



*Matamata* (oil on canvas, 4 sq. ft. @ Okai Reef Gallery).  
*Matamata* meaning many faces or eyes, based on images of my friends Glenville  
and Nisi, dancers with Oceania Dance Theatre, taken on the dance floor.

Painting by Dan Taulapapa McMullin

## *Fa'afafine* Notes:

On Tagaloa, Jesus, and Nafanua

Dan Taulapapa McMullin

1. I am a mixed-blood Samoan painter and poet and *fa'afafine*. These notes are from wandering memory, and I send them to the dead, to Fa'asapa and Fa'amanu, with my love, my *alofa*. *Tulou, tulou, tulou lava*. . .

2. The procedure being a separation of the prefix *fa'a*, meaning to cause or to be alike, and *fafine*, meaning woman. The overall being the position *fafine* and the action *fa'a*, and the position *fa'a* and the action *fafine*.

3. When I was a small boy in the Sāmoa Islands, my great-grandmother Fa'asapa showed me how to print and paint *siapo* cloth, which was women's work. I walked on her strong thin legs to massage them while she told me of this and that. There is an anthropology tale that I often see told as though it were a matter of fact or research, that Samoan families without daughters choose one of their boy children to become *fa'afafine* for the expected duties. I have sisters and I wasn't aware of being chosen to fulfill a role. I wanted to hang out with my great-grandmother and make *siapo* paintings, and iron clothes smooth with the flat iron from its small brazier of coals, and after stories sleep under her mosquito net in its halo of light from the kerosene lamp. That was my desire and choice, and she and my family in Sāmoa supported my will to be. The naming of *fa'afafine* accompanies the event of the person.

4. In this *tala* chiefly narrative of the creation:

*"O loto ma aḡaḡa ma finagalo ma masalo ina o ane, ia fa'atasi i totonu*

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DAN TAULAPAPA McMULLIN works in painting, sculpture, media, performance, and text. He's exhibited at the De Young Museum, the Gorman Museum, the Bishop Museum, and the United Nations. He won a Poets & Writers Award and other awards. Contact: [taulapapa.com](http://taulapapa.com)

*o le Tagata; ona fa'atasi ane ai lea, o le mea lea ua atamai ai tagata.  
Na fa'atasi ane ma le 'Ele'ele ua igoa ai ia Fatu-ma-le-'Ele'ele, o le  
uluga aiga, o Fatu le tane, o 'Ele'ele le fafine."*

From the chiefs of 'Upolu, we see the human being *Tagata* (pronounced tah-NGAH-tah), blessed by the deity Tagaloa with *loto* / heart, *agaga* / spirit, *finagalo* / will, and *masalo* / thought. The combination leading to *atamai* / wisdom. *Atamai*, the ability to receive and cast all *ata*, all shadows, reflections, images of this world, with understanding and ability. This gives the *Tagata* life itself. *Tagata* is joined in two, *Fatu-ma-le-'Ele'ele*, *Fatu* the tane, and *'Ele'ele* the *fafine*. It is their relationship as a couple forming a family, an *uluga aiga*, that determines who they are. Without relationship there is no identity. Thus begins almost every Samoan narrative, relationships determining names. Similarly, in many *fagogo* (fah-NGOH-ngoh) village stories, all the siblings of a family will have the same name, until a turning point leads to individual naming.

5. *Missionary News*, October 1, 1867:

"Asking parishioners of all means to pray for the perishing souls of the heathen, and holding, as did a church in Edinburgh in 1844, 'great missionary' meetings in which three thousand children gathered in a hall decked with idols suspended from the roof."<sup>1</sup>

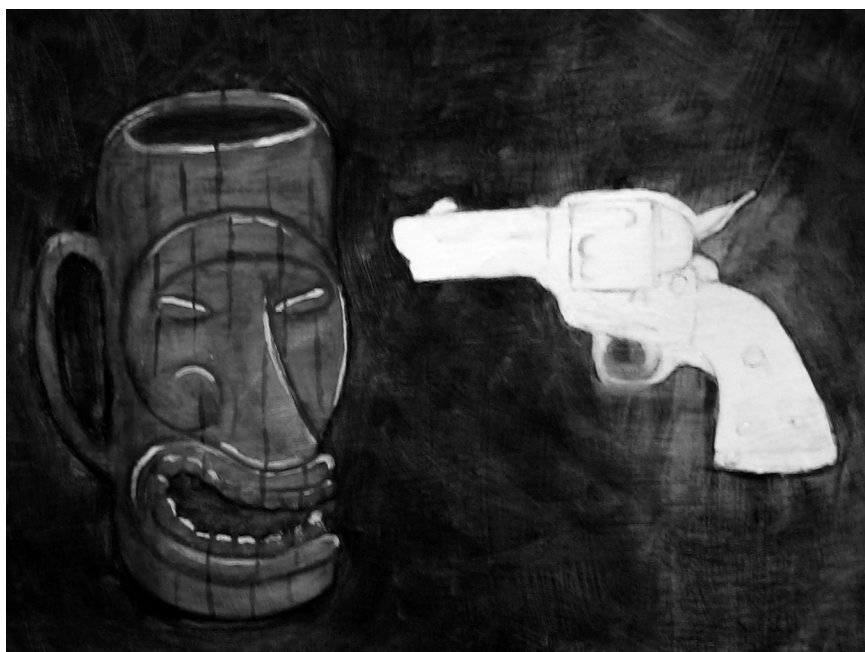
Is that where the goddesses and gods went? Or where they cast their *ata*. Into the fire of Europe. While their souls fled where?

6. When we moved from the U.S. Territory of American Sāmoa (Eastern Sāmoa) to the United States of America, my U.S. Army drill sergeant immigrant father asked my immigrant mother to sit with immigrant me in the backseat of our family station wagon telling me to act like an *American boy* because we were not in Sāmoa anymore. I had trouble knowing how she meant; I wasn't sure how I was not acting like a boy. She thought she was protecting me. Many *fa'afafine* in the United States, the majority of *fa'afafine* immigrants here, as children lived like girls in Sāmoa, but as adults live like men in America. We forget our Samoan; language is memory as we forget who we were.

7. The London Missionary Society officially brought Christianity to the Sāmoa Islands. There may be a mistaken belief that Christianity came to the islands through a process of guilt and sin, rather than by force and power. In a Suva, Fiji, newspaper article

fifty years after the advent of White Christian missionaries in the South Pacific, "South Sea Spiritism," 1882:

Were it not for English war ships and occasional displays of naval force, few missionaries or traders in these archipelagoes would lay them down at night with untroubled minds. The gunboats of Great Britain are constantly engaged in police service throughout these seas, prowling from place to place, appearing unexpectedly here and there, and often being called upon to make a demonstration of force in order to keep the natives on their good behavior. Fiji, the Navigators [Sāmoa], and other groups have for a long time been reasonably quiet, or at least—as about Apia—have indulged only in tribal conflicts and family feuds; but the leaven of barbarism still remains everywhere, and if British guns were withdrawn both mission stations and trade factories would no long survive.



*Gunboat* (oil on panel, 8 in. x 10 in., Private Collection, Los Angeles). Gunboat was the term for naval vessels carrying cannons that patrolled the Pacific Islands for various colonial governments. The kitsch tiki mug represents to me the image colonialism tries to embody us within, a dead and ugly and abject condition. The white gun to me represents colonialism.

Painting by Dan Taulapapa McMullin

The guns (the old seafaring term for cannons) of Europe and America supported their missionary works against “the leaven of barbarism.” For as it is written in First Corinthians 5:7, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump. . .”

8. One evening, at the end of a jaunt around the island of Savai’i with some fa’afafine friends, recuperating while having dinner at a beach rental, our landlady, who was a *lo’omatua*, an old woman, waggling her long forefinger under my nose, said to me,

“You’re loose like an old woman.”

Me, an elder.

9. From *Efeso*/Ephesians 4:11:

*O isi fo’i e fai ma leoleo atoa.*

*Leoleo* in the Samoan translation of the Bible, in the English translation *pastor*. *Leoleo* means also *police*, as in the similarity between pastoral shepherds and police.

On behalf of himself and the other missionaries living in the islands, Mr. [Rev. Ebenezer] Cooper [of the London Missionary Society] says he wishes to express his joy at the new order of things, and to express his tribute to the good work that the United States has done and is doing in civilizing the islanders and helping the missionaries to more productive labors by establishing a just, firm and stable government where none such had existed before.

—“Commander Tilley Praised,” *New York Times*, August 3, 1900

10. When I was a young man and started going back to Sāmoa for vacations, I met my cousin Sheree, again. When we were kids she was Jerry. As an adult she is Sheree. At church, she dresses all in white: long white dress, billowy white blouse, large and shady white hat with white lace, white heels, and a white woven fan. There was a recent movement among fundamentalists in Sāmoa, influenced by televangelism, to force fa’afafine to dress as men in church. But today fa’afafine still dress as women at church services, and at the workplace, and in the classroom, and in the home with the family, and at important social functions.

11. There was a series of articles recently in the *Sāmoa Observer* out of Apia, following a group of born-again Christian Samoans from Hawai’i who went through the islands of Sāmoa casting out demons:

Miloali'i Si'ilata is the Coordinator of the All Pacific Prayer Assembly (APPA). He led a delegation of Christians to Manu'a last year to try and rid those small islands of evil spirits. He is the leader of a group called the Pacific Team of Prayer Warriors, "for the glory of God from the Pacific into the USA. . .the Lord told us to go up through American Sāmoa and claim it since it is a Territory of the USA. We returned home via American [eastern] Sāmoa, where I was told that the Head of State for [independent western] Sāmoa, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi was in American Sāmoa during the 10th Pacific Arts Festival, promoting his book, which claims that the old gods of Sāmoa are different manifestations of the God of the Bible. Like most Christians in Sāmoa, I was very disappointed about this. Tagalaoa [pronounced tah-ngah-LOH-ah, the god of the sun, the sky, the sea] is NOT the God of the Bible! Tagalaoa was the main Principality and fallen angel in charge of the Polynesian race and people. Tagalaoa is still being worshipped in Polynesia today by a few who call themselves Tagaloanians. . . .Since the launching of the new season of Celestial Wars in the Pacific in 2000, Tagalaoa was definitely leading all the armies of Satan against the angelic armies of God. . . . Celesex between fallen angels and human beings is not new. The practice is one of the forbidden sexual practices in the Bible including homosexuality, bestiality, adultery, fornication and incest. . . . The Penis as an instrument to infiltrate the Adamic Race. . . . Tagalaoa was normally worshipped through his incarnate royal prodigies and through carvings with phallic objects. . .

—Staff reporter, "God vs Tagalaoa: Who Is the Real God?," Sunday, March 8, 2009

12. And again in another article in the quite long series, like a twisted Sunday School movie, the diary continues:

I had the privilege to lead a team of 7 for this Manu'a mission. . . . I then stuck a 'fue' (fly whisk [a symbol of chiefly authority, as with the Africans and ancient Greeks]) in the ground to represent the phallic penis, root and authority of Tagalaoa in Polynesia. Then with a knife I cut the fue in the Name of Jesus the Captain of the Armies of the Living God. To cleanse the land, I dug a hole and poured in red wine representing the blood of Jesus. . . . We then danced and praised the Lord on the beach facing east until sunrise at 6:30 a.m. We concluded our mission with the old Samoan hymns. . . . I have said all that I have been commanded to say. . .

—"Cutting the Root of Tagalaoa from Manu'a," Monday, August 4-Tuesday August 5, 2008

So the work of the missionaries continues in us and through us.





*Grace and Eseta* (oil on canvas, 4 sq. ft. @ Okai Reef Gallery).  
Eseta is my great aunt, and Grace her granddaughter. To me  
this work represents generation and heritage and family.

Painting by Dan Taulapapa McMullin

13. Once, having moved to a village far from any of my relations, I met my first male lover in Sāmoa, *F*. I was renting an apartment from a friend who had a store next door. The first night I saw my lover, he walked in the store wearing just an *'ie lavalava* cinched tight at his narrow waist, his body shiny with coconut oil scenting his broad shoulders and his curly hair. For a week after work, in his mechanic overalls, he came every day to the store to talk in Samoan to my friend while ignoring me. I was done with him. Sunday afternoon, I heard him drumming his fingers along the wall to my door. I opened to see. There he stood while the vil-

lage slept. "The store is closed," I reminded him. "Do you have a secret place?" he asked. Oh, so he did speak English. "No," I said. He repeated himself as though I misheard him, with, "I said, do you have a cigarette?" Secret place, cigarette, oh gawd. "No," I pouted. He stared, didn't say another word. I stared back. Then turned around and walked to my bed leaving the door open. Having grown up in an Americanized Samoan family, I was quiet to the village knowing. My friend next door had a first-year birthday party for her son, and the women of the village were there. I couldn't have been more nervous being now the lover of a young man from their village. As I entered the party an old woman did a little dance waving a banana slowly in my face, the other women laughed in good humor, and I was put at ease. The homophobia of my Americanized family faded into distance.

14. In Sāmoa, a *fafine* is a woman, a *tane* is a man or husband, and a *fa'afafine* is a man who lives as a woman. In the English Bible, Leviticus 18:22, it is written,

Thou shalt not lie down with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination.

In the Samoan *Tusi Pa'ia*, Levitiko 18:22, it is written,

*"Aua lua te momoe ma se tane, e pei ona momoe ma se fafine; o le mea e inosia lava lea."*

Thus it is written that a *tane* cannot sleep with a *tane*, but it is not written that a *tane* cannot sleep with a *fa'afafine*. Elsewhere, where the English Bible law references effeminate men, the Samoan *Tusi Pa'ia* references, oddly, not *fa'afafine* but *tauatane* or homosexuality among *tane*, again. Then it references *fa'asotoma*, sodomites, a multicultural multilingual conundrum. In reference to the prohibition in Deuteronomy/*Teuteronomie* against cross-dressing, the law again pertains to *fafine* and *tane*, but not to *fa'afatama* (FTM) or *fa'afafine*. Samoan-Japanese *fa'afafine* artist Shigeyuki Kihara tells me that the name *fa'afafine* originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Were *fa'afafine* simply known as *fafine* before then?

15. I remember going to the beach in a small bus with a group of *fa'afafine* friends around Christmastime, the drunken hired driver careening down the narrow sandy road hitting the branches of the rain forest, as everyone laughing sang Samoan hymns, changing words by improvisation, using puns for the body and its functions. . . . I was talking with a Tongan scholar, who told me



about a conversation he had with Samoan writer Albert Wendt: That before Christianity came to the South Pacific islands, curses were always directed at the other's family. After Christianity curses were directed at the other's body. In other words, words like fuck, shit, dick, cunt, bitch, whore, etc., the normalized or naturalized curse words of our present-day cursing vocabulary, have to do with the parts, functions, and actions of one's individual body. Before Christianity, in our old Polynesian polytheism, curse words had to do with the family, the collective body, about shaming one's family, being selfish, having no *mana*. The exception would be the body that can be cannibalized, the body as food object, although this may be post-Christian too. It would have been absurd in the old days to curse the other's sexual and gendered body.

16. I was in Apia, Sāmoa, about to visit the village of Ta'u in Manu'a. A friend suggested I stay with his mother Fa'amanu in Ta'u, which I did. Fa'amanu in the evening liked to sit with her small granddaughter in her family meeting house, a lovely round building without walls, just white pillars. Fa'amanu was the local expert in the weaving of 'ie toga, or Samoan fine mats. Her practice involved walking around the village helping and encouraging younger women in their weaving. Fa'amanu's inner forearms were scarred with diagonal lines from the sharp pandanus leaves used in weaving. Every evening during my stay, Fa'amanu and her little granddaughter and I took a stroll round the village of Ta'u, talking with the neighbors. Some of the women neighbors had a very friendly relationship with her, some pointedly ignored her, and some of the men seemed to have intimate friendships with her too. When I returned to Apia, a friend asked me with whom I stayed in Ta'u, and I said, "Our friend's mother, Fa'amanu." At which she remarked, "His mother? His parents died when he was young; he was brought up by a fa'afafine." Fa'amanu wanted me to learn how to make fine mats, and I said I would come back. She said, "Don't wait too long, our time is short." A couple years later she was gone. I hadn't returned in time to visit this fa'afafine elder or learn her craft.

17. There are many notable fa'afafine with traditional *sua'afa* or chiefly titles, like the choreographer Seiuli Ailani Alo (A *Seiuli* title was given to him by the late head of state of Sāmoa, His Highness Malietoa Tanumafili II). American anthropologist Jeannette Mageo (married to a Samoan) writes,

In Sāmoa important titles are normally given to brothers, but sisters may hold titles, and this is no disgrace. Homosexuals may also hold titles. Fa'afafine, however, are seen as jesters, and families will not invest their status and dignity to them. To become a transvestite is, therefore, seriously to compromise one's opportunities for status.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to being simply wrong on the issue of fa'afafine and *suafa*/titles, Mageo uses *homosexual* and *transvestite* as though these English words were cognate in the *fa'asamoa*, Samoan language and culture; and she seems to conflate fa'afafine and *faleaitu*, the Samoan theatrical form in which male jesters will imitate fa'afafine and anyone else at hand. Mageo's writings are filled with such abject fa'afafine-phobic stereotypes, although as an anthropologist she is considered the Western expert on fa'afafine and Samoan gender.

18. "... and, as we have seen, her later devotion to the missionary stations in Sāmoa demonstrate, Stevenson's mother tirelessly supported the foreign and domestic missions of the Church of Scotland as well as the efforts of other denominations."<sup>3</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, the Scots author of *Treasure Island* and other favorites, dying and in ill health, spent his last years in Sāmoa, which he loved, building a home at Vailima on the hill above Apia. There is a mysterious romantic passage in his travel book *In the South Seas* where a young islander man follows him mysteriously into the forest, giving a magic box, inside of which is a smaller copy of the magic box, its source of power. At tea in Apia once, *M* told me that at Vailima, where she herself grew up, Stevenson kept a house in back where he would meet boys.

19. A New Zealand critical thinker on fa'afafine and Pacific Islands gender, Lee Wallace of Auckland University, writes:

In contradistinction to the impulse to see sin and homosexuality everywhere, the gender-inversion understanding of fa'afafine that the documentary [*Queens of Sāmoa*] elaborates preserves the heterosexuality of desire: only opposites attract, as if difference were the engine of desire. The documentary, which seems to be a relaxed or liberal account of how anything goes gender-wise, mobilizes an inversion model of sexual identity ("a woman's soul in a man's body") in what Judith Butler, writing of drag, calls "the service of both the denaturalization and reidealization of hyperbolic gender norms."<sup>4</sup>

Wallace seems to assume a viewpoint of fa'afafine that the European Australian filmmakers held and ignores Samoan terms of sexuality, using English-language terms of gender like *homosexual*, *transgender*, and *transsexual*, while ignoring English terms of sexuality like *top*, *bottom*, *active*, and *passive*, assuming that heteronormativity can explain fa'afafine positionality in relation to tane and fafine. She goes on to warn that if fa'afafine don't take on western gender and sexuality terminology, we will be more susceptible to AIDS. This reminds one of nineteenth-century European/American missionaries who told Pacific Islanders that the cure for Western diseases was Western religion.

20. Midnight Mass, Christmas Eve, the Catholic cathedral in Tafuna, Tutuila Island, American Sāmoa. Invited by my Aunt L and her daughters, my cousins with white lace covering their hair. Outside the church, a group of ancient white Catholic bishops paraded in procession, bent bodies in elaborate robes. They were preceded and followed by about forty Samoan boys in scant 'ie lavalava wrapped around their waists, and nothing else—bare-foot, bodies covered in coconut oil, carrying tall candles. It was a Roman scene like the ink drawings of Aubrey Beardsley. During the service the white archbishop of the South Pacific spoke in Samoan with an aesthete voice; sounding and looking much like Peter Cook imitating the archbishop of Canterbury, he sermonized in a tongue that seemed powdered and wrinkled.

21. From a history of the church:

It followed, by London Missionary Society logic, that people who had undeveloped minds must also be undisciplined in their emotions. On two counts, then, it was feared that many Samoans might be incapable of cultivating the means of grace, being deficient in the powers of reason and self-control essential to a state of piety and morality. That is not to say that the missionaries all responded by simplifying their theological discourses, but they did shift the emphasis of their role from that of teacher towards that of father or policeman, concerning themselves less with what the masses understood of Christianity and more with overt conduct.<sup>5</sup>

For the church it was a question of development, but for the Samoans it was a realization that, among other things, Christianity was obsessively concerned with questions of the body, its display, its erasure, its punishment, its ownership, its legalization,

its mythology, and that, out of this, the Samoan body came to hide its agendas, including but not limited to fa'afafine.

22. From a missionary text:

The greatest favourite was the Po-ula (night of play or pleasure). This was an obscene night dance, and a constant source of enjoyment, especially when any visitors were present to take part in it. As the evening set in, the spectators as well as dancers began to assemble, after much care had been bestowed upon their dresses and general make-up. The only covering of the males consisted of the *titi*, or girdle of leaves, often not more than seven or eight inches in width, and about the same in depth, whilst that of the females consisted of a white or red



*Manulua* (oil on canvas, 4 sq. ft., Private Collection, Auckland).

Based on the influence of Papua sculpture on my paintings and sculptures, this painting refers to two birds or *manu*, and represents for me male-male sexuality.

Painting by Dan Taulapapa McMullin

shaggy mat around the loins, the upper part of the body being uncovered. Both sexes paid great attention to their hair, that of the males being long and allowed to hang loosely over the shoulders, whilst the females, who wore their hair short, stiffened it with *pulu*, breadfruit pitch, or else dressed it with a pomade of a certain kind of light-coloured clay, which was afterwards washed off with lime water, thus dyeing the hair to a much-coveted brown colour. . . . The last dance. . .when this skilled dance concluded, the males who had danced exchanged girdles, and commenced a variety of antics and buffoonery which formed a prelude to the closing saturnalia, of which a description is inadmissible here, but which was always received with shouts of laughter and approval from the onlookers. Regrets are often expressed at the manner in which these obscene dances have been discouraged by the missionaries; but such sentiments can be uttered only in ignorance or oblivion of the true character of the dances and their tendency. Even as late as 1839, Commodore Wilkes spoke in terms of strong condemnation of these dances, as witnessed by some of the officers of the expedition; but what they saw would convey no correct idea of the dance as conducted by the Samoans during the times so aptly describes as "the days of darkness."<sup>6</sup>

As one went throughout the villages of Sāmoa, one distinguished the remaining Polynesian polytheistic villages wherever the men had long hair and the women had short hair, and the newly Christian monotheistic villages where the women had long hair and the men had short hair. The image of the long-haired dusky maiden of the Pacific Islands was and is a Christian image.

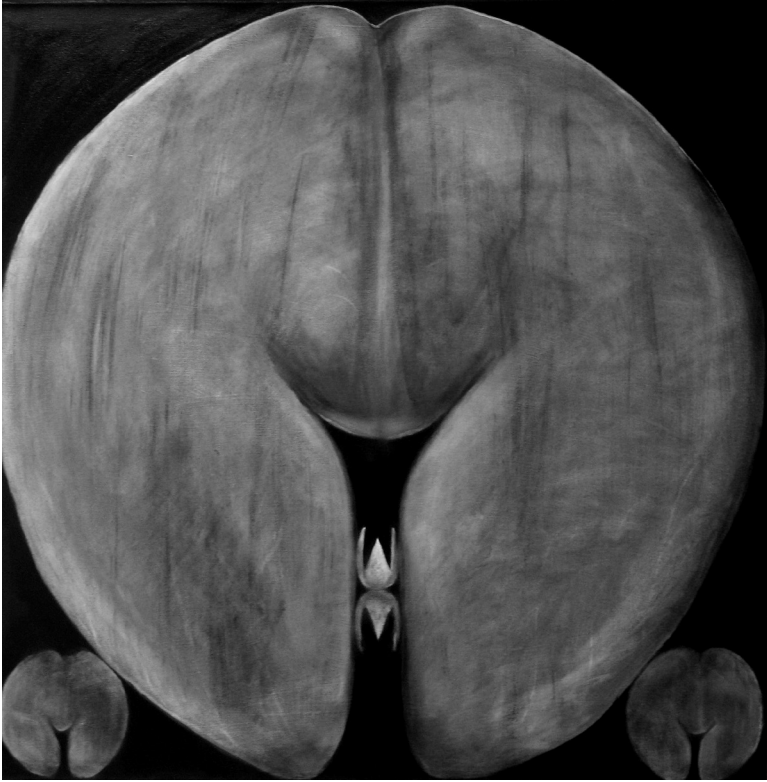
23. I had a boyfriend, *M*, in Apia who would come home after work, throw off his clothes, and put on just a lavalava; he was beautiful. Then he'd cook dinner, fish soup with coconut milk. After dinner we'd sit on low rattan chairs across from each other at the low teak table, candles on the table lighting the room. He'd turn on Radio 2AP, the traditional Samoan music station, and dance a *siva nofo*, sitting dance, to me. He'd teach me the movements of the *taupou*, girl chief. He'd make the movements of the *manaia*, boy chief. His hand movements would end up caressing his erection. Pull me in and push me away with his gestures. Push-pull, push-pull. Back and forth. And I'd respond in my dance. But we didn't touch each other all evening. At some undetermined point, we'd break the tension and rush to the next room to our bed under a mosquito net. One day my neighbor told me she and her girlfriend would sit at the far end

of her orchid garden in the dark, smoke a number, sip their wine, and watch my beautiful boyfriend, through my lanai screens, dance in the night. And I discovered he knew they were watching. This was our village *poula*.

24. The *poula* was a vaudeville, a bacchanalia, a dance party. *Po* means night, where the *poula* activities utilized the open air fale house lit by a *sulusulu* candlenut flame, and the landscape lit by the moon and 'Aniwa the Milky Way, brighter in Sāmoa mid-sea than anywhere I know. The *poula* is a night dance, *ula* is an old word referring to dance throughout Polynesia, as in the *hura* of the Cook Islands and the *hula* of the Hawaiian Islands. In Sāmoa it has the sense of laughter or joy, echoed in 'ula or lei garland, and 'ula or crimson, golden, and joyous, the joyousness which Christianity makes merely abject, joking, satirical, infantile, foolish. For the monotheists the night was heathen, the time of the *pouliuli*, po/night, uli/black, in darkest times before Eurocentric monotheism. Here I supplant "Western" with Eurocentric, because for us the West was/is sacred, the place of Havaiki, of Pulotu, of the blessed; and Europe/America is east of the Pacific. And I supplant "Christianity" with monotheism because it is seeking to elide polytheism by the sheer weight of its monolithic centrality, a centrality located in the singleness of deity, but whose deity is as variable as anything. The representation of this deity, the missionary, points upward to heaven and downward to hell, like a royal figure on a playing card, and disappears in either direction. If only among the trees at night, the night of our *poula*, our *pouliuli*, our polytheistic day. Like the British Stevenson and like the American Mead.

25. Margaret Mead, when she first came to Sāmoa, stayed as a lodger with my aunt Helen in Leone on my father's side. Mead and Aunt Helen didn't like each other. My aunt didn't like Mead asking her children so many questions and complaining about the rent. Aunt Helen's daughter, my aunt Tutasi, remembers collecting shells at a penny each for Mead, who threw them behind her dresser, making a stink. Later Mead went to Manu'a, where my mother's family was, and there Margaret Mead did her studies of young Samoan girls for her book *Coming of Age in Samoa*, in the village of Ta'u, but this time she questioned them on the porch of the navy dispensary where she was empowered by gunboats. Once when I stayed in Ta'u, I took an early-morning walk on the beach on arriving. There was a guy fishing. When he saw me





*Moana* (oil on canvas, 3 sq. ft. @ Okai Reef Gallery).  
Based on a natural form, the coco de mer is the largest nut in the world, once seen only floating in the sea until its origin in the Seychelles was documented. The form itself in an abstract way represents for me the Pacific Ocean or the *Moana*, and also matriarchy.

Painting by Dan Taulapapa Mc Mullin

getting near, he signaled, and a young man and woman tangled in the beach vines stood and walked casually in opposite directions, the young woman pulling leaves out of her hair, yanking up her blouse. I thought of Mead. Her text is in a way a Christian account from another kind of missionary supported by naval cannons, with a nerdy love for the poula of life in Sāmoa.

26. The leader of the anti-homosexual marriage movement in Hawai'i is a Samoan politician, Mike Gabbard. "Domestic partnership is just another name for same-sex marriage," said Gabbard, who founded Stop Promoting Homosexuality International. Gabbard opposed the state law that prohibits discrimination of gays in employment. "Special rights should not be given on

the basis of sexual orientation and behavior," he said. In 1997, as the president of Alliance for Traditional Marriage, he organized a day-long seminar titled "Hope for the Homosexual," with speakers from the Exodus Foundation, a ministry that claims to cure homosexuality.

27. When I last lived in Apia, my fa'afafine friends called me Miss America, because of my American accent. One day someone saw me coming out of the only McDonald's in Sāmoa, where none of my friends would eat (terrible food, high prices, tourist crowd), so they began calling me Cookie Monster. I suppose it's better than being called an ex-homosexual. A *sei* (is any flower worn on the ear): a sei by any other name is a sei is a sei is a sei.

28. The Samoan leader of the anti-gay movement in New Zealand, Taito Phillip Field was interviewed about gay marriage there:

*Investigate:* So your opposition to Labour's whipping on the Marriage Bill, was that the first inkling of trouble?

*Field:* No, there was always tension in regard to my opposition to homosexual rights, in terms of the civil union proposal. Because again in caucus, I insisted it should be a conscience vote. The argument from some in caucus was that it should not be a conscience vote because it was Labour Party policy in terms of sexual orientation. I didn't feel that that was right and I spoke out against it. Some of the older members indicated it was wiser to give members the right to a conscience vote, but clearly the tensions were there. . .

*Investigate:* It wasn't just you in the Labour caucus opposed to some of these issues. Paint me a picture about what life was like for you inside.

*Field:* Oh, clearly there were a number of us that had Christian values, and therefore we fell in opposition to some of the views and agendas that certain people in caucus had, particularly in regard to moral issues. There's no question about that.

Field was subsequently voted out of office and replaced by another Samoan Labour candidate, and more recently Field was convicted of bribery and corruption charges based on actions in office, his moral values intact, I guess.

29. Whereas the older churches in Sāmoa have reconciled Samoan traditions with Eurocentric monotheism, the new funda-

mentalists are seeking to reinstate Eurocentrism in Sāmoa, and elsewhere, by attacking traditional indigenous queer cultures. “Fa’afafine mere existence and morality has been challenged by a strong force in Sāmoa, the new Churches in Sāmoa. The message that homosexuality and gays in particular are evil is the message being spread particularly through the new American evangelist churches that have sprung up in Sāmoa over the last 15 years.”<sup>7</sup>

30. Televangelism from American cable television is now a part of Samoan culture in both Sāmoas, eastern and western. The Samoan television service Radio Graceland is “teaching the people of Sāmoa Christianity through the Graceland broadcasting network.” They have been sponsored by Trinity Broadcasting (Channel 40 from Santa Ana, California) in Sāmoa since 1997. Homophobia was always stronger in American Sāmoa than in independent Sāmoa, due to American influence. After the establishment of Christian TV in Savai’i Island in Sāmoa, there was a case of two young women on the island who were lovers. The family of one of them, on discovering the relationship, beat their daughter badly, and she ended up hanging herself. The other young woman, on learning of her lover’s suicide, committed suicide herself by swallowing the poison Paraquat. After a brief mention in the newspaper, the issue was buried with the girls.

31. Nafanua was the greatest warrior of Samoan history. When she went to war, she disguised her gender by covering her chest. One day in battle her covering was torn off, and her gender was discovered. When she retired from fighting, she became an advocate of peaceful discourse and influenced the ways Samoans conduct politics in the *fono* communal meeting house for the *fa’amatai* system of decentralized governance and communal land ownership. After her death, she was deified, made a goddess. As the goddess Nafanua, she spoke to Sāmoa through talking chiefs on the island of Savai’i. Through these talking chiefs, she predicted the coming of Christianity to Sāmoa, so the converts say, using the mana of Nafanua to increase the mana of Jesus.

32. A few years ago I was invited to go with Team Papua New Guinea, Team Fiji, Team Tonga, and Team Sāmoa to the Gay Games in Sydney. I went as a poet to the games’ indigenous arts festival that the Aboriginal Australians sponsored, while most of our fa’afafine Team Sāmoa were netball players and swimmers in their

early twenties. They arrived in Sydney with empty bags, and in a week there were limousines pulling up to the building where we were hosted by our Maori landlords, and men in tuxedos started escorting the young fa'afafine around town. At the Opening Ceremonies at Sydney Stadium, all the other queer teams marched in formation wearing regulation uniforms for their countries. Team Sāmoa was the only team at the Gay Games in drag. The Aboriginal, Maori, and Pacific Islander communities performed for us spontaneous *haka* tributes from the stands. The young fa'afafine had dressed me up like a *lo'omatua*, with a fine mat around my chest and some feathers knocking against my forehead. When I walked onto the field, there was a Samoan cameraman waving at me, I waved back. On the giant screen amid the cheering crowds, an older fa'afafine in close-up was nodding quaintly. Oh gawd, I thought, she's me. Fuck it, I said, and did a catwalk stroll in a big loop across the great field. One by one, the younger fa'afafine followed in heels, beautifully. Tall, dark drag queens in silver bathing suits with high *tui*ga headdresses of orange feathers, like Las Vegas showgirls, smiling and waving at Australia.

## Notes

1. Ann C. Colley, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 182.
2. Jeannette Marie Mageo, *Theorizing Self in Samoa: Emotions, Genders, and Sexualities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998): 209.
3. Colley, 182.
4. Lee Wallace, *Sexual Encounters: Pacific Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
5. R. P. Gilson, *Samoa 1830 to 1900: The Politics of a Multi-Cultural Community* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1970): 104.
6. Rev. John B. Stair, *Old Samoa, or Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean* (London, 1897): 132-134.
7. Phineas Matautia-Hartson, *Community Legal Research Paper: Fa'afafine in Australia* (Sydney, 2005): 33.



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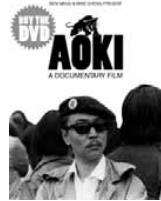
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