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# Hybridity, Vacuity, and Blockage: Visions of Chaos from Anthropological Theory, Island Melanesia, and Central Africa

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This is the true eternal return, the eternal repetition of the fundamental rhythm of the cosmos—its periodical destruction and re-creation.

———Eliade 1959:108

. . . there are contradictory tendencies always at work—on the one hand towards homogenization and on the other towards new distinctions.

———Lévi-Strauss 1978:20

We all need histories, and their violent making and remaking is one consequence of the kind of postcolonial space we inhabit.

———Moore 1997:143

Marshall Sahlins (1996) argues that anthropology has been the bearer of a “bourgeoisified” Judeo-Christian cosmology according to which an original state of chaos, akin to the Hobbesian state of nature, gives way to the order of society or the state. The central conundrum that this anthropology has sought to explain is how fallen and needy individuals come together in cooperative organization. Sahlins furthermore contends that, by universalizing this problematic as the key to interpreting human societies and social action, anthropology has subverted its attempts at cross-cultural understanding. My aim in this paper is to draw attention to a growing commitment within anthropology to a dif-

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ferent cosmological paradigm with an inverse structure. Today, the elevation of ethnic and cultural hybridity as both an approximate return to primordial human unity and an emancipatory moral high ground renders socio-cultural difference at once the presumed *telos* of many social practices and a scandal to be overcome. Whereas the older anthropological cosmology uncovered by Sahlins posited progress from atomistic privation to social solidarity, this new cosmology posits the politically motivated splintering of essential human unity by the construction of ethnicity and culture. Although I iterate the caution that this emergent paradigm too has the potential to reproduce itself as ethnography, I emphasize as more important its promising and troubling potential to revalorize anthropological thinking on cosmology. Specifically, ownership of the meta-cosmology encoded in hybridity theory ought to prompt anthropologists to question our recently acquired aversion to the idea that cosmologies inform human action. At the same time, however, we need to scrutinize our fascination with hybridity for signs of an unintentionally Nietzschean glorification of dissolution or aestheticization of periodic destruction as the necessary foundation for political and moral renovation.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the older anthropological cosmology analyzed by Sahlins, the current one to which I refer has been developed by academics from diverse and mixed intellectual and cultural backgrounds, some of whom point out that all anthropologists embody what I take to be the key metaphor of this cosmology: hybridity (Moore 1997:131–34).<sup>2</sup> Many of the themes and arguments in which I discern this latent cosmology are by now familiar. They are legible in the discourses on modernity and globalization, postmodernity, colonialism, postcoloniality, the social construction of space, and the critique of the culture concept. Drawing on the work of some of the most widely cited authors on these subjects, I argue that these discourses promote the metaphor of hybridity as representative of a universal default condition of chaos, understood in the limited sense of a re-integrative confusion of categories. Over against this particular model of chaos, diverse forms of socio-cultural practice are found to be incomplete and impermanent efforts toward differentiation, classification, and hierarchization.<sup>3</sup>

The narratives and values embedded in these discourses furthermore parallel those found in two structurally analogous but morally inverse mythic mod-

<sup>1</sup> Although contributors to the cosmology I am describing regularly indict Romanticism as the source of the morally suspect culture concept, the cosmology they implicitly construct entails new versions, not only of the Romantic (or at least Rousseauian) theme of a naturally free and happy humanity constrained and corrupted by civilization, but also of the theme of an antinomian, even violent, impulse toward dissolution into elemental forces (on these themes see Berlin 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, unlike Sahlins, I do not attempt to identify a particular religious or philosophical tradition behind the new cosmology. To do so would, in fact, be an essentializing endeavor. Moreover, as indicated in notes 4 and 5, below, variations on the basic cosmological paradigm in question are too widely attested for this trend in theory to be attributable to one tradition more than another.

<sup>3</sup> I am identifying a general trend and do not intend to imply that every contribution to these discourses displays this tendency.

els of cosmogony. Critics of regimes of difference often follow a logic comparable to that of emanationist cosmogonies: they value chaos, figured as an original undivided whole, positively, but value order, seen as dependent on fragmentation, negatively.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, these critiques tend to privilege processes of hybridization that erode socio-cultural differences and approximate a return to underlying human unity. But they also regularly present these same re-blending processes as conducive to new forms of segmentation. At the same time, analysts that read regimes of difference as attempts to classify, rationalize, and control describe a logic comparable to that of dismemberment cosmogonies: the social agents analyzed are found to value the categories they construct positively as the means to order, but value the lack or breakdown of such rationalizations negatively as chaotic confusion to be kept at bay by constant category maintenance.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, such analyses often represent the practices under study as schemes of repartition and recalibration necessitated by the intolerable inroads of hybridization. Clearly, these are two sides of the same coin. The relative moral values assigned to chaos and order may invert according to the point of view of the analyst or the outlook imputed to the agents analyzed, but the structure is constant: there is an ongoing oscillation between differentiation and integration.

After excavating this cyclical paradigm from recent anthropological theorizing, I compare two ethnographic examples in order to demonstrate why it is important to bring this paradigm to the surface and identify it as a cosmological one. The first example stems from my own field research on conflicting matrilineal identities and land claims among the Arosi of Makira, Solomon Islands. The second, dependent on the work of Arjun Appadurai and Christopher Taylor, pertains to the late twentieth-century ethnic violence in Burundi and Rwanda. Through these examples, I explore the relationship between cosmology at the meta-level of theory and cosmologies “in flux” (Appadurai 1998:231) in ethnographic situations.

Appadurai (1996:180) suggests that to characterize particular practices as cosmological is to “create the dubious impression of mechanical reproduction.” Despite such hostility to cosmology, present-day social scientific discourses are not innocent of similar deterministic tendencies, originating at the level of theory as meta-cosmology.<sup>6</sup> Bearing the latent claim that human beings every-

<sup>4</sup> Myths of emanation depict the universe as coming into being through processes of spontaneous differentiation within an original unity that contains all things *in potentia*. Examples of this model are widespread and include the Hawaiian *Kumulipo* (Valeri 1985:215), some Hindu myths of ultimate origins (Smith 1989:54–69), and a variety of pre-Socratic, neo-Platonic, and Gnostic philosophies.

<sup>5</sup> Myths of cosmogonic dismemberment depict the universe as coming into being through the violent death and division of a primordial sacrifice, the body of which provides the materials from which the cosmos is constructed. Examples include the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* and the Vedic myth of Puruṣa (Lincoln 1986; Valeri 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Although some anthropologists continue to find cosmology a useful concept (e.g., Feuchtwang

where make order out of chaos by first creating and then reaffirming differences, contemporary anthropological theory is no less—and no more—mechanistic a template through which to view human agency than any other cosmological system. Although some would see this as a delegitimizing flaw in current theory, I argue instead that, as structures that inform human agency, the universal impetus to order identified in anthropological meta-cosmology and the visions of chaos and order production embedded in particular cosmologies should be analyzed together in the hermeneutics of practice. As my ethnographic examples show, however, such a methodology reveals the need to destabilize hybridity, or any preconceived image, as the regnant model of what constitutes chaos. Whereas the meta-cosmology of theory posits that all people seek to impose ordering distinctions on chaos—understood exclusively as insufficient differentiation—attention to the cosmologies in flux in lived situations indicates that not all people conceptualize chaos in terms of the absence or admixture of categories. This means broadening our received notions of what chaos might mean to accommodate any possible vision of what preceded or is antithetical to proper order. Once this general and open-ended definition of chaos is granted, comparative study shows that visions of chaos other than confusion entail methods of order production other than the marking of difference. Thus, for Arosi, chaos—the condition inimical to order—takes the form of socially and morally evacuated space that provokes conflicting reordering acts of matrilineal emplacement. In Burundi and Rwanda, however, it appears that a condition opposite to order can take the form of “blocked beings” that must be purged from the body politic. What is required analytically, then, is a nexus between the universal impulse to order and the particular understandings of chaos that can inform the practical manifestations of that impulse. I conclude, therefore, with a proposal for developing a pluralized notion of chaos as a potentially productive comparative category for anthropological theorizing and ethnographic analysis.

#### CHAOS AS HYBRIDITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF DIFFERENCE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL COSMOLOGY

A defining feature of the cosmology implicit in much of current anthropological theory is a tendency to highlight and even celebrate hybridity in ways that

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2004; Gow 2001; Herzfeld 1992; Kapferer 1997), ethnographic analyses of praxis that appeal to cosmology increasingly risk critique as cultural determinism. This stigmatization of cosmology is traceable, in part, to criticisms of Sahlins' interpretations of colonial history in Hawaii, but is also bound up with the larger critique of the culture concept (e.g., Kuper 1999). Regarded as culture or structure by another name, cosmology can be cast as an intellectualist, objectivist, mechanistic construct that over-systematizes local knowledge and robs people of agency. Thus, Taylor, writing a chapter entitled “The Cosmology of Terror” in which he argues that “something cultural happened” in Rwanda, devotes four pages to preemptive deflection of such criticisms (1999:99–102; cf. Kapferer 1997:19), and the Comaroffs (1991:152) distance themselves from the term with inverted commas.

render this condition comparable to a return to the generative state of chaos, envisioned as the plenitude of primordial unity (cf. Friedman 2002:131). This feature is most apparent in discussions of how multiple processes and phenomena, such as greater and accelerated mobility, transnational communities and commerce, and the technologies of mass communication, combine to erode spatial, political, and social boundaries while expanding imagined possibilities for identity production and relationships. The globalizing era is one in which the formerly naturalized limits of nations, cultures, and ethnicities have become blurred under forms and spaces of hybridity, flux, liminality, and uncertainty. This is to say that we live increasingly in a state of chaos, understood as the recombination of the constituent elements of order within a new creative vortex (cf. Brightman 1995:517, 540; Friedman 1999:2–3).<sup>7</sup>

Concretizing this hybridity, anthropologists are privileging interstitial zones of migration, displacement, and deterritorialization—such as roads, borderlands, and contested spaces—not only as revelatory sites for ethnographic inquiry, but as emblematic of the liminality of the globalizing, postmodern, or postcolonial condition (Ballinger 2004:31; Gupta and Ferguson 1997:48; cf. Aggarwal 2001; Clifford 1997; Hernández 2001; Masquelier 2002; Thomas 2002). As the matrix of new formations, the chaotic hybridity that these tropes spatialize is deeply ambivalent, however. For many thinkers (Abu-Lughod 1991; Bhabha 1989; Gupta and Ferguson 1997:47–50; Young 1995:22–25), the figurative borderland where dichotomies between Self and Other disintegrate provides the standpoint for prophetic critique of old orders and the subversion of inequalities; whereas, for Appadurai (1998), uncertain boundaries between ethnic identities become the likely sites of “vivisectionist violence” as a means of identity and order reconfiguration.

Although some theorists suggest that the present contingency, permeability, and overlap of spaces and subjectivities constitutes something new, many tend also to normalize chaotic confusion as a more or less permanent feature of human history. The present hybridity is thus “business as usual, only more so” (Moore 1997:141): an acute intensification of the hybridity that has always resulted from “the historical processes of a socially and spatially interconnected world” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:45). Once recognized as constant, these processes reveal the “assumed isomorphism of space, place, and culture” to have been a “fiction” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:34). Cultures, furthermore,

<sup>7</sup> I am not claiming that anthropologists have explicitly defined hybridity as chaos; nevertheless, I find support for my analysis that current anthropological theory entails a cyclical cosmology according to which the postcolonial or globalizing era constitutes the return of a chaos-like condition, often described as hybridity, in statements such as the following: “the chaos of the garage sale . . . provides a precise image for the postcolonial situation where cultural artifacts flow between unlikely places, and nothing is sacred, permanent, or sealed off” (Rosaldo 1989:44); “Despite decolonization, certain destinies and identities seem fixed, while others seem chaotic, disorderly, unfixed” (Dirks 1992:23); “our current theories of cultural chaos are insufficiently developed” (Appadurai 1996:47).

have never been discrete, homogenous, wholes; rather, the processes of socio-spatial differentiation and the material and symbolic representations they produce are inherently aspirational, complex, and dynamic (see Brightman 1995).

It is easily overlooked, however, that to generalize relative degrees of chaotic hybridity to all times and contexts is to posit a processual model of cultural formation, erosion, and reformation. Even as incipient cultural configurations emerge at multiple and shifting sites, they are ruptured by flows of interconnection that, in turn, stimulate transformative redefinitions. This processual model, I submit, entails a cosmological paradigm according to which an original state of chaos, understood as unbroken human unity, gives rise to projects of order production, understood as projects of socio-cultural differentiation. The central conundrum that an anthropology informed by this cosmology seeks to explain is how the ontologically unitary category *Homo sapiens* segments itself into “a difference-producing set of relations” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:46).

Formulated as a reaction against a supposed anthropological “premise of discontinuity” that views ethnographic others as “preexisting ontological entit[ies]” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:33, 44), this cosmology reaffirms universal humanity as the necessary moral and intellectual starting point for anthropological inquiry.<sup>8</sup> Less obvious, however, are the ways in which the processual model described above can position this clearly non-negotiable premise within unacknowledged value-laden mythic scenarios. With respect to the critique of the culture concept, Sahllins (2000:162) identifies what he terms a “pseudo-history of the original-sin variety” according to which “culture” was, in Dirks’ words, “invented” as a tool of Western colonial discrimination and domination (1992:3). Similarly, I suggest, the processual model evident in anthropological cosmology today evokes a vision of the development of socio-cultural variation as a kind of fall from unity and equality of the Tower of Babel or emanationist variety. The necessary subtext to the pseudohistory of the colonial invention of “culture” seems, in fact, to be an implicit myth of the primordial invention of difference in an analogous primeval power struggle. This subtext surfaces when Dirks concedes that colonialism itself “can be seen as a cultural formation” emerging from and reinforcing the “processes that spawned nations in the first place” (1992:3). Such a back-step from colonial to earlier European history is the first in an infinite regress to a primordial paradox: relations of power and difference generate and presuppose one another. They must be imagined as having come into being simultaneously when mythic ancestors first forged and wielded prototypes of the “cultural technologies” of colonialism (Dirks 1992:3) to sacrifice human unity. But note how these mythic “culture heroes” have become culture culprits, high priests of power who pre-

<sup>8</sup> For the disputable claim that anthropology has operated with a model of human races and cultures as essentially distinct species, see, for example, Abu-Lughod 1991; Kuper 1999; Thomas 1994: ch. 3; Young 1995: ch. 2.



side over the dismemberment and hierarchical distribution of humanity. The moral implications of this latent just-so-story are uncompromising: only the architects of order, who almost always have blood on their hands, can ever find it good.

This is a truly pessimistic view, not only of culture, but of difference at all. Difference at almost every level is an illusion to be denaturalized as the superficial yet scarring artifact of power relations. Difference is an offense to be denied as ultimately unreal; but, as in emanationist views of the phenomenal world, there is hope that the sufferings and injustices it brings may be mitigated through enlightened awareness of its unreality. It is this hope that animates at least some of the turn to hybridity in anthropological theory. More than a metaphor for the globalizing, postmodern, or postcolonial condition, hybridity is embraced as the historical approximation of, and means of moral reconnection with, an ideal of human unity that lifts us “beyond ‘culture’” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:48) and un.masks all differences as constructed, negotiable, and transient (but see Friedman 2003:25).

Key theorists of hybridity have, nevertheless, resisted the potential world-rejecting or Gnostic implications of their negativity and sought a realist orientation to the inequalities and structures of domination in which difference is implicated. Avoiding the temptation to “sublate” hybridity “into some utopian sense of liberation or return” (Bhabha 1989:67, in Gupta and Ferguson 1997:48; cf. Bhabha 1994:38–39), and cautioning that postcolonial hybridity is not a trope that “resolves or provides solutions” to the rhythms of coalescence and re-division (Moore 1997:142), these theorists challenge anthropology to engage with a world in which difference will always be with us. They take the role of subversive trickster who speaks from the margins to question all projects that rely on and reify difference, especially the master dichotomy between Self and Other. Given the impossibility of permanent liberation from regimes of difference, hybridity reveals and promotes the mutability of all categories.

The flip-side to this normalization and ethical privileging of hybridity is the acknowledgment that the fluidity of hybridity, however morally appealing, is not practically sustainable. To the extent that hybridization is also homogenization, it may induce reactionary re-differentiation in the forms of “regionalization, nationalism, retribalism, and reinforced or newly constructed ethnicity” (Lewellen 2002:77). With the recognition of this dynamic, the formulation of a universal human condition emerges: we cannot not differentiate. We cannot eradicate our proclivity to make order out of chaos by constructing categories and prescribing relations among them. Surprisingly, in fact, despite its development within the critical response to structuralism, the new anthropological cosmology promotes a view of human ontology that is consonant with a central assertion of Lévi-Strauss. We make meaning by making order and order by cognizing and associating categories, and it is because of this propensity to make order via opposition that, however many socio-cultural worlds col-



lapse, new ones—aspirational, incomplete, multiplex, and competing—will be constructed from selected old and new elements.

In sum, the cyclical cosmology written into current theory assumes that human agency is driven by a universal inclination to achieve order by precipitating categories out of a resurgent chaotic confusion for which hybridity has become a typifying metaphor. The interpretation of actual histories and practices in light of this meta-cosmology involves, therefore, a degree of cosmological determinism: “history everywhere is actively made in a dialectic of order and disorder, consensus and contest” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:18). But this does not mean that history is ever, as Eliade (1954) claimed, abolished. Rather, it suggests that we are constantly negotiating a cosmological transition from chaos to order, and that—precisely because history interrupts and impedes our progress—we continually modify the terms of this negotiation. As the following ethnographic examples demonstrate, for anthropology, this means that theoretical acceptance of a universal impetus to order ought to redirect attention to how this impetus is manifested under the particular forms of lived cosmologies. Such a renewed approach to the anthropology of cosmology argues that persons are not prisoners of cosmological mandates; rather, cosmologies make images and models available to persons engaged in the common human project of making order out of chaos. Furthermore, such redirected attention to the actual ways in which people make order out of chaos soon discovers that this common human project is carried out with reference to multiple understandings of what constitutes a condition contrary to order and what ordering activities most effectively banish those particular visions of chaos.

#### CHAOS AS VACUITY AND MATRILINEAL PLACE-MAKING IN AROSI

A recent colonial and postcolonial history of broadening and proliferating interconnections has intensified the normal chaotic hybridity of the Melanesian context known as Arosi on the island of Makira.<sup>9</sup> The island first entered European awareness in 1568 with the arrival of the Spanish explorer Álvaro de Mendaña, who named it San Cristoval. Following whalers and traders, Anglican missionaries arrived in the mid nineteenth century, regularly taking island youths back to their school in New Zealand. Labor recruitment to Queensland and Fiji between 1870 and 1911 also placed Arosi people in new Pacific settings from which they brought back a variety of foreign goods and new “context-generative” (Appadurai 1996:182–88) ideas about their relationship to other parts of the world. In 1893 Britain declared the Solomon Islands a Protectorate, and colonial administrators, together with Christian missionaries, introduced sweeping changes that included pacification, socio-spatial reorganization, and the appointment of village headmen in lieu of ritually anointed

<sup>9</sup> The archaeological record of Pacific diasporas (see Spriggs 1997), as well as oral accounts of inter-island exchange and marriage that I collected, reinforce a methodological presupposition that precolonial Arosi took shape through extensive processes of migration and interconnection.

chiefs. These changes helped to localize “the Arosi” as a category of people regulated in a place called Arosi (Fox 1924:3–5). Today the electoral districts of Arosi I and II at the northwest end of Makira are nested within the larger provincial and central political order of a nation-state independent since 1978 and known simply as Solomon Islands. Virtually every aspect of Arosi life has been transformed: Arosi no longer speak, worship, dress, construct houses, cultivate gardens, cook food, or organize communal work in the ways they used to do.

In the midst of this compounded hybridity, many Arosi are negotiating what Appadurai (1996:188) identifies as “the special problems that beset the production of locality in a world that has become deterritorialized, diasporic, and transnational.” Despite his concern that to cast the production of locality in terms of cosmology is to mask its “active, intentional, and productive character” (1996:180), Appadurai resorts to the language of chaos and order. He points out that “neighborhoods”—lived social contexts—come into being, not only vis-à-vis one another, but as projects of asserting “power over places and settings that are viewed as potentially chaotic or rebellious” (1996:184). The production of locality is, in fact, one of the most tangible registers in which people strive to bring order out of chaos. Read in this way as cosmogonic, techniques of locality production may be seen as valuable indicators of what constitutes chaos in a given context. Although encompassed within the chaos of postcolonial hybridity, the techniques of locality production prevalent in Arosi today indicate that the vision of chaos to which these techniques most directly respond is not hybridity but semantically empty land. Depopulation and deterritorialization have made coastal land in Arosi a virtual primordial landscape devoid of putatively autochthonous matrilineal landholders. Experiencing this vacuity as both an obstacle and an incentive to the reproduction of their locality, representatives of various Arosi matrilineages are emplacing themselves along the coast in irreconcilable ways.

Henrietta Moore (1999:16) has observed that, “however globalized and fragmented the contemporary world is or is said to be, individuals and collectivities still . . . remain committed to various projects and relationships.” Most people, she reminds us, “remain in some relation to integratory concepts and practices that help to make life meaningful.” With respect to Arosi, virtually all adults clearly articulate what they hold to be the principles of Arosi socio-spatial order, even though they aver that this “custom” (Solomon Islands Pijin: *kastom*) is no longer practicable. Arosi teach their children that areas of land on Makira are held by autochthonous matrilineages, known in Arosi as the *auhenua*.<sup>10</sup> Theoretically, only one matrilineage can be *auhenua* in any particular

<sup>10</sup> Although Arosi are familiar with the idea of private property, they have not adopted it. Rare instances in which people have attempted to sell small parcels of matrilineal land or buy the few small tracts of land previously taken by European planters have resulted in unresolved ambiguities of ownership owing to the persistent privileging of matrilineal land tenure.

area. The matrilineages are exogamous, and the Arosi model of an ideal social polity is a multi-lineal community gathered around representatives of an *auhenua* matrilineage in its ancestral territory. This socio-spatial ideal is, furthermore, associated with an ethical ideal incumbent on the *auhenua* in their land. As hosts to in-marrying women, their children, and other strangers, members of the *auhenua* matrilineage at the center of a polity should be gracious and generous. This means promoting inter-lineage “entanglement” (*haikawikawi*) by permitting non-lineage residents to use land for house construction and subsistence gardening, granting access to fruit and nut trees, bestowing exclusively held lineage personal names on non-lineage children, and contributing to feasts or other forms of exchange on behalf of such non-lineage persons. The *auhenua* should foster what one man summed up as “love, peace, and unity.”

To sustain their *auhenua*-based polities, Arosi have always had to contend with the “conditions of anxiety, entropy, social wear and flux, ecological uncertainty and cosmic volatility” that are everywhere inimical to the reproduction of locality (Appadurai 1996:181, 185; cf. Scott 2000:65–66). For example, because women usually go to reside and raise children where their husbands are living, matrilineages must work to bring the children back to their ancestral land to perpetuate their unique lineage-cum-land identities as social magnets. Drawing a contrast between “olden times” (*’oha bwani*) and the present, Arosi say that chiefs, specially anointed to represent the *auhenua*, formerly served to recruit the *auhenua* back to their land and mediate the integration of others within their orbit. But beyond the loss of these chiefs, which Arosi speculate has undermined their ability to live together in clearly grounded polities, three additional concomitants of colonialism—depopulation, dislocation, and the acceptance of Christianity—have compounded the normal chaos of hybridity, and with it, the usual challenges to locality reproduction.

From the mid-nineteenth century, introduced diseases decimated many Arosi villages (Scott 2001:85–91), and assertions that the *auhenua* matrilineage of a given place is extinct are now common. Indeed, many Arosi told me that the *auhenua* matrilineages of the coastal land had all been wiped out in these epidemics. Partly in response to this crisis of disease and depopulation, missionaries and Protectorate officials encouraged the resettlement of Arosi living in the bush to the coast in the early twentieth century. Narratives of this period of relocation inform a current Arosi discourse through which many people on the coast describe themselves—but more frequently their neighbors—as *sae boboi*, “people who have come from elsewhere.” Arosi Anglican Christianity has furthermore rendered attitudes toward the physical markers of matrilineal connection to land highly ambivalent. Although Arosi no longer sacrifice at the ossuaries and ancestral shrines known as *hera*, or at the spirit-shark shrines known as *birubiru*, these sacred sites, collectively designated *dora maea*, remain as indices of unique *auhenua* identities in the land and as the loci of enduring ancestral powers. Most Arosi assume that the spirits of the dead, called

*adaro*, are still present and potentially dangerous at several types of *dora maea*, regardless of whether Christian exorcisms have been performed at them. Several of my consultants vividly likened the spirits resident at *hera* and other such sites to a radar system: *adaro* observe everyone in the vicinity and protect those whom they recognize as their descendents but punish unknown interlopers.<sup>11</sup> Owing to differing ideas regarding the relationship between the Christian God and the agency of *adaro*, however, the degree and manner in which *adaro* continue to influence events is subject to differing Arosi interpretations. There are even a few people who condemn the reckoning of relationship to land through *dora maea* as “arguing from the time of darkness,” the time before Christianity (cf. White 1991).

These interdependent influences have fostered a general uncertainty among Arosi regarding the history and nature of the coastal land where nearly everyone is now concentrated. Many acknowledge that they know neither which matrilineages established local shrines nor the names of the dead placed in the *hera* that still punctuate the coast. After disturbing one such ossuary, one young man told me: “I had a dream after visiting that *hera*. I didn’t sleep well. I dreamt that someone was coming toward me with a strong light like a flashlight. Then I woke up.” This dream captures the ambivalence many Arosi feel about their relationship to the places where they live. They endow the land with keen eyes that scrutinize them, as if under an intense beam of light, but they may not know who sees them and whether they have been seen as a relative or a stranger.

Moreover, villages, which comprise up to 550 people, cannot be assumed to subsist within the territories of recognizable *auhenua* matrilineages. Instead, when Arosi males explain their relationship to the places where they and their families live, garden, or collect naturally occurring foods, they regularly say that they “eat through the father” (*ngau suri ama*), meaning that they enjoy sustenance from a piece of land because that is where their fathers and grandfathers previously lived and worked. In contrast, to “eat through the mother” is to share prerogatives of land use where one’s matrilineage is *auhenua*. Many Arosi explain the prevalence of eating through the father today with reference to the extinction of the matrilineages that once were *auhenua* in the villages. When one elderly man showed me where he gardened in the land above his village, I inquired whether he had asked permission to garden there. “No,” he replied, “whom would I ask? The *auhenua* lineage is dead. In this village we are all people who have come.” On the surface of things, then, there is a consensus that no one in the coastal villages could justifiably claim to be *auhenua*; the land ostensibly lies empty of original landholding lineages.

<sup>11</sup> According to Arosi, *adaro* are not partial to matrilineal descendents only. Those who might feel comfortable visiting an ancestral site would include the children of lineage males as well as members of the matrilineage. However, after a number of generations, often said to be five, descendents of lineage males are no longer thought to be related to the matrilineage. Such people are likely to avoid going to the *dora maea* in question.

But just when the possibility of reproducing Arosi locality in terms of *auhenua*-centered polities seems most remote, the ordinary ordering impetus to do so has been enhanced by “contingencies of history, environment, and imagination” (Appadurai 1996:185) that have positioned Arosi within a wider inter-contextuality. Specifically, Arosi anxiety that their current disposition on the land is incoherent and superficial is exacerbated by fears that insecure coastal land may be taken by outsiders or that an imagined diaspora of genuine coastal *auhenua* may return to displace them. In 1896 the British Solomon Islands Protectorate introduced the category of “waste land,” defined as land “vacant by reason of the extinction of the original native owners and their descendants” (Allan 1957:37). Such land was presumed available for government requisition and sale. Although this waste land policy terminated in 1912 (Bennett 2000:41–42), some Arosi speculate that, in pursuit of development initiatives, the present government may appropriate land deemed unencumbered by customary owners. Thus, one man, formulating his understanding of the Protectorate government’s settlement of Tikopians east of Arosi in the 1960s, observed: “That’s what happened at Wairaraha. The lineage of the land was finished and the land was neglected, so the government took it and it became Tikopian land.” He recognized a possibility that this could happen in his village as well, because, as he said, repeating the regular refrain, “we are all people who have come from elsewhere.”<sup>12</sup>

Some Arosi additionally experience their coastal context as part of a global context of dispersed Arosi matrilineages, representatives of which may return to the island to assume their rightful places in the land. Several Arosi confided to me their belief that women from their coastal villages had been taken away to America and elsewhere, either by the explorer Mendaña or during the forced labor recruitment of the nineteenth century. These women, they said, had married and perpetuated the old coastal matrilineages abroad. The prospect of the return of their descendants is, for some people, cause for concern. As one older consultant put it: “If the lineage of the woman of our village who married at America returns, what will we people of the village now say, we who have all come [here]? In our custom there is nothing we could say.”

Given these added pressures to reproduce neighborhoods in terms of territories firmly occupied by *auhenua* matrilineages, it is not surprising that, despite the apparent consensus that there are no extant coastal *auhenua*, many Arosi matrilineages are working to emplace themselves as the *auhenua* of their littoral villages with contradictory results. They are doing so unobtrusively, how-

<sup>12</sup> Hviding (1993) presents compelling reasons for thinking that representations of landholding unilineal groups in Marovo Lagoon (Western Province, Solomon Islands) are recent “indigenous essentialisms” formulated primarily for the consumption of outsiders. As I elucidate below, however, the primacy Arosi grant to matrilineal identity and connection to place is not only a central value among Arosi themselves but is also integral to a historically engaged but culturally persistent Arosi model of cosmogony as a constant process.

ever, inhibited from openly articulating their identity and land claims by the ethical dimension of what it means to be *auhenua*. The expectation that the genuine *auhenua* of a place should be open-handed also compels them to humility toward the dependent guests on their land and discourages unvarnished assertions of *auhenua* identity and its prerogatives as incompatible with a true *auhenua* nature. The current processes of coastal *auhenua* emplacement thus came to my attention as lineage representatives secretly divulged to me genealogical narratives according to which their matrilineages alone were the original autochthonous people where they resided.<sup>13</sup> I quickly realized, moreover, that different matrilineages were telling me different narratives involving many of the same sacred sites and geographical spaces, making the present-day Arosi coastline an example of what Foucault (1986:25) termed a “heterotopia,” a context “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible.” Constituted by diverse matrilineal points of view on the same terrain, this heterotopia is the inadvertent result of Arosi attempts to order the chaos of a socially depleted landscape through renewed relationships of mutual generation among matrilineages, places, and the ancestral subjectivities said to inhabit them (Scott 2001).

For the most part, the dynamic of becoming *auhenua* along the coast today impinges only on each matrilineage’s closely guarded narrative construction of the landscape without altering the land or the disposition of objects within it. Nevertheless, Arosi reported to me a few anomalous cases of conflict involving the surreptitious construction of new “ancestral” sites and the physical manipulation of existing shrines (cf. Guidieri 1980:63–64). These new or modified structures are the work of those seeking to convince others that the sites are evidence of their long-term ancestral presence in the land. The portable “shark stones” used in the construction of the shrines known as *birubiru* appear to be especially susceptible to relocation, as all the incidents about which I learned involved these carved rock forms. In fact, without ever pursuing the matter in court, people complained to me that they could have pointed to evidence of their lineage’s ancient presence in a particular area if interloping pretenders had not absconded with elements of their ancestral shrines. Long-term lack of resolution is typical of such accusations, which tend to remain at the level of grumbled grievances in the absence of proof.<sup>14</sup>

More typical than the physical manipulation and creation of new shrines is

<sup>13</sup> One function of the old anointed chiefs, who frequently were not members of the matrilineages they represented, may have been to articulate these claims on behalf of the requisitely modest *auhenua*. It occurs to me that some people may have been eager to repose their self-understandings with me in the hope that I would likewise express and validate their claims without their having to do so.

<sup>14</sup> The ethic of the *auhenua* discussed above also contributes to a general reluctance to make the open identity and land claims that a court hearing would demand. That said, although I was not aware of any contemporaneous court hearings regarding land during my residence in Arosi, I learned of a few exceptional cases from the past.

the intangible process of incorporating existing shrines into lineage narratives. One of the clearest examples of this narrative reformation of ancestral sites occurs in an area of land that stretches along the Arosi coast for about seven kilometers and extends up into the bush for about eight kilometers. Although the extent of the land implicated varies among their accounts, three lineages are independently and inconspicuously emplacing themselves in this area in overlapping ways. Each narrative describes specific shrines that are also featured in the other two narratives, but contextualizes these contested shrines within different multifocal systems. At the same time, each narrative populates the contested shrines with different spirit-sharks and associates them with the deeds of different ancestral figures. All of the lineages concerned additionally assume the same lineage name, and each regards the others as upstart impostors. When I interviewed them, representatives of each lineage made a point of divulging and contradicting aspects of the other lineages' narratives, of which they were often partially aware, in order to alert me that their rivals were "telling lies." Understandably, therefore, all were concerned not to broadcast their narratives outside their lineages, lest elements of their accounts be similarly used against them. Accusations presented to me by each lineage about the others included: that the others had come from distant places where they were known by other names; that the interlopers had stolen elements of their shrines and narratives; or, that "they were just telling stories" that were patently untrue.<sup>15</sup>

Along with shrine and narrative elements, lineage personal names are likewise amenable to assimilation by competing lineages. Each matrilineage recycles an exclusive set of ancestral names, many of which have acquired the power to mediate agency respecting certain areas of lineage land. The name of an ancestor who once lived at a locale becomes connected to that area, often because that ancestor is said to have established a shrine there or invested the place with tabus. A child to whom the name of such an ancestor is reassigned literally "eats food on account of the name" (*ngau suri marahu*); he or she is empowered to make decisions about the area of land and nut trees that the deceased namesake oversaw. By reusing their personal names, lineages ensure that living people continue to look after all of the different areas and local powers that constitute their territories. Often a child is given a name with a view to eventually bringing that child to live at the place associated with a namesake. There is, however, no prohibition against bestowing lineage names on non-matrilinéal descendants, and Arosi have regularly followed this practice as a means of activating a child's affinities with a related matrilineage. This use of names to build ties across matrilineages easily leads to dissension regarding the origin

<sup>15</sup> In other conflicts that I studied, competing lineages attempted to invalidate each other's narrative constructions of the land, not only at the piecemeal level of details regarding specific ancestral sites, but also at the level of the framing of whole lineage narratives. For strikingly similar forms of intrigue via genealogical narrative in a very different cultural and political context, see Shryock 1997.



and ownership of particular names, and people sometimes bemoan that their lineage has lost control of land due to naming: “Our old people named different [i.e., non-lineage] people with our lineage’s personal names, and [now these people] have taken our land.” But, a situation that members of one lineage characterize as name theft, another portrays as the rightful return of a name to their land.

Seeking to secure ties to coastal lands through naming, Arosi matrilineages are making concerted efforts to recoup their personal names. This means of lineage emplacement takes two forms: conservation and premature distribution of names. Fearing that others will appropriate their names, lineages increasingly “hold firmly” (*dau babau*) onto those names that are not currently in circulation and warn against disclosing them to others. This strategy creates secret stores of unused names and carries the disadvantage of allowing the links between names and places to attenuate. A second strategy avoids this problem but appears to be at odds with previous Arosi practice. The missionary ethnographer Charles E. Fox (1924:179) noted, and older Arosi likewise stated to me, that in the past names could only be re-used when no living person bore them. Now, however, lineages are attempting “to bring back” their personal names by bestowing them on their children even when non-lineage relatives with those names are still living. As a result, Arosi are occasionally puzzled why other people have given a child a name already in use, and such situations lead them to suppose that there is no logic governing the way others are naming their children. Rather than a sign of the breakdown of Arosi logic, however, this abrogation of naming convention is, I suggest—together with the physical and narrative manipulation of sacred sites—part of a cosmologically informed Arosi response to a socially and morally evacuated postcolonial landscape.

Ethnographers and historians have observed that the arrival of European explorers, missionaries, and structures of domination in colonial spaces can precipitate a perceived return to an imagined primordial condition or state of chaos (Bonnemaison 1994; Lattas 1998; Noyes 1992; Williams 1986:chs. 7–9). This insight may be brought into productive correlation with the anthropological meta-cosmology outlined above. Colonial and postcolonial contexts, according to this meta-cosmology, are particularly radical, concentrated, and far-reaching instances of the processes of movement, exchange, domination, and cooperation that continuously shape human relations and sustain the normal chaos of hybridity. As such, colonial and postcolonial situations (or conditions of globalization) highlight a potential practical nexus between the normal chaos of hybridity and the—often very different—models of chaos prevalent in particular neighborhoods. In this conjuncture of chaoses, differences between chaos as the confusion of categories and the situationally available models of chaos with which historical processes of hybridization may engage are necessarily relevant to analyses of any ensuing reordering activities.

The forms of renewed matrilineal place-making in Arosi today clearly illus-

trate this principle. A long-term effect of colonialism has been a perceived return of Arosi coastal land to a chaotic primordial state antithetical to order, figured in a variety of Arosi idioms as empty space. It is this perception of an underlying problematic spatial vacuity that, despite the physical presence of people on the land, is inspiring the activities that are quietly configuring multiple incompatible matrilineal territories along the Arosi coastline. Although accurately understood as redoubled efforts at order reproduction, these activities do not aim to redefine confused categories. Rather, they reference Arosi representations of an ongoing transition between two contrastive aspects of primordality: one pertaining to ultimate ancestral origins in separate previously uninhabited spaces, the other pertaining to the generation of truly human matrilineages through processes of place-making.

An Arosi vision of primordial spatial vacuity may be inferred from a variety of narratives that describe how the mythic progenitors of Arosi matrilineages arose autochthonously and independently around the island of Makira. Some matrilineages, for example, claim that their ancestors were animate rocks formed with the island; others say that they originated from the daughters of snakes; another narrates descent from a female wondrously born from a dead mother; another sees itself as the progeny of a supernatural female that emerged from a well; and two lineages trace themselves to different instances of congress between two species of quasi-human island beings. Arosi say that these earliest ancestors were not yet “true people” (*inoni mora*). True people, organized into true matrilineages, came into being only when the different types of ancestral beings entered into reproductive relations that prefigured matrilineage exogamy. Prior to their connections, these pre-human categories anticipated in their heterogeneity the essential diversity of Arosi matrilineages. But unlike the matrilineages to which they gave rise, these categories first came into being in static asocial purity at sites that, although discrete from one another, were social vacuums.

Just as these pre-matrilineal categories did not yet enjoy productive relations with one another, they were likewise not yet connected to the specific domains that would become their descendants’ lineage territories. Although understood to have been somewhere on Makira—such as a well in the bush or a village of rock people—at the moment of spontaneous ancestral emergence, each point of ultimate origin was not yet a true place. Spatial analogues to the pre-matrilineal categories, these primordial no-places—not yet situated in a history of ancestral words and deeds—were merely potential places. They became actual named places, incorporated within distinct lineage territories, only when the forebears of incipient matrilineages moved out from them, shaping extents of land around and beyond them through actions that brought both the matrilineages and their specific territories into being.

Distinct in style and content from tales of ultimate origins, genealogically ordered accounts of first advent in a particular area of land also present a vision

of primordial chaos as vacuity. Such accounts emphasize that, prior to the time of initial incursion, the land in question was empty and had no identity as a place. A commonly held principle of first occupancy, according to which “the land is the land of the lineage that arrived first,” presupposes a pre-social geography that has not been transformed by the place-making activities of any other agents. In the words of some Arosi, this pre-social state is the unsettled and unused “virgin forest” (*wabu*) that their lineage ancestors were the first to clear (cf. Fox 1924:301).<sup>16</sup>

The place-making aspect of Arosi primordially is, by contrast, a dynamic aspect consisting in practices that fuse matrilineages with unique territories and promote inter-lineage relations. Genealogical lineage narratives recount how the children in each generation of a nascent matrilineage spread out from the abodes of their parents, extending their presence over terrain that thereby became their lineage territory. As these ancestors moved into the land, they engaged in a repertoire of place-making activities: they founded new settlements, enshrined their dead, invested the land with tabus, innovated and recycled personal names attached to locales, and planted nut trees and gardens. They became one with their land, shaping it and being shaped in return into a true matrilineage with an exclusively emplaced past (cf. Coppet 1985). Because of this mutually constitutive relationship among a lineage, its land, and its dead, land that is unmodified and has received no dead is like a void or black hole that threatens to consume a lineage’s identity (cf. Guidieri 1980:62). Empty space must, therefore, be claimed from this pre-social condition and made into humanized places. To humanize a space in this way is to become *auhenua* there. At the same time, place-making primordially encompasses the earliest interactions among emergent matrilineages. As a necessary component of becoming *auhenua* in their territories, lineage forebears welcomed in-marrying women, granted the use of gardening land, nut trees, and even lineage-owned personal names to non-lineage relatives, and settled strangers in their midst. Arosi society is thus envisioned as having taken shape within place-making primordially as a series of spatially discrete multi-lineage aggregates, each bound together “under the ruling shadow” (*marungi*) of an *auhenua* lineage in its land.

In sum, a transition from the primordially of ultimate origins to place-making primordially is necessary for the construction of a socio-cosmic totality. This transition, in fact, inheres in multiple simultaneous cosmogonic processes that, by their nature, cannot be definitively accomplished but must be pursued continuously for their ordering benefits to remain in effect. These processes graph perpendicular axes of generative relationships that intersect at, bring into being, and come to depend on, matrilineage territories. The processes that anchor matrilineages in particular places constitute a vertical axis, while the

<sup>16</sup> For similar ideas from the neighboring island of Malaita and in other Austronesian-speaking contexts, see, for example, Burt 1994:24–25; Coppet 1985:80; J. Fox 1997; Keesing 1992: 23–25.

concurrent processes that forge productive and reproductive relations among them constitute a horizontal axis. Moreover, the structure of this dual-axis Arosi cosmogony yields practical consequences: the vertical grounding of matrilineages in their lands is indispensable to the formation of *auhenua* lineage identities, and *auhenua* lineage identities are the necessary preconditions for viable social relations among matrilineages. There is a problematic tension, however, between the two aspects of Arosi primordality. Whereas the logic of ultimate origins allows multiple matrilineages to claim autochthonous status by virtue of spontaneous appearance at separate potential places without coming into conflict, the logic of place-making introduces the possibility that more than one matrilineage will claim to have moved into and established a relationship with the same geographical space, situating a single shrine, nut tree, or name-governed locale in different matrilineal territories and narratives. The potential for mutually disqualifying constructions of space, it seems, accompanies this way of coming into being in the land as a form of cosmologically ordered socio-spatial disorder.

Once discerned, the Arosi cosmogonic transition from one aspect of primordality to another renders the motivation behind the present efflorescence of coastal *auhenua* identities apparent. Without grounded *auhenua* matrilineages, Arosi socio-cosmic order reverts to a chaos of vacuity. But, wherever land is seen to be empty of *auhenua*, Arosi cosmic and social order abhors such a vacuum and seeks to fill it. Matrilineages cannot easily maintain their identities without ancestral emplacement, and they struggle to find a foundation for proper relations with one another without the center of gravity that an *auhenua* matrilineage in its land provides. At any given place, someone has to be *auhenua* in order for Arosi to achieve satisfactory cosmos and society there.

It thus transpires that, even as the postcolonial intensification of chaos as hybridity undermines the anchored *auhenua* identities necessary for locality reproduction, it precipitates an experience of chaos as vacuity that is, by contrast, especially conducive to the formation of such identities. The attitudes and assumptions prevalent in everyday Arosi discourse—the frequent assertion that the *auhenua* of the coast are dead, the reiteration that the present coastal Arosi have come from elsewhere, the ambiguous nature of ancestral powers in a Christian context, and uncertainty regarding the history of the coastal land—converge to foster a virtual return to the condition of ultimate origins in which land is conceptualized as empty and available to be shaped and socialized by the activities of latter-day matrilineage ancestors.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Rhys Jones' (1985:207) representation of the reaction of Frank Gurrmanamana, an Australian Aborigine from Arnhem Land, to the city of Canberra provides a parallel case. To the eyes of Gurrmanamana, "[h]ere was a land empty of religious affiliation; there were no wells, no names of the totemic ancestors, no immutable links between land, people and the rest of the natural and supernatural worlds. Here was just a vast *tabula rasa*, cauterised of meaning . . . in his own words 'this country bin lose 'im Dreaming.' . . . This land and its people therefore were analogous to the state

The coexistence of competing matrilineal constructions of space in Arosi remains out of focus in its lived details, however, if regarded only from the analytical distance of an anthropological cosmology that sees it primarily as the result of attempts to reinvent difference under conditions of normal or intensified hybridity. When grounded also in an appreciation of what constitutes a condition contrary to order among Arosi, the methods of matrilineal place-making and their conflicting results come into relief as processes of order production specific to a colonially mediated realization of a particular vision of chaos—that of primordial vacuity. If postcolonial hybridity is the encompassing context of conflicting Arosi efforts at place-making, hybridity itself is not the immediate problem. It is not the case that uncertainty resides at the level of who belongs to which matrilineage. The matrilineal categories are clear, but empty land cannot embody them as such and give them agency as the social and spatial centers of neighborhoods. Rather than employing techniques of differentiation to sort out their lineage-cum-land identities, therefore, Arosi are responding to the perceived reversion of their coastal land to primordial vacuity with a variety of practices and discourses informed by the actions of ancestral pioneers. The construction of shrines, the incorporation of existing shrines into lineage narratives, and the reclamation of lineage-specific personal names are only three of several possible renewals of ancestral activity through which present-day lineage representatives are anchoring themselves in otherwise lifeless, meaningless, and potentially alienable land. Experience of one type of chaos (hybridity) has activated representations of another (vacuity) and proliferated new transformations of the order-promoting practices appropriate to the latter.

#### CHAOS AS OBSTRUCTION AND THE SACRIFICE OF “BLOCKED BODIES” IN BURUNDI AND RWANDA

I have presented an analysis of chaotic vacuity in Arosi in support of the proposal that the meta-cosmology embedded in current anthropological theory should be coordinated with attention to the models of chaos and order production available to the imaginations of subjects in their distinctive situations. To reinforce this point with reference to another model of chaos—that of physical obstruction—I juxtapose two independent analyses of late twentieth-century violence in Burundi and Rwanda. Applying the meta-cosmology of anthropological theory to the 1972 massacres of Hutu by Tutsi in Burundi, Appadurai (1998) offers a reading of these atrocities that, I suggest, casts them as acts of neo-cosmogonic dismemberment in response to hybridity. Tracing out the symbolism of a cosmology shared by Hutu and Tutsi in both Burundi and Rwanda, Taylor (1999) interprets the comparable Rwandan Hutu on Tutsi killings of

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of all the world once in some time before the Dreaming, before the great totemic Ancestral Beings strode across it, naming the places and giving it meaning. Viewed from this perspective, the Canberra of the geometric streets, and the paddocks of the six-wire fences were places not of domesticated order, but rather a wilderness of primordial chaos.”

1994, as well as the earlier Burundi massacres, as the sacrifice of “blocked bodies” designed to restore the orderly flow of life-giving forces and substances within the body politic. Neither author appears aware of the other’s interpretation, but they are complementary rather than competing. Together they shed maximum light on the meaning of violence in this central African context and show how the universal impetus to order presumed in the meta-cosmology of theory can be mediated in practice through the symbolism of a particular cosmology.

In a comparative study of “vivisectionist violence” among former intimates under conditions of globalization, Appadurai (1998) tests a hypothesis that there is a correlation between increased uncertainty regarding ethnic identities and an upsurge in ethnic violence. He takes as one test case the violence perpetrated by Tutsi against Hutu in Burundi during the early 1970s as described in survivors’ oral testimonies and analyzed by Liisa Malkki (1995). Hutu and Tutsi share what Malkki (1995:78–95) terms “body maps,” sets of physical markers that enable them to identify each other (e.g., Hutu bear an “M” in the lines on their palms; Tutsi have straight calves while Hutu have rounded ones; Tutsi have black gums while Hutu have pink; Tutsi are tall, etc.). Drawing on Mary Douglas’ thesis that the body is universally a microcosm of the categorical distinctions relevant to particular cosmologies, Appadurai (1998:231) argues that the violence enacted on Hutu bodies by Tutsi was, in part, an enraged response to the failure of real bodies accurately to display these marks of distinction. Under the conditions of postcoloniality, the dividing lines between these ethnic categories had become intolerably blurred and could be restored only by opening ambiguous bodies up to exploratory light and gaze. Conforming to a logic that may, Appadurai (1998:232, 233) speculates, be operative in widely different contexts, the chaos of hybridity manifested in uncertain ethnic identities inspired acts of dismemberment as the means “to stabilize,” “to eliminate flux,” and “to establish the parameters” of otherness. Butchery served the neo-cosmogonic function of restoring order by separating pure categories out of a chaotic mix.

Appadurai’s analysis is compelling as far as it goes, but he is aware that it does not account for “the quasi-ritual order, the attention to detail, the specificity of bodily violation, the systematicity of the forms of degradation” (1998:243) that Malkki’s consultants describe. Although seeming to credit Malkki’s “body maps” with the power to explain “the specific ways in which Hutu men and women were killed”—including methods involving impalement along the anus to head or vagina to head axis, forced incest, and forced endocannibalism between mother and fetus—Appadurai (1998:230–31) concedes that “[i]t remains to draw out the link between the mapped body of the ethnic other and the peculiar and specific brutalities” in question. “[A]n additional interpretive frame” is required, he concludes, but offers only “surplus rage” as the missing ingredient that somehow “makes sense” of these details (1998:243). At

most, Appadurai's correlation of uncertainty with vivisectionist violence makes sense of the Burundi massacres only at the grossest level of cutting open and apart as techniques for achieving distinctions with "dead certainty."

Taylor's work provides the additional interpretive frame capable of supplementing Appadurai's contribution with a clearer focus on the "routinized symbolic schemes of nightmarish cruelty" (Malkki 1995:92) encountered in Burundi and Rwanda. Citing Malkki, Taylor (1999:104–5) points out that, despite gestures toward the need for symbolic analysis of the "techniques of cruelty" that were "already meaningful, already mythico-historical" to Tutsi and Hutu (Malkki 1995:94), she attempts no such analysis, and the "body maps" she identifies give little hermeneutic purchase on these techniques. What is needed, Taylor argues, is attention to the recursive symbolism of a Rwanda-Burundian cosmology according to which all things depend on the continuous circulation of life-giving forces and substances mediated by relationships of reciprocal exchange. Central to this symbolism is the microcosmic body, assimilated at once to the natural order and the body politic as a conduit of vitality equally susceptible to states of ordered flow and chaotic blockage. It is this "flow/blockage dialectic" played out on the microcosmic body that best accounts, according to Taylor, for some of the techniques of cruelty employed by Hutu and Tutsi in their reciprocal exchanges of violence.

Returning to analyses elaborated in an earlier ethnography of the transformation of popular medicine in Rwanda, Taylor (1992; 1999) rehearses the multiple registers in which the symbolism of flow and blockage is legible: disease and healing; sacral kingship and its rituals; a gift economy, especially as instantiated by asymmetrical exchanges between patrons and clients; and conceptualizations of local topography. Each of these registers represents forms of continuous flow as conditions of life-giving order and forms of obstruction as life-threatening chaos. Signs of order include bodily orifices and internal tracts that are open, clear, and successfully engaged in ingestive, evacuative, and reproductive functions; freely moving watercourses and navigable pathways; patron-client reciprocity; timely and adequate rainfall understood as celestial vitality mediated to earth by the king. Conversely, signs of chaos include closed bodily orifices and blocked internal tracts producing sickness and infertility; clogged rivers and roadblocks; exploitation of patrons by clients; and drought or famine indicative of a weak or corrupt ruler. This cosmology furthermore comprehends the category of "blocked beings," agents perceived to embody the condition of chaotic obstruction. Among this class of beings are sorcerers who inflict illness by causing blockages in other people's bodies; enemies of the king or even the king himself as an ambivalent figure able to control both flow and blockage; and young girls who, although old enough for child bearing, lack developed breasts or have not yet begun to menstruate. In precolonial times, the latter two exemplars of the blocked being category might be ritually sacrificed for the health of the physical realm and the community. Such a being was not



only blocked but blocking and needed to be eliminated like an internal obstruction from the social body.

Taylor's study of Rwandan royal ideology and healing practices during the 1980s equipped him with a symbolic literacy that made the messages inscribed on Tutsi bodies by Hutu in the 1990s decipherable. As several of the most horrific techniques of cruelty perpetrated in Rwanda replicated those described by Malkki's Hutu consultants, Taylor (1999:146) also applies his interpretations retrospectively to the 1972 violence in Burundi. In both contexts, the perpetrators of genocide were casting their victims as blocked and blocking beings whose existence threatened the body politic with the chaos of obstruction. Acting in ways that made them analogous to the ancient king or popular healer, the *génocidaires* appropriated the power to control and intervene in the processes of flow and blockage through manipulation of their victims' bodies. Several notorious techniques of cruelty objectify a process whereby the victimizers first contained their victims and inscribed on their bodies their blocked and blocking natures before killing them in order to remove this blockage and restore ordered flow. Impalement along the vertical axis of the digestive or reproductive tract, for example, constitutes total occlusion of these conduits of vitality, rendering the victim not only physically dead but symbolic of death as a state of self-contained closure. Forced endo-cannibalism of an aborted fetus by its mother likewise graphically displays the idea of a closed-circuit exchange, a dead end. In cases of forced incest as well, the victims become icons of "mis-directed flows" (Taylor 1999:141) that are internal to one family rather than external and interconnecting among many.

This hermeneutic of flow and blockage also enables Taylor to read additional modes of atrocity documented only in Rwanda. Emasculation and debreasting of Tutsi by Hutu in the Rwandan genocide emerge as further techniques for the sacrificial representation of blocked beings whose life-giving fluids have been stopped up. Perhaps the most pervasive techniques to which Taylor applies this hermeneutic, however, are the multiple modes of immobilization, ranging from a superabundance of roadblocks in excess of the number required to contain the fleeing Tutsi, to the cutting off of legs and feet, and the systematic slashing of Achilles tendons—even on the already infirm incapable of flight. These forms of immobilization imposed a collective stasis on the whole Tutsi category within the borders of Rwanda as a prelude to purging them from the nation-state.

That the analyses of Taylor and Appadurai are not incompatible is evident from Taylor's recognition that, inasmuch as the conditions of flow and blockage became assimilated, in the nationalism of the Hutu *génocidaires* of Rwanda, to the ethnicized categories Hutu and Tutsi, the chaos of hybridity between these valorized categories was also at play, motivating "genocide aimed at reasserting the cosmic order of the Hutu state" (Taylor 1999:154). Clearly, in order to purge the blocked and blocking category Tutsi from the body politic one

must be able to separate Tutsi from Hutu, and Taylor acknowledges that the “body maps” identified by Malkki were employed by Hutu against Tutsi in Rwanda just as they had been by Tutsi against Hutu in Burundi. But the primary targets of the rage inspired by recalcitrant bodies and the chaos of hybridity in Rwanda were, according to Taylor (1999:ch. 4), Tutsi women. Being frequently the wives and mistresses of Hutu men and the “potential mothers of ethnically anomalous children,” Tutsi women were “liminoid beings.” They were doubly chaotic, simultaneously embodying the chaos of obstruction as Tutsi and the chaos of hybridity as partners in miscegenation. Taylor reports that, in addition to suffering the tortures already discussed, many Tutsi women were also subjected to rape and sexual captivity, acts which Appadurai (1998:239–40) suggests may be methods “to expose, penetrate, and occupy the material form—the body—of the ethnic other” as part of a program of “producing persons” as tokens of clear-cut ontological types. When brought together in this way, the meta-cosmological analysis of Appadurai and the cosmological analysis of Taylor bring the position of the Tutsi woman into its fullest appalling focus. By a variety of symbolic means, the body of a Tutsi woman was good to control, for to do so was to fight chaos on two fronts.

#### CONCLUSION: COMPARATIVE CHAOS AND THE USES OF COSMOLOGY

Advocating a return to “Grand Theory” in anthropology “accompanied by a critical politics,” Moore (1997) has forwarded postcolonialism as a useful comparative “concept-metaphor” in the pursuit of these allied objectives. Concept-metaphors, she explains, are the necessary rubrics for cross-cultural study—such as “the body,” “the self,” and “gender”—that can provide a nexus between the universal and the particular and facilitate the linked production of theory and ethnography. These rubrics are serviceable to this task because their meanings are at once taken for granted and unspecifiable. As ideal constructs they are “metaphors which have no adequate referents” (Moore 1997:140), and it is therefore not possible to define them either univocally or exhaustively. Anthropological understanding of particularities and the refinement of theoretical models take place precisely when the gaps and misfits between these metaphors and their referents are pried open and scrutinized. In adding postcolonialism to the list of potential concept-metaphors, Moore advances a trope that asserts the universality of hybridity in a globalizing world while acknowledging a spectrum of relative degrees of hybridity in actual experience. The concept-metaphor postcolonialism thus seems to bear a trope within a trope, for its salient characteristic, Moore (1997:132, 141–42) implies, is hybridity. This hybridity is furthermore a species of chaos with a built-in praxis of order reproduction: “In order to know who I am, you must be different from me. We all need histories, and their violent making and remaking is one consequence of the kind of postcolonial space we inhabit” (1997:142). Building on the rationale and content of Moore’s proposal, I conclude with the suggestion that the

ethnographic cases I have presented indicate an instructive gap between the concept-metaphor postcolonialism—understood as the chaos of hybridity—and the plurality of conceptualizations of chaos that inform practical order production in particular contexts.

The methods of matrilineal emplacement in Arosi and the techniques of cruelty in Burundi and Rwanda warrant the promotion of chaos itself, which encompasses hybridity as one among many possible visions of disorder, as a comparative concept-metaphor in anthropological theorizing and the interpretation of social practices. With its privileging of hybridity as the universal condition of chaos, the meta-cosmology of contemporary theory fosters analyses of practices as responses to the disconcerting mixing and blurring of categories. Although Appadurai's work on vivisectionist violence demonstrates the explanatory benefits this specification of chaos can have, these benefits can be enhanced, I submit, by also asking: with what other visions of chaos does the chaos of hybridity articulate in history? Even within the wider context of chaotic hybridity, glossed as postcoloniality, postmodernity, or globalization, people continue to experience chaos as they know it. Hybridity is not the only model of chaos, and re-parsing is not the only technique for order making. Furthermore, as in Rwanda, social agents may be drawing on more than one model of chaos as they struggle to refashion order. Accordingly, we need to allow a less prescriptive meta-cosmology of the universal, ongoing, and multiple transitions from chaos to order to elicit this plurality of chaoses, not obscure it under a single master trope. But the existence of a significant gap or misfit between hybridity and the other models of chaos evident in contexts such as Arosi and Rwanda-Burundi need not lead to a particularist paralysis that leaves these models of chaos incommensurable (cf. Moore 1997:134–35). Rather, the substitution of a more polysemous notion of chaos in place of hybridity in current anthropological cosmology strengthens its universalist claims while mandating a comparative study of chaos that seeks to understand how particular models of primordality or the breakdown of order represent both disorder and its likely remedies. This is only to take history seriously as having produced different visions of chaos that are, after all, still obstacles to mutual transparency but nevertheless comprehensible as manifestations of a universal dialectic.

And here, a final issue obtrudes on this discussion. If anthropological meta-cosmology claims that human ontology predisposes us to engage in multiple, continuous, and imperfect strategies for bringing order out of chaos, it needs also to assert that this recognition of the eternal return of chaos is not a fatalistic acceptance that some modes of order production will be violent. Recently, influential interpreters of religious cosmologies have been criticized for aestheticizing visions of life born out of death and cosmic cycles of periodic destruction and rebirth as necessary to a supra-moral dialectic (Wasserstrom 1999). Another reason, then, to acknowledge that anthropological theory entails a meta-cosmology that encrypts pseudo-mythic narratives is to guard

against a similar tendency, or even its inadvertent appearance. When reckoning with models of chaos and their possible practical ramifications, social scientists must be clear that forms of order production are not morally neutral, and our flirtations with the renovative potentialities of hybridity must reject any implicit nihilistic attraction to order dissolution. All visions of chaos raise serious ethical questions about what ought to constitute proper order, and many seem to encode praxes susceptible to abhorrent deformation.<sup>18</sup> While order production may be necessary, not all forms of order production are acceptable and none is inevitable. A return to Grand Theory in anthropology accompanied by a critical politics enjoins, therefore, not only the breakdown of essentialized dichotomies between Self and Other, but a project of imagining cosmologically satisfying alternatives to order by atrocity.

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<sup>18</sup> So far, vacuity in Arosi has not given rise to violence. This is not to say, however, that this model of chaos may not entail such potentialities. In recent years there have been violent clashes on Guadalcanal between people of that island and “settlers” from neighboring Malaita (Dinnen 2002). However, because I have not conducted research on either island and was not in Solomon Islands at the time, it would be irresponsible for me to speculate that an analogous chaotic vacuity on Guadalcanal has contributed to this violence.

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