

Telephones, Cameras and Technology in West New Britain Cargo Cults

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I explore the creative practices of cargo cult followers in the Kaliai bush of West New Britain. I focus on how rural villagers reworked their experiences of meaning and sociality through their appropriations of western technology. In particular, bush Kaliai cult followers frequently used telephones and cameras in idiosyncratic ways that mapped out anew and rediscovered the spaces occupied by a racialised human existence. Through their novel use of western technology, cult followers struggled to resituate and overcome the new distances and cleavages of modernity by unearthing other ways of being white that came from their customary past and ancestral homelands.

Throughout Melanesia, at various times and in different cults, villagers have used telephones, cameras, wirelasses, videos, televisions, submarines, ships and planes as new vehicles for the imagination. Villagers searched for new material techniques to sustain, move and transform their thoughts and existence. Western technology seemed to offer new innovative tools for mediating, crossing, tying together and overcoming the old cleavages of tradition and the new dividing practices of race. In this paper, I move away from a materialist view of technology or rather I incorporate technology into a materialist view of the human mind and its imaginary underpinnings (Bachelard 1969, 1983; Castoriadis 1987; Ricoeur 1978, 1979, 1986). Whilst it is true that technology changes history for people by changing their relations of production, I am more interested in how for millenarian followers technology offered them new forms of history by offering new techniques for positioning and disclosing the terms of human relatedness.¹ Melanesian cargo cult followers used technology to change the horizon within which race relations were placed and unfolded. Here technology's power to redraw the horizon or boundaries of race relations was intimately bound up with its power to shift and redraw the boundaries between the known and the unknown, the visible and the invisible, what was public and what was secret, what was close and what was distant (Lattas 1998; cf. Friedson 1996). Traditionally, these types of boundaries and their disclosing possibilities had underpinned men's house cults, gender relations, dreams, visions and conversations with the dead. With the coming of western institutions, these customary practices of secrecy and disclosure were reconstituted and remediated by the new disclosing possibilities of western technology unearthed by Melanesian villagers.

In bush Kaliai cults, the forms of social distance that villagers lived in their relations were remeasured, laid out anew and, even seemed to be shortened, by that new perception of the world brought by the instruments of western technology. The cultural forms that racial politics took in the cults involved using western technology as a vehicle for imaginatively resituating and re-placing the secret terms of human existence. The realm of the invisible, which traditionally had helped constitute the boundary or horizon of the visible world, was

racialised. It was racialised through the processes of being redrawn, revisualised and reheard through the medium of western technology. Here western technology became part of a racial politics that struggled to draw close the world of the dead in ways that familiarised whites but also renegotiated and reowned the new forms of estrangement brought by white men.

DEATH AND DISCLOSURE

Like other Melanesian millenarian followers, the bush Kaliai often mimed the emotions, expressions, gestures and persona of Europeans (Lattas 1998). They especially liked to copy the white man's use of modern artifacts, like telephones, wirelasses, planes, cameras and binoculars. These industrial objects were reconstructed out of bush material, discarded tins, empty jars, and holes in the ground. Technology was re-invented in other ways, for it was also used to contact the dead in the hope of bringing them closer to the living. The traditional Melanesian dialogue with the dead was recontextualised through its remediation by the instruments of modernity. Modern technology was used to resituate the world of the dead whilst the dead were also used to resituate the world of modernity. Relevant here is Heidegger's (1977) discussion of the truth effects of technology, how technology can articulate the hermeneutic structure of the concealed-revealed dialectic. One of Heidegger's main ideas, which he acquired from Nietzsche (1973) was to redefine the essence of truth in terms of processes of concealing and revealing. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger was interested in the necessity for thought to posit the concealed so as to create truth and reality through or as effects of processes of disclosure (cf. Derrida 1979). Things come into presence not in and of themselves but by being situated in a world of meaning that determines the light that is shone on them, that reveals or discloses them in particular ways.

A great deal of modern technology involves the crossing of space, where what is distant in the surface world is brought closer through airplanes, binoculars, telephones and wirelasses. Modern technology also creates and mediates other topographical fields such as the distance between a visible world and an invisible world of concealed physical powers – be they electrical, chemical, or the laws of physics and thermodynamics. This gives a revealing quality to modern technology as Heidegger (1977: 298) recognised: 'Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing'. I want to argue that modern technology's bridging of the distance between the seen and the unseen was transformed by cargo cults into their own familiar forms of revelation and truth. In cargo cults, the white man's mechanisms for revealing and tapping into concealed scientific forces was assimilated to Melanesian magical practices for revealing and tapping into the concealed forces belonging to the secluded world of the dead. A space of death came to inhabit European technology, animating it in ways that revealed to the Kaliai the secret presence of their ancestors. Through technology the distant world of the past was once again drawn close to the present. It was the living dead who now haunted the machinery of capitalism, who became its spirit and motivating power.

For cult followers, technology's processes of unconcealment and its truth effects were similar to Melanesian customary practices of secrecy and disclosure through dreams, visions, rituals and possession (Feld 1982, 1996; Weiner 1995). Bush Kaliai customary secrets were bound up with the dead and especially with the hiddenness or invisibility of the dead. The removal of the dead from the living allowed the dead to occupy a hidden space of truth. The dead could be used to create truth effects through practices which crossed over into the invisible worlds that the dead inhabited. Dreams, hallucinations, possession, and rituals were the customary practices of revelation that the Kaliai used to redisclose and light up the world in different ways, namely from the standpoint of the dead. Borrowing and remaking these customary practices, bush Kaliai cult followers sought to end the isolation of the dead from the living by unearthing, catching, and communicating with their ancestors via modern technology.

Followers also often used songs, dances, feasts, dress, and rituals to make the ancestors feel sorry for the living. At times followers criticised the dead for remaining unmoved by their descendants' homages to them. The dead were seen to control their ability to reveal themselves and they were suspected of using their self-imposed isolation to punish the living. Through cult practices, followers struggled to regain access and control over the space of death and truth, in a context where the material living standards of Whites seemed to confirm their claim (for example, through the Church) to know where the dead, God and truth secretly resided. It was Whites, more so than Melanesians, who were seen to control processes of concealment; especially the disguising and hiding away of the dead. Indeed, Whites were often accused of fouling the open traffic that ought to exist between the dead and their living relatives. The ability of Whites to control truth was believed to reside in their ability to conceal through more powerful and cunning ways than the Kaliai, who sometimes saw themselves as trapped in the false concealing practices of tradition – like bullroarers, *tumbuan* masks and other secret cult items of the men's house (Lattas 1992b). Bush Kaliai cult followers often struggled to unearth those powerful concealing practices of Europeans, which worked to keep Melanesians imprisoned in false concealing practices. Nowadays, the bush Kaliai see the culture of the men's house as a false form of secrecy that was given by God as a punishment before he left for America. In their cults, Kaliai villagers sometimes sought to give up their customary men's house secrets and postulated more utopian worlds where men and women were not divided by monstrous masks. Yet, at the same time as the Kaliai voiced these desires, they also often in their cults created new forms of secrecy. People experimented with new, more empowering forms of concealment, which could take the form of secret names, new masks, cult offices, or telephone sites for speaking to God, *masalai* and the dead.

Melanesian villagers are renowned for creating millenarian cults out of the borrowed practices, rituals, narratives and symbols of western culture (Burrige 1960, 1969; Lawrence 1964; Worsley 1957). Cult followers often poached on the hermeneutic practices of western culture, converting its disclosures and layers of meaning into a new secret society that has its own regimes and techniques for producing truth effects. A history of European contact in Melanesia would need to explore 'the becoming of truth' and in particular explore those transformations in processes of concealment and revelation that have made the experience and production of truth different at different historical moments. Such an approach would marry Foucault's (1970, 1972, 1977, 1982) genealogical concern with the historical production of truth effects to Heidegger's concern with how truth emerges as an effect of concealment and disclosure. For Heidegger, concealment does not exclude or deny truth, but is necessary to create the truth effects of disclosure. Moreover, the particular forms that concealment, removal, hiddenness, and absence take determine the forms of co-presence within which the world is disclosed. We are dealing here with what Schürmann (1990) calls economies of presence, which is that circulation of signs and also absences of meaning that work to light up and reveal the world in particular ways. It is representations of absence that make the world present in particular ways. The presencing of the world emerges from cultural techniques for figuring and producing absences, distances, invisibility and forms of concealment.

A genealogy of truth in Melanesia would use cargo cults to explore historically how this dialectic between absence and presence, concealment and revelation, the seen and the unseen, was refigured through remaking those processes of disclosure that the white man brought, not only in Christianity but also through modern technology. The white man's ships, submarines, airplanes, cameras, binoculars, wirelasses and telephones, allowed what was absent, concealed, distant and unseen to be rediscovered and re-presented anew through new forms of communication and mobility, and through the media of glass, wire and electricity. It is no accident that the Melanesian Pidgin word for shaman is *g'asman* (glass-man), for the shaman uses his visions and dreams like the *glas* (glass, i.e. spy-glass or field glasses) of the

white man to bring what is distant close, to disclose that which is removed or cannot be seen. Cult followers merged modern technological practices for disclosing the hidden with local customary practices for disclosing hidden meanings and worlds. Followers struggled to transform their existing world by revealing anew its hidden premises and by reinventing the techniques of disclosure that situated truth and the visible world by situating the unseen. For followers, the transformative world of the dead would be brought closer and relit through new more powerful forms of *glas* than that provided by the time-honored methods of dreams and hallucinations. Perhaps more accurately, the customary revelatory world of visions and shamans was displaced and remediated through that new world of penetrating vision embodied in the *glas* technology of Europeans - their binoculars, cameras, videos, and televisions but also their telephones, wirelesses, and planes, for these too span the distance between the seen and the unseen, what is audible and inaudible, what is absent and present.

It is a question of the cultural forms that 'distance' takes and what cultural forms the process of overcoming distance also assumes. It is a question of how creative processes are mediated by images of movement and by techniques for spacing and figuring otherness. Cargo cult beliefs and rituals seek to create and introduce an alternative space or moment within the present; and they do so by seeking to alter the relationship between what is near and what is far-off, what is present and what is missing, what is current and what occupies the alternative times of the past and future. Indeed, the experience of distance that is measured by one's removal from one's origin and future becomes the language for thinking about the distance of race. What is more, often the spatial and temporal images of distance employed to construct race relations borrowed on Christianity; with one's nearness and removal from God becoming a way of conceiving of those distances separating Europeans and Melanesians. As Heidegger has pointed out, people's experience of a world is often constituted in relationship to how God is spatially and temporally positioned in relationship to the present.

By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. In a world's worlding is gathered that spaciousness out of which the protective grace of the gods is granted or withheld. Even this doom, of the god remaining absent, is a way in which world worlds.

A work, by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness. "To make space for" means here to liberate the free space of the open region and to establish it in its structure. (Heidegger 1977:170-1)

Cargo cults seek to refigure the spatial boundaries of the world by refiguring the lingering presence or absence of God, by altering His remoteness and nearness. The scope and limits of the present world are changed by altering that relationship to God which provides people with the spatial and temporal structure of their world. The setting up of a world is the setting up of a relationship with that which is withdrawn from it, for it is the experience of an absence which gives presence its structure. Absence is not just a nothingness, it has a structure and reality. Each culture has its tropes and narratives for figuring that absence which is removed from the world but which is also at the same time secretly constitutive of it (cf. Sartre 1988). Notions of an absent God, of lost or misplaced ancestral heroes, and of removed or unconcerned dead relatives are some of the formulae which a culture can employ to talk about and set up that absence that lingers in all things and determines the nature of their co-presence. The cultural presence that absence is given shapes and highlights the spatial and temporal structure of presence as it is lived. In the bush Kaliai area, this absence was sometimes figured in myth as a black Moses or Christ who ran away to America. At other times this absence was figured to be angry, uncaring dead relatives concealed in the earth and distant mountains (Lattas 1998).

In the 1970s, the bush Kaliai cargo cult leader Censure stated that present racial divisions were grounded in past crimes committed by those in the surface world against the dead.

For this reason, followers sacrificed pigs to the dead, gave them shell money and honoured them with compensatory songs, dances and ceremonies. The resolution of this domestic strife would allow followers to overcome the racial injustice that made up the lived experience of being a *netif* (native). Such themes worked to familiarise the sources of racial inequality. Along with myths about the personal nature of the offence given to a black Christ who ran away, such themes allowed the experience of race to be domesticated, to be brought into the realm of kinship and home.

It is here a question of how racial difference and inequality are assimilated to the ways people think about the concealed and how people try to use kinship to remediate racial distances by making the concealed move closer to the world of the familiar, to the world that is lit up. Just as that which is present to us is seen within a certain light, so that which is hidden is also seen within a certain light. Indeed, as Heidegger has pointed out, it is concealment which generates and creates our sense of presence, the way we view the world: 'Concealment as refusal is not simply and only the limit of knowledge in any given circumstance, but the beginning of the lighting of what is lighted' (Heidegger 1977:175). The Kaliai in their cargo cults often seized upon items of European technology for they recognised and wanted to appropriate their means-to-an-end function and design. Followers wanted these pieces of equipment to fulfil not just the desires of Europeans but also their own desires for cargo, a new white skin, a new morality, and the pleasure of once again seeing departed relatives. The Kaliai recognised technology for what it is, namely, a human act of contrivance that makes possible the realisation of certain objectives. Into the medium of European technology, people inserted their own forms of wish fulfillment. Indeed followers merged traditional ways of realising ends through magical techniques with European ways of realising ends through modern technology. This merger resulted in modern technology acquiring a certain magicality; it acquired new mimetic moments of disclosure and control. Magic did not become a primitive science, instead the disclosing, transformative moments of technology merged with the disclosing transformative moments of magic so that technology acquired an enchanted, ghostly presence. What allowed magic to merge with technology was the common project of bringing forth through human artifice that which is not present. Both generated their truth effects by tapping into the hidden and the unknown. The aesthetic power and attraction of technology, not only for the Kaliai but also for us in the West, emerges out of the aura of truth it produces when it calls up and employs a concealed world of power; be it in the form of chemical reactions, the laws of physics, electricity, sound waves or whatever.

For cargo cult followers, the politics of colonialism is often a struggle to control practices of secrecy and processes of concealment. Race relations are experienced as a struggle to own access and control over those worlds of the hidden upon which are built people's sense of the real world. The modalities for revealing the real, for creating a sense of presence, are determined by a culture's sense of the hidden. The awe that people experience before Christianity and western technology is an awe concerning the secret powers that westerners tap and utilise, but also an awe concerning the practices of concealment and disclosure that Europeans use to sustain a sense of what is present. In their dreams and visions, Melanesians struggle to disclose and capture the imperceptible powers that animate European technology and that empower Christian churches. In their cult practices, villagers mime western practices of concealment and disclosure so as to capture new truth effects and new horizons of visibility.

Freedom and people's sense of the political is closely tied to this process of opening up the concealed, of escaping from particular ways of lighting up the world. It was Heidegger (1977: 306) who recognised this when he wrote:

Freedom governs the open in the sense of the cleared and lighted up, i.e., the revealed. To the occurrence of revealing, i.e. of truth, freedom stands in the closest

and most intimate kinship. All revealing belongs within a harboring and a concealing. But that which frees - the mystery - is concealed and always concealing itself. All revealing comes out of the open, goes into the open, and brings into the open. The freedom of the open consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws. Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose lighting shimmers that veil that hides the essential occurrence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils. Freedom is the realm of the destining that at any given time starts a revealing on its way.

Freedom is bound up with processes of revealing, of clearing away untruths so as to allow a new form of visibility, a new way of lighting up the world. This process of bringing secrets and the hidden into the open is not arbitrary but governed by culture; it is a mode of disclosure. In the context of European hegemony, these modalities for concealing and revealing become reflected upon, despised, banished, transformed, and borrowed from other cultures. The processes of secrecy and veiling themselves come to be seen as central to the constitution and transformation of a present racialised existence. Certain customary processes of veiling like masks will be given up but only so that new processes of veiling can be taken up or made central.³ For Heidegger and Nietzsche, the experience of freedom is not only constituted in the stripping away of old veils and the revelation of hidden mysteries but also in the consciousness that emerges of life as inherently veiled. I consider this sense of the need for deceptions as underpinning the tricks that cargo cult leaders often played on their own followers. For example, the cargo cult leader Censure sometimes made his children go around at night whistling so that followers would assume that the dead had come closer to the living. Another cargo cult leader, Mapilu, tried to mail a letter to the dead (Lattas 1998: 108). The letter was put inside an envelope and then placed inside a mat. Later when the envelope was opened, the letter had gone, supposedly to its destination - the dead who now lived like Whites. Some villagers suspected that Mapilu's brother-in-law, who was handling this letter, might have secretly removed it when placing the envelopes inside the mat. Though villagers have such suspicions, this does not necessarily undermine their faith in cult practices. Indeed, the same cult leaders who perpetrate such deceptions on their followers are the strongest believers in the reality of the dead and in the need to free people by revealing another hidden layer of existence within the present order of things.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER WORLDS

In terms of the Kaliai bush, the most detailed information I have concerning the earliest use of European technology to disclose the white man's secrets was the case of a policeman called Tigi. In early 1963, he returned to his home village of Bolo for a two and a half month period of leave, when he was reported to the authorities by neighbouring coastal villagers for spreading stories. Even now, many Kaliai villagers remain convinced of the truth of Tigi's stories and believe he was dismissed from the police force for revealing secrets that he was duty bound to conceal. One secret that Tigi revealed was why Europeans kept their cemeteries in such good order. In his recorded confession to the colonial authorities, Tigi told of a Morobe man who went and photographed the graves of his ancestors. He told of how this Morobe man was later gaoled by Whites who wanted to conceal the truth about cemeteries.

Formerly all the people in Papua and New Guinea were all right [i.e. had the same lifestyle as Europeans]. One day a Morobe man took some pictures of the graves of his ancestors. This New Guinea man took the pictures and then sent them to be developed by Europeans. The Europeans saw these pictures. When they saw these pictures they asked the New Guinea man, "Where did you get these pictures?" The New Guinea man replied he took the pictures at the graveyard. The Europeans asked,

“Who informed you to take pictures at the cemetery?” The New Guinea man replied, “It was my idea.” The Europeans then said, “You cannot do this, we are keeping this a secret. Now you have discovered this secret.”

Some bush Kaliai villagers claim that when the Morobe man had his photographs ‘washed’ (developed), the colourful plants next to the graves were no longer visible as plants but as the faces of people who lived long ago. In 1995, when I interviewed Tigi, he stated that the ancestors in these photographs had white skins and other European features. Here the inaccessible worlds of the dead and of Europeans become amalgamated and redisclosed through that alternative vision of the world bestowed by the camera. The camera provides access to the real world as seen through the eyes of Europeans and as such it becomes a magical tool of disclosure capable of revealing the clandestine worlds that Europeans monopolise and claim as their privilege. The camera becomes that mobile western instrument which allows the world of vision to be displaced so that vision itself can be visualised differently; namely, from vantage points belonging to the dead and from the secret vantage points belonging to whites. It is the white man’s seeing of the unseen which is coveted and appropriated by the Morobe man and Tigi. The camera in the material form of a photograph allows something which is no longer present, which is out of sight, to have a continued visual presence. It is this keeping present of the unseen, this relocation of reality into the picture, which gives the camera a certain magicity, a certain transformative potential.

In the late 1970s, a bush Kaliai woman called Melo began a cargo cult in which she used a ‘camera’ not only to reveal the world differently from the way it ordinarily appeared to people’s eyes but also so as to transform her followers and their world. Using pieces of timber and vines, Melo built a ‘camera’ and then she instructed her followers to decorate themselves and line up to be photographed by her. Followers were told that afterwards, when their photographs were ‘washed’ and came back, they would see themselves with white skins. These were the new skins they would later acquire when their cult was successful. Monongyo quoted and explained Melo’s thinking like this:

She would make people stand up for a while [to be photographed] and then tell them: “You can now be happy. Later I will wash [develop] this. When the film comes back, you can see these photos of ours and be happy. Now you must decorate yourselves good. Later you will see your skin and it will be as white as that of all white men. It will not come up black, like us natives. No way!” Their skin would come up white, like all you whites, and then they [Melo’s followers] could be happy.

The hair would not be like ours, it would look like that of yours. They [people in the photos] would come up like all whites and then all kinds of something [cargo] would come up.

Melo informed her followers that if they did not get their photographs taken ‘then it would not be enough for their skins to change and for them to come up like all *masta*; they would stay like *ol kanaka* (natives).’ Those whose skins remained dark would become the *netif* of the new race of white men; and their black skin and subordinate position would remain with them forever. Like other Kaliai cult leaders, Melo presented her work as villagers last chance to earn the right to enjoy a future European life-style. Her photos were not just representations of, but a means of producing, a new white body for people. As Monongyo put it:

Yes, the photo would change their skin. For it is like this with this photo of theirs: she would wash this photo and after she washed it their skin would come up good.

Now supposing some people were afraid and she was not able to photograph them, then their skin would remain black.

We see here the symbolic washing of black identity through the chemical washing of its rep-

resentation in photographs. I believe that embodied implicitly in this act of washing an image of oneself were notions of moral purity, baptism and rebirth - all of which were major bush Kaliai cargo cult themes (Lattas 1998). Relevant here is the fact that the local words used for a representation, including a photograph, are the same words used for soul - in *Pisin* it is *tevil* and in the local languages of Mouk and Aria it is *ano* (these are also the words used for one's reflection and shadow). Through her photos, Melo was washing and transforming people's souls, their self-images. She produced and washed the new formative self-images that came from new ways of positioning the constituting gaze of the other.

Melo's appropriation of the camera occurred alongside her appropriating the pedagogic mannerisms of Europeans. She often dressed like a white man and would strut around her village with the same authoritative body postures as a white colonial kiap. She would inspect her village for its tidiness and would order individuals to remove grass and excrement. Inside her house, she built a European style chair and followers would come and tell her their worries. She would sit in the chair in an unusual way with crossed legs which one informant explained as: 'It marked in her talk that she was a master'. Like a white man, she also had domestic servants and a secretary who would record her teachings and messages from the dead. It is the persona of Europeans that Melo incorporated and it was their gaze that she captured in her village inspections, pedagogic counseling sessions, written records and her camera.

Melo's claim that by washing her followers' photos their skin would 'come up good' served to merge popular, rudimentary, chemical notions of photographic development with appropriated Christian notions of moral development and social transformation through cleaning and baptising people's souls. Many bush Kaliai (like Tigi and Melo) believe that the photograph which captures one's *tevil* or *ano* can also capture and reveal the hidden second body that a person will inhabit when they die - for death is regularly spoken of as leaving behind one's first skin so as to live in a second body, in a second skin. Melo's camera promised not only to reveal but also to create this second idealised skin that followers were to acquire when their cult won the new law of existence. The camera allowed people's soul-*ano-tevil* to be internalised into what seemed to be a more powerful medium of representation, a more powerful form of mimesis belonging to the white man, which was now merged with the mimetic cult practices of ritual.

The camera creates a double of the world, a second way of rendering it present, and because of this it was rendered as capable of mediating the second reality of a hidden world belonging to the dead or of a future world. Here alternative ways of doubling the world become amalgamated so as to become doorways into each other's possibilities.

The transformative power that villagers projected onto their new representational practices was not a totally new phenomenon that emerged with the coming of what seemed to be more powerful European forms of mimesis. For in traditional Kaliai culture, spells often work by operating on a 'picture' (*ano* or *tevil*) of the desired object or state of affairs. In rain magic, the leaves of plants that grow around streams are used to hold water above a fire, which heats up the leaves until they break releasing a sudden flow of water as in a tropical storm. Prior to hunting, men will perform magic using insects that float on water and that resemble the game they want to catch. For wild pigs, they will use a short fat insect whilst for cassowaries a long-legged thin insect. These insects are said to be 'pictures', the *ano*, *tevil*, that is representational doubles, of the desired game. Cameras come to participate in this magical relationship between representations and the hidden or future reality to which they refer, for photographic images also capture and draw close the alternative hidden reality of objects. Thus, in photos, the colourful plants at graves are revealed to be the living dead who have acquired white-skins or alternatively, as in the case of Melo, people see their future white self as being realised through the process of being photographed. In providing an alternative positioning of objects by displacing them into the world of representation, the camera is associated with the alternative hidden realities of objects which in traditional culture is

their soul (*ano, tevil*). The camera relocates the world of objects by mimetically reproducing a double of them, and for this reason the camera can become a magical vehicle for alternative visions of other relocated worlds. The camera displaces the world into another medium of existence offered by the space of representation and in doing so promises that relocation and displacement of existence which the cargo cults are interested in magically producing. Cameras are good to think with in cargo cults because they offer the promise of an alternative second existence which they partly realise in the way they materially reproduce the world.

Through her camera, Melo experimented with the boundaries of black identity. Indeed, she used the empowering vision of a technological European gaze to produce new corporeal schemes for her followers. They now had a compromised hybrid sense of themselves as a white body concealed by an existing black skin that the camera would wash away. They would be chemically and photographically baptised into their new cleaner white identities by the camera. This belief in the creative magical power of the camera did correspond to a certain truth and that concerns the way all identity is constituted through a process of seeing oneself through the eyes of others including all their techniques for capturing and accentuating processes of seeing. What perhaps makes the mechanical eye of Europeans so powerful is that the transformative, productive potential of machines is married to the field of viewing bodies, such that the field of vision is experienced anew as powerful and transformative. Moreover, the camera, in the photos it generates, does offer people alternative ways of seeing their racialised bodies. It does displace their *netif* identities into an alternative, unfamiliar, material space and into alternative ways of visualising the self and existence. It is this new alternative way of doubling the body and existence, which is experienced as magical for it corresponds and opens out onto that future displacement and remaking of the self and existence promised by the cult.

Through her camera, Melo's followers revealed themselves differently to themselves. They participated in a new perspective on themselves where through the lens of a European cultural artifact they would remake and whiten their problematised *netif* identities. This new self-vision promised a new empowered Melanesian self. Melo's camera partly re-enacted a colonial hegemonic situation that had problematised black identity and idealised whiteness. Yet Melo's camera also appropriated the promise of this colonising project where through the supervisory gaze of Whites, villagers would be remade like Europeans. A new form of self-development was being posited where the transformative pedagogic projects of the West were displaced and condensed into that new form of vision offered by the new objectifying gaze of the camera. Development came to be redeveloped in ways that let the bush Kaliai own the process of whitening themselves. Melo's camera took the redemptive educational projects of European hegemony, which is people becoming white by seeing themselves through European eyes, and reobjectified it. The magical power of the camera refetichised the transformative, uplifting projects of European cultural hegemony. It condensed the civilising process of becoming white into a material object that embodied the gaze and representational practices of European culture which could now be appropriated by Melanesians. They could now start whitening themselves through a copy of Europeans' processes of copying, through miming European mimetic practices, and through seeing by means of European ways of seeing.

Melo's camera allowed the bush Kaliai to search for new more powerful forms of mimetic magic, for more powerful ways of transforming a representation into reality, or more accurately for a way of representing foreign representational practices so that they realised the foreign culture they embodied. European copying practices were reconstituted by becoming part of a magical cosmology which understood the copy to be partly the spiritual essence, soul or second reality of what was depicted. The alternative duplications of reality offered by European technology promised an alternative world which was not simply the promise of an alternative ideational world, but an alternative real world to which the representation

referred. It is a question of photographing oneself into existence, of taking the mimetic representational practices of western culture and casting them under the spell of an indigenous system of magic that is able to draw a soul, hidden truths and concealed realities out of representations.

Through her camera, Melo, like the Morobe man who photographed graves, crossed and superimposed together the world of the past with the world of the future. The powerful mimetic practices of Europeans were used to reawaken the mimetic powers of the ancestors so as to uncover another kind of modernity owned and controlled by Melanesians. Another example of this was when Melo constructed so-called 'binoculars' from bits of bush timber and vines that she then used to navigate around in the bush. I was told these 'binoculars' let her see the dead and invisible places that had cars, electric lights and iron roofed houses. In disclosing and drawing close the unseen, Melo's binoculars crisscrossed the distance between the living and the dead with the distances between the past and the future, white and black, and European and Melanesian. This interweaving of different differences went hand in hand with something else with which Melo was experimenting, namely the gender boundaries of her identity. Elsewhere (Lattas 1998), I have explored how Melo adopted an androgynous persona: she stuck hair to her face, used vines to flatten her chest, carried things on her shoulders like men, wore western men's clothes, and mimed the postures, attitudes and actions of European kiaps. In her everyday behaviour, Melo experimented with new hybrid forms of identity that blurred racial divisions by blurring sexual divisions. She especially copied the mannerisms of white men in the hope that they would perceive her as one of them and would listen to her requests for cargo. Here Melo's everyday behaviour enacted that same crossing of difference and distance that she sought to realise through her camera and binoculars.

CENSURE'S CULT: RE-VISUALISING THE DEAD AND ONESELF

Prior to starting her own cult, in the early 1970s Melo had been part of Censure's cult, which had also sought to localise the photographic gaze of Europeans. Censure would line up followers at certain holes in the ground known as 'doors' and 'telephones', and there followers would be photographed by the dead. Censure's son - Posingen - described these scenes like this:

He [Censure] spoke that the [underground] people who lived at the telephone, they would photograph [*kamerim*] everyone. Suppose father heard good wind [talk] from a [an underground] man, he [the underground man] would say: "Tell all the people to stand up good, so I can photograph them all". Father would then say: "You all stand up good so all the people at the [telephone] door can photograph you. You must stand up straight, you can not lie about". He would speak like this "if you want to throw [dance] the law, then do it good so they can photograph you". The people at the door would then photograph and father would inform everyone "they have finished photographing you".

Censure emphasised the importance of performing well the cult's songs and rituals, which he received from the underground and taught his followers. He also emphasised that the cult's rituals would not succeed without correct moral behaviour and this included a new form of respect by men for women. It was women who performed many of the cult's songs and dances which were re-mirrored down below as the productive work of underground female christs (Lattas 1998). As was the case with traditional ceremonies witnessed by the dead, those in the underground were meant to admire followers' performances and see them as a form of reverence. Indeed, the underground was meant to feel obligated to repay the hard ceremonial work of followers. Cult rituals would make the ancestors feel sorry for the poor

state of their descendants whom they would then repay with cargo. These ancestors in the form of white spirit beings would come and photograph the ceremonial work of the living and, for this reason, Censure would instruct his followers:

Stand up good and dance good so they can photograph you nicely, so your photo can be good. . . You must all stand up good so the people at the door can photograph you all. You all must stand up straight, you cannot lie about. . . if you want to work the law [of the cult, of the future] then do this well so that they [underground dead] can photograph you all.

The creation of a memory in the dead would be through ordered ritual displays of respect that had been permanently captured and impressed upon the dead via photographs. Here one form of memorialisation blends with another; the mnemonic ceremonial techniques of tradition blend with those seemingly more perfect objectifications of memory employed by Europeans. The new law of existence would come from the process of seeing oneself through the gaze of white men which was assimilated to the gaze of the underground dead. I believe that the transfixing colonial gaze of Europeans was displaced and re-objectified into the eye or gaze of the camera, with both western gazes becoming an extension of the more familiar caring gaze of deceased relatives. Elsewhere (Lattas 1998), I have explored how the caring gaze of the ancestors was merged with the pastoral gaze of western hegemony so as to create another formative field of vision, another generative domain of self-reflection and self-constitution. In the magical cult work of cameras, the generative power of ancestral kin (creating descendents; providing magic, good health, fertility and game) was displaced into vision and merged with the transformative objectives of colonialism and the civilisation process. The new future would come from seizing and making one's own the powerful formative gaze of foreigners, for the otherness of their white gaze like that of the dead promised to institute another future subject living in a remade world.

In the form of telephone holes that take photographs, western ways of seeing natives were reobjectified and regrounded in the earth; they were localised into a landscape that now viewed its inhabitants differently. The camera was used to evoke and bring to the surface those alternative worlds of doubling offered by the underground and the future. These two alternative worlds with their different forms of emplacement were amalgamated and used to resituate each other along the alternative perspectives of the dead and Europeans. A new technologised landscape provided new vantage points for viewing human existence. The power of the look to create subjects and social worlds was being experimented with in these hybrid forms of vision where holes in the ground were telephones and doors that took photos from the vantage point of the dead and so as to prefigure a new kind of westernised world. These overlapping and superimposed ways of seeing and knowing involved localising a European discourse that stressed achieving modernity not only by way of development work but also via the pedagogic project of adopting a certain way of seeing the world.

The power of the local terrain to create its inhabitants, to know and speak to them was a traditional part of bush Kaliai culture. Songs and dances gained from temporary stays in the underground or from having run into dead relatives and *masalai* would be sung in traditional ceremonies that the dead would also attend. Local myths tell of how certain species of sugar cane, bananas, and taro were acquired from particular sites associated with the dead and *masalai*. Some bush Kaliai clans trace their descent to *masalai* women who were captured and then married men in the surface world. *Masalai* and dead ancestors were assigned the power to protect ownership and access to land by injuring strangers who spoke languages other than those belonging to a locality. Locals knew the codes of silence and the adjacent languages that particular *masalai* from neighbouring localities required so as to recognise them as one of their 'boys'. Photographs taken at telephone holes reinvent this customary way of being known and formed by the landscape, and of manipulating its perception of one-

self. Today, the traditional gaze of the underground has been transformed by being fused with the power of the colonial Other's look to create those whom it inspects. A new formative white gaze is projected and internalised into the landscape and this gaze is assimilated to that re-positioning and re-objectification of self embodied in photographs. We have the emergence of new ways of doubling subjects through the amalgamated mirrors of modernity and tradition, through the alternative forms of emplacement and travel offered by a localised modernity and technologised localities. Western ways of seeing and hearing through photographs and telephones are blended with traditional beliefs that ascribed to the landscape a presence that could see and hear those belonging to the surface world.

For cargo cult leaders like Censure, the process of reforming people's identity involved regrounding them in a remade landscape. Here I should mention how Censure gave each follower a new name that belonged to an underground person who was making their cargo. Censure's son, Posingen, described these new names as a form of baptism. He described his father as 'washing' followers in the same way as the Catholic Church had previously 'washed' or baptised villagers with its new names. In photographing his followers from underground telephone holes, Censure was confirming his cult's new forms of identification that involved people seeing themselves differently as well as seeing the process of seeing differently.

During one of many conversations, Posingen told me how some of the photographs taken by underground white spirit beings had turned up at government offices in Rabaul. There they were hidden in rooms, which Melanesians were ordinarily prevented from entering. The revealing content of these photos meant that they had to be hidden from the prying eyes of Melanesians. Posingen described to me one photo, which depicted his father standing up on a stone ridge with certain underground white spirit beings (Alas, Sen Kilok and Sen Seuve) and together they were photographed by the Big Man (God). During this photographing, the Big Man transferred his knowledge and power to all of them and in the case of Censure this took the form of a light that came to Censure's head.

It is like this, father stood up in the middle and Alas stood up to one side and Sen Kilok and Sen Seuve stood up on the other side. He was there, at the bridge (stone ridge). In this area they say there is a bridge, the Bridge of Balitu. It is the bridge of the Big Man, he came down Mount Sinai and he stood up there. Father stood up in this area, at this *raunwara* (round water, i.e. lake or pool), he was there with his [spirit] children, for they are his *kandere* [nephews] - Sen Kilok and Sen Seuve. The two of them were standing up there when the Big Man came down, Alas was also standing there. The Big Man came down this bridge, he came down and he took the photo. He took a photo of them all; just like when you photographed us all. He photographed them and then he gave this power to them all, this huge star came to the head of my father and it was truly shining. . . . Father was in the middle and the others were on either side. He [Big Man] photographed them. Now with this [Big] Man, it is like this, the knowledge that was in His head shone and came to my father's head, and the head of my father started to truly shine.

In his government report and published articles on Censure's cult, the Catholic priest and anthropologist Father Janssen (1970, 1974) spells Censure's name as Sen Sio, which in *Pisin* means Saint Sio. In Posingen's above description, the process of Censure becoming a saint involved acquiring God's halo of knowledge through the camera. The camera did not just simply capture Censure's soul-image (*ano*) but also transferred to him (and the others) some of the qualities of the photographer. Indeed, the cult's term for Censure was Otit which was also the cult's term for the God of Papua New Guinea (Lattas 1998). In effect, the omniscient gaze of God was condensed and transferred via the camera so that observer and observed became implicated in each other though the process of participating in creating a common

perspectival position. This mediating work of photography was also objectified in the terrain that the photo was taken from, which was a stone ridge that was often said to be a secret bridge. The ridge came down from the mountains where God resided to a lake that contained people's future wealth. It is no accident that the photo is taken at this 'bridge' which spans and joins together a number of different terrains and in doing so can mediate and join together the conceptual spaces belonging to the bush Kaliai and Europeans, the living and the dead, and the past and the future.

When discussing the significance of this cult site, Posingen explained how at all other cult sites, like at the telephone-doors, underground female Christ were the 'boss'. However, at the lake, which was known as the Glass of God, Alas was in charge and he 'bossed' the future 'gold money' of followers. Censure came to this lake to receive information from Alas concerning which underground female Christs bossed certain telephone holes and where followers should go to perform their next ceremonies. Though the Glass of God was a long way from Meitavale, Posingen described how followers would sing the cult's songs of Atwane and Seaneh so as to be lifted up and sped along in ways likened to the fast plane travel of Whites: 'With Atwane and Seaneh, it did not matter that an area was a long way. By mid-day we would be there. With Atwane and Seaneh, it would lift us up like the plane that you travelled on yesterday.'

Whilst discussing the photos taken by the dead at telephone sites and by God at the bridge of Balitu, Posingen told me about other secret photos taken from bushes around Meitavale village by an underground white spirit. He had photographed Monongyo hoisting the cult's flag up and down whilst decorated female followers sang and danced the cult's ceremonies. At the coastal Kaliai village of Atiatu, Censure's family claim to have later been shown these photos by a relative who stole them from a government station in Rabaul where he had worked for many years. This relative warned Censure's family how there was a strong taboo on the photos being made public. He explained that the photos were proof of the success of Censure's work: 'For these photos came up from his [Censure's] strength, from his power'. Posingen believes his father was killed by coastal villagers over these photos. Ex-followers who saw the photos became jealous that Censure was finally going to win the new law of existence whilst they remained in poverty. As Posingen put it:

These photos came up when the colonial government was boss . . . They were found by a man from Atiatu [village] who was in Rabaul working for the government; he won many years in government service. His *masta* took him into his office where they had these photos of everyone when they were gathered together at the *raunwara* [Glass of God], when all the people were gathered around the flag, when all the big men and women worked at throwing [hoisting] the flag. They were not pictures, they were photos. . . . They were of us black people who had gathered in these areas, around the lake and flag. The photos were of [the places] Balitu and Meitavale. One photo was of this man (Monongyo) who was speaking before, he held up the flag, his picture came up. When they [on the coast] saw this picture their thinking was no good about my father. They spoke: "this man will work this law and they will all live good and then we will have the pain of buying the law from them, why should it be like this." So they went and worked poison [sorcery] and he died. [They thought] "Why should this man work this something so they sit down good even though all the other people have left [the cult]? Will he alone win it and sit down good? And then it will be hard on us". For this reason they finished him [killed Censure].

This is a statement of how divisions, rivalry and jealousy between Melanesians produces a murderous but also self-destructive drive that prevents Melanesians from hanging onto a ritual law which could successfully merge the perspectives of the dead and of Europeans. The singing of followers around flags and lakes was captured secretly by a European camera con-

trolled by the Kaliai underground who in turn lost control of their images to the colonial administration. Followers' attempts to capture a European system of representation in their flag rituals was in turn covertly recaptured by western forms of representation ultimately controlled by a colonial order that hid the significance of local representational practices. Posingen's above statement sought to explain and refigure the reasons why white administrators were so hostile to his father's movement that they jailed some followers twice. Western forms of governmentality are revealed to be secretly capturing, controlling and hiding the empowering alternative representations of Melanesians, which in turn involve displacing and localising western representational forms and instruments.

Ultimately colonial control is shown to be not absolute, for it is subverted by a *netif* who enters a government office and steals the underground representations of Melanesians that Europeans monopolise. These stolen back self-images originate from the dead, with Whites hiding these subversive images of local empowerment because they prefigure the coming of a new age. These stolen back secrets and truths become entrusted to the world of kin [relatives at Atiatu] where they form a dangerous economy of meaning that has its own secrets about European secrets. Stories of unknown, concealed photos that are sneakily returned and revealed are a way of reflecting on colonialism and race as grounded in controlling representations, in controlling ways of capturing and objectifying people. Resistance becomes those confidential forms of disclosure that recirculate the suppressed truths held by this government of representation. It is when the white man's management and monopoly on the perspective of the dead is returned to Melanesians that cargo ought to come. Yet, when this empowering perspective is returned, cargo's arrival continues to be blocked only this time not by Europeans, but by resentful local villagers. They cannot stand to see a fellow *netif* beat white men at their own secrets and they fear the consequences of their own rejection of these underground truths. Today it is Melanesians who kill each other over these empowering self-images, they are fatally divided by this alternative underground perspective on the world. Out of envy and spite, they viciously maintain *netif* poverty and racial subordination by directing covert black power toward the covert administrative ends of surface whites.

In his discussion with me, Posingen emphasised that it was not surface Whites but underground relatives who originally took these secret pictures. He thought they were probably taken by Censure's underground nephews. Posingen described the photos as part of *autlo* (out-law), that is, an outside law like that belonging to Whites, and any attempt to acquire access to the photos before the right time would result in arrest.

This here goes to the *autlo*; this *autlo* that the photo came from, it is truly taboo. It is like this, it is the way of you Whites. You say that the photo is finished [cannot be acknowledged]; that it has its own time for being seen. If you show it to anyone else [natives] you get gaoled.

I have already mentioned how Censure's family became aware of secret photos of themselves when visiting relatives at Atiatu village. The man who stole the photos warned them that only when the new law of existence 'came up' would everyone have free access to these pictures. In his discussion, Posingen also associated race relations with unequal access by Melanesians to representations of themselves, and he gently included myself the anthropologist in this conspiracy.

There was a man who stole them. This man worked for the government at Rabaul. He knew about them and he took them, hid them and carried them off. He brought them here [to the Kaliai area], he hid them and said: "This something has its time for when it will come up. We will now hide them, for it would not be good if we had a big court [i.e. hearing, ordeal]." He said: "When the time for something to come up happens [i.e. when the cult work is successful] then these photos will be able to

come out into the open. These photos which support you, you must really hide [not mention] them, you cannot show them to anyone else.”

These kinds of photos are in all the offices, at Rabaul, and where you live [Australia] and in America. When you [Andrew Lattas] go there you can see them, you know about this.

The world of racial inequality is condensed into different ways of looking at the world where the camera becomes an objectification of the alternative viewpoint of Whites, which in its otherness is analogous to the alternative view point of the dead, God and secrets. The transfer of knowledge and power will occur when Melanesians can see themselves differently, from the vantage point of underground positions that they struggle to recapture from white control. The world of racial inequality takes the form of a world of appropriated self-images - clandestine photos locked up in government offices at Rabaul, Australia and America. There, Whites can see Melanesians in ways in which Melanesians cannot currently see themselves. Resistance here becomes those secret practices that claim back these alienated representations. Utopia becomes that moment in time when the living achieve free access to secret portraits of themselves alienated from their own terrain. It is a secret picturing of the world possessed by the dead, white *masalai* and a black God that Whites in the surface world have pocketed. These white men hide the alternative forms of emplacement offered by a local landscape that is re-imagined through the field of vision offered by modernity and the white man's gaze.

There is something profound in figuring a world of inequality as grounded in stolen photos, in the unequal access of people to ways of picturing themselves. The alienating gaze of colonialism is reobjectified and resisted in these narratives of a cult leader who is empowered at a 'bridge' by the transfer of light in photography. The depowerment of race is figured as people's removal from the forms of self-possession and empowerment offered by photos that localise and remake the alienating gaze of modernity, white men and their god. The photos that come from *autlo* embody a new law of representation which crosses together the perspective of the underground and of Europeans. In doing so these photos simultaneously localise the gaze of Europeans whilst modernising the gaze of the dead.

TELEPHONING THE DEAD

Censure's special cult sites, like his telephone holes and the Glass of God did in the past have traditional significance. Indeed, people's grandparents often avoided them because they were regarded as dangerous *masalai* sites. By naming the specific underground 'boss' of each *masalai* site, Censure claimed to have pacified their boss and to have overcome his followers' fears of what was in the ground. Followers were re-educated that *masalai* sites were really doors and telephones. Censure would go there to ring the underground. He would hold telephone conversations that tried to unearth whatever grievances the dead might have against the living (Lattas 1998). Often the dead would own up to holding back the cargo and they would demand compensation from the surface world for having abruptly ended their lives through a traditional culture of warfare, sorcery or widow killing. Telephone sites gave new forms of significance to the landscape: they created a new imaginary geography, which repositioned both followers and the white man's critique of tradition. These sites provided new vantage points for conversing with a past that had formed followers and now promised to reform them. The white man's moral critique of custom was internalised, displaced and reobjectified as the angry voices of dead relatives who demanded apologies and compensation with pigs and shell money. Many of Censure's discussions with the dead were about convincing them that the living were now very different from those above ground ancestors who had previously perpetrated crimes against those who now lived underground. These telephone holes helped to create a new reflexive gaze whereby the Kaliali denounced the past cul-

ture of their grandparents for its ignorance and immorality. Through these phone calls, villagers renegotiated their relationship to the traditional culture of their grandparents in ways that declared them to be new sorts of moral subjects.

One underground group that wanted an explanation for the death were widows who had their necks ceremonially broken when their husbands died. Censure would assure these women that the living today considered their grandfathers *longlong* [ignorant, insane] for having murdered them and that today the new line of men considered women valuable for they were the ones who cooked food, worked hard and carried children: 'They [grandparents] were slightly *longlong* and they worked all these sort of things, but now when it comes to this time of ours, we do not work this, for we are all clear. We are not enough to go bugger up all you women. You women are all people for cooking food, whatever food is about you work it and we men eat. Your talk is true, it is true, we men are something nothing, but you women are something true.' Censure was trying to produce a new domesticated form of masculinity that was predicated on a new found respect for woman's reproductive and nurturing powers. He saw himself as producing a new national citizen for Papua New Guinea who would recognise and take responsibility for the immorality of men's past relationships to women. . . Sometimes the underground women would not be appeased by Censure's explanation and close female relatives would come forward to the telephone to support Censure by speaking with the underground women. As Theresa, Censure's daughter-in-law, put it: 'Now, supposing they [murdered women] were kicking Otit too much, then we would go and stand up next to Otit and we would make die [stop] this court.'

Another of Censure's telephone conversations was with Katu, a man who had been speared. Katu was angry about the way he had died and Censure tried to calm him by letting him tell his story. After Katu had spoken for a while, Censure tried to turn the tables on Katu and on the grievances of the dead in general. Censure questioned the right of the underground dead to always hold the living accountable for above-ground crimes. He pointed an accusing finger at the underground, saying that they had in fact committed these wrongs for which they now wanted the living to compensate them. Posingen gave me this account of his father's dialogue with Katu.

Father spoke: "Ask yourselves, not me. We, this new line, do not know about this kind of thing [killing people]. This line [that killed] belonged to all of you. Youse alone buggered up people and went around killing yourselves, youse alone. The reason for this is that you did not have enough food." [Katu asks]: "What, why did we not have food?" [Censure replies]: "You did not have food because of you, yourselves. For youse alone chased away the Big Man [God]. He ran away and punished you all. This punishment of yours is not having enough food and eating all sorts of bitter fruits and yams. This [wrong and punishment] did not occur with us. We of this time are not pig-headed, we stop good, plant our food and eat. But before when you all did not have food, it was to do with youse, it was your punishment." He [Censure] worked this and Katu then said "I think it is our fault".

Here Censure tries to convince the dead of their own participation in sin. Censure's performance and conversations at his telephone-doors were witnessed by his followers and through him they were conversing out aloud with the very tradition which helped form their thoughts and identity. I see these dramatic telephone conversations as objectified re-enactments of an interior process of moral reevaluation, where people play out on a stage an interior drama going on within themselves. In this scenario, Censure convinces the dead of their guilt and their need to reform themselves. Here the Christianised and pacified Kaliai self speaks back to its origins, trying to convince those underground voices of the past inside itself about the right ways to view its living identity. All human beings have multiple identities and multiple voices inside themselves through which they carry on a dialogue which

establishes who they are. The psychological condition underlying what psychologists sometimes see as multiple personality disorder emerges out of the normal condition for living as a human being. The underground that was morally re-worked by Censure involved a dialogue of self-alienation where people struggled to live with underground voices that had rejected them; an underground past which the living also had difficulty accepting. These subterranean voices tormented people with a memory of immorality that had to be appeased. People struggled to renegotiate the voices of their heritage and utopia was identified with that moment when people would be able to live untormented by the underground voices that their cult had brought to the surface.

The telephone is that medium of European culture which sustains a new reflexive gaze that articulates a moral re-evaluation of customary practices. Via the telephone, a new ethical conscience comes to be formed inside the self. The telephone objectifies the internalised voices of dead kinsmen and of a morally problematised tradition which Melanesians now carry inside themselves since the coming of Europeans. When explaining the significance of European telephones to me, Posingen described them as something that allowed you to talk with those who were invisible. At his telephone holes, Censure spoke a new language which he called English and which he received from certain underground women known as the Wind of God (Lattas 1998: 176). Some of Censure's telephone holes were located above underground streams and the noises made by subterranean water was interpreted as underground engines and workshops. Conversations with concealed beings, like *masalai* and the dead, had always been a feature of traditional bush Kaliai culture; what was different about the cargo cults was that these conversations with an invisible presence were racialised and rendered into vehicles for mediating all that which was removed and kept at a distance from Melanesians. There is a politico-poetic logic in cargo cult appropriations and miming of European technology, for it is here partly a question of what within European culture is good to think with in terms of tying together the traditional problem of the distant dead with the new problem of removed foreign lifestyles belonging to strangers from distant lands. Indeed, many bush Kaliai see the removal of the dead from the living as a recent phenomenon that has increased with the coming of the church (Lattas 1998: 110-13). Villagers claim that they used to run continuously into the dead in their gardens and the bush but that now no longer see them. In cults, the techniques which Whites use to bridge distance are localised so as to overcome the new distances and cleavages from the dead that the white man's presence is imagined to have instituted. Just as Europeans use telephones to speak with people from whom they are separated, so Censure used his telephones to make audible the increasingly distant voices of the dead who were enjoying and could bring about the white man's life style.

These struggles to create one's own telephones are struggles to create new avenues for opening up those concealed, secret presences which make all existence possible; those absences which give the world's presence its structure. The struggle over meaning, and for owning the grounds of self-identity, are always partly struggles for the ownership of imaginary geographies and their horizon of possibilities. To recreate identity and its historical possibilities involves recreating the terrains of alterity that people use to place the present and themselves. For example, when Censure's followers discovered a piece of iron in the ground, Censure claimed it was a bridge to Queensland in Australia. This was his means of bringing the outside worlds of the dead and of Europeans into the Kaliai area so as to refigure people's sense of home, place, the past and the future. Via this subterranean railway, the world of modernity would be joined to that of the Kaliai so as to remediate people's relationships with each other through their new shared relationship to outside worlds. Just as dreams were traditionally used to mediate people's relationships with each other through the dead, so technology was used in a similar way to remediate relationships through new common dealings with that which was removed from them - cargo, Brisbane, America, the white man's lifestyle, the past and the future. The camera, binoculars, the wireless, and telephone were used to establish new relationships between followers by establishing shared

relationships to an alterity that was conceived as a lost origin, a problematised past and a future possibility.

CONCLUSION

In his analysis of capitalism and technology, Marx discusses how people are created through their products. It is this constitutive remaking force of objects that is experimented with in cargo cults where the identity of groups and their structures of leadership come from controlling the technology that leads to and from the dead. Here western technology is not part of the progressive eroding away of the mediating constitutive force of death in sociality but rather technology reinvents the mediating and constituting role of the dead, adding its forms of mediation to that of the dead. Here western objects start to take on a life of their own and not only in the sense that these objects acquire new biographies, which consist of the history of their meaning different things in different contexts (Appadurai 1986, Thomas 1991). Rather western objects take on a life of their own in the sense that the alternative media of representation offered by technology become assimilated to the alternative domain of the dead. Technology allows groups and individuals to realise themselves differently by remediating their relationships back to themselves via a reconstituted modernised death space. The conditions for the objectification of subjects are changed as death changes its medium of existence. Here Marx's discussion of the social relations embodied in objects must also include social relations with the dead for these are also re-constituted as people enter new imaginary relationships with the dead as part of the process of entering into new imaginary relations with objects and themselves. The space of death which inhabits technology brings the world of western culture back to cult followers in particular ways which redefine and reposition subjects by changing the space of their thoughts, and how those thoughts are positioned in terms of those unseen worlds that underpin them.

A great deal of philosophical work has been done by Bachelard and Serres on how the materiality of certain objects shapes our thoughts by giving form, direction and movement to them. Likewise, Lévi-Strauss (1973) also talks about how certain objects are good to think with. It is through objects that we develop as subjects. Objects do not just impinge upon and constrain us, but they also compromise us in more radical ways - for they create us as much as we create them. In her phenomenological analysis of Aboriginal culture, Nancy Munn (1971) explored this process as the objectification of subjects and the subjectification of objects; here subjects are internalised into objects and objects are internalised into subjects. In the compromised world of modernity, new objects emerge to carry thought and subjects away in different directions, allowing individuals and communities to become something other than themselves.

A concern with movement, change, metamorphosis and transformation is not just specific to modernity and processes of colonial contact, but was also an aspect of traditional Melanesian culture. Indeed, for all cultures, it is the unstable ambiguous world of the outside and the unseen that makes meaning, identity and history possible; it defines and individuates subjects and communities through conferring upon them distinctive biographies and trajectories of meaning. Colonialism and modernity bring new social divisions, forms of outside-ness and hiddenness that provide new vehicles of the imagination for carrying thought, subjects and communities beyond the confines of a present that is experienced as oppressive. Traditional culture was never static though nowadays it may be denounced and unfairly characterised as such by those embracing the white man's projects and visions of change. Indeed many Kaliai cult followers express a nostalgic desire for their grandparents' magical powers of change and travel. Many equate their current racial depowerment with having lost access to the realm of the unseen that their grandparents often saw and visited. Currently, the bush Kaliai are experimenting with modernity's new material possibilities for representing, seeing and accessing that which is distant. The desire for movement, change and becoming is the

problem of how to bring the outside into the inside and the inside into the outside. This topographical problem is the domain of a spatial politics that strives to upset the boundaries and horizon of race relations by redisclosing them anew.

Cargo cults are attempts to redraw race relations' horizon of possibilities and this is partly a narrative re-rendering of the world which is why all Kaliai cargo cults called themselves a *stori* (story, Lattas 1998). Politics took the form of subversive stories, endless creative experiments in narrative, and this is because the time of a narrative requires space - the crossing of cleavages, distances, removals and exclusions. It is the crossing of different kinds of spaces that creates narrative time, whose alternativeness to the time of the present allows narrative time to become a means of realising the time of another world. The movement of a narrative, in its crossing and recrossing of different spaces, reworks the distances between categories in a way that breaches and overcomes the racial partitioning of the existing world. Technology offers these same kinds of story effects by offering its own distinctive crossings of space and time where to offer a remade future is modeled on the distance, distinctiveness and possession to the past.

NOTES

- 1 In the West, technology is used in a similar way in science fiction (Guthke 1990; Jung 1987; Williams 1990)
- 2 Thus, many New Tribes Mission followers who gave up their customary *tumbuan* masks also believed that their new liberating American missionaries were tricking them. The national government of Papua New Guinea with the support of the Australians was said to have barred the new missionaries from revealing the truth that the Kaliai dead lived in America and that some whites were deceased relatives.

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