To speak about the making of a generation is to speak about the shaping of subjectivity in a world defined by encompassment. In this arena, the construction of the person figures centrally in any understanding of the forms and implications of the conversation between Melanesia and the West, not least because the concepts of personhood indigenous to Melanesia and Papua New Guinea in particular are significantly different from those embodied in Western practice and texts and presupposed by the colonially inspired political institutions that define the emerging states of Oceania. Concepts such as nationhood, liberal democracy, civil rights, and electoral politics presuppose at least a Western-like image of the individual (ideologically defined as an autonomous, self-animated, and self-enclosed agent). The emergence of the nation-states of Melanesia, oriented toward and encompassed by Western culture and capitalism, entails the evolution of Western-like conceptions of the individual (embedded, for example, in World Bank policy about how these nations should organize their economies in terms of a free market [LiPuma 1996]). To so speak of modernity is to place the construction of identity in the path of desire, not least being the desire of Melanesians to internalize the modern, to consume and be consumed by the goods and services of the capitalist economy, to entertain “rights” not known or needed before (e.g., the right of privacy), and the desire to redefine the political so that the polarity of power reverses course and flows back from the white West to black Melanesia. All of these motivate the emergence and increasing visibility of the individual facet of personhood because the individual is the main and mythologized locus of those types of desire particular to modernity. To connect the study of the person to the evolving of modernity and the larger set of forces reshaping life throughout Melanesia is to carry the ethnography of personhood onto a terrain rarely visited by anthropology, and certainly not the anthropology of Melanesia—which in theory and description has long been bound to the local level. To approach the construction of the person in the context and conflicts of modernity is to problematize the interpenetration and interfunctionality of levels: for the people of Melanesia, the ongoing dialectic between the construction of subjectivities at a
local level and the encompassment of Melanesia. If there was any single feature that characterized the up-and-coming generation of Maring it was the emergence of the individual aspect of the person, the knowledge, desires, and life trajectories of these agents increasingly attuned to the world beyond the walls of kinship and community. For their part, the agents of Westernization glorified and naturalized the individual aspect of local persons, rewarding those Maring who “used their own initiative,” “thought for themselves,” “were their own person,” “took care of their own interests,” and so on.

More than anything else such an account of personhood requires a sense of proportion. Studies that overemphasize or underestimate relations of sameness and difference between Melanesian and Western societies hobble our efforts to understand how the dynamics of encompassment reconfigure local forms of personhood. The necessity is to clarify the character of relativity. And also to relativize relativity: for what is considered (and contested) as “local” today has been influenced by Western presence and pressures, just as what is considered Western (parliamentary-style government, capitalism on Bougainville, the use of all-purpose money in bridewealth payments) bears an indelible Melanesian imprint. In other words, a theory of relativity is crucial because all scientific and most public sphere discourse about Melanesia (even when Melanesians are themselves the authors of such discourse) is comparative.

The concept of the person also has another and different hold on anthropological understanding. The reason is that ethnography—and one could go back to Malinowski and the mythological origins of fieldwork—has always held, indeed been founded on, if not an overt contradiction, then two positions that want careful negotiation and management of perspective. Subsuming itself to the universe of the Other, anthropology has argued for the unique and special character of each and every culture. At least in part because the genesis of anthropology was inseparable from the encompassment of the Other by the “West,” anthropology has positioned itself against all versions of ethnocentricism (including in-house varieties) that would otherwise reduce the others to some version of the West. And, as I have argued elsewhere (LiPuma 1998), this defense of the “otherness” of the Others led ethnographers to ignore precisely those conditions of encompassment that made their own enterprise possible. Within the academic field of anthropology, a much more positive political value was placed on an ethnography of difference than on sameness. Certainly a primary trope of anthropology is to criticize others’ studies (especially by the preceding generation of ethnographers) on the grounds that they have been compromised by ethnocentric presuppositions. This is the basis, for example, of Marilyn Strathern’s critique of Leenhardt’s study of New Caledonia; namely, that though Leenhardt recognizes that the person is
highly relational/dividual, he cannot break free from his Western bearings, leading him to posit a residual individual aspect or center (1988:268–70). For Melanesia and beyond, there has been imagined a theory of anthropological “progress” based on increasing epistemological awareness of the uniqueness of others’ cultures.

In the same breath, or at least the same texts, anthropologists have been making equally strong claims for the psychic, linguistic, and biological unity of humankind. The foundational claim is that whatever differences may exist, however much indigenous notions and practices were bound to their context of production, no matter that local cultures had their own epistemology, ethnographers could work their way into the habitus of the other, they could understand what lay behind local practices and translate and reproduce this for a Western audience of, minimally, peers. No less a student of other-ness than Stanley Tambiah began his Morgan lectures (1984) with the statement that the ethnographic project begins in the understanding that there are human “continuities of experience” as well as common “existential problems” (e.g., death) that engender a “psychic unity” across time and culture (1990:1). If the rationale for an anthropology rested on the first claim, the possibility of a viable ethnography adequate to its task rested on the second. In practice, anthropological claims of distance and the “uniqueness” of cultures coexist and co-occur with claims of proximity and sameness (although the latter claims have not been the subject of the same theoretical reflection). In the absence of these claims, anthropology would be drained of purpose, ethnography of meaning: the enterprise would be nothing more than self-analysis exoticised. Nowhere are these twin claims brought into relief or contested more than in reviews of the character of persons. In sum, there is no way to grasp the journey toward modernity by the nation-states and cultures of Melanesia or the anthropological project itself without clarifying the character of personhood. Moreover, the two are linked inseparably because an account adequate to an understanding of modernity in Melanesia must be able to grasp the conditions of its own construction.

Reconceptualizing Personhood

I would like to begin by setting out the primary argument, not least because of the complexity of engaging an issue that crosscuts so many dimensions (e.g., linguistic, political, juridical, medical) and social levels. The perspective developed here takes issue with theories of personhood that posit the self as fully individualized and defined in terms of internal attributes, thereby presuming that the “individual” is an ontologically privileged transhistorical and transcultural (meaning noncultural) cate-
gory. From this viewpoint, the difference between persons in Western and Melanesian societies is a function of the content given this category. Though this view dominates Western social science, it is a minority report in the anthropology of Oceania that has progressively stressed the difference between our images of the person and those indigenous to Melanesia. In this light and against this background, I would also like to take issue with the view that Western and Melanesian images of personhood are fully incommensurable because the West constructs individuals while the societies of Melanesia construct dividuals or relational persons. Though this theory is politically appealing to an anthropology that fetishizes difference, it is ethnographically, theoretically, and, in the context of the emerging nation-state, also politically troubled. In making this argument, the analysis cannot help but promote a dialogue with the relational position staked out by Marilyn Strathern (1984, 1990) and others. The intention is to clear a theoretical space to better explore the conceptual and historical relationship between Western and Melanesian persons. The goal is not to refute the relational position as much as to embed it in a theory that enshrines its insights and strengths while allowing us to transcend its weaknesses.

In all cultures, I will argue, there exist both individual and dividual modalities or aspects of personhood. The individual facet emerges in the use of language (insofar as speech metapragmatically4 centers itself through the use and/or presupposition of an “I”), in the existence of autonomous physiological systems of the human body, and by the fact that the body serves as the ground and signifier of the person, most importantly as the locus of an intentionality that is shared between, and thus presupposes, agents (Lambek 1993). By equal account, all societies encode relational, dividual aspects of personhood. This is true insofar as the identities of subjects and objects vary across contexts (domesticated animals can both be treated as members of the family and be “put to sleep,” eaten, used in medical experiments, etc.), each language inscribes the use of a “you” as well as an “I,” and identity and self-construction are the result of socially created relations (ethnicity, ritual, etc.). The foregrounding and hence transparency of individual and dividual aspects of personhood will vary across contexts for action within a given culture. More, cultures differ critically in the ontological status, visibility, and force granted individual/relational aspects of persons, especially as these appear in the construction of their own comparative discourses about persons, such as justifications or explanations for actions. From this view, it is a misunderstanding to assume either that the social emerges out of individual actions (a powerful strain in Western ideology that has seeped into much of its scientific epistemology) or that the individual ever completely disappears by virtue of indigenous forms of relational totalization (such as those posited
for certain New Guinea societies). It would seem rather that persons emerge precisely from that tension between dividual and individual aspects/relations. And the terms and conditions of this tension, and thus the kind (or range) of persons that are produced, will vary historically.

In this regard, encompassment and the progress of modernity in Melanesia simultaneously create and capitalize on the foregrounding, affirmation, and promotion of the individual aspect of this tension thus leading to a greater visibility and public presence of persons as individuals (see Foster 1995b). To assume, in other words, that there exists an opposition between societies based on substance and those based on relations, cultures of fully dividual persons versus a Western world of individuals, is not only to accept Western ideological notions of the person (which sees the person as undividedly individual), but to use that ideology to construct the Other as its opposite image. Indeed, a general problem in the conceptualization of the relation between Melanesia and the West (taken collectively) is that accounts of Melanesian thought and practices are contrasted not with equivalent accounts of Western notions of personhood, but with Western ideology. Because our understanding of Melanesian persons takes place in that field of contrasts with Western persons (in theory and in the practice of ethnography), an adequate analysis of Melanesia is inseparable from an adequate account of the Western construction of persons. Unfortunately, I would argue, many recent analyses define the Melanesian person against an inadequate account of the Western person, which leads them to overstate the differences, a failure that, quite consonantly, is most apparent in the contexts of ethnography and of modernity.5

Those who hold a relational view of Melanesian personhood, who in Josephides (1991) words practice the “new Melanesian ethnography,” read the following contrasts from the ethnography.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WESTERN</th>
<th>MELANESIAN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons are conceptually distinct from the relations that unite them and define them.</td>
<td>Persons are the compound and plural site of the relations that bring them together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivity is grasped and symbolized as a unification of pluralities. Singular person is an individual.</td>
<td>Collective sociality/life is defined as an essential unity. Singular person is a composite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society and the individual are in a relation of opposition, contestation, and hierarchy.</td>
<td>The social and the individual are parallel, homologous, and equivalent.</td>
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The contrast here is between the West’s own self-understanding, which exists both ideologically and normatively (as embodied in constitutional and statutory law, ethnviews of aesthetics, economic reasoning, the relation of individuals to the government, etc.), and an account of the foregrounded elements of personhood in traditional, nonencompassed

Social life consists in movement from one internal/external state to another.

The person is the subject of an explicit and visible ideology: individualism.

An individual’s behavior and intentions are interpreted as the public expression of inner qualities (greed, honesty, etc.).

Persons mature biogenetically as a consequence of their own inner potential.

Persons depend on themselves for knowledge about their internal selves, i.e., self-knowledge.

A person’s power lies in his/her control over others; power is a possession.

Persons are axiomatically same-sex; social identity should fully replicate one’s natural physiological state.

Society stands over and against the individual as an external force that imposes norms, rules, and constraining conventions.

Its commodity logic leads people to search for knowledge about things and to make an explicit practice out of knowing the nature of objects.

Social life consists in movement from one mode of sociality to another.

There is no explicit ideology of persons, only contextually situated images.

An individual’s behavior and intentions are interpreted in terms of his or her actions in context.

Persons grow transactionally as the beneficiary of other people’s actions.

Persons depend on others for knowledge about themselves, and they are not the authors of this knowledge.

A person’s power lies in his/her ability to do and act; power is a relation.

Persons alternate between same-sex and cross-sex identities; social identity is detached from one’s physiological state.

Society runs parallel to the individual; it is embodied as a disposition to think, believe, and feel in a certain way.

Its gift logic leads people to search for knowledge about persons and to make a practice out of knowing the person-making powers of objects.

The Modernity of the Person in Melanesia
Melanesia. The Western notions of the person against which the Melanesian ethnography appears are ideological inasmuch as they privilege and foreground individual elements of Western personhood while masking, subordinating, and sublimating the more dividual facets. For the West, the notion of the person as wholly individual (as an autonomous, self-contained, self-moving agent) is constructed historically, contested, at best a partial description, and critical to forms of “misrecognition” (Bourdieu 1984) and abstract domination (Postone 1993) common to capitalism. Although I can only gloss here what is implicated in the Western production of the person, it is nevertheless necessary to at least locate the Western person because it constitutes the background and presuppositions for our discussion and ethnography of the Melanesian person.

The person in capitalist society has two defining features: (1) the person is composed, historically and culturally, of dividual and individual aspects; and (2) paradoxically, the person appears as the natural and transhistorical individual. The double character of the person is intrinsically bound to, and homologous with, the character of commodity-determined labor. Unlike Melanesia, where products are distributed by ties of kinship and community, and overt relations of power and domination, in capitalist societies “labor itself replaces these relations by serving as a kind of objective means by which the products of other are acquired [such that] a new form of interdependence comes into being where . . . one’s own labor or labor products function as the necessary means of obtaining the products of others. In serving as such a means, labor and its product preempt that function on the part of manifest social relations” (Postone 1986:6–7). So it is that commodity-determined labor is mediated by structures such as that of personhood (and also class) that it itself constitutes. The social relations of capitalism are thus based on a quasi-independent structure that stands apart from, and opposed to, persons understood as individuals. Labor, here, as socially mediating activity creates relations among persons that, though social and containing dividual elements, assume a quasi-objective and individualist character. And as capitalism develops, as now throughout Melanesia, the mediating function of labor slowly but inevitably reshapes the cultural form of the person. The person becomes progressively reified as a self-contained, self-shaping, independent agent. What this means is that a defining feature of capitalism is that the ontological forms, such as labor and the individual, that appear to underlie the social ones (individuals’ actions) are not only themselves social but have their sociality disguised. The extension of this view is that an ideology of the person as fully individual is a necessary feature of the form and reproduction of the person in capitalist society. Certainly one of the major features that distinguishes Melanesia from the West is the absence of a sanctified ideology of persons that is necessary to their construction.
Nonetheless, the ideology of the Western person as fully individual only partially conceals the reality that Western persons are interdependent, defined in relation to others, depend on others for knowledge about themselves, grasp power as the ability to do and act, grow as the beneficiary of others’ actions, and so forth. Most of the features of Melanesian personhood cited above also apply to the West, however much they may be misrecognized or pushed into the background. It is at this depth of sociohistorical construction that we discover that the true ontological form is not, as the West would imagine it, the individual; it is the dual person delineated by both dividual and individual facets, the basis of what anthropology knows as the psychic unity of humankind, which opens the possibility of an ethnography of Others. Simply phrased, it is because persons are inherently dual that an ethnography of Melanesia is possible.

Once we grasp the character of personhood in societies defined by the commodity form, it becomes evident that our real danger is in understanding the preceding inventory of differences as a totalizing opposition: as indicative of two incommensurable forms of personhood and sociality, rather than as two socially and historically variable ways of relating dividuality to individuality. The contrast between the West and Melanesia is telling because along this epistemological divide Western cultures place the greatest emphasis on individuality whereas Melanesian cultures stress dividuality. My argument is that we should not replace the “ethnocentric” notion that Melanesians are sovereign unified subjects who operate as causes of sociohistorical effects with the idea that they are partible subjects who operate as effects of multiple lines of determination: neither notion is a productive description of personhood for either Melanesians or for Westerners. The ethnographic goal, I would argue, is to uncover the conditions (e.g., encompassment by the West) under which dividual and individual aspects of personhood emerge and are hidden.

Ethnographers, of course, have assumed all along that whatever forms personhood may take there are sites of commensurability and the possibility of translation. The very practice of description assumes that between we and they, Westerners and Melanesian/others, there is never absolute separation of substance and agency, individuality and dividuality. No matter what is argued theoretically, ethnography as intercultural communication and experience presupposes at least the partial unification of person and agency. To juxtapose a theory of Melanesia that separates the person and the agent to a Western image (ideology) of the unity of person and agency is to render these two forms of society incommensurable, to push relativity to the point at which ethnography is no longer possible. It is to say that there is no point of essential similarity, no sameness between Melanesian personhood and Western personhood that would allow translation: the “I” of the Melanesian sentence would have no trans-
Ethnography and the Person

Though an earlier anthropology assumed that Melanesian cultures were comprised of Western-like individuals and a later anthropology denied the existence of such individuals, ethnography all along has presupposed both a critical element of difference and a fundamental sameness. For however cultures construct intentionality, and those of Oceania clearly imagine intentionality differently from the West (LiPuma 1994), they must always link agency to personhood. That is, the sentence must always have a speaker, the agent must always have a name (even if that personal name is fully bound up in a system of relations), and bodies perform acts (e.g., observe taboos), acquire habits and language, and undergo changes independent of one another (e.g., birth and birthing, illnesses, and death).

What I am getting at is that a Westerner can have access to Melanesian intentionality and a Melanesian can have access to Western forms of intentionality because both operate in terms of dividual and individual aspects of personhood. Whatever else ethnographers have said in statements of theory and method they have always presupposed (1) that persons are the locus of intentionality, (2) that every agent (the ethnographer especially) has an identity that is neither reducible to nor wholly predictable from his/her position in a system of relations, and (3) that a person’s identity is more than culturally inscribed; it is continually reshaped in a life-world that is never reducible to a fixed system of social relations and values because people are confronted with, and encompassed by, unpredictable circumstances (like crop blights and plagues) and foreign phenomena (like colonialism and capitalism) that, transcending and transgressing the limits of understanding, elicit new ways of being in the world. Accordingly, the succession of generations is never a mechanical process, the production of identity never a finitude. Ethnographers have assumed this to be the case in a double sense.
The first is that every ethnography presupposes the conditions and possibility of coordinated intentionality. This is the premise that the people with whom ethnographers live and interact have beliefs, desires, and judgments, that is to say, intentions to act, and that we as ethnographers have access to those beliefs, desires, and judgments—sufficient access that we can grasp and understand the action of others as deliberate and meaningful. For example, if an ethnographer witnesses a curing ceremony (a Maring shaman places leaves and water in a bamboo tube, bespells it, and then passes the tube over the body of the ill) the ethnographer must presume that those involved hold global beliefs about the form and value of curing and specific beliefs about the form and efficacy of the particular cure; that they have the desire to cure the ill individual; and that they have made the judgment that this curing ceremony is appropriate to the illness in question. Even the simple and seemingly transparent act of watching a woman and her young daughter plant taro, which we may take as commonsensical and demanding no explanation (even a note in our field diary), presumes beliefs (about the value of taro and when it should be planted), desires (to be productive, help and support kinsmen, etc.), and judgments (this is the appropriate time and place to plant), and takes as axiomatic that ethnographers can and do have access to them. Ethnography is founded on the idea that a coordination of intentionality is cross-culturally possible; that a person from one culture has the bases to grasp and interpret the actions of a person from another culture. Ethnography is founded on the idea that a coordination of intentionality is cross-culturally possible; that a person from one culture has the bases to grasp and interpret the actions of a person from another culture. Ethnography rests on the assumption of the ontological existence of the person; an agent defined minimally by the fact that he/she has beliefs, desires, and judgments, thereby constituting intentions and thus the possibility of coordinated intentionality or shared meanings (with, for example, the ethnographer).

The second premise of ethnography is that it can be transcendent in a social sense: that ethnographers can overcome both the social and the epistemological separation that almost all ethnography, the study of New Guinea societies being where such separation is at its zenith, is condemned to. The premise is that the accounts produced by ethnographers will not simply be an objectification of their own culturally and individually defined beliefs, desires, and judgments. On one hand, they will not simply understand, thereby reducing the Other’s categories to their own epistemology. The idea is that the ethnographer can find points of convergence that allow him/her to determine, explore, and relate the shape of indigenous epistemology in a way that does not do violence to that epistemology or the acts and events that presuppose it. On the other hand, ethnography must assume that its agents, by virtue of taking up a position analogous to
local agents or capitalizing on indigenous means of integrating strangers, can make a place for themselves (a social position) in the societies they study. The integration of the ethnographer into any society, even those with highly relational images of the person, is possible only through the space of individuality, precisely because an ethnographer has no socially, locally created identity. In this respect, ethnographers resemble, at least for Melanesia, big-men or chiefs: namely, agents who possess the power to express and enforce their individuality. In terms of modernity, the ethnographer (like the missionary and the health official) is a locus of individuality and an instrument and index of historical change. Or, to note this a different way, the dividual is to the individual as culture is to nature, as the social/ritual order is to entropy, as the clarity of custom is to the epistemic murkiness of modernity. For Melanesians and others, the conundrum is that Western notions such as democracy, freedom, and civil society (because they are founded on the concept of individual rights) foreground the individual facet of personhood in societies in which sociality, order, knowledge, and indeed the entire structure of intentionality have been mostly (though never exclusively) defined in terms of the dividual facet of personhood.

What this means is that ethnography as social action presumes the existence of an intrinsic connection between individuality and social dividuality. Ethnography in Oceania has long been based on, and taken advantage of, the fact that the very incorporation of a Western ethnographer into a society that privileges the relational aspect of personhood is itself a privileged position from which to see social life. In other words, ethnography not only presupposes an individual aspect to Melanesian personhood but uses that aspect as an entrance point into indigenous lifeways. This individualist aspect would be much more transparent if anthropologists routinely deconstructed the space of being an “informant” in a society that does (or at least did) not recognize such a “role.” Certainly, in the era of modernity what needs to be analyzed is the construction of the practice and position of information mediation and mediator (i.e., informant) in the face of requests for social information by anthropologists, colonizers, missionaries, government officials, and other emissaries of Westernization.

The encompassment of Melanesia is simultaneously objective and subjective. Further, it underlines that these objective and subjective moments of encompassment are intrinsically connected. Agents interpret transformations in the objective structure through the prism of the concepts, desires, and dispositions already instilled within them even as these transformations redefine these concepts, desires, and dispositions. Nowhere is this more telling or socially transformative than in the construction of the subjectivity of the up-and-coming generation. The condi-
tion of modernity under which the junior generation has been raised calls for, elicits, valorizes, and ultimately rewards a new kind of subject, a new kind of person. A consumer, a citizen, a Christian. On these grounds, the chapter has developed two interrelated arguments with respect to Melanesian personhood. The first is that there has always been an individual aspect of personhood, even if this aspect was traditionally in the background and on the margins of practice. The second argument is that this individual aspect is becoming more important, visible and foregrounded with modernity. In this respect, modernity seeks to move what was traditionally marginal to the Melanesian person to the epicenter of social life. The move entails not only the foregrounding and valorization of the individual, it entails the construction of the modern Western concepts of a culture and a society because in the cultures of capitalism the individual and the social receive their values from their mutual opposition. The individual is defined in opposition to the social just as society is perceived as an integration of individuals. The remainder of the chapter sets the stage for grasping the emergence of the individual by tracing a kind of history of the Maring person.\textsuperscript{12}

\textit{The Person in Maring Exchange}

The assumption, long made by ethnographers, that there exists a necessary and universal connection between substance and agency, dividuality and individuality, is more than a methodological trope or a descent into ethnocentrism. For most ethnographers, it has its basis in their ethnographic experiences. We could retrace our steps back to Leenhardt and the founding of comparative studies of the person (1947) to see that even as he explores the character of relationality, he is aware that there must be a connection between agency and cause. The connection becomes apparent when we examine the construction of persons in, and across, practices and contexts for action, which are also instances of self-(re)presentation. To do this, I would like to explore the Maring concept of the person; specifically in the context of exchange that appears to exemplify the relationship between dividual and individual aspects of personhood. The evidence suggests that the “person” in exchange emerges precisely from the tension between dividual and individual aspects, and that is particularly true in instances where the exchange goes awry and there is no coordination of intentionality. Moreover, I would argue that tension between dividuality and individuality has long been a common refrain in Melanesian society (see Kulick 1992), though it goes under other names (such as the contrast people make between agents whose intentions are transparent and who act
openly and in public versus agents who operate secretly and privately and whose intentions are easily imagined as nefarious).

The Maring concept of truth holds that truth has an inner and outer dimension and that it is inscribed in the act itself, an idea that has been explored in the context of “veiled speech” (Strathern 1975). The surface or appearance of an action, its skin to use the Maring’s own metaphor, characteristically manifests deception, lies, and dissembling. Its aim is to manipulate the beliefs, desires, and judgments that surround the presentation and reception of the gift. By contrast, the inner core of the action is its truth and power to pull or bend others. Language is thought to lie on the skin of the action; it is the primary (though not only) means of disguising the “true” intentionality of an actor. In this respect, the importance of exchange lies in the virtue that gifts are indexical; they are a part of that which they express. Nevertheless, the social practice of gift-giving is still infused with manifold intentions and active dissembling. When agents evaluate a gift, they expect a difference between its surface or “skin” and its more “interior” truths. This inside-outside schema is the Maring way of organizing the hierarchy of intentions that will be embodied in a given action. For example, the presentation of a gift will include a verbally stated intention (e.g., the gift is because you are my affine), a presupposed though unstated intention (e.g., the gift helps to discharge my outstanding bride-payment debt), and a disguised intention (e.g., the gift will be followed by a request for use of your garden lands). Conversely, every request for a gift can be seen as the maintenance of a social relation, repayment for a gift given previously, or as an extortion based on power, such as the power to harm through sorcery and magic. The intentionality of a gift is such that the beliefs, desires, and judgments of the recipient concerning that gift are often read onto the donor. If a recipient “feels” subjugated by a gift, he/she may well interpret the subjugation as intrinsic to the gift-giving, and thus part of the intentionality of the act itself.

Maring locate intention in the relationship between an action and its influence rather than in the “mind” of the agent. There is no means in Maring to speak about someone’s intentions or judgments apart from what they do and other people’s experience of those acts. There is no way to differentiate between the mental dimension of an act and the act itself; rather the action is understood to embody a hierarchy of intentions. Determining the meaning or intent of some action, “digging out its root” to use local metaphor, is a function of understanding and assessing its inner and outer layers. In this respect, the agent is the fulcrum of the relationship, the cause of a specific response inscribed in the relationship itself, such that the agents appear passive in the sense that they are constituted by that momentary crystallization of relationship—what we refer to as an event. The actions of agents appear to be sucked out of them by the com-
plex of relationships with others in terms of which they act (M. Strathern 1988:272–74). Agency and cause appear to live separate lives.

At the same time, however, agents are also aware that nothing can guarantee the execution, meaning, interpretation, or aftermath of a specific act of exchange. The structure of clan affiliations, relations of affinity, the history of exchange between the parties involved: none of these can guarantee the actions of the participants, and, more precisely, the unfolding of intentionality. There is always a possibility that one of the agents will back out of the exchange or interpret/intend the gift as an act of violence or extortion. There is always the possibility that the agents, as the body and embodiment of intentionality, will tell (cause) a lie or dissemble. There always exists a degree of uncertainty that is at least partly brought under control by representing persons. So it is said of certain persons that they “see gifts badly,” meaning that they often ascribe malevolent intentions to the donor; other persons are portrayed as tolerant and inclined to be generous. In the same spirit, some ancestors are portrayed as generous, to look favorably on the gifts (of pig) offered to them and to reciprocate by helping the living; a smaller number of ancestors, by contrast, are depicted as ungracious and unwilling to help their descendants. And, just as a man will cut off an exchange partner who sees gifts badly, so he will refuse to propitiate an ungenerous ancestor. In this respect, people classify the behavior of others. They create a comparative discourse about interpretation of the intentionality of gifts that is inflected by, but never reducible to, the complex of relations shaping the event. The “scandal” of the gift is that there is a thin subjective line between generosity and treachery—even in some cases between brothers, what Maring ideology lauds as the most presupposed and predictable of kin relations.

The Maring not only thought and talked about people comparatively, but also created and recognized person’s biographies. How a person exchanges—simply and practically, that person’s pattern of action over time—was a central element in the biography. The performance of giving objectified the affinity between exchange partners. But the act of objectification, that performance, was undertaken by the “singular subject.” This was exemplified by the language of giving that centers itself indexically in the I. Thus, the presentation of a gift will use such ritualized phrases as: “I give this to you nothing” (without expectations). No matter how set the field of relations, no matter how regimented the exchange context, the inscription of intention/meaning was not necessarily transparent or predetermined. The individual aspect emerged because performances were individuated, and the history of these performances generated a person’s biography, name, reputation. And the history of people’s performance was circulated, becoming part of collective memory such that the memory itself becomes an aim and presupposition of future exchanges.
(e.g., raising one’s name). Though, according to Maring, the reasons why others were the way they were can never in principle be known, and those I talked with were unwilling to even speculate about why some agents often “see gifts badly,” there was always the possibility that a person would be the basis of his/her own actions, and that some agents were comparatively more likely to be the basis/cause of their actions than others. There was always the possibility that individuality would help to shape the meaning and implications of an exchange event. So it was not only that the person comes into being in the context of relationships: to some degree agents always act as their own cause because they always had the option of doing so or not. It was not just that agents come into focus with respect to their relationships to others but that they do so as a matter of choice, however presupposed and overdetermined this choice may be.13

Within Maring society, the individual aspect of personhood had little visibility in many contexts for action, such as exchange and production. There was no ideological endorsement of individuality, as occurs in the West generally and especially in the United States. People did not simply valuate others by the way that others activate relationships (i.e., successfully or unsuccessfully), though this was surely critical; people evaluate others also through their personal biographies of activation of relationships. And the difference between the way different persons activated relationships, and more precisely, the memory of these differences as instantiated in people’s comparative discourse about action (e.g., the way people are represented by others), was their individuality. For the Maring, there was always the presence of individuality, though a notion of unknowability masked its presence. One way to interpret this evidence was that the difference between the West and Melanesia did not lie only in the respective emphasis they place on individuality versus dividuality, but also on the way in which they objectify and represent persons’ actions. The objectification of behavior in the West converts acts that are both dividual and individual into pure individuality, whereas the objectification of behavior in Melanesia converted dividuality/individuality into a knowable set of relations and unknowable reasons for action.

The corollary to the involvement of persons in exchange was the relationship between these persons and the things that flowed between them. The possession of an object like a bird plume engendered a partial and contextualized identity (affiliation) between the owner and the object owned, a partiality that was revealed in the reality of the enjoyment of its use values, even as that object was destined to be alienated by decay, loss, theft, or sale. The product can be separated from its producer, the plume from the man who captured it, with a partial though recoverable loss of self. For Maring, as for Westerner, there was never a one-to-one correspondence between owner and object, producer and product, although in
certain situations it might appear that way. What distinguished Westerners from Maring and Melanesians more generally was that Westerners presumed ideologically that there was an identity between an agent and what that agent owned and that persons were the sole authors of their own actions, whereas Maring presumed, but did not submit to ideological reflection, that a partial connection existed between owner and object, and that agents author their behavior in relation to, and with, others. For Maring and for Westerners, persons are least like what they are, have, and do in the domestic sphere, and more so along the avenues of exchange and circulation. The error here would be to assume that the one-to-one relationship between owner and object, the necessary and highly inculcated form of capitalist epistemology, accurately reflects the structure of Western life, and to then conceptualize Maring society as its opposite, thereby ignoring or having to “explain away” those instances where Westerners act as if no correspondence existed, and Maring act as if one did.

The direction of an intention away from the “self” revealed the intention in the act (of giving) and the coordination of intentionality, each agent acting as the other’s effects. The gift a person created was evidence of his/her effort in relation to an “other” who in that sense incorporated that effort. At the same time, however, the form of the gift (its size, quality, form of presentation, etc.) and therefore its intentionality was never fully predetermined (meaning that the gift was indexical and hence a statement about the current state of this relationship). The result was that in the act of exchange the person emerged—became visible—as dividual and as individual because that effort both belonged to the recipient and was never totally predetermined by virtue of existing relations. This tension revealed itself when there was an absence of a coordination of intentionality. Donor and recipient may have different interpretations of the gift: the beliefs, desires, and judgments of one may be very different from the other. The attempt to reproduce or grow relations through exchange may or may not be successful. A clear example is a case described by Riebe (1987) where an exchange misfired due to a lack of a coordination of intentionality, leading to accusations of sorcery and an eventual murder. Similarly, it was sometimes the case that a gift earmarked to support one relation was redirected toward another. Here is an example.

Yingok has three wives, the middle wife having been with him for seven years and the youngest wife two years. The kin of the youngest expect a payment of cooked pork from Yingok and indeed Yingok seems to have intimated that two of his larger male pigs are destined for them. However, he slaughters the animals as part of a ceremony for his second wife’s clansmen, in payment, he says, for her children. The relatives of the youngest
wife are miffed at the outcome and threaten to take him to court. Yingok readily acknowledges the claims of his youngest wife’s clan, but disparages them as greedy and says that they did not “hear him properly.”

The case in question clearly indicates that the gift or effort cannot be self-consumed, but also that its destination and thus its intentional effects are neither preordained nor free from ambiguity. The problem with a purely dividual reading of this event is that it leaves no room for contingency or creativity. Interestingly, given the fact that the Maring have a rather deterministic ideology, this event, when recounted in the past tense, was portrayed as inevitable and very presupposed, as though Yingok’s decision was simply called forth by the relational field in front of him. Just as a “Western” ideological reading would see only the individual—Yingok trying to strategically maximize his resources to improve his social status—so Maring grasp his behavior as predetermined by obligations toward his affines. Analysis is lost here if it forgets that the power of these ideologies to construct reality is simultaneously their power to disguise it, to produce forms of misrecognition essential to the reproduction of that reality.14

The Practice of the Individual

If local representations of exchange masked the presence of the individual, there was another practice in which the individual facet of personhood could not be more transparent. Indeed, it is the one local practice defined by its expression. The practice in question is, of course, sorcery.15 Whereas other local practices presupposed constraining relationships that consume and devalue the individual, sorcery devalues the social through the wanton consumption of other members of the social body. It could be said that until the progress of Westernization sorcery was the indigenous name for instances and acts of individuality. So a person who was inordinately successful in relation to others (in hunting, pig-raising, etc.) was suspected of sorcery. And just as sorcery was the expression of individuality, so those persons who rose above others could only have managed this through some form of sorcery. The argument is that the Maring knew the individual element of personhood in two ways: in practices such as exchange in which the individual element was ideologically masked and in the practice of sorcery where it comes to the fore and in this respect challenges the indigenous image that the social is the paramount cultural value. Further, I would suggest that one reason that the advance of modernity has been
accompanied by an upsurge in the practice of sorcery (LiPuma 1998) is that they share the same underlying epistemology. For the Maring, sorcerers were as powerful as they are marginal. They expressed that facet of all of us that is better left sublimated and mute. While ethnographers frequently grasp sorcery in terms of cause and effect, viewing it as the prosecution of physical ends by symbolic means, the Maring focused much more on the personhood of the sorcerer. They spoke first of the sorcerer as someone who wantonly disregarded the limits of kinship and thus of morality. All social relations had the propensity to be violent or peaceful, reciprocal or nonreciprocal, mutually beneficial or predatory. A moral person was someone who modulated and controlled these propensities in respect to social distance. But the sorcerer could not. Greed overcomes him, envy “eats” him, and so he turns on his own kin. The sorcerer does not “walk on the road”—a description that was equally a metaphor of the public and visible paths that join residential hamlets. Rather, the sorcerer “walks in the bush,” hidden and hiding from the comings and goings of everyday sociality. Where normal people made “noise” to announce their presence, the sorcerer treaded silently to conceal his movements. Sorcery was the inverse of wealth creation; it was selfishness carried to its most profane result.

Sorcerers thought only of themselves, casting aside their social obligations to others. They “want things only for themselves,” thus expressing a possessiveness, a sense of greed, that was the opposite of sharing and reciprocity. The sorcerer “throws away” the kinship relations that defined him in social space, and becomes the sole and only cause of his own behavior. The intentionality of the sorcerer was opaque and unfathomable because he acted only in his own interest. Whereas the ancestor spirits (including nowadays Jesus) might attack a wayward man to punish him for having spurned his social commitments—not least the imperative to share food with kin—sorcerers attacked their own kind for self-aggrandizing and malevolent purposes. They acted without regard for the well-being of their community and in this regard defined themselves in opposition to it. For this reason, the sorcerer must be stopped at all costs, and indeed he was the one type of person who may be killed and killed justifiably by his own close kin: for his uncontrolled individualism threatened the nature of the social itself. A sorcerer’s *nomane* (sentience and culture brought about by the socializing influence of kin) was “twisted” and “crooked” (see Strathern and Stewart 1996 for the parallel Hagen concept of *noman*). So the Maring said that “sorcerers are not part of us though we know they live among us”—or at least so it was told in indigenous ideology.

But this was only one of a number of stories that people related about sorcery. They also knew that it was very reckless to discount the reality
that someone living nearby, even though they may appear oh so normal, could be deeply engaged in sorcery. In this sense, the sorcerer as a “species” of person was an abstract personification of a set of actions and relations. And so people admitted that anyone, a man, a woman, regardless of age or social position, may and can use sorcery if overcome by greed, anger, or envy. The sorcerer led a secret double life. My housemate Gou put it this way: “You believe all along that this man you know, even one of your own near kinsmen, respects the customs of reciprocity, but actually he wants to take and destroy what’s yours without giving anything in return.” Sorcerers almost always “saw things badly” although they pretended to “think straight.” The duplicity lay in the fact that the “skin of the behavior” of someone who practices sorcery simply disguised its twisted intentionality—an intentionality defined by possessiveness, a quest for accumulation at the expense of reciprocity, a disregard of kinship in one’s own interests; in short, the sorcerer takes himself as the primary value. Note that what the Maring perceived to be the worst traits of the sorcerer—such as his compulsion to possess power, accumulate things, and live in privacy—the West understands as the natural and universal attributes of persons qua persons. In acting as agents, sorcerers internalized or consumed the relations of which they were composed. They literally cannibalized the life force (min) of their own kin. In this respect, sorcerers exhibit, but in the most false way known to Maring, the knowledge of their internal compositions and capacities in the response of others.

What Maring said about sorcerers indicates that they used to be, and in 1980 to a great extent still were, the most visible, telling, and forceful expression of the individual aspect of personhood. Though markedly antisocial, sorcery was the exemplar and name for the articulation of unbridled and transparent individuality at the expense of social relatedness. It was the surfacing of the should-be-sublimated dimension of the human psyche. In this regard, the Maring have always had much more than a casual acquaintance with the individual aspect of personhood.

**Politics and the Emergence of the Individual**

Within those societies that privilege the dividual dimensions of personhood, the individual has a critical political moment, not least as a resource of negativity. Even before the arrival of the colonial officials and missionaries people imagined the individual as the obverse of dividuated personhood. And especially since the advent of modernity (read encompassment), agents have been enabled to protest the “traditional” order by organizing action around the individual aspect. Modernity has allowed the individual to become visible, the tension more explicit, and the expres-
sion of individuality more legitimate. In the precolonial epoch, there were two recognized sites for the emergence of the individual facet: common acts of sorcery and rare cases of “wild man” behavior. In other words, the other transparent form of individualism was insanity (pym) in which a person, for no apparent reason, became disconnected from his social moorings. Both were instances in which a person’s secret or unknowable individual desires overpowered their sense of social limits, leading to the inward direction of violence against their own kin. The encompassment of Melanesia has generated a new and much more powerful context for the expression of individuality. This individuality was personified by missionaries, anthropologists, and local “informants”; it was objectified in new institutions such as schools, trade stores, and courts; it was broadcast by television, radio, newspapers, and other forms of mass media as well as by the constant migration of people between town and hinterlands. What Western modernity has in common with the traditional contexts for the expression of individuality was that it also often involved violence.

In a series of articles, Robert Foster (1992, 1993, 1995a) has examined the structure of media and communications at the national level. His enquiry underlines the extent to which the politics and practices of modernity stress individuality. Billboard, print, and radio commercials peddling soft drinks, petrol, and a symphony of other products are also on an ontological plane, advertisements for the ascendance of the individual. They emphasize that in the world of modernity the individual is the privileged site of desire and interests. In a similar though more muted and retarded sense the same thing has been happening at the local level, and for a longer time. The persons and practices of the church, health care, business, school, and the state do not simply motivate change in the way people worship, manage illness, use money, or educate their children; they inaugurate a reformation in the location of knowledge, desires, and dispositions. Perhaps the most subtle and powerful change has been the creation of local contexts for the expression of the individual aspect of personhood and the legitimation and empowerment of that aspect and its expression. All the chapters that follow, each in their own way, illustrate that in the contexts of the modern, from prayers to the Almighty to the paradise of consumer choice, the underlying and unquestioned premise is that knowledge, desires, and dispositions are embodied in, and properties of, the individual. In this image, the universe is populated by self-animating, self-enclosed, and self-interested persons who, from the bastion of their individuality, recognize that they have interests in common with other individuals and, accordingly and contractually, join with them to create a society.

The process of foregrounding the individual aspect began with the arrival of white Europeans. It was advanced through permanent contact
with such Westerners in the person of district officers, missionaries, medical personnel, ethnographers, traders, and sometimes their respective families. From the Maring perspective, these Westerners had two telling characteristics, taking as normal precisely those ways of being that indigenous life saw as aberrant. The first oddity was that these Westerners were clearly willing to step outside of social relatedness and inhabit a world where they had little or no connectedness to anyone. From the Maring slant, they appeared to be beholden to, and trusting, no one. Many Maring, in fact, found it hard at first to believe that the Westerners on the Koinambe mission station (Jimi Valley)—the VSO nurse from County Cork, the Anglican priest from San Francisco, the former policeman from Newcastle, the Summer Institute Bible translator from Western Australia, as well as the anthropologist who lived with them—were not somehow related. They believed there must be some kinship or community connection not because they were all “white” (the Maring were more than aware that all similarly colored people do not have a kinship relation) but because no one would be so individualistic. Such people seemed to have approached the world as if it were a canvas for the inscription of their own desires. Nothing symbolized this relationlessness more than the Western quest for privacy that the Maring, especially the senior generations, equated with secrecy, that, in turn, was equated with nefarious behavior (such as that of a sorcerer).

The second oddity was the Westerners’ attachment to things. They seemed so attached to their possessions that they appeared blind to the possibilities of exchange and immune from the obligations of sharing. What the Maring did not know was that they were encountering people who embodied the culture of capitalism. What they did suspect was that these people apparently defined their subjectivity in terms of their possessions. They would inexplicably tire of their clothes long before they were worn out; they purchased new watches while the old ones still happily ticked; they raised houses seemingly large enough to shelter a whole sub-clan and then lived alone; they accumulated large quantities of rice and meat but rarely held feasts. Filtered through the logic of sociality, the evidence presented to the Maring led them to misinterpret the actions of the Westerners. Some observed that the reason these Westerners had removed themselves far from the sphere of kinship was precisely so they could accumulate gifts without having to share them. Some thought that the Western pursuit of privacy (read secrecy) was the hidden source of their magic over objects, their ability to attract an unending stream of material goods. What all these experiments in understanding had in common was their attempt to make sense of persons who imagined themselves as individuals.

The lesson, inscribed in Western practices and embodied by its agents, a lesson that time and experience would reinforce over and again,
is that desire is personal. The mission school, the nature of Christianity with its belief in a one-to-one relation between a person and God, the behaviors and sermons of the Anglican minister, an introduced system of trials that focused on the culpability or guilt of specific persons, the operation of the mission trade store and other agents of capitalism (e.g., coffee buyers), and the biomedical view of illness have gradually created the understanding that the individual aspect of personhood and its expression is what modernity is all about. Persons as individuals receive grades in school, God saves individuals, not whole clans, biomedicine’s singular mission is to heal the bodies of individuals, the individual who commits a crime must pay for it: all these reinforce the concept and legitimacy of the individual facet. There is no small irony that the “progress” of modernity has coincided with a growth in sorcery and sorcery trials (LiPuma 1994), a critical reason being that sorcery was one of the primary traditional sites for the expression of the individual aspect of personhood.

The pressure brought to bear on the local notion of the person is remarkable for its unevenness, with the consequence that agents must necessarily practice, if not endorse, a bivalent epistemology, using one image of the person in rural settings and another in the context of urban, capitalist, Western-like interactions. But even in the rural locale, there is a dynamic not only between urban and rural notions but also in the way in which different aspects of modernity intersected variably and contingently with local practices and were imbued with variable degrees of legitimation. Indeed, if we take the Maring as an example, an implicational logic runs from the appearance of the trade store to the emergence of the individual aspect of personhood. The trade store implies the right of private property, exemplified by a decline in the obligation to share, and private ownership in turn is a metaphor for privacy or the self-containment of the person that is an index of individuality. The emergence of a notion of private property is exemplified by the emergence of interclan and even immediate kinship (e.g., between a man and his mother’s brother) trials for property theft. In such trials, it was typical for defendants to claim that they were only sharing/borrowing the objects in question whereas the plaintiffs argued that certain forms of sharing were no longer possible. So one plaintiff argued that “the time when no one cared who took what is over; now is a time of business, a time when individuals own things and have a final say in who can and cannot use them.” What is increasingly clear is that, under the conditions of modernity, different levels of epistemology become metaphors for, and speak on behalf of, each other, thus opening the way for the construction of a new politics of personhood. This was nowhere more true than at the crossroads of generation and gender.

The emergence of the individual aspect as a political resource, empowered by the institutions of modernity, had a telling generational
The existence and validation of extracommunal opportunities allowed members of the junior generation to pursue new forms of freedom at the expense of kinship and community. They could now cut the tendons of dependence by working on the mission station, going to high school, and generally availing themselves of opportunities outside the community. But the effect of the modern was also to compel the Maring to recalibrate the relations of obligation, duty, and compliance within the community. And no more so than with respect to women. The Maring called the modern age the “time of women”—using the pointed pidgin idiom of *tim belong meri*. The possibility of freedom allowed women to extend their sociality beyond the walls of the domestic enclave and into the emerging space of the modern public political sphere. More than their mothers could have imagined, the junior generation of women expected their beliefs, desires, and judgments to matter. They gained newfound control over the marriage process, especially in the choice of spouse and the timing of the union. In contrast to their mothers, many women of the junior generation expected to have a resonant voice in the initiation and developmental cycle of the family. They embraced Christianity because they believed its tenets were more favorable to women and because its agents gave them additional leverage in the pursuit of their individual interests. The Anglican priests inveighed in private, print, and pulpit for the “rights” of indigenous women, the locus of these rights being, of course, the individual. In particular, the Anglican clergy and the most Christian Maring of the junior generation fought against what they saw as the traditional acceptance of domestic violence against women. The Christian argument was that domestic relations were subject to the laws of God and state, for God had a one-to-one relationship with each of his children and the state protected every one its citizens. The entrance of women into a public sphere that was itself being created by modernity allowed them to participate more actively in exchange and bisnis. For women in the kingdom of kastam, the individual aspect of the person functioned as a resource to negate the existing order of power and as a doorway into the modernity of the future. Especially the elder generation of men rued this emancipation of women, however modest, and would sometimes (particularly for the benefit of foreigners like myself who knew them only in an emasculated state) wax nostalgic about a time when women knew their place and men were warriors endowed with the gumption, the fire, the presence to maintain the social order. But this time had passed. So one young woman, as her grandfather made such a speech, a speech that she had surely heard before, simply pursed her lips and smiled at me, indicating that she was as respectful of his age as she was certain that the landslide of history would bury the sound and fury of such sentiments.
Beyond the Person

As a theoretical preamble to the chapters to follow I have argued that the Melanesian person, like persons everywhere, has both dividual and individual aspects. My argument is that to grasp the transformative influence of biomedicine, Christianity, and Western legal and educational systems on the construction of Melanesian subjectivity (and one could also include Africa and other traditional haunts of anthropology), it is necessary to understand that the crosscultural ontological form is the dual person and that the process of encompassment engenders an extraordinary tension between the dividual and individual aspects of personhood. The danger is that the project of relativizing our metaphors can too easily be carried to the point where the relations between Melanesia and the West appear so incommensurable that we have no way to account for the possibility ethnography and the emergence of the individual person in the modern era. It thus seems that if the notion of the composite person or dividual is to be integrated into the modern history of Melanesia, it needs to be relocated or repositioned in ethnographic space. In this reading, the person emerges from the tension, itself always variable and culturally and historically shaped, between these two aspects of personhood and the ways in which they are objectified and embodied. And further, the marginalization of individuality in Melanesia and the sublimination of dividuality in the West are necessary for the creation of the kind of person that each of these sets of societies attempts to produce (LiPuma 1995). It is precisely this individual dimension of Melanesian personhood, traditionally subordinate to the dividual image of the person, for the most part ideologically unarticulated, almost invisible in the context of “traditional” social practice, that is now beginning to emerge with modernity. A critical reason for this history is that individuality is central to modernity not only conceptually but as the locus of the forms of desire that define the modern. The true irony is that the overemphasis of the individual that was the hallmark (and error) of the original encounter between Western ethnographers and Melanesians has turned out to be an omen of things to come.

The encompassment of Melanesia is simultaneously objective and subjective, transforming in an endless dialectical dance both the concepts, institutions, and practices of the objective world and the kind of subjects or persons who enact and reproduce that world. In the first quarter-century of contact between the Maring and the West, this change appeared most dramatically, to the senior generations disturbingly, in the kind of persons that were the junior generation. Western agents and institutions came to dominate Maring even as they provided some of the objective political resources and validated the expression of the forms of subjectiv-
ity that would allow for the greater emancipation of the junior generation and especially women. There is here a political conundrum for anthropology. The “liberation” of women, ethnic minorities, etc. from conditions that we would find intolerable is accomplished through a process of cultural violence, the encompassment of the Other, which, in turn, permits the emergence of new and powerful forms of interpersonal freedom, but, as is intrinsically the case under the culture of capitalism, at the expense of new forms of abstract and impersonal domination (such as those imposed by the market). The view from the cultures of capitalism is that abstract domination is inherently preferable to overt interpersonal domination because the latter is an insult to the individual in a way that the former is not. Indeed, a significant lesson of modernity is to appreciate greater freedom in the context of diminishing autonomy. One result is that Western observers are often perplexed by the fact that those who are emancipated from kinship and community-based domination seem less thrilled with their newfound freedom than their Western saviors think is warranted—a reaction that they attribute to the persistence of tradition rather than the loss of identity that accompanies diminishing autonomy. But my friend Gou knew better. He observed that “civilization allows us to leave home and attend school so that after we graduate and can’t land a job we have no choice but to return to a community where we no longer want to live.” So throughout Melanesia (and the world of Others generally) there are floating bands of young men who inhabit the violent space between the dividuality of a community that they can no longer tolerate and the individuality of a modern society that has no use for them.