

## Polyfest

the eyes  
of the wave blink  
at my arrival, dirt whistles from  
his ocean joints. My lungs fill  
with conch shell breathing  
crowds gather  
and leave

## What is Afakasi?

You ask  
What is Afakasi?  
Afakasi is dead  
they once said  
and it was almost like  
I could see your hues getting lighter  
blending into one  
corners that have been stretched  
no longer fit you  
confined in your redefinitions of identity.

Afakasi where are you from?  
She asks  
I've never heard of your land  
shifting Afakasi to a place like Polotu  
implying  
my sense of belonging  
can only inhabit one place  
Eh, Afakasi, are you saying you are a new race?  
In between is too hard  
you once said  
It's not easy being the disruption  
the cultural eruption  
that causes people  
to umm and aahh  
question and hesitate

Afakasi is part  
dying and living  
resenting and forgiving  
wrong and right

surrender and fight  
here nor there  
white skin with untamable hair  
you can never fake  
that you don't care

Afakasi is running a race  
you once said  
races against races  
where are we placed?  
First, second or third?  
but I see race beside a race  
to a finish line  
that will challenge minds

Afakasi is overprivileged  
they whisper  
excused from fa'a Sāmoa  
yet  
granted its scholarships  
as if blood and skin is currency  
for opportunities

Afakasi is hybrid  
they said  
as if we are scientifically designed  
injected  
synthetic  
realigned  
into an unnatural state of being  
I'm Alive!  
I'm Afakasi-stein  
as if

the Creators hand-gathered us from dust  
and placed us  
in no man's land

Afakasi is cut up  
dissected  
into red-stained quantum  
of halves and quarters  
measured, defined, redefined  
celebrated  
then  
Shut Up!!!

Coz  
Afakasi has no right  
to speak on full-blooded affairs  
Your skin is too fair!  
As if  
full-blood is more red  
pumping  
a heart to speak

Afakasi is prized  
I've heard him say  
I want Afakasi children  
as if  
they are a rarity  
a delicacy  
100 paces back  
to mindsets  
of Gauguin cooking fantasies  
in a melting pot  
of naked breasts

long island hair  
a hibiscus behind the ear

Afakasi is inked up  
the tap-tap tap-tap  
bleeding the brown  
to the surface  
creating maps of heritage  
a badge of ancestry

Afakasi is redundant  
you said  
your evolution in terminology  
discrediting my whole history of identity

all I've ever known is this

holding onto this term  
with a tight fist  
no more Afakasi  
must mean

I don't exist

But  
Afakasi is my generation  
a product of your migrations  
she feels  
that is how I know she is real  
she can't be dead  
she lives  
in me, you, half the generation  
in my neighbourhood

She breathes  
she changes  
chameleon-like  
she's not dead  
she evolves  
into representations of  
stories  
struggles  
hopes  
dreams

Half caste  
smashing casts  
moulds constructed by others  
casting shadows  
on taboo territories  
you can't talk about that realities  
cast out  
out cast  
thinks  
moves fast  
looks past

Colour!

White father  
Brown mother

So you ask,  
What does Afakasi mean to me?

Afakasi is all encompassing  
a compass reclaiming  
explaining

identity  
divorced from colonial chains  
reclaimed to set free

Afakasi is not  
dead  
a hard . . . part . . . race  
privileged . . . hybrids  
cutting up  
rights with  
prized  
ink-made  
redundant

She is  
breathing  
changing  
evolving  
smashing  
whispers kissing microphones  
amplifying tones

Afakasi speaks  
and She is heard

## I Am the Va

Va is the space between, the between-ness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things.

—Albert Wendt

I am the va

so cut me up

scatter me among yourselves

and taste the bitter sweetness

of the space between

brown

and

white

Mud

that is how some have treated us

slap some colour onto us

cleanse culture into our pigments

as if skin soldiers

invaded white into us



and we just let them.

mud reveals

But when the rain and dirt swim

worms

U and Polu

that feed on decayed histories

that can unearth stories

the va

between life and death.

You want me to choose

to condemn and stone the other side of me

making me believe

one half is a victim

to separate the marriage of bloodied ropes

that bonds my two halves

to create a twisted tight tension

so thin we

SNAP

disrupt the va

between mother and father.

You want to be my Patriarch

to instill your superior lineage

bestowed by your 100%

making me your kingdom

of cultural authority

your jewel in the rough

your rose between the cracks

watered down cultures

create a va

between knowing and being unknown.

My va

is neither here

nor there

not brown

nor white

it belongs in nothing

and exists in everything.

between ignorance and acceptance.

scatter me among yourselves

to fill the gaps

I am the space

So cut me up

and use me