

## Book and Media Reviews

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*The Orator/O Le Tulafale*. Feature film, 110 minutes, color, 2011. Written and directed by Tusi Tamasese; produced by Catherine Fitzgerald; distributed by Transmission Films Ltd (in Australasia) and the New Zealand Film Commission (global). Samoan with English subtitles. Release information available at <http://theoratorfilm.co.nz/>

*The Orator/O Le Tulafale* hit our creative capital city of Wellington like the tropical thunderstorm that majestically opens the film—potent, uncompromising, life-affirming. After being drenched by it, the world appeared refreshed. As educators and students in Va'aomanū Pasifika offering programs in Samoan studies and Pacific studies at Victoria University, we witnessed the excitement that writer/director Tusi Tamasese's feature-length debut generated among our colleagues and in our classrooms, communities, and homes. We began to swap stories about "*Orator* effects." The movie prompted quiet students to speak, brought staunch old chiefs to tears, and facilitated the types of conversations that we need to have in the Pacific but often do not voice. As the film's blessings continued to pour down on us, we sought ways to channel the runoff. First, some of our staff organized a roundtable discussion, giving undergraduate and graduate students and staff an opportunity to engage in passionate dialogue about the film in both English and Samoan. It was in that forum that the following reviews began to germinate, each the product of a collaboration between a senior and junior scholar in Pacific studies or Samoan studies. Staff also

had the opportunity to share their thoughts for a Radio New Zealand International piece on *The Orator*, coordinated by an undergraduate student in Pacific studies and intended to air in conjunction with the publication of this issue of *The Contemporary Pacific*. Collectively, the following reviews present an opportunity for members of our intellectual community to harvest the budding fruits of well-watered intellectual plantations and offer them back to those we serve. It is both a privilege and an obligation to honor this film in the best way we know how—through loving, critical commentary.

APRIL K HENDERSON

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*The Orator/O Le Tulafale* has been touted as the first full-length feature film to be written and directed by a Samoan and filmed in Sāmoa and in the Samoan language. Given that the screenwriter and director, Tusi Tamasese, is a University of Waikato film school graduate and earned a master's in screenwriting from the Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), and that the film was largely funded by the New Zealand Film Commission, produced by a New Zealander, and features some of New Zealand's most respected visual and sound technicians, *The Orator* is also being enthusiastically claimed as a New Zealand film. For a directorial debut, it is remarkable that the film has received critical acclaim at the Venice Film Festival in 2011, is scheduled for the 2012 Sundance Festival, and was nominated by New Zealand for

an Academy Award in the category of foreign language films.

The central characters of *The Orator* are a farmer and a weaver. Sa'ili and his wife Va'aiga each have painful histories of being excluded or diminished by others—Sa'ili for being not only an untitled adult male in a village and society that privileges chiefs, but a little person to boot, and Va'aiga for shaming her family by having a child out of wedlock. Sa'ili has raised Va'aiga's teenage daughter Litia as his own, although Litia is ambivalent about having him as a father. The film centers on Sa'ili and Va'aiga's struggles to confront their own fears and demons—Sa'ili through acquiring a talking chief title, and Va'aiga by weaving a fine mat (*'ie tōga*) of atonement. Their quests are set amid scenes of majestic mountain ridges, lush taro plantations, tranquil bathing pools, and meticulously manicured rural villages. Ironically, given that the film title might lead one to expect an abundance of verbiage (a *tulāfale* is a talking chief), one of the distinguishing features of the film is its economy of dialogue. The silence simultaneously tills and weaves the possibilities for multiple layers of understanding through the film. Like Sa'ili the farmer and Va'aiga the weaver, *The Orator* is able to present gifts to those who would receive them. Through this review, we attempt, as non-Samoan Pacific Islanders—Micronesians—to reciprocate.

We both saw the film, for the first time, in the early days of its screening in Wellington, New Zealand, in October 2011. Our review features our individual “takes” on the film, with Emelihter responding to *The Orator's*

representations of place and culture, and Teresia approaching the film as a teacher in Pacific studies. As creative writers and active participants in arts communities across the region, both of us have a keen sense of a shared genealogy when it comes to an “Oceanic imaginary” (Subramani, “The Oceanic Imaginary,” 2001). We close our review with reflections on what it means now to have *The Orator* situated in that genealogy.

Reaction shot (Emelihter): “I wanted Sāmoa to be a character in the film,” said Tusi Tamasese during a cast and crew Q&A held at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) in Wellington on 29 October 2011. This character is the one we see first: Sāmoa—fecund, quiet, dark, and thirsty. Audiences are made to listen to the whisper that comes just before the downpour, and it was then that I knew this was going to be an honest Pacific (Samoan) film. Already, I wanted to cry, and very few movies make me cry. Because I'm from Pohnpei in Micronesia, an island with rainfall of more than 300 inches a year, rain is a central part of my Pohnpeian/Pacific understanding. Rain on a tin roof represents home to those of us who grew up in homes like these and to those of us who romanticize about such dwellings. It is this feeling of the familiar—of “belonging,” in a Sia Figiel sense (*Where We Once Belonged*, 1996)—that makes so many of us fall in love with Tusi Tamasese's film. This communal, shared feeling is central to the film in a way that makes many of us who live away, Samoans and other Pacific persons, long for the home(s) we left behind. This is not to say that Samoans watching the film in

Sāmoa won't feel similarly potent connections to place. But Pacific Islanders living in diaspora will be watching the film through a lens tinted with nostalgia. However, this is no sentimental, romanticized Pacific Island feature film—thank you, Mr Tamasese. The unspoken, delivered through Sāmoa's landscape and characters going about their daily routines, is one of the strongest elements of *The Orator*. The story unfolds with a subtlety like Va'aiga's 'ie tōga, a piece of her that remains with her family when her body is taken home by Sa'ili and Litia. Tamasese and cinematographer Leon Narbey are masters at transferring the island pace to screen. The slow and wide shots ever so realistically convey the stifling humidity as well as the small moments that only a Samoan from Sāmoa would know how to transfer to screen with the help of a very talented crew. There are many of these little moments: the "Telesia" segment on the radio, Sa'ili napping on his parents' graves, and the young women of the village watching the men play rugby (we know what they are thinking). At times the film envelops its viewers in a hopelessness that suffocates, a powerful sadness surrounded by beautiful foliage and people, some of them malicious and power hungry and some of them humble and strong. The film is highly sensual without any sex and leaves the senses intoxicated. Above all, *The Orator* left me envious of Samoans for having this precious film to call their own; grateful to Tamasese, cast, and crew; and inspired to create beauty. *Kalahngan en kupwur karohsie me iang wiahda kasdo kesempwal wet.*

Reaction shot (Teresia): In my

Samoan Irish New Zealander husband's most Polynesian nationalist moments he will remind me that all I-Kiribati were originally Samoans. I don't mind because there's good linguistic evidence of that and because unlike most of his kin, at least my husband knows that Samoans have significant historical connections to other less well-known cultural groups in the Pacific. If I'm alert, I'll retort that my I-Kiribati ancestors left Sāmoa for good reason. Samoans can be pretty ethnocentric and willfully ignorant about the rest of the Pacific. Many believe that they are the "sacred center" and that we are meant to revolve around them. Some of us other Pacific people resent that. In New Zealand, you get a lot of grumbling in community events, consultation events, and even in some of our Pacific studies classes, about Samoan domination. But sometimes Samoan pride hits the right note, and we can all celebrate it along with them. Our vuv Pacific studies students' reception of *The Orator* is one such example of Samoan pride hitting the right note. In several class sessions and in a roundtable discussion organized by our program about the film on 20 October 2011, student after student of Samoan descent declared how proud the film made them to be Samoan. But what made these declarations most meaningful was that they were invariably accompanied by the students' questions about choices made by the writer/director and by their critical reflections about issues of representation in the film. This is the kind of Samoan pride I feel like I as a non-Samoan can get behind because this is not the kind of pride that people

from Fiji, where I grew up, might call *viavia levu* (arrogance). As an outsider, what I see and hear in my Samoan students' and colleagues' and friends' responses to this film can best be described in one Samoan word: *alofa*. This is *The Orator's* gift to Pacific studies, an ethos so clearly visible—and audible—in the choice of shots, in the sound design, in the structure of the plot, in the construction of the characters, and in the delicate balance between representing both the beautiful and the ugly sides of Sāmoa and Samoans. It is *alofa*—a pure and confident love, empowered rather than disempowered, to narrate and create, to interrogate, criticize, and comfort—that infuses this film. Like Albert Wendt and Sia Figiel before him, Tamasese has taken representations of Sāmoa far beyond the vulgar objectifications of the Mead/Freeman controversy and, most importantly, has done it with the *alofa/aroha/alohaloloma/tangira/limpoak* that Wendt deemed imperative for Pacific people's sovereignty over our own intellectual pursuits (“Towards a New Oceania,” 1976). So if *alofa* is *The Orator's* gift to Pacific studies, what is its gift to non-Samoans more generally? It takes a huge effort not to feel a pang of envy as a non-Samoan watching this film. But if you, like me, still feel frustrated at not having the means at your disposal to outdo the Samoans just yet, you know what they say: if you can't beat them, make love with them. *Alofa atu*.

(Joint commentary resumed) In their 1999 essay “Four Writers and One Critic” (in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*), Vilsoni Hereniko and

Sig Schwarz proposed that literary critics in the Pacific should think of themselves as “talking chiefs” for the region's writers and literatures. While there are some problems with the applicability of such a model across other Pacific and especially non-Polynesian texts and contexts, their idea raises interesting implications for engaging with a text such as *The Orator*. As we see in the film, among the key duties of a *tulāfale* in Sāmoa is to find out the statuses and lineages of the people he or she is among and about to address. We close this review ever conscious of our not being Samoan, and especially conscious of the limitations the film sets up for women as orators. We want to take up the challenge of thinking through a talking chief's privileges and responsibilities—not so much as literary or film critics, but as creative writers and performers ourselves—and we wonder, does the Pacific need more talking chiefs?

At the cast and crew Q&A at Te Papa we referred to earlier, Tamasese admitted he had not seen Martyn Sanderson's 1990 film adaptation of Albert Wendt's 1994 novella *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree* until after he had written his film script. Moreover, he was not aware until then that his little person Sa'ili had a predecessor in Albert Wendt's “Tagata,” the main character in *Flying Fox*. Perhaps this was an oversight that only another Samoan could afford. The two of us are used to sometimes having a greater awareness of Samoans' contemporary creative genealogies than many of the Samoans we interact with, which can be a bit embarrassing for both parties. In Tamasese's case, perhaps not

being burdened by the knowledge of what had gone before is what set free his genius. But as Micronesian women writers from the un(der)-represented Pacific Islands of Pohnpei, Banaba, and Kiribati, we have never felt that we could afford such ignorance.

We understand that to enter into creative cultural production in the Pacific is to become part of a genealogy of thought and imagination, whether you are aware of it or not. Both of us have actively sought out Pacific films, poetry, and music for inspiration, affirmation, and pure necessity (artistic survival!). It has not always been easy searching for ways to identify with work by fellow Pacific Islander artists who often have little awareness of who we are or where we are from, but this predicament has given us a deep appreciation for how precious and valuable each creative contribution to the Pacific is. *The Orator* richly deserves celebration, and it is our creative duty as Pacific artists/scholars/students to articulate our *alofa* for it. But just as importantly, we need to be able to locate it within a genealogy of other Pacific films by Pacific writers and directors such as Vilsoni Hereniko's *The Land Has Eyes/Pear ta ma 'on maf* (2004) and Toa Fraser's *No. 2/Naming number two* (2006). Each of these films addresses issues of both alienation and aspiration, explores the intersection of customary practices and social change, and in some ways can be perceived as love letters by each of the writer/directors to their ancestral homelands. It is also worth recalling that *The Land Has Eyes* preceded *The Orator* as an indigenous language film shot on the home island by an indig-

enous writer and director. Space does not allow us further commentary on how these three Pacific Islands feature films might be read productively together, but we hope that others will take up that challenge since each in its moment has expanded our collective Oceanic imaginary. *The Orator's* unique offering to the two of us as creative practitioners is a renewed sense of dedication to and pride in the craft of creating (in) the contemporary Pacific.

EMELIHTER KIHLENG AND  
TERESIA K TEAIWA  
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Samoan director Tusi Tamasese's debut feature *The Orator/O Le Tulafale* simultaneously comforts and challenges its Samoan audience—it takes us on a provocative, nonjudgmental excursion into the icons, nuances, and metaphors of Sāmoa's history and society and into Samoan ways of feeling and thinking. As Samoans engaged in the development of Samoan and Pacific studies, we are thrilled by the opportunity that this film offers to explore the nuances of contemporary Samoan life without losing sight of the profound significance of particular cultures for addressing universal human concerns.

*The Orator* appears to be a muse working to awaken and tease Samoan and Pacific imaginations, inspiring us to move beyond banal, superficial, and dogmatic interpretations in order to get “beneath the surface,” as Tusi observed in a 2011 interview with Stephen Carnell (<http://www.theprimateperspective.com/>). As its

nuances and meanings surface, come alive, and dance, enticing viewers to delve deeper, the story encourages Samoans to make sense for themselves of what *fa'asāmoa* (Samoan culture) might or ought to be and how it resonates with other cultures. As muse, the film titillates our intellectual capacities and awakens those parts of our Samoan or Pacific selves that may have been deadened by the overwhelming impossibilities and tensions of contemporary monoliths—monolingualism, monoculturalism, monotheism, and even monogamy. Its sumptuous smorgasbord of visuals, sounds, and linguistic metaphors provides windows through which to study the rhetoric, practice, vulnerabilities, and strengths of what it might mean to be Samoan, to be “of Sāmoa,” or to be of the increasingly global Pacific.

*The Orator* might also be provocateur, subversively seeking our express and complicit acknowledgment (as Samoans) that there is sophisticated beauty in a chiefly culture that promotes simplicity and restraint. Described by the director as his “hero” in one online interview (blog.flicks.co.nz, 4 Oct 2011), the Samoan chief Leopa'ō is someone bestowed with voice and power—raised to speak less and listen more, to speak only when he must and, when he must, to speak in a manner that is loving and aims always for peace. Rhetoric and metaphor are core tools in the oratorical repertoire of Samoan chiefs because of the assumption that their allusive qualities help to avoid confrontation—provided, of course, that those interpreting the allusive speech understand its cultural logic.

As provocateur, the film forces us

to admit that at times we Samoans can be an inflexibly proud people, overly strict and emotionally undemonstrative. It forces us to recognize that we too grapple with issues of violence—structural and personal, blatant and subtle, and often gendered. In Sāmoa's hierarchical and patriarchal society, there is high potential for the negative exploitation of neighbors and family members, often realized, as the film suggests, in the normalization of domestic violence. The film is saturated with scenes in which the potential for violence seems ever-present, either in speech or by gesture—from the use of words such as *'aikae* (eat shit) and *pogāua* (translated as “pain in the neck”) as threats or in jest, to the use of threatening stances while holding a machete or rocks. At the structural level, a masculine chauvinistic violence in particular is implicit, for example, in the retributive treatments imposed on Litia, one of the film's heroines, compared with that imposed on her married male lover. Viewers may also not realize the subtle but significant and gender-specific link in the film between the *pe'a* as symbol of Samoan male courage and the Samoan saying, “E i ai sou ake?” (“Do you have any balls?”).

But perhaps the film's most subversively persuasive force is its simple message about *alofa*. As embraced in *The Orator*, *alofa* forgives our transgressions—what Tui Atua, in the 2011 Professor James Ritchie Memorial Lecture Series keynote address, described as *tuā'oi* or boundaries; it mediates our differences, pursues justice, and finds us peace. It overcomes or resolves hurts, rejuvenates joys, and re-imagines personal and collec-

tive futures. It has been said by many a Samoan orator that *fa'asāmoa* is founded on *alofa*. Tusi's *Orator* basically says the same thing, but what a powerfully layered and evocative way to say it!

As Tusi astutely portrays, Samoans have a love of rhetoric, history, family, and place. Similarly, Samoans are fascinated by the play between the physical and metaphysical, the sacred and profane, the bidden and forbidden. Much of this love is said in the unsaid—in a look, a gesture, a touch, a flinch, a stance, a smile, a half-smile, even in a preference for a plant or for a particular style of dress. It is also captured in the names chosen and in the linguistic expressions and idioms used. To adequately convey all this, Tusi's Samoan story about his Samoan orator had to be told in the Samoan language and in Sāmoa. Thankfully this necessity was recognized and supported by the New Zealand Film Commission and the Samoan Government.

To understand how *The Orator* is metaphor personified, it is useful to unpack what we believe is the legacy of Leopa'ō. This chiefly title bestowed on the lead character, Sa'ili, literally means "voice (*leo*) with a bang (*pa'ō*)." The image conjured up is of someone with a "strong voice," a voice with impact. Samoan historians have pointed out that Samoan history was recorded using names, especially the names of people and places, and that Samoan leaders reveled in double-speak, riddles, and metaphors. Tusi implies putting this methodology to work in his use of the names "Sa'ili" and "Tagaloa." Both are loaded with suggestive meanings. The obvious

interpretation for the name "Sa'ili" is its everyday meaning, "to search." In the context of the film we are led to surmise that it is a search for power, voice, and presence—for Sa'ili, the presence of mind and of body to say what is in his heart. Add to this the fact that Tusi chose to name Sa'ili's high chief "Tagaloa," and we are led to surmise further that perhaps Tusi is deliberately poking at Sāmoa's continued but repressed belief in its anthropomorphic God Tagaloaalagi, the name sometimes abbreviated as Tagaloa, believed to be the founding ancestor of Sāmoa and Samoans. Here Tusi implies that the legacy of Leopa'ō is his love not only for his wife and family but also for his Sāmoa, a Sāmoa that embraces its ancient mythologies, with all its warts and faults. By having Tagaloa bestow the title Leopa'ō on Sa'ili, Samoan indigenous theology meets—at least in name—Samoan contemporary life.

Va'aiga, the name given to Sa'ili's wife, is equally interesting. As a name, it embodies three words of significance to Sāmoa: *va* (the relational space that Albert Wendt and many others write about); *'āiga* (the Samoan family unit, core to Samoan culture, economics, and politics); and *va'ai* (to see, to seek, to look after—similar in meaning to the word *sa'ili*). The names carry the metaphorical message that Sa'ili and Va'aiga are both looking and searching.

To give this name to the mother of a family is also to draw on the significance afforded to women in *fa'asāmoa* as *tama'ita'i* (female heirs and carriers of family inheritances); as *feagaiga* (protectors of family peace); and as *ilāmutu* (female mystics). Each

of these roles and statuses is present in the film: when Va'aiga's brother Poto seeks her forgiveness, her roles as *feagaiga* and *ilāmutu* are hinted at; when her body is brought back to the place of her birth, her status as *tama'ita'i* is acknowledged.

The importance of environment and spirituality in this film cannot be overstated. For instance, the influence of Christianity in Sāmoa is present in the shot of stained-glass church crucifix windows shown during the scene set in the village *sā* period (the mandatory evening prayer time); it is there in the blurring of Tagaloa's *pe'a*; and it is most powerfully there in the scene in which a young boy perched Zaccheus-like atop a *pua* (plumeria) tree witnesses redemption/retribution coming to Litia. The words of the young lad's song—"Faigatā o lenei ōlaga 'ua o'o mai, na'o Iesū na fetalai, na'o ia 'e te mālōlō ai" (Woe the burdens of this life, only through Jesus can we find relief)—provide subtle but clear evidence of Christianity's hold on the Samoan spirit. Similarly, there is scarcely a moment in the film that does not underline the significance of the natural world to Samoan life: the taro and *ta'amū* (elephant ear taro), whose leaves and roots are staple foods for Samoans; the *nonu* (Indian mulberry) plant, known for its healing properties; the image of the languid snail, indicative of the pace of Samoan village life; the native 'iao bird (wattled honeyeater) singing in the morning; the dogs barking; people bathing in natural springs; women weaving mats of dried pandanus leaves; the sounds of children playing and the tropical rain falling in abundance; and the burial of deceased

family members on the front lawns of family houses.

*The Orator's* achievement as a resource for honest reflection on Samoan life and the human condition is realized by the tremendous talent and generosity of those who came together to make this film. We are indebted to Tusi Tamasese and his collaborators for showing us how we can tell a rich, honest, and loving story about ourselves and our Samoan heritage. This, to us, is the legacy of Leopa'ō, and we celebrate with him by calling his 'ava (kava cup): "Ooooo lau 'ava lenei Sa'ilimālō!"

SADAT MUAIAVA AND  
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Na o'o mai ni lagona 'ese'ese 'i le 'aumaimoa i le pō na fa'ato'ā fa'aali ai le ata 'O *Le Tulafale* i le pitonu'u o Porirua i Uēlightone, Niu Sila. Na va'aia le lolofi mai o le atunu'u o Sāmoa, Papālagi, Māoli ma tagata fo'i o isi atumotu o le Pasefika e maimoaina lenei ata fou. 'A'o tālia le 'āmataga, sā le'i maua ni manatu mautū ma le maopoopo 'auā e tau-mate i liu po 'o le ā lenei ata. 'Ae na fa'aosofia lagona 'ina 'ua 'āmata fa'aali le ata ma va'aia ai fōliga matagōfie o atumauga lanulau'ava mālosi, le to'ulu'ulu mālie ifo o uaga i luga o lautalo lauusiusi lanumeamata, le taia i le fa'alogo o le pā'ō'ō o matāua i luga o isi laulā'au 'ese'ese, le sanisani fiafia o manu felelei i luga o lā'au o le vaomatua, le totolo lēmū ane o le pili i tafatafa o se 'ogālā'au ma aga'i atu ai i luga o laulā'au mamago, e alu e sa'ili sana mea'ai o le aso!

‘O le fa’atomuaga lea o lenei ata tīfaga, ‘ua fa’aali mai ai le si’osi’omaga mānaia ma le lafulēmū, ‘o se ulua’i va’aiga lautele ‘i le atunu’u o Sāmoa. ‘Ua ‘avea lea folasaga e fa’aaogā ai le gagana va’aia o mata, e fa’ailoa mai ai le ‘oa o le ālāfua ‘ua ta’ua o le ata tīfaga. ‘Ae taia loa taliga i ‘upu lauvala (tulou) i se leo pa’a’ā, ‘ua lafo ai ni ‘upu māsoā i se fa’ato’aga i uta o se nu’u! ‘O ni ‘upu tautafa’amata’u a nisi na gālulue; ‘o se tasi lea o fa’ailo o le itū’aiga si’osi’omaga ma le lalolagi lea ‘ua pu’eina ma momoli mai e lenei ata tīfaga, ona e iai lona tāua.

‘O se matātī’a fou ma le tāua lea ‘ua ‘ausia ma fa’ata’atia e lenei ata. ‘O *Le Tulafale*, ‘ua iloga lona tula’i mai ‘o se ulua’i ata tīfaga tele lea ‘ua fa’aalia i faletifaga tetele o le lalolagi (e ‘ese mai ata lāiti ‘ua ta’ua o DVD e fa’aali i televise) ‘ua fa’aaogā ai le gagana Sāmoa. ‘Ua ‘ato’atoa ai ma fa’amalieina le matamataga a le ‘aumaimoa. ‘Ua fa’aalia mai ai tū ma aga māsanī o le lalolagi o Sāmoa i o latou si’osi’omaga ‘ese’ese, e fa’aaogā ai itū’āiga ‘upu ma tala e talafeagai o le gagana Sāmoa. ‘O se matātī’a fou ‘auā fa’ato’ā fa’alogoīna lea o le gagana Sāmoa i totonu o faletifaga o le lalolagi lautele. ‘Ua fa’amalieina le va’ai ma le fa’alogo ‘aemaise o lagona, ona ‘ua ‘ausia lenei sini ‘autū i lenei ata tīfaga. ‘Ua saputu ai lagona sanisani ma ni lagona fa’agae’etia, talu va’aiga ma fa’alogoga fa’amaupu’epu’e ‘ua fausia e lenei ata tīfaga tāua ma le maoa’e.

‘O itū’āiga gagana ‘olo’o fa’aogāina i le *Tulafale*, e lē fa’aitūtasi. ‘Ua iai le gagana o aso ‘uma, ‘o le gagana fa’aaloalo, ‘o le gagana o le fiafia, ‘o le fa’anoanoa, ‘o ‘upu fo’i o le to’atāma’i ma le ita. ‘O se tasi lea o metotia ‘olo’o fa’aaogā e le ‘aufaiatatīfaga e

mamanu ai uiga ma olaga o tagata Sāmoa i aso ‘uma i totonu o lenei ata tīfaga, se’i fa’ailoa ma momoli mai ai le fe’au ‘autū a le ali’i faitīfaga, ‘o Tusi Tamasese. ‘O le mea e silisili lona tāua i lenei ata, ‘o le fa’aaogā lea o le gagana Sāmoa e gagana a’i le ata.

E ‘ese’ese fo’i tagata ma o latou uiga ma a latou tala e talanoa ai i lenei ata tīfaga. E to’atele i latou e lē fiafia i le gagana laulauvala, ‘ae to’atele fo’i latou te talia. Fai mai o aga lava o lalolagi o tagata soifua e pei o Sāmoa. E lē tu’ua ni masei ‘ae ‘aumai na’o ni lelei. ‘O le gagana lea na fa’aaogā i uta i le fa’ato’aga, e fa’amanatu mai ai fo’i le olaga māsanī o tagata Sāmoa, ‘a faitai ‘ona lalau lea o o latou tuā’oi pe’ā lē fiafia ‘i ai, ‘ae fai fa’alafi ‘aua ne’i lagona mai. ‘O le ala lea na lafoina ai i uta ‘ae lē o tai. E fa’alogoīna fo’i i nisi taimi i fafo o fale, ‘ae fa’apēnā fo’i nisi taimi o le vevesi o ‘āiga. ‘O le tiute lea e lē taumatea, ‘ua fa’ataunu’u e le ali’i faiatatīfaga, ‘o lona fa’amaoni i talitonuga ma ‘auala e taumulimuli ai le tufuga gaosimea fa’alemafau (artist). ‘O lana ‘anava tau fo’i lea.

‘A ‘o le ā le ‘autū o lenei ata? E tele ‘autū o lenei ata i le faitau i ai fa’alemafau fa’apea nisi molimau fa’aalia, ae tasi lava lona ‘autū iloga. ‘O le tala o lenei ata tīfaga, e au’ili’ili ai le olaga o se ulugāli’i Sāmoa e nonofo i le ‘āiga o Sa’ili, ‘o le tamāloa. ‘O Sa’ili fo’i ‘o se sa’a. ‘O lana āvā, ‘o Va’aiga, ‘o se tama’ita’i na fa’ate’a ‘ese ma lona ‘āiga ma lona nu’u ‘ina ‘ua fānau ‘ae le’i faia sona to’alua. ‘O le ulugāli’i lenei e ‘autū i ai le tala ‘ātoa o lenei ata. ‘O se ulugāli’i e pei lava o ulugāli’i ‘uma, e fealofani, ‘ae iai lava fo’i fe’ese’esea’iga. ‘O Sa’ili e lē pei o isi tamāloa o le nu’u ‘auā

‘o ia ‘o se sa‘a. ‘Ae e le‘i ‘avea lenei mea e fa‘alotovaivai ai lona to‘alua o Va‘aiga. ‘Ina ‘o tā‘ele Va‘aiga i le tasi afiafi pogipogi i le vaitā‘ele o tama‘ita‘i o le nu‘u, na ia ta‘u manino ai lava ‘iā Sa‘ili mea tāua e lua i lona māfaufau, e na te talitonu e tatau ona iai ‘iā Sa‘ili pe‘ā fia matai: “Ga ‘avaku e le Akua le guku ma le faku ‘iā ‘oe. Pau a gā o mea e mo‘omia e le makai.”

‘O lona uiga, ‘o le matai tulāfale e taulia le lototele, le toa o le loto ma le lē fefe e tautala, ‘ae lē ‘o le sa‘a, pe ‘o le lē taulia i le va‘ai a tagata. Fai mai le molimau a le *Sāmoa Taimi*, “O le tauluga . . . o lenei ata, ‘o se vaega na fafau mai lava i le ‘āmataga, ma na mautinoa lava le fa‘atalitali o le ‘aumaimoa pe mafai e Sa‘ili (‘o le sa‘a e ‘autū ‘i ai le ata) ona fai se ‘upu ma se fa‘amatalaga . . . i le tofi fa‘afale‘upolu” (*Sāmoa Times*, 28 Novema 2011). ‘Ina ‘ua maliu Va‘aiga ma toe fao atu ai lona tino maliu e lona tuagane ma le ‘āiga, na iloa le lē faigōfie ma le telē ‘o se pāpuipui e tatau ona ‘ausia e Sa‘ili, e toe ‘aumai ai lona to‘alua e tanu i lona ‘āiga ma lona ‘ele‘ele! ‘O le fesili pe mafai e Sa‘ili se lāuga e toe fa‘afo‘i mai ai le tino maliu o lana āvā? ‘O le taimi na lāuga ai Sa‘ili, na to‘ulu‘ulu mālie ifo loimata ona ‘ua ia mafaia! Na toe fo‘i ai loa ma ‘ave le tino maliu o si ona to‘alua. ‘O le tauluga lea.

‘Ua ta‘atitia nei ni matāti‘a tetele ‘ua ‘ausia e lenei ata. ‘Ua lē gata i le molimau ma se fa‘ailoga taualoa na maua i se tasi o laumua e togi ai ata tīfaga fou, i le ‘a‘ai tele e ta‘ua o Vēnise (Venice), ‘ae ‘ua filifilia fo‘i e Niu Sila e fai ma ana ata tīfaga e tauvā ai mo fa‘ailoga silisili ma le taualoa i le lalolagi o ata tīfaga, ‘o le Oscar i

Kalefōnia. ‘Ua māfua lea filifiliga ‘ona ‘o le gagana Sāmoa lea e fa‘agaganaina ai le ata (foreign language category), ‘ae fa‘a‘autū ma fa‘amautū ‘ona ‘o le fa‘atufugaga o le ata ‘i le taleni ma le tomai ‘ua foa‘i e le Atua ‘iā Tusi Tamasese.

‘Aiseā ‘ua māfua ai ona maua nei fa‘ailoga silisili e lenei ata e faia i le gagana Sāmoa i laumua o le lalolagi? ‘O se tali pu‘upu‘u ona ‘ua talitonuina le fe‘au o lenei ata!

‘O faiva alofilima o le ali‘i faiatātī-faga o Tusi Tamasese, ua pei ‘o le a‘e manumālō o le fā‘agatama po‘o le tausinioga sa feagai ma le ali‘i o Leātioogie: na pati ta‘oto ai lona tamā o Fe‘epō. E ui o le taua o le toa na tauia i le toto masa‘a le faiva o Leātioogie, ‘a‘o le taua o le poto ma le atamai ‘ātoa ma le sogasogā fa‘alemafau i taleni ma agava‘a ‘ua foa‘i e le Ātua le faiva o Tusi. E fa‘atusa fo‘i i se faiva o le sami loloto, ‘auā e lē iloa pe tua ma ni ā le faiva! E tele ‘a fe‘ai, e tele fo‘i lu‘itau. Ui i lea, ‘o lenei ua patipatia e Sāmoa ma le lalolagi ‘ātoa le fa‘atautaiga. ‘O lea ‘ua tau i le tapua‘iga, ina ‘ua a‘e manumālō le faiva o le sami loloto lea na ūia, ma ‘ua salalau tala i nusipepa, ‘o televise, ‘o ‘upega tafā‘ilagi, ma ‘auala ‘ese‘ese o fa‘asalalauga i le lalolagi ‘ona ‘ua taulau o le fa‘amoemoe. ‘Ua sunu‘i se matāti‘a fou i mea tau ata tīfaga e se alo o Sāmoa!

E moni ai le ‘upu, ‘ua tau mai le ata o Taulelei, talu lenei ata ‘O *Le Tulāfale*. ‘O se ma‘atāua o measina e ‘anagatā ma fa‘amemelo i ai tagatānu‘u Sāmoa, ‘ua va‘aia ai ana tū ma aganu‘u ma aga‘ifanua, fa‘apea ma lona si‘osi‘omaga i lenei ata tīfaga. ‘O le ta‘ui ma le ‘au‘afa e lē so‘ona tālā pe fa‘alealea ‘ae ‘o lea ‘ua moli-

mauina ma maimoa le lalolagi i lou lōtoifale ma lou si'osi'omaga. 'O lea fo'i 'ua tatala ou fa'amalama Sāmoa i ni sālililiga ma ni su'esu'ega o māfaufauga fa'aneionapo. 'O lenei ata 'o se alagā'oa tāua e aogā mo a'oa'oga o le gagana Sāmoa i ā'oga mauāluluga 'aemaise Iunivesitē. 'Ua sasa'a i uta ma 'ua folasia le faiva o Pili 'a'o silamiō le kelope 'i lona mātagōfie ma lona ma'ema'eā, 'a'anoa ma le 'anagatā.

'O se fa'atautaiga mātagōfie ma le 'aulelei lenei faiva! Malo le fai o le faiva!

*English Translation:*

A range of emotions coursed through audience members awaiting the opening of the film *The Orator/O Le Tulafale* in Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand. People of Samoan, Māori, other Pacific, and European backgrounds were making their way into the theater to watch this new Samoan film—uncertain of what to expect, like fishermen guessing what might be at the end of their lines. From the opening scenes of the movie, however, a swell of inspiration, excitement, and pride could be felt throughout the theater.

The film's introduction of Sāmoa portrays a sumptuous, rich, and fertile environment. The beauty of the landscape astonishes—deep green mountains appear, accompanied by light, gentle raindrops falling on luscious green taro leaves, the popping and echoing sound of rain hitting other leaves in the forest, the excited songs of the rain-forest birds; a lizard near a sun-dried branch quietly and slowly meanders along dry brown leaves to look for its day's rations. It is also an introduction to the superb use of

visual language that enriches the film throughout, exemplifying how powerful and resonant the medium of film can be. And then this visual feast and the peaceful audio of the deep forest is shattered by profane language. The curses uttered by workers in the taro patch foreshadow the complexity of the world being conveyed.

Given the film's title, it is not surprising that *The Orator* pays exquisite attention to the multidimensional role of language and its varieties in daily life. The characters' nuances and differences are reflected in the lines they deliver—the language of happiness, sadness, words to curse by as well as to reflect anger, and forms of respect and ceremonial language. The language used in the plantation reflects that part of Samoan life where we curse a neighbor we don't like. But in the movie, as often in real life, this is usually hidden away and is rarely intended to be heard; this is why, in the film, it is used in the bush and not in the village center. When heard outside of the house, such language indicates that families are at loggerheads—in this case the film's viewers are placed in a remarkable position where they view both the internal and external dynamics of intimate relationships.

The multifaceted use of language is one method by which the writer/director Tusi Tamasese captures the way the people live their lives. The use of the Samoan language in the film is a particularly important milestone and provides special satisfaction for Samoan audiences. Their excitement and joy was palpable in the Porirua screening, as an intriguing experience of the Samoan culture could be seen

and heard through the appropriate use of that culture's own language. Many Samoan speakers may balk at the vile language used in parts of the film, but many others may have no problem with it, since such talk is part of what the real world of people like us Samoans is about. The bad needs to be seen and heard just like the good that makes up that world. This is part of a professional compass that compels Tamasese to follow the ethics and principles of his art.

What is the essential intention of this film? Though there appear to be a number of these, we suggest that the film has a central goal. *The Orator* is the first major feature film in the Samoan language to be shown in international cinemas. This places the film squarely on a pioneering platform. The story line is centered on the lives of a Samoan couple who live in the village of the husband's family. Sa'ili is no ordinary husband, for he is a dwarf, and Va'aiga, his wife, is an outcast, banished by her family and village for giving birth to a fatherless child. Like any other couple, they have learned to live within and in spite of their personal circumstances, and they must complement their differences. The fact that Sa'ili is a dwarf does not discourage Va'aiga; in fact, she uses it to challenge him to be strong. One evening as dusk sets in, while Va'aiga is bathing in the village pool, she answers Sa'ili's question regarding what it takes to be a chief: "God gave you a mouth and a heart! That's all you need to be chief!"

Va'aiga's admonition means that it matters for an orator to have guts. It does not matter whether one is a dwarf, nor does it matter if one does

not have social standing—to be an orator one must be bold and courageous and not be afraid to speak. As the *Samoa Times* recorded (28 Nov 2011), "The climax . . . of this film was planned from the beginning, and it was certain that the audience would wait to see if Sa'ili could speak as an orator." When Va'aiga dies and her body is snatched away by her brother and taken back to her family and village, a major wall of uncertainty is placed in front of Sa'ili, which he has to overcome. He must persuade her family to return her body so she can be buried on his land. In its premier screening, tears rolled down our faces as we watched Sa'ili stand and orate in front of Va'iga's family.

This film's outstanding achievements deserve comment. Not only has *The Orator* received favorable reviews and top recognition at the Venice International Film Festival, but it was also selected as New Zealand's entry in the prestigious Academy Awards, in the foreign language category.

The skillful craftsmanship of filmmaker Tusi Tamasese is reminiscent of the heroic efforts and the competitiveness of the legendary Leatiogie, whose blind father Fe'epō applauded while resting in his abode. However, while Leatiogie's skills were displayed in heroic war games, the comparable intelligence, expertise, and diligence of Tusi shine through the art of filmmaking—it is a testament to his God-given gifts and talents.

Crafting a film is like fishing in the deep ocean where outcomes are unpredictable since the fisher may encounter dangerous fish and numerous other obstacles and challenges. Nevertheless, Sāmoa and the whole

world salute the production of *The Orator* with loud applause. The task is complete and it is clear that Tusi Tamasese's casting in the deep sea has yielded a successful catch. Just as Pili's legendary fishing returned with plenty for all who meditated and prayed, Tusi has similarly fished in the deep ocean of filmmaking. The catch is thus displayed (a Samoan saying) and the globe can appreciate its idiosyncratic beauty, revealing complexities, and pricelessness.

Taulelei's mythical prediction that everything would turn out well is an appropriate metaphor with which to rain praises about *The Orator*. Word about this son of Sāmoa's filmmaking achievements has spread via the newspapers, television, the Internet, and various other media and publications. It is a jewel and precious ornament of which the Samoan people are proud, particularly since it is rare that such a depiction of their customs, as well as their natural surroundings appears on a big international screen. *The Orator* is a fine mat unpacked for public display, thus revealing the intricacies of Sāmoa's core beliefs and values. Contemporary views, critique, and research will follow, but this film will stand as a valuable resource for studying and teaching Samoan language and culture at secondary and tertiary institutions.

*The Orator* is a vibrant work. Congratulations for a job well done!

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*Pacific Island Artists: Navigating the Global Art World*, edited by Karen Stevenson. Oakland, CA: Masalai Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-9714127-7-4; x + 203 pages, full color illustrations, notes, bibliography. Paper, US\$69.95.

*Pacific Island Artists: Navigating the Global Art World* is a volume that aims to contextualize and address issues associated with contemporary Pacific art. Karen Stevenson's introduction notes that the impetus of the collection arose from sessions at the Association for Social Anthropologists in Oceania's (ASAO) conferences and developed over a number of years with input from Robert Welsh and Vilsoni Hereniko. Although some of the fifteen chapters are directly derived from the ASAO sessions, Stevenson invited other contributors including artists, a commercial gallerist, and curators to interject distinctive perspectives.

The range of prominent contributors will attract a wide audience interested in the anthropological, art historical, and commercial aspects of contemporary art in the Pacific Islands and diaspora. The collection offers a broad introduction to contemporary Pacific art for a general audience, and a number of the chapters will be of interest to an academic audience. However, several of the essays require readers to have some historical, political, and cultural background in order to appreciate topics as varied as Anna-Karina Hermkens's analysis of gender relations and barkcloth in New Guinea and Elaine Monds's account of locating, exhibiting, and selling Melanesian art in a commercial gallery on Vancouver Island.