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EDITOR'S FORUM

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**TOWARD HISTORICIZING GENDER IN POLYNESIA:  
ON VILSONI HERENIKO'S *WOVEN GODS*  
AND REGIONAL PATTERNS**

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This article considers possible parallels between Rotuman and Samoan gender history through Vilsoni Hereniko's book *Woven Gods*. Hereniko draws upon the work of Victor Turner to analyze his Rotuman data, arguing that wedding clowns reverse normative social structures. Wedding clowns are expert female practitioners of Rotuman joking discourse. This discourse is not only ritualized on special occasions but is also an everyday informal discourse and, I argue, is in this sense normative; it counterbalances respect discourse, which is likewise practiced in ritual (ceremonial) contexts but also in everyday polite contexts. In the Samoan precolonial sex-gender system, males and females had different discursive specialties—males in politesse, females in joking. Joking was often sexual in nature and indexed practices at odds with contemporary virginal ideals for girls. Rotuman wedding clowns may represent traces of precolonial feminine gender practices that resemble precolonial Samoan practices. Further, they offer a running commentary on sex-gender colonialism.

VILSONI HERENIKO TAKES THE LICENSE to be a scholar-trickster—to document custom or to write myth as his thought processes and creativity demand. To take is also to give: Hereniko gives his readers a kind of permission that I intend to take. In this essay, written in response to his work, I will be my own kind of trickster—the woman clowning at the wedding, so to speak—taking the opportunity to ask questions that Hereniko's *Woven Gods*

(1995) raises for me, rather than trying to answer them. I also exploit a possibility offered in “The Death of the Author” by Barthes (1977), who sees the text as an open field for play rather than a closed object; every reading, in Barthes’s view, goes on writing the text. Let me begin as Rotumans do when clowning around (Howard 1990:269), saying “*se fek*,” “don’t be angry” with me for taking *Woven Gods* as a venue in which to explore, comparatively, my interest in discourses on self and Polynesian sex-gender history.

### **Turner and Rotuman Clowns as Queens-for-a-Day**

Through much of his book, Hereniko expands on Victor Turner’s seminal work on carnival (1977). Turner believes that there is social structure and that in carnival there is, temporarily, antistructure. Carnival-type occasions (1) represent a return to a purer form of collectivity than one usually finds in social life—*communitas*—and (2) evacuate collective frustration with normative structures. The *communitas* and release offered by carnival renew and reinvigorate social structure even while they deconstruct it.

In weddings, according to Hereniko, the normative pattern of Rotuman social structure is reversed in a seemingly chaotic play (1995:127). Normally, chiefs and men rule. Normally, Rotuman females are subordinate, act shy, and must be careful to respect propriety. But the woman who rules the wedding jokes with men about sex, her banter bringing out the sexual/scatological undertones of every encounter (*ibid.*:51, 80, 130, 133). Brandishing her *poki*, a large stick that is self-consciously both scepter and phallus, the clown orders everyone about, playing a role that is recognizable throughout Polynesia (*ibid.*:93, 158, 129, 143–166). In Samoa, for example, the clown, *fa’aaluma*, is literally “one who humiliates,” and that is what queen clown does at Rotuman weddings; chiefs kneel at her behest and men dance absurdly. “A Rotuman wedding,” Hereniko says, “is an arena in which chiefs and men learn humility” (*ibid.*:78).

Drawing out the implications of this argument, one might speculate that as Rotuman chiefs are to commoners, so Rotuman men are to women. On wedding days the entire “chiefs are to commoners as men are to women” ensemble is reversed via women. For Turner and for Hereniko, carnival and clowning allow people to let off steam in reaction to the frustration exacted by everyday social rules. Naturally, these rules are least rewarding for those who are oppressed and marginalized—aptly represented by women.

This inversion idea has been used to explain more than clowning; it is perhaps the most honored explanation of spirit possession (Lewis 1971; Bourguignon 1969), which is seen as another occasion for reversing social structure. And these two types of events—carnival and spirit possession—

are connected, at least in the Pacific. Carnival events are often at least figuratively ruled by spirits. Like their Samoan comedic relatives who perform in the theater known as Spirit House, Hereniko's Rotuman clowns are kin to ghosts; the entertainment forms associated with them may be rooted in ritual dance aimed at spirit harnessing (Hereniko 1995:80, 134).<sup>1</sup>

Hereniko cites Bradd Shore frequently on these topics, because he believes there are many cultural patterns accurately depicted by Shore in Samoa that also prevail in Rotuma. Shore sees those Samoan high-spirited occasions that Turner would call carnival (e.g., dancing parties, comedy nights) and Samoan spirit possession as forms of "conflict management" (1977:307; 1978). Shore calls this type of management "homeostatic," meaning that periodically reversing normative structures allows a society to remain in a state of balance or homeostasis. Mead ([1928] 1961:110–121), before Turner or Shore, saw dance similarly, and dance was a part of Samoan carnivals long before missionaries tried (unsuccessfully) to ban it. Samoan social rules, in her view, demand the suppression of individuality. Samoan dance, which Mead sees as very individualistic, effects a normative reversal vis-à-vis individuality, making its everyday suppression tolerable.

This is good theory, but no theory tells the whole story. Rotuman weddings have further stories to tell. Like Hereniko, but from another direction, I too suspect that there are many parallels between Samoa and Rotuma; further, these parallels are suggestive of larger Polynesian patterns. Based on my Samoan work, therefore, I want to raise a series of questions about the Rotuman data, thereby offering an alternative view of Rotuman weddings.

Hereniko frequently suggests that the clown's power has contracted, indicating culture change in this institution, which he dates roughly to the 1960s and 1970s (1995:96). Inasmuch as Rotuman weddings do reverse normative structures, are these reversals of (1) traditional social structures or (2) of social structures that date to the colonial period, reversals that have paled in part because colonialism has? In other words, what if wedding clowns comprise a figure in which one might read a colonial history, rather than merely reflecting Rotuman culture in a synchronous sense? What if the spirits who figuratively rule at Rotuman weddings in the person of queen clown are also historical ghosts, the ghostly survivors of an earlier age, with something to say about precontact Rotuman culture?

Hereniko sees not only clowning but sex roles in Rotuma as very like sex roles in Samoa, as those roles have been analyzed by Shore (1977, 1981, 1982). Thus, following Shore on Samoan roles (1977:416), Hereniko says that "the male wanders farther afield into the wilder and more dangerous territories," while "the female is more concerned with maintaining received order, sanitation, and cleanliness" (1995:62, 76). Like Freeman (1983), Here-

niko sees these sex roles as traditional. But what if they are not? Might Rotuman wedding clowning be a shrunken version of a precolonial cultural world that was more gender-balanced, in which the clown's queen-for-a-day sovereignty was for more than a day? What if these gender roles—both celebrated and turned topsy-turvy at Rotuman weddings—have been subject to historical revision, and—more significant—what if they have been subject to a Victorian colonial revision that inscribed all too familiar gender biases and inequities upon these relationships? These kinds of revisions might well be cross-culturally recurrent in Polynesia: missionaries, from the seafaring John Williams onward, were oh so thorough in their labors there. Such revisions would resemble the variations on a theme that one finds in truly old elements of Polynesian cultures occurring in different Polynesian locales.

### **Joking Discourse and the Self**

I want to offer a supplement to the now-classic Turnerian view of carnival, which structures much of Hereniko's study, and to the models of clowning, spirit possession, and gender developed in Shore's work on Samoa as applied by Hereniko to Rotuma. To do so, I must make a detour into my work on the self (Mageo 1995, 1998). I argue that there are universally recurrent discourses on self that are key to understanding the cultural construction of personhood and that implicate other areas of cultural life—comedy, spirit possession, and gender among them.

Cultures begin with a premise about what it means to be a person, which is inevitably contradicted by experience. A moral discourse therefore arises, preaching that, although people may not be as their culture construes them, it is good and virtuous to be so. This discourse, furthermore, condemns contradicting tendencies. Ultimately, however, moral discourse succeeds best at highlighting these contradictory tendencies rather than suppressing them. In response to contradiction, two further discourses arise, one of which I call formal and the other, informal. In formal discourse everyone is expected to enter into cultural performances, with both gestural and verbal aspects, which convey the values lauded in moral discourse. In informal discourse everyone enters into performances that express a rhetorical "as-if" version of those tendencies condemned in moral discourse. There is yet another discourse that develops out of this series, but its consideration is unnecessary for my purposes here.<sup>2</sup>

My idea is that what Turner would call "antistructure" is actually structured into everyday talk, being fundamental to a major cultural discourse—informal discourse. This discourse is not saved for special antistructural occasions but is part of culture's daily balancing act. Formal discourse is

regent on ceremonial occasions, just as informal discourse is regent on carnival occasions, but neither is reserved for these privileged arenas. In this sense what I call informal discourse is part of a homeostasis, but one that saturates quotidian existence. I argue that all discourses on self feature norms. Rather than being antinormative, informal discourse is only in a special, limited sense antimoral: I say "in a special sense" because the antimorality of informal discourse is not literally meant.<sup>3</sup> I turn to the Samoan example for further clarity.

Samoans see people as role players in hierarchically tiered groups. In Samoan moral discourse people say that everyone should "stand at their posts," meaning one should humbly play one's appointed role in the group, deferring to superiors—a sentiment that is often contradicted in practice. Accommodating a contradicting human nature, Samoans define two further discourses: (1) a formal discourse in which everyone talks as if others are his or her superiors and affects an as-if deference toward them and (2) an informal discourse in which people playfully put down one another in jest.

In precolonial Samoa these discourses were performed at rituals and carnivals but were also everyday forms of talk. At Samoan ceremonies people spoke with ostentatious deference toward those with whom, before and after the ceremony, they might war (Churchward 1887:99–101). These performances, however, had mundane correlatives. Thus, in the nineteenth century, Robert Louis Stevenson watched Samoan children on the streets of Apia "my-lord" one another when they played marbles. Frequently, Samoans greet and address one another with high-flown courtesy and ceremoniousness, although this ceremoniousness is rhetorical: it is not meant as an indicator of any thoroughgoing deference to others. The boys that Stevenson observed were, after all, trying to beat one another at marbles.

In what were the most important carnival occasions, Joking Nights (Pōula), people performatively put down others, albeit in hilarious jests that were both verbal and choreographic (Churchward 1887:229–30; Krämer [1902] 1995:366–381). But Joking Night jests were highly elaborated versions of an informal discourse that was and still is the salt and pepper of everyday Samoan conversation. Traditionally, this discourse turns on two jest genres called *faipona* and *ula* (as in Pōula, Joking Night), illustrated below in that order.

If a person should jeer a young woman as she might be passing by remarking freely on her person saying she was diseased or ill formed she would instantly throw off her cloth & expose herself in every possible direction & pass on. A respectable young man who had been residing among them some time informed me that when

he first went on shore among them the females in great numbers gathered round him & some took off their mats before him exposing their persons as much as possible to his view. Perceiving him bashful the whole of the women old & young did the same & began dancing in that state before him desiring him not to be bashful or angry as it was Faa Samoa . . . or the Samoan fashion. (Williams [1830–1832] 1984:232)

To *faipona* is to lampoon, usually by carping on salient and risible personal characteristics.<sup>4</sup> To *ula* is to tease, preferably about sexual or scatological subjects. In Samoa to *faipona* or to *ula* is to playfully attack another's dignity: they are "as-if" put-downs. At Joking Nights the first part of the program was decorative and orderly, but joking dominated the program's second part. Although the entertainment mode was at once theatrical and choreographic—there being no real dividing line between the two—in part two the emphasis fell initially on theatrical versions of *faipona*, moving on to choreographic versions of *ula*.<sup>5</sup>

Shore argues that in Samoan social structure there are two predominant contexts, one of which he calls complementary (in which people's statuses vary) and the other, symmetrical (in which people's statuses are approximate) (1977, 1978, 1982). These contexts are related to but not coincident with formal and informal discourses, respectively. The difference is that Shore means to—and in my view does—describe actual Samoan social structure; the formal and informal discourses I describe are rhetorical rather than reflective of real social structural variables like status, age, or gender. Thus Stevenson's marbles-playing boys who addressed one another so formally did not inhabit what Shore calls a "complementary" context, that is, a situation in which social status varies: these street urchins, as Stevenson calls them, shared a common social status. Conversely, on Joking Nights and at like events, authorities were a particular target of put-downs (Sloan 1941:68; Shore 1977:318–331; Kneubuhl 1987; Sinavaiana 1992a:214). In other words, people affected an informal discourse as if no significant status differences existed between them on occasions when in fact such differences did exist.

Formal and informal discourses are structured in the sense that they represent highly patterned language games, but, like Turner's carnival, they can also be seen as deconstructive of real social structural variables like status, age, or gender.<sup>6</sup> By bringing a rhetorical relation to bear upon these structures, formal and informal discourses show that people may act in line with them or in freedom from them, implying that institutionalized social structures are conventional and arbitrary rather than natural and necessary. Contra Turner, who sees deconstructive practices as the flag of carnival, I

see them as a normal part of how we talk to one another, although we may be only dimly aware of the far-reaching, culture-challenging implications of what we do.

As in my discourse model, clowning at Rotuman weddings is but a high example of an informal discourse that is structured into everyday life. Hereniko gives evidence of the day-to-day occurrence of the clown's wedding discourse at the opening of his book, which begins with a return to Rotuma. Sailing on a small ship, he loses his quarters to a high-status family. Bunked uncomfortably in a hallway, he ends up spending his time on deck, where an eccentrically dressed middle-aged woman begins and sustains joking repartee (1995:6). This is, Hereniko both realizes and remembers, the way Rotumans entertain one another, and it happens in countless venues. "Card games and other informal contexts are usually marked by a lot of teasing banter," he relates (*ibid.*:15). Cards, furthermore, "turn everyone into a clown" (*ibid.*:13). But this clowning talk is not confined to so common a pastime as games; it is also what makes routine work lighter when one is net fishing in the lagoon or farming in the taro plantation (*ibid.*:15). If old women are the ruling spirits of informal discourse both at carnivals and in daily life, what does this say about Rotuman sex roles? For clues let us turn to the Samoan case.

### Discourse and Gender History

In precolonial Samoa, formal and informal discourses were gender-marked, men tending to specialize in formal discourse and women in informal discourse (Mageo 1998:119–140). Men held most important titles, and the central actors in ceremonies were the titled representatives of groups. Ceremonies, therefore, constituted a male-dominated province, and, from an early age, males practiced a ceremonial discourse of genealogy and esoteric allusions. Thus Mead says: "It is an exceptional girl who can give her great-grandfather's name, the exceptional boy who cannot give his genealogy in traditional form for several generations. While the boy of sixteen or seventeen is eagerly trying to master the esoteric allusiveness of the talking chief whose style he admires, the girl of the same age learns the minimum of etiquette" ([1928] 1961:82–83).

In old Samoa the village was the basic political unit, but villages were fractious (Davidson 1967; Gilson 1970). Visiting, feasting, celebrating, partying, and marrying between them forged larger political solidarities. These activities were hosted by the *auluma*, the association of native-born village women (Moyle 1975:239; Shore 1977:318; Meleiseā 1987:28). Hosting entailed entertaining visitors, and in these entertainments women took the

leading role, as in the earliest description of such a night by the missionary Williams.<sup>7</sup>

The performers are divided into companies. . . . The young virgin girls taking the lead . . . enter the house entirely naked & commence their dance. The fullgrown women then follow after. Then come the elderly women all of whom are entirely naked. During their dancing they throw themselves in all imaginable positions in order to make the most full exposure of their persons to the whole company. In addition to this there are several persons supplied with flambeaux which they hold as near to the dancers as possible. During the whole of the time of performing the females are using the most vile, taunting, bantering language to the men. . . . The men then enter and being rather more bashful than the fair sex they [bear] . . . a narrow leaf in their hands. . . . The ladies however will not . . . be content with this return for the full & free exhibition they have made & commence a furious attack on them in language suitable to the occasion. The men at length throw away their apology for a covering & make a full exposure of their persons using lights as the females had done before them. (Williams [1830–1832] 1984:247–248)

Joking Nights were held on the evening after major ceremonies but were not the only occasions for jesting performances: in welcoming and parting celebrations (*‘aiavā*), entertainment was also of a jesting nature.<sup>8</sup>

In old Rotuma, too, there were once more occasions, such as weddings, on which informal discourse was grandly celebrated and that were, in this sense, operative equivalents to ceremonies. There were *sa‘a*, fine white mat weaving bees in which a woman clowned and had authority over men who wandered nearby (Hereniko 1995:114, 116–118). There were Beach Picnics in which a clowning woman was a catalyst to games among young people that involved “touching, embracing, and teasing banter” (ibid.:19).<sup>9</sup> “The Rotumans have always been fond of games on . . . sandy beaches, especially on moonlight nights,” Eason explains, when “they used the village playhouses for dancing.” These houses “acquired a good deal of notoriety and were suppressed by the missions,” but not very effectively until the late 1880s (Eason [1951]:23).

There were also *tautoga* (Hereniko 1995:16–17, 88), traditional mass dances that began in an orderly fashion but became increasingly free and in which a female clown broke away to prance about, playing “the bird” and inciting laughter.<sup>10</sup> Energetic dancing on these occasions was often a form of



choreographic jest (*ibid.*:14), just as it was on Samoan Joking Nights.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Hereniko says, at such a dance “exaggerated body movements, facial contortions, or suggestive sexual antics are the standard techniques” (*ibid.*:17). Compare Churchward’s clearly biased nineteenth-century portrayal of Samoan girls performing at a Pōula:

Any stranger to Samoa . . . on his first introduction to such a party of girls, seated in front of him so demurely and properly, would require but slight provocation to persuade himself that he saw an eightfold incarnation of all that is modest and good. Alas for such a man’s feelings should he . . . witness the very extravagant performance of these same damsels, when fairly roused and hounded into delirium by the approving shouts of the audience! . . . These same quiet-looking . . . damsels are quite capable of becoming so excited . . . as really to lose all command of their actions, distorting their countenances in the most hideous manner, and performing such undesirable antics, that . . . they appear at last more like a lot of demons let loose from below, than the angels upon earth they at first appeared. (1887:229–230; cf. Williams [1830–1832] 1984: 247–248)

If Samoan informal discourse was the special province of women in which they took the lead, there must have existed a better balance between gender talk and gender power in old Samoa than was found in colonial Samoa. Eason says of old Rotuma, “Women seem always to have had power and influence, and very little work to do” ([1951]:12). In Samoa, Christianization and colonialization had an unbalancing gender effect, as I will describe below. Did Rotuma suffer similarly? Once again, I turn to the Samoan case and its grounding in the self, about which I can speak more knowledgeably; then I will return to further interrogate the Rotuman data.

### **Colonialism and Gender Clowning**

Cross-culturally there are two common premises about what it means to be a self: an egocentric premise in which the self is defined in terms of the individual’s inner experiences and a sociocentric premise in which the self is defined in terms of people’s group roles.<sup>12</sup> Societies featuring different premises also define formal and informal contexts in diverse ways. In the egocentric case, contexts are defined by how intimate the individual is with others: when interpersonal relations are close, the context is private (informal); when they are not, the context is public (formal). In the sociocentric

case, contexts are defined by group types. Thus in Samoa, when groups are composed of people differing in status, they are formal; when groups are composed of people of approximate status, they are informal. Shore calls formal contexts complementary and informal contexts symmetrical (1977, 1978, 1982), and I have argued that people's talk may actually counterpoint these contexts rather than discursively replicating them. I have, however, a further difference from Shore here: he sees the binary social division of life into contexts as a distinguishing feature of Samoan culture; I see formal-informal context splits as a universally important feature of social structure, albeit differently defined (private-public, hierarchical-peer, and so forth) depending on the culture's fundamental premise about the self (egocentric, sociocentric, or other). I do not mean that there are only two important contexts in Samoa or elsewhere, but rather that people sort contexts (which are extremely various) into binary categories.

American culture tends to be egocentric, and our context split is between public and private, but this was not always the case in our English parent culture—English culture before the nineteenth century. It may seem that I stray here from the Rotuman and Samoan case, but it was nineteenth-century English culture from which the original missions to Samoa and to Rotuma came, and so some historical perspective on the English culture of contexts and genders is prerequisite to understanding contact and subsequent culture change in these places.<sup>13</sup>

Late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English culture was ensconced in a context revolution and a debate about gender and sexuality attendant upon this revolution. Levy argues that internalized values, as opposed to values located in a community's shared social space, are concomitant with capitalism; in a capitalist world communities break down and individuals circulate among locales in search of work (1973:347–354; 1974). I argue the same is true of the self (Mageo 1998:29–30, 144, 147). In mid-eighteenth-century English society, the Industrial Revolution effected a change from sociocentric values and a sociocentric self toward privately held values and an egocentric self.<sup>14</sup> During the same period a redefinition of social contexts was taking place along with a reorganization of gender roles that revolved around contexts (Davidoff and Hall 1987). A private domestic sphere was partitioned off from public life. Particularly in the middle classes (of which missionaries were members or fledgling members), women migrated into this domestic sphere, giving up former roles in the public realm.<sup>15</sup> Whereas the parlor had once served many purposes—for example, as an office for an adjacent factory in which a wife might work as an assistant manager—it was gradually purified, coming to represent a haven deeply tinged with personal sentiment and insulated, along with its female inhabitants, from the crasser, competitive world of men.

Missionaries to Samoa educated converts in Christian doctrine, with particular emphasis on sexual ethics and in an egocentric context split between public and domestic realms. Girls were trained not only to read but also in sewing and other domestic arts (Mills 1844). "Our energies need to be directed," says the Reverend Mills of the London Missionary Society, "as much in raising up pious and educated wives as in preparing Native Male Teachers for the Work" (ibid.). Seminaries in contemporary Western and American Samoa (Piailoa School, Papauta School, Malua School, Mapusaga Fou School, the Catholic Catechist School, and others) still matriculate husbands and their wives, training wives in the domestic arts.

I have claimed that in old Samoa the self was sociocentric and the context split was between hierarchical groups, in which statuses differed (formal), and peer groups in which they did not (informal). This split inspired a formal and an informal discourse, even though, in these discourses, contexts lost their actual social structural mooring and turned rhetorical. I also described how the informal joking that women led at Joking Nights could be raucous and wild. As Samoa became increasingly Christian over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a belief in premarital chastity for all women along with the belief that women belonged in the domestic realm rather than on the public stage compromised their role as entertainers.<sup>16</sup>

This change in the gendering of Samoan discourses was unfortunate for gender balances: it meant that men came to dominate a context that had formerly been the most important feminine province and sphere of authority. Older women were and are exceptional in this regard. Even though they were no longer a part of institutionalized comedy, they remained notorious for their clowning.<sup>17</sup> A plenitude of examples crowd my mind, but one must suffice: "One elderly and dignified *tama'ita'i* [titled lady] is celebrated among the women of her village for a particular dance she does; completely silent and straight faced using eye movements to express passion, resignation, pain, strain, surprise, and release, she parodies a whole sequence of events in sexual intercourse, enacting both the husband and wife roles" (Schoeffel 1979:217).

Gradually boys took up the comedic banner in a new comedy theater called Spirit House. Thus male comics replaced females as leaders of informal discourse, but their signature joke was feigning femininity.<sup>18</sup> By acting in a transvestite style, they left bodily traces of abandoned practices. In Spirit House the actors were called spirits, *aitu*, possibly because spirits were conceived of as shape shifters, as actors also were.<sup>19</sup> But there is another sense in which these figures were spirit-affiliated. Samoan male transvestites and notorious jesting older women, I believe, are cultural memories—ghosts of a pre-Christian, precolonial age. Could it be that Rotuman female clowns, like their Samoan sisters, embody a cultural memory trace of

a time when being spirit-affiliated meant more than it means today? Spirits represented to Christian ministers all those aspects of Pacific cultures they would cast out—exorcise from cultural identity. Spirits are, therefore, special cultural markers of pre-Christian culture, although they also tend to be compounded symbolically with anticolonial commentaries, as I will later describe.

### **Gender Imports and Virgin Brides?**

“Traditional Rotuman culture,” Hereniko assures his readers, “has always had a strict code of conduct regarding premarital sex for girls, as reflected in its emphasis on virginity for the bride” (1995:65). He goes on to describe a number of traditional wedding customs that are reminiscent of high-status marriages in old Samoa, such as the display of fine mats (*ibid.*:120–126). In pre-Christian Samoa, however, there were actually two kinds of marriage, corresponding to the two contextual discourses.

High-status marriages took place in a formal discourse and required virgin brides, whose defloration was the supreme moment of the ceremony (Tuiteleapaga 1980:69; Freeman 1983:231). Lower-status marriages were elopements that often began on Joking Nights and in which virginity was a “requirement” more honored in name and in the breech than in body (Krämer [1902] 1995:377; Stuebel 1976:30; Turner [1884] 1984:95–96; Pritchard 1866:134; Schultz [1911] n.d.:29–30; Tuiteleapaga 1980:68–69). Christianization imported a new kind of marriage, church weddings, which became every girl’s formal wedding. In church weddings common people appropriated the accoutrements of high-status marriages (as much as their means permitted them), mainly the display of wealth. There was also an insistence on the bride’s virginity, but this virginity was taken on faith rather than tried by a defloration, because missionaries so thoroughly disapproved.

The two pre-Christian marriage forms made sense in the Samoan sex-gender system. Status and titles were life’s aim in old Samoa, and this aim was pursued by extended family groups (*‘āiga*). One of the most important means by which *‘āiga* progressed in status was through their daughters and, even more important, through their daughters’ offspring, who were, ideally, *gafata i luma*, “genealogic steps forward” (Hjarnø 1979–1980:91–93). A high-status girl remained virginal until her family arranged a union with a titled partner. That way, the baby’s genealogy and correlative status would be exalted. Because lineage was cognatically calculated, lower-status girls could not hope to bear truly exalted babies, but if a lower-status girl bore a high-status male’s baby, its genealogy would be elevated at least through the paternal line. Such offspring opened not only genealogical avenues to status, but practical avenues to the resources and titles of the father’s family.<sup>20</sup>

In the project of bearing high-status offspring, lower-status girls acted in a more entrepreneurial capacity than their high-status counterparts. On Joking Nights, flamboyant, bawdy banter that was both verbal and choreographic gave these girls license to flaunt their charms. Then a girl might meet a male of lineage accompanying a traveling party whose “duty” it was, the first German governor of Western Samoa says, “to contract as many marriages as possible for the good of his village” (Schultz [1911] n.d.:29–30; see also Pritchard 1866:134–135). After all, descendants forged alliances between villages, which decentralized and fractious Samoans needed.

Did Joking Nights have Rotuman analogs? If Rotumans have always insisted on virgin brides, why did they also hold those mass dances at which young people moved with energetic abandon and the Beach Picnics at which they touched, embraced each other, and bantered shamelessly?

In Rotuma too there seems to be a difference in the sexual practices of higher-status and lower-status girls. Higher-status girls were supposed to preserve their virginity before marriage and might be clubbed to death should they fail to do so; lower-status girls “usually had a screened off room in the father’s house in which to receive night visitors, the idea being to attract men to the *hoag* (family) and to receive presents” (Eason [1951]:12). Children born as a result of visiting and gift giving between unmarried women and men, Eason adds, were “no disgrace.” Indeed it was said that an early barrier to Christianization was that lower-status Rotuman girls visited foreign ships to receive gifts from sailors, as did their Hawaiian cousins; the many white vagabonds who were resident at the time told Rotumans that missionaries would make them give up this custom (Eason [1951]:49; Sahlins 1981). Even during the 1960s, Howard says, girls “experienced considerable pressure to sexually engage a boyfriend who regularly provided store-bought presents” (1998:160). Further, “women with no economically productive males in their households sometimes sought to alleviate material deprivation by forming sexual alliances with men of means” (ibid.:160).

The Samoan sexual system relied on a scant distinction between intercourse and marriage. The local word for marriage was *āvaga*, which signified a girl going off to stay with a boy. *Fa’aipoipoga*—the word used for formal marriages in Christian times—was originally a Rarotongan word imported by missionaries so as to distinguish what they considered proper marriages from what they considered mere intercourse, there being no local term that effectively differentiated the two (Schultz [1911] n.d.:22). Despite Christian disapproval, in Samoa *āvaga* remained the most common kind of marriage (Schultz [1911] n.d.:22; Keesing 1934:412; Schoeffel 1979:210), although it came to be called “the way of the night” (*fa’apōtuli*)—benightedness being missionaries’ favorite trope for local behaviors that were discordant with Christian teaching. Sometimes way-of-the-night marriages

would later be legitimized in church. Sometimes the girl was simply sent home to her family; then her subsequent offspring was a “baby of the night” and not an effective means to raise her family’s status.

Reading a bit further in Hereniko, one discovers that only in a “proper” Rotuman wedding is the bride a virgin and that many weddings today are not “proper weddings,” meaning that often brides are not virgins (1995:44). Indeed, when Hereniko actually sets out to categorize Rotuman weddings, he finds three kinds (ibid.:66, 99). (1) There are proper weddings. In proper Rotuman weddings the boy’s family sends a representative to the girl’s family to speak on his behalf (Howard 1998:164). This pattern held for formal weddings in old Samoa, the representative speaker being called a *soa*, “double.” (2) There are also Rotuman marriages that amount to a man having gone to stay with the woman, which do not seem to be recent cultural inventions. In Samoa these marriages are simply called “staying together.” (3) There are Rotuman marriages in which a woman merely runs off with the man, an *āvaga* in Samoan. In Christian Rotuma, as in Christian Samoa, these latter two marriage types may be legitimized later by a minister and a public wedding.

The real variety of marrying practices in Rotuma raises questions about the traditional nature of the sex roles that, following Shore, Hereniko delineates in Rotuma. Describing these sex roles in Samoa, one of Shore’s informants says: “Boys . . . run around naked. The girl, however, should be covered up” (1982:228). Showing off one’s beauty or one’s body is in Samoan called *fā’alialia*, and it is true that today when girls *fā’alialia*, they are roundly condemned. In missionary reports of old Samoa, however, one finds a rather different attitude toward female flaunting. The missionary Williams, so busy bringing Christianity to one Pacific island after another, left Tahitian teachers in Samoa to spread the gospel. When he returned, these teachers complained of the Samoans, saying that the women were continually wishing their wives

to lay aside their garments and “faasamoa” do as the Samoan ladies do, gird a shaggy mat round their loins as low down as they can tuck up the corner in order to expose the whole front side of their left thigh anoint themselves beautifully with scented oil, tinge themselves with turmeric put a string of blue beads round their neck & then faariaria [*fā’alialia*] walk about to shew themselves. You will have, say they, all the manaia [*mānaia*] the handsome young men of the town loving you then. (Williams [1830–1832] 1984:117)

“The handsome young men of the town” is actually a mistranslation: *mānaia* means “the sons of chiefs.” *Fā’alialia*, then, was an everyday form of flaunt-

ing correlative to the bawdy choreographic jesting girls did at Joking Nights, and it served the same purpose: attracting high-status males who could sire babies of elevated genealogy.

Shore correlates the gender dichotomy he finds in contemporary Samoa (between females who cover up and males who do not) with other gender contrasts having to do with females remaining in and around the house, while males wander abroad (1977, 1981, 1982). Remember Hereniko's parallel gender distinction in Rotuma: "the male wanders farther afield into the wilder and more dangerous territories," while "the female is more concerned with maintaining received order, sanitation, and cleanliness" (1995: 62, 75–76). In Samoa, *fā'alialia* and strolling about—going *ta'a* in Western Samoan or *eva* in American Samoan—are related activities. Girls who go *ta'a* at night (*ta'apō*) are thought to be *fā'alialia*, flaunting themselves, and are suspected of trysting with boys. Today doing so will earn a girl sharp criticism and even a punitive haircut. But there were no such consequences for the Samoan girls described by Williams, who wished missionary wives to lay aside their straight-laced garments and who thought walking about to show oneself was so acceptable an activity.

The male-female role dichotomy that Hereniko finds in movements through social space he also finds in dance movements: women's dance is "restrained and circumscribed, the men's expansive and vigorous" (1995:61). One of the supreme regional examples of this choreographic gender dichotomy is the Samoan *taualuga* in which the *tāupōu*, "village princess," dances in a restrained manner—keeping her body poised and upright—while an orator, or alternatively any boy, man, or old woman present, dances a clowning part called *'ai'aiuli*. One of Shore's informants describes this choreographic counterpoint: "The *taupou* dances slowly, sweetly, gracefully. She never tumbles about. But the orators, they roll all about there, jump about here" (1982:260).

Traditionally the *tāupōu* was the prototype of those high-status girls for whom formal marriages were arranged, the fruits of which (*tama'āiga*) would be confluences of two exalted genealogies (Hjarnø 1979–1980). She was a chief's virginal daughter, appointed temporarily as his village's "princess"—as the word was translated in colonial times—who this village carefully chaperoned and hoped to marry to a high title from elsewhere. The village princess was also, in my view, the prototype of the premarital virginity and the corollary sex role that missionaries proffered to Samoan girls. A symptom of Samoans' gradual acceptance of this idea was a change in the English/Samoan gloss for "virgin" between contact and the mid-twentieth century. The best gloss Samoans could find for their missionary friends up until Pratt published the last edition of his Samoan dictionary in 1911 was "*tāupōu*" ([1911] 1977:152). Her virginity then appears to have been a dis-

tinguishing feature—distinguishing her from common girls. By the 1950s, however, Samoans glossed “virgin” for Milner firstly as “girl,” *teine*, and only secondarily as *tāupōu*, implying that virginity had become a universal standard for girls ([1966] 1979:458).

The first European missionary to Rotuma was the Wesleyan Reverend Fletcher. In the 1860s he compiled a word list (Fletcher 1870); there is no word for virgin on this list, even though the concept was of obvious import to missionaries. In Rotuma, the earliest dictionary was not published until 1940 and translates from Rotuman to English only (Churchward 1940). The English word “virgin” appears only as a gloss for *taupo’ou* and for *salmafua* (virgin forest). Howard says, “There is no role known as *taupo’ou* in Rotuma; it is an adjective used to describe nuns and the Virgin Mary, so may well have been borrowed from Samoan by the first Samoan Methodist missionaries” (pers. com., 1999). In contemporary Rotuma as in Samoa, people use euphemisms for virginity, the most common being “young girl” (Howard and Rensel, pers. com., 1999).

In Samoa the *tāupōu*’s evolving role in the dance illumines and illustrates colonial gender history: she moved from being a model for high-status girls in pre-Christian times to being a model for all Christian girls. On Joking Nights the *tāupōu* led a set of orderly, often energetic dances that opened the evening, while the highest-titled person present performed the graceful, controlled dance today called the *taualuga*. By the mid-twentieth century, the highest-status person still graced an occasion by condescending to dance, but the *taualuga* had come to be conceived of as the village princess’s special dance (Milner [1966] 1979:248; Mageo 1996:38–40, 1998:193–202). Colonial choreography thus made bodily restraint emblematic of the village princess. This choreographic identity was congruent with the Christian-Samoan privileging of virginity and put the virginity ideal in an idiom that others could affect.

During colonial times, the village princess dance style came to be affected by girls generally (Mead [1928] 1961:118). Recall that joking choreography had been led by girls in Joking Nights, when, “roused and hounded into delirium by the approving shouts of the audience,” they would “throw themselves in all imaginable positions.” This variety of dancing had come to be called *’ai’aiuli* and was judged inappropriate for Christian girls, but old women continued to dance the *’ai’aiuli* role.<sup>21</sup> There is evidence that a gradual transit of wild and funny dancing from girls and women generally to old women only occurred during the period before female dances were thoroughly Christianized. In the 1890s Joking Nights still took place. Unlike Williams’s early report, the German medic Krämer says that at that time only old women still danced naked; girls would “once in a while undo their



lavalava only to fold it back together very soon" ([1902] 1995:374), at least until the wee hours of the morning, when no one but the young people remained. Then the young men would "tear the lavalava off the girls amidst laughter and screeching" (ibid.:377). The starring role in jocular dancing also shifted genders, moving to orators and to boys. In Samoan folk theory the village princess was by then the dance's central figure, while the clown danced on the periphery of the dance floor (Shore 1982:257–261). In Samoan practice, he often hovered close about the village princess, proceeding to throw himself on the ground before her, inviting her to step on his back, so that the two coalesced into one figure at the heart of the dance. Did the dance role that shifted in Samoa from all females to old women and males—leading choreographic jesting—shift from all females to only older ones in Rotuma?

Shore relates that the *ai'aiuli* clown is a foil to the village princess, his jocular indignities highlighting her dignified movements (1982:258–262), and his is a typical Samoan explanation. It is precisely this foil relationship that Hereniko believes pertains between the virginal bride and the clown at Rotuman weddings (1995:81). Let me suggest an additional way of understanding this virgin-clown juxtaposition. I have argued that in the colonial *taualuga* featuring a virgin while prescribing her a clowning accompaniment was a way to smuggle in those ribald Joking Night dances of which Christian ministers disapproved (Mageo 1996a:38–40, 1998:197–198). Might contemporary wedding fanfare serve the same purpose in Rotuma, highlighting that part of the affair that Christianity most privileges—virgin brides—while preserving what Rotumans most enjoy—carnavalesque, Rabelaisian joking?

### Spirits of Cultural Memory

In Samoa, changed sexual ethics for girls were not without psychological consequences, the most dramatic of which was a spirit-possession epidemic. Girls were the most frequent victims of this epidemic, which I date to circa the late 1950s through the 1970s (Mageo 1994, 1996a, 1996c). One typical pretext spirits took for possessing a girl was that she went strolling about (*ta'a*), particularly at night or with her hair down, all of which were seen as flaunting (*fā'alialia*) and as indicative of trysting. Another spirit pretext for attacking a girl was vanity (Cain 1971:178), which happens to be one of the possible translations of *fā'alialia* (Milner [1966] 1979:457). Yet another spirit pretext was that the girl had worn red clothes or red flowers in her hair. Spirit girls, often the agents of possession, wore red flowers in their own hair and were particularly likely to possess girls who wore such flowers in or around the spirit's home village or in the spirit's "*ta'a*," the place where she

strolls (her haunt). Spirit girls, furthermore, were rubicund beings who would glow red like someone who had spent the day at sea; girls they possessed or boys they seduced would be flushed with this same telltale glow.

Similar interdictions against wearing red seem to prevail in contemporary Rotuma. Hereniko says that “at Losa, if there are visitors and it’s early evening, you can’t wear red clothes and stroll around” (1995:48), meaning the spirits will attack you if you do. But why? Are red body decorations regarded as flaunting in Rotuma as they are for Samoan girls? Are some people more likely than others to be attacked for wearing red on an evening stroll, girls, for example? And what does the proviso “if there are visitors” indicate? Does it refer obliquely to a now-forbidden cultural memory of Beach Picnics? Samoan Joking Nights took place when a traveling party from one village visited another. Did Beach Picnics or *tautoga* require a similar excuse? Were they a particular occasion for girls’ strolling/flaunting that they might attract the sons of chiefs?

Whatever these interdictions on wearing red and strolling signify, the wedding clown often wears a bright red dress (Hereniko 1995:73). Red flowers, moreover, adorn her hair (*ibid.*), just as they do that of Samoan spirit girls. Indeed, Hereniko says that red feathers are “symbolic of the spirit world” and that the wedding clown is “a modern version of a Rotuman ghost” (*ibid.*:93, 119). In Samoa, birds’ feathers are an analog of hair. Spirit girls are typically reputed to have red hair: One of the most famous (*Letelesā*) may take the form of a parakeet identifiable by its red-feathered head; from this parakeet came the feathers that typically decorated mana-imbued objects in old Samoa. I have argued elsewhere that Samoan spirit girls are cultural memories of pre-Christian girls and that their sex-gender practices are practices that could be submerged but not entirely forgotten by Christian Samoans (Mageo 1996a, 1996c, 1998:164–190). Could it be that red-bedecked Rotuman wedding clowns, like Samoan spirit girls, embody a memory of bygone practices, memories that are now threatened with extinction?

Hereniko believes that historically the Rotuman clown is a mere ghost of her former self (1995:116–117, 166). In folk theory she is still the supreme ruler of the wedding: “The female clown . . . behaves like a chief,” ordering everyone about and punishing those who fail to obey (*ibid.*:77, 79). In fact, nowadays she constantly frets about exerting her authority. If she pushes chiefs too far, she will be punished by spirits (*ibid.*:25, 49, 51, 131, 151). But in the old Rotuman world the clown was a “spirit” (*ibid.*:108, chap. 6). Today the clown’s spirits have deserted her in more ways than one. She worries she will offend the couple’s relatives. She worries that the visiting Fijian govern-

ment official will not understand her jests and will be offended (*ibid.*:24). On top of all these worries, her children worry she might open her dress in public, flaunting herself (*ibid.*:42). With all these causes for worry, she must be extraordinarily sensitive (*ibid.*:135), a sure mark of disempowerment, as women in many cultures can attest.

Clowns were not always so beleaguered by cultural double messages about asserting their authority. Past clowns consistently “forced all the chiefs to kneel” (Hereniko 1995:95). Their sticks, emblemizing their authority, were “longer than the clown herself” (*ibid.*:102). Hereniko feels that clowning women can no longer adequately fill their role and that this role is too important to abandon. No present performer he could find seemed to him a very good example of what he felt Rotuman female clowns were meant to be. So, in chapter 3 he imagines himself into the female persona of the clown and plays the part in fantasy. I have argued that the Samoan boys who played the role of transvestites in that colonial theater genre called Spirit House acted on the same impulse, although this was not their only motive (Mageo 1992, 1996b).

Hereniko notes transvestite elements in the wedding clown's behavior. She is “dressed as a female” but behaves “like a male” (1995:92, 128). Her phallic stick is called a *poki* (*ibid.*:93, 129), a word meaning “penis” in Samoan. I have shown that in Samoa spirited cross-dressing or cross-acting was a vernacular gender commentary, well adapted to carry on a critique of colonial gender roles (Mageo 1992:452–453, 1996b:592–604, 1998:202–216). Often these commentaries revolved around the figure of the village princess: a male comic might wear the village princess's ceremonial outfit but, so arrayed, would mimic a transvestite. The result was a mockery of Samoan-Christian feminine gender ideals.<sup>22</sup> Could comedic gender crossing also be an evolving vernacular commentary on Christianity's sex-gender system in Rotuma?

### Colonialism Commentaries

Colonial imports seem to be one of Rotuman clowns' favorite subjects—speaking English, for example (Hereniko 1995:39, 90). Fanon thinks language one of the most important vehicles and emblems of colonialism (1968:17–40). “Every colonial people,” he says, “every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created . . . finds itself face to face with the language of . . . the mother country” (Fanon 1968:18). In Samoa problems with speaking English are a metaphor for inferiority feelings and fears of cultural distortion. There are many jokes about people speaking English stupidly and about foreigners' ensuing misunderstandings of local meanings. In one joke, for example, a women is selling fish. Her friend wildly mistranslates

her words in such a way that the tourist-buyer thinks she is trying to sell herself. Nineteenth-century visitors tended to see the indigenous sex-gender system—both its flaunting girls and its politic matings—in just these terms (Williams [1830–1832] 1984:77–79, 84, 130; Wilkes 1845:148–149), but from the Samoan viewpoint it was all a mistranslation.

A recurrent figure in Rotuman wedding clowning is the prostitute (Here-niko 1995:23, 93). Is she a joke about such mistranslations and the sexual conservatism that resulted from them? A standard joke for the wedding clown is to act like she is “in love with the white man” (ibid.:43, 48). One clown forces Hereniko’s friend, an Australian video man, to dance, rolling her eyes and falling on the ground in a mock faint, indicating she would like to make love (ibid.:83–84). Do these jokes represent historical sentiments about Rotuman overassessments of colonial others (particularly by women) and mock these sentiments as well?<sup>23</sup>

### **Historicizing Gender and Clowning in Polynesia**

In Samoan and Rotuman clowning, one finds that reversals, such as those described by Turner in carnival, are continuous with everyday forms of talk. Further, these comedic reversals are not only of normative social structures in the synchronous sense. They are also reversals of diachronic elements of social structure, for example, colonial elements; further, comedic reversals are a particularly handy medium for commenting on and thinking about historical conditions such as colonialism.<sup>24</sup>

I would further venture that reversals in everyday talk and in carnivals are related not only to institutional structures but also to their internalized versions, that is, to structures of self. Moral discourses and the norms they feature structure the self, as Freud showed long ago (1961), initiating a psychic economy that privileges certain parts of us, while disenfranchising and cloaking others.<sup>25</sup> Fanon could be read as arguing that in colonized cultures the extent of this disenfranchisement and self-rejection expands (1968). These disenfranchised parts of us, I suggest, are banished from the highlighted territories of cultural worlds by historically changing discourses of morality but continue to haunt the half-lit territories. If Rotuman moral discourse, influenced as it must be by colonial experience, to some degree alienates girls from their sexuality, their freedom of movement, their pleasure in power, and their expressiveness, these lost parts of girls continue to haunt the Rotuman world in the form of old women’s joking—whether it is undertaken to pass time on the deck of a small ship bound for Rotuma or to honor a bride at a wedding.

In this essay I promised nothing more than questions, and I shall end

with them as well. Could there be so strong a parallel between contemporary sex roles in Samoa and in Rotuma—as I believe Hereniko rightly argues—without there having also been a strong parallel in pre-Christian times? Would it follow that in Rotuma, as in Samoa, there was once an informal discourse of jest equal in import and social place to chiefly discourse—a discourse that was, furthermore, a female specialty? Did girls too take a leading role in informal venues, as old women and wedding clowns still do? Are contemporary church weddings a revised version of high-status weddings in old Rotuma and are they markedly more formal than the ways of marrying practiced by most people in pre-Christian times?

If there was a pre-Christian parallel between clowning and gender in Rotuma and in Samoa, and if there is a contemporary parallel, then it seems likely that there are also commonalities in the intervening history of both places. In Rotuma, as in Samoa, has girls' sex-gender identity become more emphatically virginal and demure under Christian influence? If so, what was this identity like before having been stamped with the Christian imprimatur? Have Rotuman girls to a degree lost their voices through a Christian disinheritance of informal jesting discourse, failing to be given a speaking part in chiefly discourse in exchange? Is the wedding clown the patron saint of girls' forgotten ancestresses, who, en masse at *tautoga*, threw themselves into gymnastic antics as Samoan girls did? Is there a relation between the form of alienation that Fanon (1968) attributes to the colonial experience—in which inferiority feelings inspired by colonialization inspire a rejection of indigenous lifeways—and cultural memory loss?

If historical parallels might be drawn between Rotuma and Samoa in regard to clowning and gender, there must also be differences. Samoa was a larger and more stratified social world than was Rotuma. What differences did these factors make between Rotuman and Samoan versions of (1) informal discourse, in everyday talk and in institutionalized clowning, (2) informal marrying, and (3) feminine sex roles? How did variant Christianizations play upon and amplify these preexisting differences?

What about other Polynesian locales? Ortnor argues that a sexual system kindred to that I have outlined here was once pan-Polynesian (1981). Surely, then, the questions I have raised about Rotuman clowning and gender could be raised profitably in nearby places such as Tonga or Tokelau. In locations like Hawai'i and the Marquesas, where precontact cultures were so seriously eroded, mixtures of the past and the present in current constructions of gender and context would be far different, although no less intriguing. Are gender-crossing clowning styles vernacular commentaries on colonial forms of gender and sexuality there too? Transvestite elements are shared by clowns throughout the region (Hereniko 1995:appendix). What about places

like Tahiti, where Christianity seems to have had a more moderate effect on gender and sexuality? There would be mixtures of local and colonial attitudes toward sex and gender there nonetheless, and perhaps even concomitant clowning commentaries. Would the combinations of indigenous and foreign elements be weighted differently? In twentieth-century Tokelau and Tahiti, women have been the particular victims of spirit attacks (Huntsman and Hooper 1975:420; Levy 1973:196); is their victimization symptomatic of gender confusions as it is in Samoa?

If all these questions seem a less than satisfying conclusion, it is because I mean to open a conversation rather than to close one; this essay can only really be concluded by the responses of others.

### NOTES

I thank Alan Howard for sharing his work on Rotuman gender with me and for his generous help with sources on Rotuman history.

1. On the connection between comedy and spirit possession in Samoa, see further Shore 1977, 1978; Mageo 1996a, 1996b, 1998:164–217; and Sinavaiana 1992a and 1992b. Hereniko argues in his appendix that this theater-spirit connection pertained in other Pacific places as well, for example, in Fiji (1995:154).

2. For a fuller and more adequate presentation of this theory than is possible here and for an explanation of this last discourse type, see Mageo 1995, 1998.

3. On formal and informal discourses, see further Mageo 1992:444–449, 1995:287–228, 1998:81–101, 191–217.

4. Alternatively, one can *faipona* about another's ancestry (Mageo 1991:20, 1992:445). This jest genre seems related to one outlined by Hereniko in Rotuma: there *te samuga* is an indigenous form of teasing others about one's ancestors that was adapted to comment on contact with Europeans during the early colonial period (1995:62–63). *Faipona* is often practiced by making up funny nicknames for people or their families. Howard describes a similar joking style at Rotuman Beach Parties in the 1960s (1998:157).

5. On the Joking Night program, see Mageo 1996a:34–38 and 1998:193–197. Mimetic choreography was also referred to as *ula* (Moyle 1988:201), implying that *ula* may have been a summary term for joking performances.

6. On contextual discourses as deconstructive, see further Mageo 1995:288–289, 1998:81–101.

7. On women's leading role at Joking Nights, see further Mageo 1992:446–447, 1996b:593.

8. On Joking Nights as the concomitant of ceremonies, see Stair 1897:235; Turner [1884] 1984:90; Churchward 1887:141; Tuiteleleapaga 1980:70, 102. On other joking occasions, see Moyle 1975, 1988:99, 103–142, 144–146, 205–222; and Mageo 1998:131–132.

9. On Beach Picnics, see also Howard 1998:157–158. Howard describes Beach Party courting games that still existed in the 1960s (1998:169).

10. On *tautoga*, see also Howard 1998:169.

11. Hereniko says these occasions also involved exchanges of mock insults, *te samuga* (1995:17, 43, 51); so did the Pōula (Krämer [1902] 1995:361–62; Kneubuhl 1987).

12. On sociocentric and egocentric cultures of self, see Mauss [1938] 1985; Read 1955; Dumont 1966; Fogelson 1982; Levy 1983; Rosaldo 1984; Shweder and Bourne 1984; White and Kirkpatrick 1985; Sampson 1988; Harris 1989; Kondo 1990; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Hollan 1992; and Murray 1993.

13. The first Christian mission to Rotuma was the London Missionary Society, arriving in 1839, followed by the Wesleyans in 1845 and later by the Roman Catholic Mission in 1847. Conversion was at first slow, gaining momentum in the late 1880s. See further Eason [1951]:43–59. Foucault's work on nineteenth-century European sexuality and the self (1988, 1990) implies that the self-context-gender transition I trace in English society was broadly European and would have been shared even by the French Catholic mission—although no doubt with significant differences.

14. On the Industrial Revolution in England, see further Ashton 1947.

15. On missionaries and middle-class status, see Gunson 1978:34–35, 38, 86.

16. On this role change, see further Mageo 1992:447–449, 1996a:38–40, 1996b:592–594, 1998:191–217.

17. On old women clowning in Samoa, see further Churchward 1887:230; Krämer [1902] 1995:374; Schoeffel 1979:215–221; and Sinavaiana 1992a:213.

18. On transvestism in Spirit House, see Shore 1978; Mageo 1992, 1996b; and Sinavaiana 1992a, 1992b. On the continuity between precontact female comedic dancing and colonial male comedic theater, see Mageo 1992, 1996b.

19. On actors as *aitu* and on *aitu*'s shape-shifting nature, see Williams [1830–1832] 1984:265; Stair 1897:216; Keesing 1934:399; Holmes 1974:64; Shore 1977:308; Schoeffel 1979:405, 407; Kneubuhl 1987:173; and Mageo 1996a.

20. On genealogical steps forward, see further Hjarnø 1979–1980 and Mageo 1996c:123–140, 1998:133–138.

21. On colonial changes in choreography, see Stevenson 1925:218, quoted in Moyle 1988:206; Moyle 1988:passim; and Mageo 1998:197–202.

22. On the *tāupōu* as symbolic of the Christian sex-gender system, see further Mageo 1998:141–217.

23. The Rotuman clown's antics seem to implicate not only chief-to-commoner and male-to-female relations but local-foreign power relationships as well. One of Hereniko's wedding clowns tells him that her antics are "even funnier because the man is a foreigner and he has to copy you" (1995:43).

24. Sinavaiana also argues that Samoan comedy comments on colonialism (1992a, 1992b). Her work in this area has focused largely on local-foreign power relations, while mine has focused more on gender relations (Mageo 1992, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1998).

25. As to how moral discourse structures the self, see further Mageo 1998:52–80.

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