

Fa'avae Tuli

Or: Finding my malu

Tuli's footprints
Trace the lines between past and future
The here becomes a temporal reality
where did I come from?
Where am I going?

Lines between spaces
Spaces between lines
Spaced lines on a white page
Inked into memories
And on tongues
Of the once loved dead

Lines between Pago's governor Leiato and Fa'amalepe
Lines to Luatua Moe
Lines to Taula'ai I, my grandmother
The footprints of the golden clover
Are a woman's footprints in the black rocks of Pulotu

Inking spaces between Saleimoa and Nofo'ali'i where the stolen baby sat
Connecting to Luatua
And the people of the trees
Two eel-Gods and a talking owl
Who kept watch
Tuli walking with the Tui A'ana
Tuli walking with Nu'uoula and Sami
Tuli walking on my grandmother's thighs

Her malu of black stars
Circumferencing her world
Tuli walking to the people of the tui'se
Where a man walked out of the ocean
And Salevao was shape-shifter
Man-dog-wolf

Tuli walking with Lau
Of the Tuigamala
And the sacred *Lau niu sae lua*
And Fa'amalepe smiling

Remembering the splitting of coconut frond
Capturing a moment of Man, and spirit

My malu will not be on my thighs
Spanning the circumference of my limbs
My malu will not be on my thighs

My mother made sure of that
Instead, she tattooed my tongue, my eyes, my ears
Planting my pito under a coconut tree
That struggles to breathe
My malu will not be on my thighs
It is in the genealogy of the owl and the dog-wolf-man

Shape shifting
My malu will be on my feet
Connecting me to land

It will be on my back
Because I carry the people of my tree

It will be on my hands
Because I must touch other lives

It will be on my tongue
Because I must take this responsibility
To speak

My malu will not be on my thighs
Because I have another duty

I must first speak with the spirits
And learn to love my blackened tongue

Fa'amoemoe
Is a male child
Of un-birthered hope

Where am I going?

where did I come from?

The here becomes a temporal reality

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Trace the lines between past and future.

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