

Volume 36
issue 3 / 2017

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577
Niterói (RJ), 36 (3)
dec/2017-mar/2018

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

On Seeing a Bull's Skull in a Bicycle Seat: Innovative Archaism

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TO REFERENCE THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

Mishra, S. (2017) On Seeing a Bull's Skull in a Bicycle Seat: Innovative Archaisms. *Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication*, 36 (3), pp. 45-59.

Submitted on 7th June 2017 / Accepted on 27th November 2017

DOI – <http://dx.doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v36i3.1043>

Abstract

How may indigenous practices from Oceania open up the possibility of a future occluded by the long epoch of surplus accumulation? This future is not unforeseeable, but rather one that co-exists as an impeded possibility in the present. The global South—whether as time, space, value or figure—inhabits the order of the non-synchronous and archaic vis-à-vis the global north as dictated by the normative law of surplus accumulation. In this paper I draw on Theodor Adorno's insight concerning the co-presence of the archaic in the time of modernity to argue that the perspectival aspect of modernity is built on the act of looking at something while looking through it. In other words, seeing concerns the paradoxical act of not-seeing, of looking through some aspect or dimension of whatever one is looking at. If, however, silence were to discover speech, and we commenced to look at what we have been taught to look through, modernity starts to take on an altogether different aspect. The Global South of Oceania, in particular, turns into a region of innovative archaisms, counter-national imaginings, surplus-subverting practices and communal forms of ecological ethics. This paper contends that archaic indigenous practices, in concert with scientific knowledge, may be in advance of the modern in offering a pragmatic response to the climate-related crisis generated by modernity.

Keywords

Global South, Fiji, Oceania, Arcaism, Temporality

For some years now, I have mulled over Theodor Adorno's letter to Walter Benjamin dated 5 April 1934 in which he gives a compelling account of the "essential and categorical historicity of the archaic" (Adorno & Benjamin, 38) and its co-presence with the modern and the new. In the letter, Adorno hits on the realization "that just as the modern is the most ancient, so too the archaic itself is a function of the new: it is first produced historically as the archaic, and to that extent it is dialectical in character and not 'pre-historical,' but rather the exact opposite" (Adorno & Benjamin, 38). Consequently, the archaic is "nothing but the site of everything whose voice has fallen silent because of history: something which can only be measured in terms of that historical rhythm which alone 'produces' it as a kind of primal history" (Adorno & Benjamin, 38). The critical aspect to this quite remarkable aside is that the archaic, as a co-emergent element of the modern, of modernity, is produced by the same history that reduces it to a state of silence and muteness. Just as the modern comes to vociferously dominate history, the archaic, which is engendered simultaneously by this history, falls silent and its address is a form of muteness.

It is here that Adorno, I think, is advancing his most revolutionary point. The very silence of the archaic is produced by the same history that gives voice to the modern within historical modernity. It would be wrong, however, to read this silence as a form of erasure, as a permanent dumbfounding of the archaic, for just as the potential of speech is silence, so the potential of silence is speech. The same law of time that produces both these categories may upend the orders of speech and silence. In other words, if the archaic were to realize its potential and speak in and through historical modernity, its primal status would dissolve, just as the advanced status of the modern would dissolve were it to fall silent. It is at this juncture that Adorno's insight resonates with Ernst Bloch's masterly analysis of the revolutionary potential of the non-synchronous in the service of an "impeded future" (Bloch, 33). The extant yet unfinished past, for Bloch, cannot be future-directed unless its non-synchronicity informs the synchronous present of modernity, thereby unshackling "the still possible future from the past...by putting both in the present" (Bloch, 33). How do we, in other words, open up the possibility of a future occluded by the long epoch of surplus accumulation? This future is not unforeseeable, but rather one that co-exists as an impeded possibility in the present. In any case, it may have dawned on you that the global south—whether as time, space, value or figure—inhabits the order of the non-synchronous and archaic vis-à-vis the global north as dictated by the normative law of surplus accumulation. It is my intention, in this paper, to draw on Adorno's insight concerning the archaic to argue that the perspectival aspect of modernity is built on

the act of looking at something while looking through it. In other words, seeing concerns the paradoxical act of not-seeing, of looking through some aspect or dimension of whatever one is looking at. If, however, silence were to discover speech, and we commenced to look at what we have been taught to look through, modernity starts to take on an altogether different aspect. The global south of Oceania, in particular, turns into a region of innovative archaisms, counter-national imaginings, surplus-subverting practices and communal forms of ecological ethics.

Eveli Hau'ofa's much-lauded seminal paper, 'Our Sea of Islands,' is principally a quarrel with perspective as it relates to the ideological practices of modernity. Derived from the Latin, *perspicere*, the noun 'perspective' relates to the prepositions 'at' and 'through' when brought into conjunction with 'look' (*spicere*). Perspective, therefore, involves the act of looking at something while looking through it. In other words, seeing concerns the paradoxical act of not-seeing, of looking through some aspect or dimension of whatever one is looking at. Indeed "one-sidedness is," as Joseph Brodsky notes, "the enemy of perspective" (Brodsky, 454). In his essay, Hau'ofa confesses that, for a long time as a scholar, he was looking through our large sea of islands while looking at small islands in the sea. He writes that "the idea of smallness...depends on what is included and excluded in any calculation of size" (Hau'ofa, 6). This is exactly the point at which his intervention turns into a rousing critique of a borrowed perspective, of an entire borrowed consciousness, predicated on the legacies of northern modernity. At the heart of Hau'ofa's paper lies an epiphany linking the perspectival to the epistemic whereby the character of knowledge—and acts of knowing—are transformed precisely when we look at whatever we have been taught to look through. The act of looking at and looking through belong to the same relational dynamic because invisibility is a function of visibility. That which is made visible by modernity, of which the bourgeois nation-state defined by a bounded landmass is exemplary, renders invisible that which resists incorporation into its forever-restive system of political, material and ideological reproduction. Any perspective that accounts for Oceanic islands as territorially-distinct nation-states spatially discounts the sea that forms an integral part of the interdependence of archipelagic life-worlds. Hau'ofa performs a recovery of an alternative southern perspective by looking at our large sea of islands while looking through modernity's account of small islands in the sea—and this latter account continues to persist in the idea of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). By dint of this simple yet ingenious shift in perspective—which is relational in that what is looked through and looked at are in a state of perpetual contestation—he retrieves an indigenous perspective (or an archaism) whose scope evades and exceeds the frames of modernity. There

is a magisterial simplicity in Hau'ofa's approach. All he is saying on one plane is that if you link up dots you stop seeing autonomous dots across watery voids of separation; instead, you begin to see broad waves of convergence, detour and flight stretching from the South to the North Pacific. This perspective, once rescued from a structural repression which, as Jacques Derrida notes, always gives rise to hauntings (Derrida, 37), resists modernity's account of hemmed-in, auto-centered, aid-dependent micro-states of Oceania.

Hau'ofa published his essay in 1993, the same year that Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* appeared in Boston. Both texts, in their different ways, sought to argue that modernity, insofar as it is seen as a non-dialogic western enterprise, is repressively structured by the practices and values it looks through in selectively looking at certain practices and values as shaped by the *longue durée* of capital accumulation. Gilroy, for instance, points out that black practices—cultural, musical, literary or political—cannot be understood in relation to national paradigms because they breach bounded communities and categories and include multiple territorial arenas washed by the Atlantic Ocean. Gilroy's account effectively upends the two poles of the archaic and the modern. Classical practices of surplus accumulation relied heavily on archaic forms of enslaved labour, where the labour time was not bought temporarily—as with waged labour—but indefinitely and transnationally. So modernity in its classical form exploitatively produced transnational archaic work. Yet, it was the ordeal of these enslaved workers, and their resistant narratives and practices, on which the modern politics of emancipation, transnational resistant aesthetics and the discourse of rights found expression. Archaic labour engenders the modern ethical and emancipatory discourses of the Enlightenment.

While Gilroy was drawing on the black Atlantic and arguing for its constitutive if antagonistic role—or 'antagonistic indebtedness' as he calls it (Gilroy, 191)—in shaping the ethical and political discourses of modernity, Hau'ofa was salvaging a regional perspective that decried modernity's belittlement of islanders and its perspectival sequestering of islands from oceans and oceanic peoples from each other. It is no coincidence that Hau'ofa and Gilroy came up with two southerly accounts of what may be called 'oceanic transnationalism' in 1993. By the early nineties, with the rise of neoliberalism on the back of border-breaching capital flows, large-scale migratory traffic and the strategic adjustment policies imposed on the global south, the emergent areas of transnational studies and diaspora criticism was drawing interest from a raft of scholars. Implicit in the works of Hau'ofa and Gilroy is the desire to salvage two older perspectives, one concerned with pre-colonial Oceania and the other with post-emancipation Atlantic, without losing sight

of the flows of capital, cultures, goods and subjects in the time of globalized modernity. I make this point to attest to the complex nature of Hau'ofa's retrieval of an Oceanic perspective which concerns a form of recovery where an older perspective is salvaged through an account of present itinerant practices that cannot circumvent neoliberal forms of surplus accumulation. In a nutshell, when Hau'ofa looks through small islands in the sea described by northern agencies, he is looking at our large sea of islands through contemporary diaspora practices that return him to an older form of transoceanic enmeshment through trade, migration, war, marriage, shared cosmology, itinerant labour and gifting. His is a form of double visioning. The oceanic commerce between islanders, and between islands and continents, in the globalized present fires up his imagination to the point that he is transported to the past, to classical forms of inter-island trade and traffic, bypassed by northern modernity. Hau'ofa, then, adduces modern diasporic circuits to access the archaic network of interisland commerce, thus attesting to the constitutive persistence of such traces in the time of modernity.

Hau'ofa's essay is a fine testimony to how the work of the imagination transports us to spaces and practices rendered invisible by modernity in its disavowal of the constitutive role they actually play in its unfinished project. It also testifies to the contagious character of such acts of the imagination as his work has inspired the imagination of others, and of historians and linguists in particular, thereby contributing to a reconsideration of history. Cultural and linguistic histories now assume oceanic proportions in that inter-island mobility, cultural enmeshment and cosmopolitan drift are salient features of an unbounded methodology. David Chappell, for example, recuperates the sea of islands metaphor to capture the sea-change islanders such as Lojeik, Ahutoru and Tupaia endured as a consequence of crossing and crisscrossing the threshold between cultures, technologies, languages and life-worlds. Paul D'Arcy's account of pre-contact mobility draws a broad picture of inter-island traffic motivated, in some cases, by an exchange economy where valuable shells, sinnet cords and woven clothing are traded for turmeric, cooking pots and wood or, alternatively, where stingray stings for spears, symbolic whales' teeth, fine tapa-cloth are bartered for vesicanoes, bright feathers and sandalwood. The linguist, Paul Geraghty, makes a similar point while tracing the genealogy of Pulotu, the mythical homeland of Polynesians. Describing how Pulotu (or Burotu in Fijian) came to be associated with a celebrated red hue, he observes that the plumes of the kula lory, which decorated the edges of woven mats, were part of an exchange economy between Fiji, Tonga and Samoa (Geraghty, 350). The prestige associated with bird feathers, especially colorful and rare ones, was an important catalyst for inter-island commerce in most of Oceania. Nicholas Thomas, for his

part, thinks of islanders as exemplary cosmopolitans driven to travel for heterogeneous reasons. When not moved by adventure and a sense of curiosity, they set out to acquire prestige and status; when not shipping out as sailors on whalers or steamers, they go abroad on missionary work; when not picked up by blackbirders for inter-island drudgery, they wander along metropolitan ports as willing sight-seers. Critically, all four scholars dispense with methodological nationalism by opting for a perspective that discusses travelling islanders in terms of their different causes and drives as enacted on an undulant and borderless oceanic stage.

One year before Hau'ofa and Gilroy published their bold interventions, *The Shark that Ate the Sun*, a novel authored by John Pule of Niue, appeared under the imprint of Penguin Books. Sections of the novel draw on an epistolary tactic to capture the exchange of information, commodities, money, ideas, political ideologies and food taking place among members of the Niuean diaspora over a period of two decades from 1942 to 1962. As the letters crisscross the Pacific Ocean we are given insight into the transversal relations and practices that characterize the Niuean diaspora. Not only do members of the family transit through multiple regional points, such as Samoa, Tahiti and Fiji, when moving between New Zealand and Niue, but they also make their way to Canada and England. The letters, in their circular sociality, testify to a fluid cartography of flows, outflows and counter-flows in an epistolary narrative that resists settling down in any one territory. If characters move from Liku to Apia to Suva to Auckland, they also undertake the reverse journey. Not only do the letters move back and forth in a crabwise fashion, but they also attest to the back and forth movement of material and ideological practices. If northern commodities such as money, shoes, clothes, wedding rings, pots and photographs wend their way to Niue from Auckland, Niue sends back talo, yam, banana, breadfruit, resistance narratives and children as part of its southern kinship network. The novel's letters speak to each other in a manner where the present context of the addresser intersects with absent context of the addressee, forging lines of convergence and divergence through the work of the imagination. Pule's vision of Oceania is large-scale and interwoven. His sea of islands is, however, not restricted to Hau'ofa's capacious oceanic frame; it is a large sea of islands certainly, but found sometimes on a small street in Auckland. When the Niuean, Mocca, writes to her brother, Puhia, she observes:

There is a friendly Palagi family next door and a Samoan family on the other side. Across the road is another Palagi family and next to them is a Maori family. We have already made friends with the

Indian couple who own the fruit shop on Great North Road (Pule, 45).

Mocca also makes the point that “there is no change if you change everything” (Pule, 52). There is a philosophical reading to be had here in that, if one changes everything all the time without respite, change turns into a rather pointless idea. Mocca, however, seems to be implying that cultural patterns and perspectives might endure even when practices have changed as a consequence of the long epoch of modernity. Thus we return to Hau’ofa’s double visioning of the constitutive forgetting of the archaic that is at the heart of modernity. Both Pule and Hau’ofa perceive current oceanic exchanges among mobile islanders as discontinuously continuous with classical oceanic practices identified by historians. They access the past via the present by looking through the static land-bound and hugely delimiting view of islands as underscored by the growth-oriented paradigms of a nationally-prescribed northern modernity.

Hau’ofa and Pule are concerned with oceanic forms of itinerancy as manifested prior to the new millennium. The former gives the example of an uneducated Tongan worker who lives in Berkeley, California, flies to Fiji via Honolulu with a cooler filled with T-shirts, some for students in Fiji and the remainder for his relatives in Tonga, purchases kava while in Suva, catches a second plane to Tonga where the kava is pounded and packed, meanwhile replenishing his cooler with seafood, before flying back to California via Fiji and Honolulu where the kava and the seafood are sold to put his two sons through college. Both Hau’ofa and Pule are alert to the ever-expanding web of circulation among islanders as these relate to actual life-worlds and practices bypassed by developmental discourses. More than two decades later, we continue to witness such material forms of circulation with the difference that an enormous amount of cultural, familial, financial and political intercourse now happens in the digital or virtual form. Instead of citing examples of this new form of exchange and circulation, thereby attesting to what is plainly self-evident, it might be preferable to imagine how the discontinuously continuous practices of our sea of islands might be re-configured as the region confronts the challenges of the digital age, ‘crisis’ modernity, climate-related dislocations and global hyper-mobility. For us to accomplish this feat, however, requires an act of double visioning where we start looking at what we have been looking through for far too long.

Last year, Fiji was visited by a cyclone of preternatural strength, resulting in the devastation of life, property and crops. While the international community was quick and compassionate in its response, there were disturbing stories of hunger and malnutrition emanating from the outer islands. The same modernity that came

to our aid might have been responsible not only for the unbearable winds, but also for dismantling indigenous food preservation systems. Brian Schultz observes that Fijians in the past had established strategies to counter food shortages as a consequence of wars, droughts and hurricanes: “Classic examples of traditional food preservation techniques include the drying of shaved cassava or yams so as to produce a storable powder, the pit preservation method of staple carbohydrate foods such as breadfruit and taro where [they]...were soaked in water and buried in leaf-lined pits [and]...left to ferment, and the sun-drying and smoking of fish” (Schultz, 10). Ingrid Johnston ratifies this claim in a recent study entitled *Rebuilding Communities after Disasters: Remote Islands* (Johnston, 67-68). As food becomes scarcer and more expensive, southern islanders might want to reimagine, and share with one another, these context-specific strategies for food preservation and security in the age of super droughts and storms.

Hurricanes have also drawn attention to the pitfalls of a diminishing reliance on indigenous architectural knowledge and a status-conscious dependence on northern housing materials, designs and styles. It has been shown that the Fijian bure and the Samoan/Tongan fale are architecturally designed to cope with extreme weather events and that the elders in Oceania’s scattered villages have a good handle on these structural principles. In a report based on interviews conducted with architects two years after Samoa was struck by Cyclone Evans, Catherine Wilson observes that “the majority of homes damaged during the disaster were Western style, with destruction of roofs a common problem” (Wilson, digital page). Drawing on the expertise of her Samoan informants, she points out:

Traditional architecture is epitomised by the ‘fale’, an oval-shaped open structure with timber posts supporting a steep domed roof. All of the building elements are ‘lashed’ or bound together, originally with a plaited rope made from dried coconut fibre.

The fale’s open structure allows strong winds to pass straight through it, and the complex system of lashing offers flexible movement and strength in the face of ever-changing winds...

“The roof of a fale is curved and winds which hit it will move around its surface without meeting resistance...” (Wilson, digital page).

She cites a third architect who observes that “[t]he design of the fale connects the roof directly to the posts that are concreted into the ground, creating less points of weakness” whereas “Western housing designs...are reliant on more points of connection from the foundation to the roof, leaving them more vulnerable to fail under stress...” (Wilson, digital page). The Tongan scholar, Futa Helu, discussing the work of the architect, Tomui Kaloni, who called attention to the “instinctive geometry” of Polynesian architecture (Helu, 324), made a similar

observation in 1999. Remarking that the style of the fale faka-Manuka drew on “traditional naval architecture...where the roof is the independent variable to which the floor had to be adjusted,” he remarks that it led to the construction of a house where the walls and roof “are gently curved at critical points to divert or ease lateral as well as vertical loading” (Helu, 319-20). The critical aspect to the fale’s architecture is a moving part in the half-dome sections called feleano that “has the effect of unifying all ta (half-dome) action into one which then develops complex load-bearing stresses—cable and twist actions—in addition to being the resisting force to lateral loads on the main central roof section that are all channeled to the ground through the feleano” (Helu, 323-26). Thus the non-synchronous, when faced by climatic perversities unleashed by the relentless system of surplus accumulation, returns as an innovative archaism, as that which is breathtakingly in advance of the modern.

I might add that the present anthropogenic environmental crisis is directly linked to exclusionary property relations brought about by a northern system of surplus accumulation. It is this property relation that dictates lives and laws in most cities. While bourgeois property law also governs life in the cities of Oceania, there are some practices among city-dwellers in this region not encompassed by such laws. In Suva, for instance, there is an unacknowledged consensus amongst the people that any unutilized arable land, whether privately or publically owned, may be borrowed by another party to supplement their domestic food supply. So a bele garden might appear on the neglected lawn of a police post, a dalo plot on the banks of the council’s drainage system or a cassava patch at the back of a bus stop next to an upmarket hotel. I, too, participate in this outer-legal but slyly sanctioned and quietly ethical i-taukei practice where the notion of exclusionary ownership turns, at best, murky. The idle land next to my property I share with a villager from down the road, although neither of us is the legal proprietor. Sadly, his raurau patch is bigger than mine. It took an outsider, John O’Carroll, to point out how such archaic koro-derived practices are invisible to modernity and to urban morphologists because of growth-related paradigms linked to the market economy (O’Carroll, 37) and to, I might add, urban landscape aesthetics drawn from the global north. Caught up in a visible system governed by the circulation of exchange value, we cease to grasp the possibility of use-value existing for itself outside the exchange system—use-value, that is, in its enduringly archaic form. However, if such unbounded forms of land-sharing for purposes of subsistence contribute to our everyday food supply, then we need to discuss what this southern practice might mean regionally.

The fapui'aki ritual of Rotuma provides another instance of an ethical practice in food distribution and food conservation. The fapui is a coconut frond tied around the trunk of a tree, usually a fruit tree, to mark it as forbidden to harvest. Where there is no sign of a fapui, the fruit of that tree becomes common property regardless of land ownership. The fapui, if not hijacked to serve private interests, has the potential to be employed as an instrument for the conservation of fruit trees and for the sharing of food surpluses. This practice lies at the core of Rotuma's foundational cosmology (Howard, 53-54). There are many examples from Oceania of the quiet persistence of such adaptive practices, but they are seen to occupy the order of the archaic and so remain largely unremarked. Given that we are living in a world facing a crisis that is multi-layered and cross-thatched, it is time to look closely at the market-circumventing options offered by the discontinuously continuous practices of Oceania.

I want to draw your attention to how one such archaic practice is being resurrected across the waters and islands of Fiji to the point of being adopted by those operating the hospitality industry. In this instance at least, touristic modernity is alert to the financial windfalls associated with an indigenous conservation practice. Faced with the depletion of marine stocks by commercial fishing, many coastal villages are reviving the customary practice of tabu whereby the harvesting of seafood is prohibited for some years in areas covering ocean tracts, fringing reefs and mangrove estuaries which are home to mud crabs. Tabu, however, is not simply a synonym for prohibition. Tabu-na or vaka-tabu-ya implies putting tabu on something by rendering it sacred through the act of consecration. So where modernity might view the ocean as a storehouse for edible maritime commodities, shorn altogether of the sacred, of sanctity, the observers of tabu regard it as a source of food certainly, but also as a hallowed extension of the vanua and therefore inclusive of land, sea, sea life, genealogical ties, reciprocities, duty of care, ecological ethics, and so on. Vanua is at the heart of the oceanic sublime in that it aspires to the condition of the sacred where nature, culture, genealogy, food, sea, river, land and life are indissolubly bound together. In 2001, for instance, Shangri-La Fiji actively worked with eight coastal Cuvu villages to put a tabu on selected reef and mangrove systems bordering the resort. Under a plan ratified by the Cuvu Tikina Council, it was possible to "set aside 50% of the Tikina's reefs as well as some adjacent mangrove and seagrass habitats as no-fishing areas (Bowden-Kerby, 153). Not only were the areas under tabu more appealing to visitors because of the abundant reef and marine life, but the fee levied from them was channeled into further acts of ecological restoration while ensuring the replenishment of food stocks for local communities. The denizens of Kavula in Bua

furnish another recent example of how southern tabu practices may intersect with modern instruments of conservation. With the aid of flip charts and related illustration tools provided by the NGO cChange, the community was able to mobilize support to impose a tabu on gravel extraction from the Kavula River. The tabu's overall objective is to replenish fish stocks by protecting the Redigobius Lekutu, a rare species of freshwater fish (*The Fiji Times*, July 7, 2016).

Many i-taukei coastal communities, in fact, have been drawing on scientific knowledge to revive customary practices, thereby engendering innovative archaisms in a bid to reverse modernity's assault on food sources and ecological life-worlds. The villagers of Ucunivanua have achieved notable success in reversing the steady decline in the population of the kaikoso clam. Imposing a three-year tabu on the harvesting of the kaikoso, they obtained assistance from scientists at my university who taught them how to monitor and statistically-sample the clam population in the region. Their success in increasing the clam size and population led other villages in the area to resurrect the practice: "Sawa villagers, for example, imposed a *tabu* on a mangrove island. By counting the "active" holes in the mangroves, they found that the numbers of the mangrove lobster *Thalassina anomala* increased by roughly 250 percent annually, with a spillover effect of roughly 120 percent outside the *tabu* area" (Aalbersberg, Tawake & Parras, 146). The authors of the report proceed to cite the case of Nacamaki village on the island of Gau where "one year after creating a *tabu* area the community harvested approximately eight tons of their food totem, the rabbitfish, in one week," provoking one elderly woman to declare that "our ancestors have released the blessing to us by reviving this tradition" (Aalbersberg, Tawake & Parras, 146). Here, then, to hark back to Bloch, the marriage of the non-synchronous tabu with synchronous scientific knowledge informs the future-forging resurrection of an unfinished past.

I-taukei oral narrative testifies liberally to the efficacy of the tabu as a longstanding indigenous practice based on the convergence of ecological, ethical and survivalist ethics. The villagers of Nacamaki and Namuana, based respectively on the islands of Koro and Kadavu, are famously associated with the ceremony of summoning sea turtles with their incantatory songs. In the case of the Nacamaki, the villagers are forbidden by the tabu to look upon the turtles once they have ventured on the beach:

As soon as the turtle invasion began it was the custom for the villagers to go back to their homes without a single backward glance, and to stay there for a night and a day, leaving the beach to the turtles. There was much speculation as to what happened there, but the ceremony was one that had been imposed upon their

ancestors by the gods, and no one dared to break the tabu, until one inquisitive and skeptical man defied the ancient edict in order to satisfy his curiosity (Reed and Hamez, 211).

For his violation of this injunction against human interference in the reproductive habits of turtles, the curious man is turned into a tree bearing vonu or turtle nuts. He also serves as a cautionary reminder to the others not to breach the communal tabu. It is difficult not to read the narrative as an instructive critique of the disenchanting economic man, narcissistic, daring and skeptical, who seeks to extract value from a secret pertaining to the reproductive rights of turtles. The legend associated with Namuana village, on the other hand, concerns the abduction of two chiefly women by Nabukelevu fishermen. When the sea intervenes by inciting a storm and changing the women into turtles, the terrified fishermen cast the changelings into the ocean and scramble for home. Unable to be re-transformed, the turtles live in the bay fronting Namuana village and make an appearance only when invoked through song by its womenfolk. As a result of the rapport between the women of Namuana and the turtles of Namuanu, there is a tabu in place on the harvesting of fish and turtles (Blakelock, 47). Such fabulous accounts possess potency precisely because they create the conditions for the systemic application of the tabu. The tabu, in turn, informs the effective and ethical management of the marine eco-system which constitutes the qoliqoli or customary fishing arena coming under local stewardship. Not surprisingly perhaps, the revival of the tabu was a key recommendation of a report on sea turtles commissioned in 1993 by the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (Guinea, 32). Tabu and transformation go hand in glove in i-taukei cosmology and suggests an ethical interspecies contract that, in the light of the present planetary crisis, constitutes an innovative archaism in the time of modernity. Innovative archaisms, as I have argued, are in advance of the progressively desolating time of modernity.

For this and kindred reasons it behoves us to conduct our discussion in another idiom by changing the grammar behind our epistemic categories in the way Hau'ofa changed the grammar of perspective. For to keep speaking of sustainable development, strategic adjustments, regional food or other securities, market integration, property rights, remittance economies or policy-driven education is to settle for the grammar—and therefore the codes—of northern or neoliberal modernity while looking through extant southern practices that permit us to live, know and travel in ways uncharted by the overlong and overdrawn age of surplus accumulation. If modernity defines itself through a process whereby it relationally relegates to areas of darkness what is, in fact, constitutively necessary to it, then it

is time to shine a light on these dark areas in order to transform the 'death drive' driving surplus accumulation. The challenge is to see a bull's skull in a bicycle seat—and that presupposes a new grammar of the imagination where selected ethical archaisms, working in concert with the synchronous scientific present, gain visibility.

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I am grateful to Jason Titifanue for the fapui reference, to Robert Nicole for pointing me in the direction of Futa Helu's essays and to Caitlin Vandertop for alerting me to Ernst Bloch's 1932 paper on the dialectical relations between synchronism and non-synchronism.

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