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'Think of Me as a Woman': Queen Pomare of Tahiti and Anglo-French Imperial Contest in the 1840s Pacific

Patty O'Brien

In 1843 a young woman pleaded to her 'sister queen', Victoria, for her 'compassion' and 'assistance' against an aggressive foe that had overthrown her and captured her kingdom. This same distressed queen also wrote to King Louis Philippe of France in 1844 asking him to consider the plight of a 'weak and defenceless woman' who was 'nearing the birth of another child' while suffering from the autocratic actions of his South Seas representatives. The young queen was Pomare IV of Tahiti.[1] Victoria reported in the mid-1840s that Louis Philippe, and perhaps she too, wished 'Tahiti *au fond de la mer* [at the bottom of the sea]', as the 'Tahiti Affair' was causing such a storm between their respective governments.[2]

Why would the small island in the South Pacific, the imaginative site of South Seas exoticism for half a century, create such antipathy between Britain and France at this time? The answer to this question has several components. First, the 'Tahiti Affair' was a culmination of shifting geopolitical realities in the South Pacific. During the thirty-year-old queen's lifetime, the islands of Tahiti grew as a key Pacific commercial centre conveniently situated between the British colony of New South Wales (NSW) and Valparaiso, Chile, where both French and British eastern Pacific sea power was based.[3] In the 1830s this importance increased rapidly with the peak of whaling that saw large numbers of vessels using Pape'ete as a refreshment port. Second, by their assumed right of first discovery, the presence of a substantial London Missionary Society (LMS) presence and diplomatic understandings between Britain and island rulers, many in Britain considered Tahiti as their own. The controversy of the 'Tahiti Affair' was fanned by long-standing Anglo-French rivalries rendered more potent by widespread disgust in Britain at heavy-handed tactics used by French agents in the Pacific. The public outcry in Britain was heightened by the violence used against the Queen and her people which culminated in a war fought from 1844 to 1847 between French troops, their Tahitian supporters and Pomare's loyalists.

The operation of gender in this imperial episode is intriguing. While French imperial acquisitiveness in the Pacific carried on regardless of the gender of the island rulers, successfully in the Marquesas Islands and unsuccessfully in New Zealand and Hawaii, the particular circumstances of the French takeover of Tahiti and the fact that the

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island had a young queen as its sovereign added layers of complexity to this distinctive incident.[4]

Women had figured prominently in Europe's vision of Tahiti from the outset. They were championed for their exoticism, fulfilling male fantasies of a tangible paradise that the French explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville in 1768 thought was a modern location of Cythera.[5] Such fantasies diminished Tahitian women as historical figures by typecasting them as pliant beauties whose sole purpose was to offer peerless welcomes to weary European sailors.[6] Queens had also figured prominently in European imaginings of the island. When the British first took possession of the island in 1767, they incorrectly assumed the high-born woman, Purea, to be the island's sovereign and crowned her 'Queen Oberea'. Despite this misreading, Queen Oberea became the emblem of Tahiti for many years after she first appeared in European accounts.[7] By the 1830s, actual and armchair travellers had crowned Tahiti as 'the queen of the Pacific' for its feminised luxuriance. The history of contact prior to the 'Tahiti Affair' created imagined 'Tahitis' that had great currency in France and Britain by the 1840s. In these imagined 'Tahitis' the perceived condition of women – their sexual accessibility or moral restraint, sobriety, maternal characteristics and acceptance of Christianity – were vital barometers for evaluating Tahitian society as a whole.

This article shows how vignettes of Pomare operated in the French and British disputes that comprised the 'Tahiti Affair'. It argues that images of Pomare oscillated between 'whitened' images that championed her as an exemplar of Victorian female nobility versus those ignoble ones that exaggerated her racial characteristics and posited her as an emblem of a disordered colonised people requiring imperial governance. I argue that pre-existing imaginings of Tahiti had a marked effect on how Pomare was treated and the outcomes of France's imperial actions perpetrated during the late 1830s and 1840s. The article also argues that Pomare was an active agent in fashioning her image with the assistance of her European allies, as the earlier quotes suggest, by promoting herself as a paragon of Victorian womanhood. Thematically, this article shows how the many visions of Pomare refracted questions about women in power, indigenous rule, religious progress and the attainment of civility by Tahitians that competed with a vision of a highly sexualised and corrupted island in the colonised Pacific over which Queen Pomare reigned.

As a central figure in Tahitian colonial history, Pomare has undergone previous historical examination, though she has been dealt with as a tangential historical figure in the greater masculine dramas of Pacific colonial history. The genealogy of Pomare is reliant upon accounts generated by four central actors in the Tahiti drama, three of whom were biased against the queen and yet referred to most often by historians: Jacques Antoine Moerenhout, the Belgian 'merchant adventurer' who acted as US and French consul on Tahiti during the 'Tahiti Affair'; and LMS missionaries William Pascoe Crook and John Orsmond, who was dismissed from the LMS in 1845 for aiding the French.[8] The fourth principal source is the missionary George Pritchard, who enjoyed great power on Tahiti prior to the Tahiti affair. Pritchard's writings coupled with those of several other LMS missionaries and British naval captains comprise a very different version of Pomare that fed into a marketing machine for Pomare in Britain. It is important to note that historians have tended to rely uncritically on Moerenhout, Crook and Orsmond's accounts that traduced Pomare, and not entertain the more complex historical picture produced by these other sources.[9]

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These published and unpublished sources formed the basis of the first historical works concerned with Queen Pomare and her island at the time of French annexation.[10] Eugène Caillot's 1910 *Histoire de la Polynésie Orientale* was heavily reliant upon Moerenhout in his historical sketch of the queen, while Teuira Henry's 1928 *Ancient Tahiti* was overtly based upon the writings of the missionary malcontent, Orsmond. Later historians, notably Paul De Deckker, Colin Newbury, Robert Langdon, Charlotte Haldane and Patrick O'Reilly writing with Raoul Tessier, fleshed out Pomare to a greater extent by making use of public documents, some favourable missionary writings as well as those damning accounts of Orsmond and Crook.[11] De Deckker's impressions of Pomare, though enlightening, are secondary to his principal historical subject, George Pritchard. Newbury concentrated on Pomare largely as a public figure as he was concerned with outlining colonial and economic power machinations in Tahiti. When he does comment on Pomare as an individual, it tends to be of lurid nature and sourced to Orsmond and Crook. Both Newbury and De Deckker agree in their assessment of the young queen's governing style that they describe respectively as 'feckless' and 'absolutist'.[12] Langdon also took this approach while O'Reilly and Tessier summarised impressions of Pomare derived largely from Caillot and Henry. Newbury, Langdon, O'Reilly and Tessier all subscribe to a vision of Pomare as an incarnation of the dissolute island woman and do not question the gendered and racialised implications of this, nor the historic function of such representations.

In contrast to this corpus of work, Haldane's vision of Pomare is uncritically sympathetic and avoids the scandalous rumours perpetuated by other historians. She detailed Pomare's private life as mother and wife and related this to the external pressures of her public role as queen during the years of French aggression. She outlined a number of popular representations of Pomare, though without interrogating their gendered inflections or demonstrating their political and historic functions. In contrast to this historiography, this article will unravel the provenance and purposes of the competing images of Pomare while outlining how they functioned in the course of the 'Tahiti Affair'.

Pomare became queen of Tahiti at the age of fifteen in 1827.[13] Her succession to the Tahitian throne followed the sudden death from dysentery of her younger half-brother, Pomare III. These children inherited the crown from their father, Pomare II, who died in 1821 after effecting great changes in Tahiti. The most significant features of his reign were his military domination of Tahiti and immediately surrounding islands, the burgeoning importance of Tahiti as a Pacific port, his own escalating wealth due to his control of trade and the adoption of Christianity. LMS missionaries had worked the Tahitian field since 1797, but it was not until Pomare II sought baptism in 1812 that their fortunes began to improve. Pomare II knew that conversion would bring spiritual and temporal benefits through enhanced relations with Britain and would aid the boom in trade. In 1812 the LMS denied his appeal to join their flock owing to his overtly dissolute lifestyle, which included relationships with many different women and also with *mahu* – transgender men – and his unconcealed use of alcohol, newly imported to the islands.[14] Yet, in the year following the birth of his daughter Aimata (who would become Queen Pomare IV) in 1813 to Teremoemoe, whom the LMS considered his mistress, Pomare II made Christianity the official religion of his kingdom. Imposing LMS moral standards was key to this religious 'conversion' that had a greater impact on his subjects than on himself. He suppressed the *arioi*, the sexual society made

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famous from Cook's *Endeavour* voyage. Young women who persisted in the now traditional sexual commerce with European sailors risked severe punishment, much to many sailors' chagrin.[15]

In 1822, the year after her father died, the nine-year-old princess Aimata married the young chief Tapoa with the aim of forging an alliance with Bora Bora chiefs, who ruled part of the Leeward group of islands that had not been vanquished by her father.[16] At this point Aimata gave no indication that she would be anything other than compliant with the new culture of the island that fused Christianity with some permissible Tahitian customs like the use of island flowers. To William Ellis, LMS missionary and author of the widely read *Polynesian Researches*, Aimata in 1822 embodied a promising result of missionary influence in her choice of English-style wedding garments but also in her tender sensibilities, particularly 'a tear moistening the eye of the youthful bride'.[17] Yet this cultural fusion increasingly faltered in the years after Pomare II's death. Church attendance declined, coupled with a relaxation of the imposed sexual strictures. A religious cult, the *Mamaia*, which blended elements of Christianity with traditional beliefs, like the *arioi*, along with prophecy, proliferated.[18] This movement militated against missionaries and their harsh methods of enforcing cultural transformation in the islands, particularly regarding sex.[19]

When Aimata became Pomare IV in 1827, she was largely an unknown quantity as far as missionaries were concerned.[20] Owing to her youth she did not assume her regal duties until 1831 and lived away from Tahiti on the islands of Moorea and Taha'a where she was exposed to these latest cultural and political influences that included the *Mamaia* cult.[21] The maturing Pomare proved to be quite different from Ellis's early sentimental picture of her and rather resembled a contemporary version of Queen Oberea for the long-serving missionary Revd Crook. Like her wayward father, she did not readily embrace Christianity or the new laws of Tahiti that were shaped by it. Instead she reacted against them, supposedly living a 'scandalous' life of 'debauchery', according to French historian Caillot.[22] Crook thought her prone to the lowest behaviour of Tahitian women: drinking and promiscuity.[23] He wrote in January 1828 in his journal for the LMS office in London that the young queen who then resided on Moorea 'was loose in her conduct and causes a great deal of trouble to her people'. She also 'keeps a number of loose young people about her of both sexes' and 'the young girls are prostituted on board ships and much wickedness is committed between them'. He continued by asserting that 'many of these girls', and 'it was confidently reported the queen herself have been afflicted with the venereal. This has undoubtedly been the case with her mother and aunt'.[24]

When one of Pomare's close friends was found guilty and sentenced to work as punishment for breaching morality laws, Pomare directly interfered 'to get the said girl with her again'. Crook bemoaned that Tahiti was governed by these 'loose women' – Pomare, her mother Teremoemoe and aunt Ari'ipaea Vahine – who challenged the male judges and chiefs who tried to uphold these morality laws, even to the point of creating 'war'. Tahitians of lower status treated these ruling women with the utmost contempt, Crook continued, terming them '*tehui arii tuemata ore* – the princesses without eyebrows, alluding to their losing their hair through the venereal'. Crook's desired solution was that God might send 'an active and enlightened King over these people' to rectify this litany of female and native flaws writ large in the theatre of Tahitian political power.[25] Crook was responsible for perpetuating this most scandalous

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picture of Pomare, though his account was generated second-hand. Revd Henry Nott, who resided on Moorea, was the initial source of Crook's knowledge of happenings on that island.

We shall return to this dissolute vision of Pomare that originated with Crook in 1828 and now turn to the one created by Moerenhout, who published the influential *Travels in the Pacific Ocean* in 1837.[26] Moerenhout first met Pomare in 1829 and reported that he found her 'sweet and good' and 'at the time she was pretty'. She welcomed him into her company and took the opportunity to 'test his gallantry' on one occasion by constantly dropping her fan and expecting him to pick it up, behaviour he interpreted as coquettish.[27] His account was not entirely favourable, as he also portrayed the queen and other senior women as having a liking for rum. As a major importer of liquor, Moerenhout claimed that he was constantly asked for supplies that he granted free of charge, even though in his book he disparaged those women who partook of such beverages. He maintained that such sights as drunken women and the sexual debauchery that followed certain ships' arrivals at Pape'ete offended him. He also claimed to support missionary efforts to introduce temperance and higher moral standards, an assertion that later outraged his growing LMS opponents who, in the heat of conflict on Tahiti, cited his own profligacy.[28] His opponents would later claim that his portrayal of Queen Pomare, the people of Tahiti and the LMS missionaries were nothing more than 'base calumnies'.[29] It is to be noted that Moerenhout's publication was intended to enhance his standing as an authority on Tahiti as he actively sought and gained appointment as US consul for Tahiti in 1836 and so he stressed his own moral rectitude, though, as we shall see, he too was flawed in this regard.

Moerenhout's 1837 account also contained details of Pomare's political situation when she returned to Tahiti in 1831 to assume her governing duties. He portrayed her as still disobeying the authority of powerful male chiefs when it came to restrictions on sex, alcohol and the outlawing of the *Mamaia*. Moerenhout argued that when Pomare attempted to revive demonstrations of submission by chiefs to the sovereign, the chiefs rose up against her in 1832 and threatened to overthrow her.[30] She was spared by the timely appearance of a British warship that offered her and English residents protection.[31] Although she was not overthrown, she was forced to submit to the new laws. In Moerenhout's assessment, Pomare IV owed her continued reign to his friend, Tati, a leader in the council of chiefs of Tahiti, who would be one of his key instruments in orchestrating French annexation.[32]

What Moerenhout's account does not detail is how Pomare reacted to this first internal crisis of her reign by modifying her behaviour and seeking closer spiritual and temporal assistance from certain LMS missionaries, particularly George Pritchard. In 1833 she delighted missionaries by becoming a member of the temperance society.[33] Yet in 1834 she disappointed them by announcing she was divorcing Tapoa, supposedly because he could not father children, though he remained her ally. Equally distressing was her choice for second husband, Ari'ifa'a'ite a Hiro, a young noble of Ra'iatea.[34] Even those missionaries who supported her never approved of him owing to his apparently dissolute ways that only worsened over time. This setback was overcome in 1835 when Pomare sought baptism and became a mother for the first time. These two events signalled to many missionaries that she had repudiated her past life in exchange for one based on Christian feminine virtue, though Crook and Orsmond would continue to evoke her flaws for years to come.

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Pomare's first international crisis came in 1836 when she expelled two French Jesuit priests from her realm. Her decision to do this was accounted for, especially by Moerenhout who harboured the priests in his house and made approaches to Pomare on their behalf, by her over-reliance upon Pritchard and her own naivety.[35] This incident pitted Pritchard against Moerenhout as they battled for Pomare's patronage. Pritchard argued that the priests would damage the good work of the LMS, while Moerenhout averred that Pomare's actions defied codes of justice 'admitted by all nations' and warned that France would take action against her if she appeared to be denying Frenchmen access to her kingdom. He also cajoled her and the Tahitian people to 'still be what they have ever been when left to themselves, a hospitable, a kind and a beloved people'. He conjured up the mythic Tahiti as the face it should always put forward: 'let Tahiti still be the island of Wallis, Cook and Bougainville, open to all vessels, friendly to all nations'. He continued, 'since you proved generous and tolerant when idolatrous and in a state of barbary don't suffer to be changed by foreign arbitrariness or foreign anti-tolerant principles . . . to become when Christians and approaching civilisation, inhospitable, cruel and without tolerance'.[36]

Moerenhout's appeal to the mythic past and present geopolitical realities did not succeed with Pomare. Instead, Pritchard's strategy to keep Tahiti free from religious competition was pursued. Pritchard continued to assume that Pomare enjoyed the support and interest of Britain based in New South Wales, while Moerenhout looked east to the Americas and after the priest incident to the French Navy stationed in Valparaiso as his means to increased power on Tahiti. Moerenhout accused the queen's agents of handling the priests roughly and set about publicising this fact abroad. Pomare and Pritchard wrote to the US president and Secretary of State respectively requesting the removal of Moerenhout and his replacement with 'a good American citizen'.[37] Pritchard's status also shifted as he was appointed British consul for Tahiti in 1837, a position he had sought since 1832.[38]

Pomare's actions against the priests were deployed by Pritchard and other sympathetic LMS agents to create an image of her as a defender of the Protestant faith and loyal to the historic ties to Britain. This became an increasingly common refrain as she maintained this policy despite the commencement of French 'aggressions' towards her. The chief agent of the French aggression was Admiral Abel Du Petit Thouars who entered Pape'ete harbour for the first time aboard the frigate *Venus* in August 1838. He came with the express purpose of demonstrating French displeasure at the expulsion of the priests two years earlier. He viewed Queen Pomare's actions as 'insults' to French citizens in her realm. Du Petit Thouars's methods of impressing upon the queen the level of French displeasure were deliberately humiliating and severe and, like Moerenhout's earlier allusion to the halcyon days of early contact, laced with sexual suggestion.

Du Petit Thouars made three demands of her under threat of bombardment: reparations of 125 gold ounces; an apology; and a twenty-one gun salute of the French flag. For the last demand the *Venus* had to provide both the tricolour and gunpowder.[39] Pritchard found the money for the excessive fine and Pomare wrote meekly to Du Petit Thouars casting herself as 'only the sovereign of a little insignificant island. May knowledge, glory and power be with your majesty – let your anger cease and pardon the mistake I have made'.[40] In private she was less supplicant, reportedly having said

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of the French commander's demands, 'blow away; I am queen of Tahiti and will stand up for my rights'.[41]

Du Petit Thouars insisted on seeing the queen and was accompanied by the navigator Dumont D'Urville, who had recently returned to Tahiti. Pomare had recently given birth and brought the baby to this meeting, suckling it and attending to it while the French complained. D'Urville told her that he remembered her as a pretty girl of fifteen and used this prior acquaintance to lecture her about her conduct towards the French and principles of religious freedom. He could see that 'the poor woman is no more than the echo of the English using their pitiful excuses to excuse herself'.[42] The queen began to cry 'but she managed to look upon me with a clearly angry expression'. Du Petit Thouars tried to soothe her by giving the queen a few friendly winks 'as if to pull her hair or gently slap her cheek'.[43] According to Du Petit Thouars 'she seemed to take but little interest in what happened before her as she held her baby and was interested in nothing else but breastfeeding it'.[44] Despite her indifference, Du Petit Thouars felt for the young woman 'without friends, without counsel, she is abandoned to the will of an ambitious and demanding society that dictated its orders to her', but the French contingent was apparently not part of this dictatorial element.[45]

Du Petit Thouars's pity did not mitigate the punishments he meted out to Pomare despite the fact that she had recently given birth, an issue consistently mentioned by the British as an affront to the codes of gallantry. After this meeting Pomare, citing her maternal duties, refused to dine aboard the *Venus*, a further display of her defiance towards the commander. Pritchard was instead invited aboard and Du Petit Thouars took the opportunity to goad him. Du Petit Thouars asked Pritchard if he could use his influence with the Tahitian government 'to get them to licence a certain number of prostitutes ... that when ships came in, there might be no difficulty in obtaining such persons'. Pritchard indignantly replied that he would not use his influence for this purpose nor did he believe that 'the Natives would agree to anything of the kind'. To this Moerenhout said that if the missionaries threatened the Tahitians with excommunication, 'they would agree to anything that was recommended'. Pritchard could not think of anything more 'preposterous'. 'Such conduct might do for Roman Catholic priests', he sniffed, 'but not for agents of the London Missionary Society'.[46]

The French commander antagonised the queen and her counsellor further by appointing their nemesis, Moerenhout, as French consul to Tahiti. Pomare was infuriated when Moerenhout was introduced to her as France's new representative, thus elevating his status higher than before, as France's interests in the region eclipsed those of the USA at the time. In addition to her acquiescence to Du Petit Thouars' three initial demands, Queen Pomare signed the most favoured nation treaty he drew up because, as she subsequently claimed, she feared bloodshed. Of all the foreign nationals resident in Tahiti, there were very few French, a total of nine in 1842 and even fewer in 1838. This did not mitigate the argument carried by this French admiral and several of his colleagues that the French were persecuted under this fickle, British-dominated regime.[47] In this instance, Pomare acquiesced when it was absolutely necessary but remained defiant in her personal dealings with the commander and his agent, Moerenhout, both of whom she would come to abhor.

Despite disrupting the tenuous Tahitian status quo, Du Petit Thouars did not yet frighten the queen and her chiefs into permitting Catholicism to be preached as he expected they would after he had flexed France's military muscle. Within two months

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of his departure they agreed to continue with their current policy of disallowing Catholic missions.[48] Such defiance ensured that successive French captains who arrived at the island would extract further concessions and signs of submission from the Tahitians, especially from the queen. Captain Cécille of the *Héroïne,* arriving in 1838 shortly after the *Venus* departed, used similar tactics to ensure that French residents could receive land grants. In 1839 the captain of the *Artémise*, Laplace, would add his mark to this erosion of sovereignty by insisting that 'French Catholics should possess every privilege allowed to Protestants; that land should be appropriated for the erection of a Catholic church, and the French priests have full liberty to exercise their ministry'.[49]

Owing to damage incurred by his ship, Laplace breached laws and landed his whole crew on Tahiti. M. Reybauld, who wrote an account of this shore leave that would appear in the midst of the 1843 crisis, evoked the elusive golden age of Tahitian contact. Unlike earlier visitors to the islands, Reybauld was not disappointed. This island that 'Bougainville called the New Cythera did not belie its name. The whole of Pape'ete was one seraglio without restraint'.[50] When night fell 'every tree along the coast shaded an impassioned pair, the waters of the river offered an asylum to a swarm of copper-coloured nymphs who came to enjoy themselves with the young midshipmen'. 'Wherever you walked', he continued, 'you might hear their oui! oui! oui! The word that all the women have learnt . . . and it is the only one'. Reybauld's equation of the Tahitian women's sexual alacrity with their innate nature, which was so integral to Bougainville myth, was here not only reiterated but reified. The French had not only ensured freedom for Catholics, Reybauld argued. They had freed the Tahitians from a religion that professed to 'save the soul' but 'killed the body'. The sailors, far from despoiling this paradise, had, in Reybauld's view, revived it. The natives, he claimed, sought in the sailors 'protection from the oppression of the sombre missionaries'.[51] Reybauld epitomised the French ability to wed sexual liberty, Catholicism and political discourses of freedom. Such accounts were further grist for the mill of British supporters who charged the French with gross hypocrisy. After his deeds in Tahiti, Captain Laplace sailed for Hawaii where similar pressures were placed upon Kamehameha III, who had not yet opened up his islands to Catholic missions to the satisfaction of the French.[52]

Pomare's response to these incidents was to look to Queen Victoria. Pritchard reassured her that the British queen 'will at all times be ready to attend to any representations that Queen Pomare wishes to make'. After Du Petit Thouars forced her to sign the 1838 treaty, a letter signed by Pomare was sent to Victoria explaining the circumstances that had led her to sign a document that drove a wedge between Britain and Tahiti and asked again for Britain's protection. The author, perhaps Pritchard with Pomare's input, added a new element of humility in her pleas for assistance, namely that Tahitians could not govern themselves because of racial inferiority. She acceded that to the 'white people' who visited Tahiti, whom she deemed to be 'superior to us in mind and body', 'our institutions appear foolish and our Government feeble'; she also maintained that the protectorate document was signed owing to 'our poor experience and knowledge'. She continued that the things 'dearest' to her heart were 'the Protestant faith and our nationality', both of which were imperilled by the French protectorate.[53] Victoria responded that she was 'deeply touched by this appeal' but was 'unable to render any assistance without assuming a right of interference which might have proved dangerous to the interests of her kingdom'.[54] Pritchard also wrote to Governor Gipps in NSW, who had received Du Petit Thouars after he left Tahiti. Gipps had little sympathy with Pritchard,

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writing to the Colonial Office that 'it is beyond doubt that they [the priests] were removed . . . in consequence of the Representations of the English Missionaries'.[55]

In 1840, Queen Pomare left Tahiti, followed by Pritchard in February 1841. The former departed with her family to travel to the Leeward Islands. Paraita, a chief and an 'intimate friend' of Moerenhout according to Pritchard, was appointed to act as her regent in the meantime.[56] Pritchard left for England to plea for a British protectorate and to protect his business interests that included organising a new currency for Tahiti.[57] Yet, since France had been outmanoeuvred in New Zealand in 1840, the French government set its imperial sights firmly upon the eastern Pacific archipelago of the Marquesas that was free of competing imperial interest from Britain, though far less of a prize than Tahiti.[58] France needed to secure orderly and commodious Pacific ports that they did not yet possess. Du Petit Thouars was charged with this duty and departed France in 1841 on *La Reine Blanche* with the task of attaining treaties in the Marquesas that would ensure access to such ports. As Du Petit Thouars sailed towards the islands, Pomare received assurances from Louis Philippe via the outgoing commander of the French Naval Station in Chile 'that the government of the King neither wishes to conquer Your States nor to take them under Protection'. What France wishes 'is to maintain with Tahiti the amicable relations which it has with other States'. Du Petit Thouars would soon arrive in Tahiti, he advised, but only with the purpose to 'convince you further of the advantages you derive from your amity with the French'.[59]

Despite assurances to the contrary, within a month of Du Petit Thouars's return to Tahiti in August 1842, the island was a protectorate of France. Du Petit Thouars and Moerenhout set this dramatic chain of events in motion. Combined with Du Petit Thouars's charge to secure ports for France, his recent activities in the Marquesas and their joint fear that Pritchard would return from Britain with a Waitangi-style document, the two devised a stratagem that would impel Tahitians to request French protection.[60] Overtly, they used the pretext of the continuing deprivation of resident French nationals' 'natural rights' by the Tahitian government to demand reparations of 10,000 piastres.[61] If the Tahitian government could not pay, they had to request French protection. Covertly, Moerenhout also used Pomare's temporary absence from Tahiti due to impending childbirth as an opportunity to stage a putsch by cajoling the four principal Tahitian chiefs, Paraita, Tati, Utumi and Hitoti, to sign this request for French protection, supposedly with the assistance of copious amounts of alcohol provided by Moerenhout. The chiefs later offered a range of reasons for why they had signed, from fear that they 'would be fired upon' if they did not, a threat supposedly made by Moerenhout according to Pritchard, to criticism of LMS missionaries for not offering political counsel on the implications of the document.[62]

With these key signatures in place, Moerenhout and Du Petit Thouars set about securing the critical consent of Pomare. In her weakened state, her representative presented her with a fait accompli. Her chiefs had betrayed her and if she refused to give her consent, though she was not shown the document, Du Petit Thouars would fire upon Pape'ete. Moerenhout, now elevated in rank to Commissaire du Roi, travelled to Moorea to make the pregnant Pomare sign. She refused to do so. Moerenhout was incensed. Regardless of her condition and the fact that she was still the queen, Moerenhout 'shook his fist' in her face and 'foamed at the mouth' and said 'many hard words against me in the presence of many strangers' over the course of many hours, Pomare claimed in a letter to Louis Philippe that was widely publicised.[63] 'She held

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out long but at length yielded with tears and protest' and signed at the eleventh hour on 9 September 1842 with LMS missionaries Alex Simpson and two others 'telling her she had no alternative'.[64] Upon doing so, she took her eldest son in her arms and, 'kissing him affectionately said "my dear child, I have signed away your birthright"'.[65] This touching image of the young queen, betrayed by politically imprudent male chiefs, the ambitious French consul and the belligerent French naval captain in the midst of the most delicate female predicament, was conveyed back to Europe. It was publicised that Moerenhout's behaviour so distressed her that she went into labour that night, although it was eight days later that her son, Tamatoa, was born.

Pomare and her supporters hoped that extensive publicity about how her signature was obtained would ensure that the French government would not ratify the protectorate treaty. She pleaded for help from Victoria by writing five petitions to her between 1843 and 1844 that appealed for her sympathy on the grounds of French treachery, the longstanding friendship between the Kings of England and Tahiti, the shared Protestant faith and an imputed emotional connection as a fellow female sovereign and mother.[66] When Pritchard returned from England in January 1843, he did not bring a British protectorate but gifts from Victoria that included drawing room furniture and a carriage that she sold to King Kamehameha III of Hawaii owing to her 'very straitened circumstances' in 1845.[67] From Governor Gipps, whom Pritchard visited en route to Tahiti, she received handsome clothes for herself and family. Yet British naval captains visited the island in the expectation that their government would intervene on Pomare's behalf. While careful not to act in a manner that could lead to war between Britain and France, the captains goaded the French by paying homage to a new flag Pomare had designed and now flew to mark her continuing status as a sovereign of an independent country that did not contain any of the French symbols demanded by Moerenhout.

In Britain, the government was informed by the French that 'we should gladly avail ourselves of any means of strengthening or improving our possession of the Marquesas' and that 'we have nothing to conceal with regard to our proceedings in the Pacific'. Also, the French 'were quite ready' to acknowledge Hawaiian independence, on the understanding that the British did not prevent French acquisition of Tahiti.[68] Despite 'great alarm' prevailing in England about the fate of the missionaries if the protectorate was ratified, the French foreign minister, François Guizot, continued to reassure the English ambassador Lord Cowley that freedom of religion would prevail and that non-French citizens would enjoy full protection.[69] Correspondence, made public in submissions to the House of Commons in May and August 1843 and early 1844, showed that the issue of how Pomare's signature was obtained was discussed in official talks between the British and French governments. Cowley suggested in a letter to Lord Aberdeen that the matter of the force used to make the queen sign the document was gingerly raised but defused by Guizot. He insisted that Pomare's rough treatment of French citizens resident in Tahiti was 'of no trifling importance', so much so that the French admiral was compelled to seek redress, which led to Pomare 'demanding' that France provide protection for her kingdom. In short, Guizot stressed that it was the French who were sinned against by the 'vexatious' island queen.[70]

In correspondence among various British government principals, the welfare of Queen Pomare was a reiterated point of concern. The activism of the LMS and its extensive web of support compelled the government's concern for the queen. The LMS publication, *Missionary Magazine*, reported the numerous French 'humiliations' of the

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Tahitian queen throughout the months in 1843 when the French government deliberated on ratifying the protectorate treaty and then into 1844, 1845 and 1846 when conditions in Tahiti deteriorated greatly. This publicity fuelled numerous public meetings across England and Scotland and also in Paris, Switzerland and The Netherlands, where the fate of the Tahitian queen and her subjection to the 'odious tyranny' of the French was firmly aligned with the fate of Protestantism in the Pacific. A deputation from the LMS and Wesleyan Mission Society also called upon Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen in April to state their 'deep interest' in the affair.[71] All the agitation and prayer did not succeed and the British government acceded to France's protectorate over Tahiti while securing the continued independence of Hawaii.

In November 1843, Du Petit Thouars returned triumphantly to Pape'ete on *La Reine Blanche* with the news that the King had ratified the treaty. Pomare responded to this unwelcome news by writing to Louis Philippe imploring him to 'undo the said treaty that you may leave me *Independent on Tahiti*'.[72] Meanwhile, she continued to fly her own insignia, ignoring Du Petit Thouars's orders that 'the National Flag of France shall be successively hoisted *on all the Society Islands*'.[73] He kept insisting over the succeeding days that she comply with this order while also lecturing her about the right of nations and the principles of diplomacy. On 5 November he called her continued refusal to fly the French flag 'vicious' and a 'gratuitous insult to the King of France's Government'. He gave her twenty-four hours to comply or all her lands and those of her family 'shall be confiscated for the good of the State'.[74] They had a meeting during which Du Petit Thouars lectured Pomare. She responded imperiously that he had to put any requests to her in writing. He refused her obstinacy and declared that by noon he would send an armed force onto land to haul down her flag and 'take possession of all her dominions'. Pomare braced herself and asked her people to trust in the 'justice' and 'kindness' of the French king.[75] Du Petit Thouars was true to his threat. He took possession of Pomare's house and installed the governor of the new French colony in it, thereby deposing her.

Pomare was harboured in the British consulate and then aboard British vessels. Unrest grew in the Tahitian population. Pomare wrote to her people in January 1844 reassuring them that Britain was coming to rescue them. This letter was intercepted. The new governor, Bruat, claimed it was seditious. In March 1844, Pritchard, who still held the office of British consul, was arrested for inciting insurrection and was promptly deported. The French still courted Pomare as they could see how the Tahitian people loved her and therefore how central she was to peace in their new colony but Pomare, fearing arrest, evaded them.[76]

News came via a British warship in July 1844 that Du Petit Thouars's deposition of Pomare and the seizure of her property had been rejected in Paris. Pomare was heartened by this news and hoped that a full reversal of French claims was imminent coupled with the desired British protectorate, though this intelligence did not quell the tension on the island. She refused Bruat's entreaties for her to return to Tahiti as she feared that the aggressive French mode of action would continue, a fear that was realised, and that if she returned to Tahiti 'she would be made an instrument in the hands of the French for oppressing her people'.[77] She cited her concern about the welfare of her forthcoming baby as the reason why she desired to travel to another island though she wished 'my people to remain in peace and quietude until we hear officially from Britain and France'.[78] Pomare was conveyed to Ra'iatea, then outside

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the French protectorate, by a British warship. News of her departure coupled with French colonial actions caused further discontent. Relations between the French and Tahitians escalated into bloody conflict that would continue for another two years.

With the young heavily pregnant queen exiled, her people in arms and the LMS missionaries imperilled by the escalating violence, the 'Tahiti Affair' attracted new levels of apprehension in Europe. In December 1844 Revd Heath wrote of the war that, 'the Tahitians have had 9 battles and skirmishes with the French and have had the advantage in all of them. They have lost about 100, the French upwards of 300. They say the French are mere boys and jeer at them that they dare not attack their camps'.[79] The increasing difficulties that Pomare experienced during exile made her even more of an object of pity for her supporters. Now her fate was a matter of high importance to 'both our national honour and interest', as Sir George Grey stated to parliament in 1845.[80] 'The arbitrary and flagitious proceedings of the French' towards the queen were a constant refrain in the British press.[81] *The Times* ran several articles in 1844 and 1845 tracking the fate of Pomare and the gendered implications of the 'Tahiti Affair'. They published Pomare's beseeching letter to Louis Philippe of September 1844 that set out the multitude of wrongs perpetrated against her and then appealed to his chivalric nature by pleading with him to 'think of me as a woman and near giving birth to another child'. Pomare also called Moerenhout's morality and suitability for his high office into question by highlighting that he was living with another man's wife.[82] Of the French government's response to these gendered questions *The Times* deemed that Du Petit Thouars's supporters in the Chamber of Deputies attempted to 'leave Queen Pomare and her rights as much as possible out of the question'.[83] The French press similarly championed the bravery of the admiral and his significant contributions to the advancement of French sea power in the region and omitted the less venerable dimensions of the affair that involved Pomare.[84]

The LMS went on the offensive by generating publications and portraits designed to summon up British resolve not to let French actions prevail in the island kingdom. Samuel Tamatoa Williams's *Appeal to British Christians* of 1844 laid out the sequence of events by depicting Pomare as 'intelligent', her rule as 'salutary' while the succession of French visitors were cast as 'depraved' and 'vicious' and the chiefs, who signed Du Petit Thouars's protectorate, 'semi-barbarous'.[85] Mark Wilks similarly laid out the extent of French violations in his 1844 work *Tahiti*. Wilks meticulously reviewed all relevant French accounts and events highlighting the multitude of French wrongs against Pomare and the LMS. He concluded by scoffing at France's discussed reparations for the LMS and Pomare that he dismissed as grossly inadequate for the overthrow of a sovereign, the murder of the Tahitian people and the 'inoculation of her states with the corrosive virus of deadly and infectious vices'.[86]

Artist George Baxter, who was the engraver at John Snow publishing house that released a number of these LMS publications, produced the most emotive portrait in 1845 (Figure 1). In this portrayal the crowned Pomare, baby in her lap and surrounded by other children and her ennobled, Anglicised husband, gazes heavenwards while the French troops land on the beaches below. Baxter did not shy away from depicting Pomare as a South Seas Victoria, endowing her with the ample bosom and majestic disposition akin to that epitome of feminine virtue. Orsmond claimed that this portrait was condemned by other missionaries for its lack of realism and being a too overt allusion to Victoria, and that even Pomare 'scoffed' at the likeness.[87] Yet the *Missionary*

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Figure 1: George Baxter, 'Pomare, Queen of Tahiti, the persecuted Christian surrounded by her family at the afflictive moment when the French forces were landing, 1845' (Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NK541), by permission of the National Library of Australia.

Magazine lauded this portrayal of 'the exiled and homeless Sovereign of Tahiti . . . as a correct transcript of the original'.[88] Other representations of Pomare as a virtuous, church-going mother also appeared in the British press (Figure 2). Other sentimental literary portrayals included a poem which waxed lyrical about the grace and majesty of

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Figure 2: 'Queen Pomare with her husband and children, going to church in Tahiti', *Pictorial Times*, London, 1844 (Rex Nan Kivell Collection, NK7449), by permission of the National Library of Australia.

'Pomare, Queen of the Pacific's Queen'. It stressed her resolve to exercise control over 'all a woman's weakness' and place her own safety after that of her people. Pomare here does not deviate from the complete set of feminine virtues. It concludes with a gentle admonishment of Britain's actions:

> Also that Britain should confess
> Her ear is turn'd from a woman in distress
> How chang'd from when it was her proudest boast
> To raise, defend the helpless 'gainst the host
> When her brave arm upheld the sinking right
> And virtue triumphed in Britannia's might[89]

Meanwhile LMS letters revealed a sad decline in fortunes of the exiled queen, who declared she would rather sacrifice her kingdom than live under French tyranny. Revd Thomson wrote in January 1845 that:

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> Pomare is well but her infant is ill – she has had to leave Vaiaau because of the cold of that valley is prejudicial to the health of her child. She dare not return to the town she is so very much afraid of the French, she is wandering from place to place a fugitive, and this mode of life in this unhealthy district has affected the health of her child. The poor child is ill (I am informed by Mr Platt) from an insufficiency of food.

He went on that the 'conduct' of Queen Pomare 'is beyond all praise'. Though she had been 'driven from her native land and not allowed to rest in peace on Ra'iatea she is often annoyed and compelled to flee, from the French steamers. Still she bears up nobly under her trials, her conduct is Queenly and her character Christian'.[90] Pomare's sick baby, whom she had named Victoria, died not long after Thomson's letter had been written. In April Revd Charter wrote to London complaining that, 'I had cherished a hope that the present painful Dispensation of Providence would have been sanctified to her spiritual welfare' but Pomare had greatly disappointed him. Her offence was that she had not attended church for a number of successive weeks, though he does not make direct mention of her recent bereavement that could reasonably account for her absence.[91] Revd Krause wrote positively of Pomare in April 1845 stating that she has 'given but *little occasion* to doubt her sincerity' but she was surrounded by the lowest influences from her husband Ari'ifa'a'ite, whom he described as a drunkard and 'the vilest of the vile', and her mother and aunt. These three exercised a 'pernicious influence' over Pomare and he wished that she were 'firmer in resisting this evil but she is a *woman*'.[92]

The external stresses of the French protectorate and war caused long-standing bitter ructions within the LMS brethren to spill over into open conflict. While Orsmond continued to be ostracised in 1845 owing to his open embrace of the French protectorate, his allies attacked his adversary, Alex Simpson, by reviving accusations of sexual misconduct. Basing his letter on hearsay many years old, William Henry wrote to the LMS headquarters and accused Simpson of having had relations 'not only highly reprehensible but absolutely basely criminal' with young female students when he was in charge of the mission school on Moorea in the 1820s. The most shocking detail that Henry imparted was Simpson having relations with a schoolgirl 'and it may be proper here to observe that *that* girl is now alas! Pomare'.[93] The dissemination of such stories outraged Revd Thomson, who wrote to London in December attempting to scotch the vicious rumours about Pomare. He wrote that, 'Should any statements derogatory to the . . . character of Queen Pomare reach you from *any source* missionaries or otherwise I would suggest the propriety of receiving with caution as some have lately been using language in reference to the Queen which I think facts will not sustain'. He continued that 'everything coming within my own observation and all I hear from visitors of the Queen confirms the high opinion of her character which I have formed'. That she had foregone 'a fine establishment and wealth at command' and sacrificed all 'rather than sanction the state of things existing in Tahiti should commend her to the sympathy of all', Thomson argued. The sovereign of Tahiti with her husband 'may be seen planting taro, cultivating the soil for their own support while their children collect coconuts to make oil to purchase clothing'.[94] Revd Charles Barff, who visited Pomare on Ra'iatea in December 1844, concurred that the queen was suffering in her exile with her family and servants living in 'a very mean house'.[95] The pathos of Pomare's situation was conveyed to the church-going people of Britain through the *Missionary Magazine* and

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special meetings held to pray for the queen and her people in their 'season of great trial'.[96]

The news of reinforcements of 1,000 troops being sent from Brest in late 1846 as well as French attempts to extend their protectorate over the Leeward Islands by arguing, falsely, that they also constituted Pomare's realm, induced the LMS flock into widespread political action.[97] A campaign of 1846–47 of sending memorials to the Foreign Office, signed by thousands of people from across Britain and Ireland, demanded that the British government press France to cease hostile actions in the Leeward Islands, recognise their independence and desist from an escalation of hostilities in the Tahitian islands in which the indigenes had had the upper hand to that point. In many of these documents 'the unfortunate' and 'exiled' Queen Pomare was the symbol of her distressed people who were 'just adopting the forms and institutions of European civilisation'. Many of the memorialists expressed their alarm that these 'improving' islanders were on the brink of 'extermination' by the French. Not only did it behove the British government to act because of their shared history and religion, but to abandon them, some memorialists argued, 'to the power and caprice of their oppressors would be both unmanly and cruel'.[98]

What these devoted supporters were not aware of, as they signed on in their multitudes to Queen Pomare's cause in late 1846, was that she had already decided to submit to the French Protectorate.[99] In June 1846, George Charter wrote that Pomare was becoming increasingly desperate, not only because of the continued pursuit of the French, but also domestically. Her husband was exhibiting increasingly violent behaviour towards her, with Pomare confiding in Charter that her husband had threatened to kill her by burning down her house. 'Poor Woman! The distress she experiences from his conduct is great'. Before Charter sent this letter to Britain, Pomare came to him again in July and told him, 'I will go up and join my people . . . it will be better for the Protectorate to be established than for the dreadful blood shedding to be continued'. She confided that she had been misinformed about Britain's commitment to protect Tahiti by Pritchard: had he 'informed me fully of the contents of Lord Aberdeen's letter of Sept 25 1843 I should have acknowledged the protectorate'. Charter tried to change her mind by assuring her 'of the hopes cherished by many in England that the French would abandon the islands', but Pomare replied 'they will never go'.[100]

On 6 February 1847, Queen Pomare and Governor Bruat met on Tahiti as she formally acceded to the Protectorate and was restored to the throne with great ceremony. For her troubles, she was to receive 5,000 dollars annually plus another 3,000 as rent for her lands and offices. She had succeeded in having Moerenhout removed from Tahiti to San Francisco and Bruat was also recalled as she had desired. She sent him back to France with an extensive shopping list, a sign perhaps of how Pomare saw their new power relation and her entitlement to French compensation.[101] Despite her newly restored wealth and status, Pomare continued to suffer as the French monitored her every move, interfered with her choices about how she would raise her children (particularly on the matter of whether they would be schooled by LMS teachers or by French ones) and whittled away her domestic power base. Within four years she wrote to the French president complaining that a new governor rendered her 'a stranger in my own land, my word is useless it is of no value'.[102] Thomson described her in May 1847 as 'a queen without power'.[103]

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We have seen how central gender was to the events from 1838–47 that constituted the 'Tahiti Affair'. In Europe, the 'Tahiti Affair' was shaped by representations of the Tahitian queen as a vulnerable woman that called British and French masculinity into question. Also, Pomare's babies and imminent childbearing experiences coincided with a number of significant moments. Her mothering was a central component of the public image of Pomare promoted by the LMS, epitomised by Baxter's portrait of a South Seas Victoria with babe in arms. This Pomare is difficult to reconcile with the polarised view of her as an island woman abandoned to dissolution, as advanced by the dissenting missionary voices of Orsmond, Crook and William Henry and Pomare's nemesis Moerenhout.

The question of Pomare's sexual morality is key to deciphering her. Crook, as we have seen, conjectured in 1828 that she was infected with syphilis, while Henry claimed that she had been involved in elicit sexual relations with Revd Alex Simpson. Orsmond, the dismissed LMS missionary, wrote that Pomare's spite for her husband even included taking medicine 'to destroy the fruit of her womb' that caused 'the foetus to fall away' at about the time of Bruat's arrival in November 1843, though it should be remembered that Pomare was heavily pregnant in mid-1844 with Victoria and used this as a means to go into self-imposed exile on Ra'iatea.[104]

Despite the importance of Pomare's maternity to historical events and popular representations of her, confusion persists about this aspect of her life. According to Newbury, she had six children between 1838 and 1847. De Deckker records eight births in total with the first two dying in infancy. O'Reilly and Tessier, using Teuira Henry and Cuzent's *Iles de Société* of 1860 as sources, claim that her first three babies died. Ari'iaue, her oldest child to survive into early adulthood, was born in August 1838, according to Henry, and was probably the baby she suckled in her first meeting with Du Petit Thouars and D'Urville.[105] O'Reilly claims Ari'iaue died prematurely from complications resulting from syphilis. O'Reilly and Tessier list the succeeding births, that De Deckker concurs with, as: 3 November 1839, Teratane;[106] 23 May 1841, Teari'i Maeva Rua;[107] 23 September 1842, Tamatoa (the baby born after Moerenhout forced Pomare to sign the protection document);[108] 20 March or May 1846, Teri'itapunui[109] and 17 December 1847, Teri'itua.[110] We have seen that Victoria was born in 1844 and was dead in early 1845. This puts the number of babies Pomare bore at either eight – the six listed above, Victoria and the first child born in 1835 when she converted to Christianity – or, using Tessier and O'Reilly's calculations, ten – the six listed, the three born before Ari'iaue who died, and Victoria (who is not mentioned).

Disease and dissolution were the key weapons used to disparage Pomare. Numerous historians have perpetuated disparaging representations without questioning the possible motives behind them. The question of whether Pomare had syphilis is laden with moral questions and it may offer an explanation for the deaths of her first babies, Victoria and Ari'iaue in his teens. They could have all died from the effects of congenital syphilis.[111] As we have seen, Crook insinuated that Pomare was infected in 1828 on the premise that the common people mocked her mother, aunt and herself for their lack of eyebrows. Only Crook's opinion on this is extant, but historians who perpetuate the story have not acknowledged its questionable origin. Many of the male missionaries who generated information about Pomare were reticent to comment on her 'confinements' and other topics they regarded as womanly, making only the most fleeting allusion to them. They also were mostly quiet about the death of Victoria, only

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alluding to it as one of her trials. Pomare may well have been infected with the disease as Crook claimed, but the children's father, Ari'ifa'a'ite, may also have infected them if they were afflicted at all. Could it be that such a high infant mortality rate was common due to other factors, apart from syphilis, that led to the sharp decline of Pacific populations in the nineteenth century? Thomson suggested that Victoria was sickened by lack of food and the damp locations Pomare was forced to endure in exile to avoid French harassment. From the evidence, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about whether Pomare was afflicted with syphilis with its accompanying implications regarding her sexual morality. She died aged sixty-four in 1877. The question then about whether she was diseased should be treated with scepticism.

Two predominant archetypes have circulated about Pomare. The sympathetic image of her promoted during the 'Tahiti Affair' has given way to an image in most of the historiography of Pomare as a queen captured, like her people, in the web of colonialism's fatal impact – corrupted, primitive, sexually untamed, addicted to drink, diseased – and therefore needing imperial governance. She did not, I contend, fit either of these diametrically opposing portrayals. In her early years as a queen, she partook in a resurgent Tahitian culture that entailed sexual and sexualised practices, such as dancing, that shocked the LMS missionaries. Yet after her first political crisis in 1836, after she had been baptised, she 'whitened' herself by more closely mirroring British notions of female nobility embodied by Victoria from 1837. She made political mistakes as she did rely too heavily upon Pritchard, yet she also displayed political savvy. Her appropriation of Victorian, Christian femininity and her use of her womanly vulnerability aided her cause, though it could not achieve her highest goal, the attainment of a British protectorate in exchange for a French one, that was beyond her control after 1842. She was defiant in the face of great provocation and believed in her status as a female indigenous ruler, though she stressed humility regarding her race and gender when it advanced her cause. She was loved by many of her people but not all. She consistently battled with internal power struggles from the four principal Tahitian chiefs, as well as her violent husband.[112] She was also a mother who was concerned about the welfare of her offspring during a time of great flux in Tahitian history.

This article has argued that Pomare is a more intriguing historical figure than previous historians have allowed. It aimed to reveal the political, social, national and religious location of contemporary authors who generated images of her. The position of these authors in the drama of the 'Tahitian Affair' indelibly marked their representations of Pomare, although this has gone largely unrecognised or acknowledged by subsequent historians. The current orthodox view of her as a dissolute island queen has drawn without reflection upon Crook, Orsmond, William Henry and Moerenhout. All four were heavily invested in detracting from Pomare, yet their vision has formed the basis of a flawed genealogy that has underpinned the authoritative works on the French takeover of Tahiti. This article has revealed the gendered and racialised politics promoted by a French-centred version of imperial events. For the French, Pomare was a capricious indigenous ruler prone to savage behaviour and unacquainted with modern concepts of civility and the rights of individuals, flaws that were exacerbated by her gender and youth. But it is also important to note that Pomare consciously used ennobled racialised and gendered terms for her own purposes, albeit unsuccessfully. The foregoing analysis has maintained that images of Pomare need to be read within the context of emotive imperial events that were replete with disquiet about a young,

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female indigenous sovereign and that these images fed into historic events surrounding the French takeover of Tahiti. It has offered an alternative means to envisage this contested historical figure by bringing to light alternative representations of her rendered by other witnesses to the dramas of the 'Tahiti Affair' that cast her and her island's history in a different light.

Notes

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1. Queen Pomare to Queen Victoria, 1843, in George Pritchard, Paul de Deckker (ed.), *The Aggressions of the French at Tahiti and other Islands of the Pacific* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1983), p. 133; Queen Pomare to Louis Philippe, *The Times*, 24 May 1845, in *The Polynesian*, 25 September 1844.
2. Victoria, in Charlotte Franken Haldane, *Tempest Over Tahiti* (London: Constable, 1963), p. 157.
3. The principal islands of Tahiti, Moorea and several smaller islands constituted the islands of Tahiti.
4. Hawai'i and the Marquesas had male rulers. Like Tahiti, a single monarch, Kamehameha III, descendant of the first king who unified the group, Kamehameha, governed Hawai'i. The Marquesas was fractured into smaller tribal groups governed by male chiefs who collectively signed on to French protection in 1842. See Greg M. Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774–1880* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980); Nicholas Thomas, *Marquesan Societies: Inequality and Political Transformation in Eastern Polynesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Deryck Scarr, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001); I. C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Gavan Daws, *Shoals of Time* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968); John Manning Ward, *British Policy in the South Pacific: A Study of British Policy in the South Pacific Islands prior to the Establishment of Governments by the Great Powers* (Westport: Greenwood, 1976). In 1840 Britain managed to prevent French annexation of New Zealand by encouraging Maori chiefs to sign the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840. See Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), ch. 3.
5. Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, *A Voyage round the World* (1772; repr. New York: Da Capo, 1967), pp. 218–19, 256–7.
6. Patty O'Brien, *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006, ch. 4).
7. John Hawkesworth, *An Account of the Voyages of Discovery Undertaken by the Order of His Present Majesty for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere*, vol. 1 (London: W. Strathan and T. Caddell, 1773), pp. 461–3, 479; Greg M. Dening, 'Possessing Tahiti', in Greg Dening *Performances* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), pp. 128–67; Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1989), p. 47; Roy Porter, 'The Exotic as Erotic: Captain Cook at Tahiti', in G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (eds), *Exoticism in the Enlightenment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 1–17; Bridget Orr, 'Southern Passions Mix with Northern Art: Miscegenation and the Endeavour Voyage', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 18 (1994), pp. 212–31; Harriet Guest, 'Looking at Women: Forster's Observations in the South Pacific', in Nicholas Thomas et al. (eds), *Observations Made During a Voyage Round the World* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), pp. 41–54; Margaret Jolly, 'From Point Venus to Bali Ha'i: Eroticism and Exoticism in Representations of the Pacific', in Margaret Jolly and Lenore Manderson (eds), *Sites of Desire/Economies of Pleasure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 99–122.
8. Eugène Caillot, *Histoire de la Polynésie Orientale* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910); Teuira Henry, *Ancient Tahiti* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum, 1928); Jacques Antoine Moerenhout, *Travels to the Islands of the Pacific Ocean*, tr. Arthur R. Borden (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1983), p. xi.
9. Neil Rennie, *Far-Fetched Facts: The Literature of Travel and the Idea of the South Seas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

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1997); Robert Nicole, *The Word, the Pen and the Pistol: Literature and Power in Tahiti* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). All make fleeting reference to Queen Pomare in relation to their quest to outline the literary construct of the South Seas and, in Nicole's case, Tahiti. All concentrate upon the Queen Pomare rendered in Pierre Loti, *Le Mariage de Loti* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1880).

10. Gilbert Cuzent, *Iles de la société Tahiti* (Paris: Rochefort, 1860), pp. 46–7, makes brief mention of Pomare but does not attribute sources and its intent. Jean Dorsenne, *C'est la reine Pomare* (Paris: Les éditions de France, 1934) is an unsourced fictionalised account of Pomare.
11. Haldane, *Tempest over Tahiti*; De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*; Robert Langdon, *Tahiti: Island of Love*, Pacific Publications (London: Cassell, 1963); Colin Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: Change and Survival in French Polynesia* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1980); Patrick O'Reilly, *La vie à Tahiti au temps de la reine Pomare* (Paris: La Société des Océanistes, 1975); Patrick O'Reilly and Raoul Tessier, *Tahitiens: Répertoire biographique de la Polynésie Française* (2nd edn), (Paris: La Société des Océanistes, 1975).
12. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 63; De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 24.
13. Queen Pomare was known as 'Pomare IV', as she was the fourth monarch of this line, and she was also known as 'Pomare V', as in Pomare Vahine.
14. William Pascoe Crook in Haldane, *Tempest Over Tahiti,* p. 25.
15. John Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission 1799–1830*, Colin Newbury (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society, 1959); Niel Gunson, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in the South Seas 1797–1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978); Douglas L. Oliver, *Ancient Tahitian Society*, vol. 2 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), pp. 913–14; Margaret Jolly, 'Desire, Difference and Disease, in Ross Gibson (ed.), *Exchanges: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in Australia and the Pacific* (Sydney: Museum of Sydney, 1997), pp. 185–217, here pp. 194–5.
16. O'Reilly dates this to 1822 while Newbury cites 1824; O'Reilly and Tessier, *Tahitiens: Répertoire Biographique,* p. 453; Newbury, *Tahiti Nui,* p. 60.
17. William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches during a Residence of Nearly Six Years in the South Sea Islands* (London: Fisher Son & Jackson, 1829), p. 564.
18. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 62; O'Reilly, *La vie à Tahiti*, p. 12.
19. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui,* pp. 60–62.
20. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 60.
21. Until 1831 her mother, Teremoemoe, and aunt, Ari'ipaea Vahine, held power, jostling with other chiefs; see Newbury, *Tahiti Nui,* p. 64.
22. O'Reilly and Tessier, *Tahitiens*, p. 448.
23. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 60.
24. William Pascoe Crook, journal entry, 1 January 1828, *South Seas Journals* (*SSJ*), Box 6, Church World Missions (CWM), SOAS Library Special Collections; Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 64.
25. Crook, journal entry, 1 January 1828, *SSJ*, Box 6, CWM.
26. See Nicole, *The Word*, pp. 99–104.
27. Moerenhout, *Travels to the Islands*, p. 117.
28. Moerenhout, *Travels to the Islands*, pp. 161–2.
29. Mark Wilks, *Tahiti: Containing a Review of the Ongoing Characters and Progress of French Roman Catholic Destruction of English Protestant Missions in the South Seas* (London: John Snow, 1844), pp. 66–7.
30. Moerenhout, *Travels to the Islands*, pp. 150–52; De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 24.
31. Moerenhout, *Travels to the Islands,* pp. 154–5.
32. Moerenhout, *Travels to the Islands,* pp. 134–5.
33. George Pritchard, *Queen Pomare and Her Country* (London: Elliot Stock, 1878), p. 11.
34. He was also known as Tenani'a. Henry, *Ancient Tahiti*, p. 249, claims he was Pomare's cousin.
35. See Pomare to Viscount Palmerston, 13 November 1836, regarding the priests in 'Correspondence relative to the Proceedings of the French at Tahiti', 18 May 1843, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* (*PP*), vol. 61, p. 366.
36. Moerenhout to Queen Pomare, 27 November 1836, Territory of French Polynesia, Papeete, Tahiti, available at The Australian National University, Canberra, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (*PMB*), 73.
37. Queen Pomare to US President, 31 December 1836, ms in Société des Etudes Océaniennes*,* Musée de Pape'ete, available at *PMB*, 71; De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 45, n. 32; Newbury, *Tahiti Nui,* p. 95; Richard A. Greer, 'Trouble in Tahiti: S. R. Blackler's Despatches on the French Seizure of the Society Islands', *Hawaiian Journal of History* 5 (1971), pp. 127–51. With a change of US administration in 1837, Moerenhout was relieved of his duties because of his Belgian nationality, though he acted for the USA until his replacement, Samuel Blackler, arrived in 1839.

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38. De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 173, n. 32.
39. De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 95.
40. De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 51.
41. Samuel Tamatoa Williams, *An Appeal to British Christians and the Public Generally on Behalf of the Queen of Tahiti and her Outraged Subject* (London: W. Blanchard & Sons, 1844), p. 5.
42. Dumont D'Urville, *Voyage au pôle sud et dans l'Océanie sur les corvettes l'Astrolabe et la Zélée 1837–1840* (Paris: Gide et J. Baudry, 1842), p. 69.
43. D'Urville, *Voyage au pôle sud*, p. 70.
44. Abel Aubert Du Petit Thouars, *Voyage autour du monde sur la frégate la Vénus, pendant les années 1836–1839* (Paris: Gide, 1840), p. 394.
45. Du Petit Thouars, *Voyage autour du monde,* p. 394.
46. Pritchard, *Queen Pomare*, pp. 56–7.
47. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 95; Pomare to Louis Philippe, *The Times*, 24 May 1845, names all nine French residents.
48. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 95.
49. Wilks, *Tahiti*, p. 93.
50. Reybauld in Wilks, *Tahiti*, p. 92.
51. Wilks, *Tahiti*, p. 92.
52. Brij V. Lal, *Encyclopedia of the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), p. 81.
53. Queen Pomare to Victoria, 8 November 1838, 'Correspondence relative to the Proceedings of the French at Tahiti', 18 May 1843, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 61, p. 369.
54. Pritchard, *Queen Pomare*, pp. 31–2.
55. Sir George Gipps to Lord Glenelg, 24 December 1838, *Historical Records of Australia*, series 1, vol. 19, p. 709.
56. Pritchard, *Queen Pomare*, pp. 74–5.
57. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 110.
58. Robert Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 21.
59. Captain Buglet to Queen Pomare, 21 January 1842, in De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, pp. 82–3.
60. See literature referenced in endnote 4.
61. See *Historical Records of Australia*, vol. 12, pp. 387–8.
62. Letter from Tati, 4 March 1843, cited in De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French,* pp. 87–8; William Howe and Alex Simpson, 8 February 1843, *SSL*, Box 16, folder 1, jacket a.
63. Pomare to Louis Philippe, 25 September 1844, *The Times*, 25 May 1845, p. 5.
64. Thomas Heath, 11 February 1843, *SSL*, Box 16, folder 1, jacket a.
65. De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 119.
66. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 328, n. 9.
67. Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, p. 140; *The Times*, 24 March 1846.
68. Lord Cowley to Earl of Aberdeen, 20 March 1843, 'Correspondence relative to the Proceedings of the French at Tahiti', 18 May 1843, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 61, p. 382.
69. Lord Cowley to François Guizot, 5 April 1843, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 61, p. 384.
70. Cowley to Aberdeen, 30 August 1843, and François Guizot to Count de Rohan-Chabot, 11 September 1843, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 51, 1844, pp. 100–4.
71. 'French Aggressions in Tahiti', *Missionary Magazine* (*MM)* 82, April 1843, pp. 51–3; 'French Outrage in Tahiti', *MM* 83, May 1843, pp. 65–80; *MM* 85, July 1843, pp. 113–17; *MM* 87, September 1843, pp. 143–5.
72. Pomare to Louis Philippe, 4 November 1843, in De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 162.
73. Du Petit Thouars to Pomare, 3 November 1843, in De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, pp. 157–8.
74. Du Petit Thouars to Pomare, 5 November 1843, in De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, pp. 164–5.
75. Pritchard, *Queen Pomare*, pp. 58–9.
76. C. Henricy in Wilks, *Tahiti,* p. 95. One of Pomare's female servants was arrested as the French soldiers mistook her for the queen, who was already aboard a British vessel; see Langdon, *Tahiti: Island of Love,* p. 169.
77. Robert Thomson, 11 December 1845, *SSL*, Box 18, folder 4, jacket e.
78. Queen Pomare to Governor Bruat, 13 July 1844, tr. J. Platt, National Library of Australia, ms 4191.
79. Thomas Heath, 12 December 1844, *SSL*, Box 17, folder 4, jacket c.
80. Sir George Grey, Parl. Debs. (series 3) vol. 77 (6 February 1845), p. 167.
81. *MM* 83, May 1843, p. 69.

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82. Pomare to Louis Philippe, 25 September 1844, *The Times*, 24 May 1845.
83. 'Debate on the Affair of Tahiti', *The Times*, 4 March 1844, pp. 4, 5.
84. Extract from *Moniteur Universal*, 25 April 1843, reproduced in 'Correspondence relative to the Proceedings of the French at Tahiti', 18 May 1843, *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers*, vol. 61, pp. 386–90.
85. Williams, *An Appeal,* pp. 6–8.
86. Wilks, *Tahiti*, pp. 133–4.
87. Gunson, *Messengers of Grace*, p. 189.
88. *MM* 110, July 1845, p. 109.
89. Anon., *Pomare: Queen of Tahiti: A Poem* (London: John Ollivier, 1847).
90. Robert Thomson, 8 January 1845, *SSL*, Box 18, folder 1, jacket a.
91. George Charter, 9 April 1845, *SSL*, Box 18, folder 2, jacket d.
92. Ernest Krause, 9 April 1845, *SSL*, Box 18, folder 2, jacket d; original emphasis.
93. William Henry, 28 July 1845, *SSL*, Box 18, folder 3, jacket c; original emphasis.
94. Robert Thomson, 11 December 1845, *SSL*, Box 18, folder 4, jacket e.
95. Charles Barff, 17 December 1844, *SSJ*, Box 9.
96. *MM* 100, September 1844, p. 137. See also editions for October and December 1844; January, February, March, July and October 1845; February, September, November and December 1846.
97. Aldrich, *The French Presence*, p. 188.
98. 'Memorials Respecting the Occupation of Tahiti by the French', Foreign Office 58/50–58/54, The National Archives, Kew.
99. The Leeward Islands remained independent.
100. George Charter, 20 June 1846, *SSL*, Box 19, folder 2, jacket d; Ari'i Taimai recalls that she induced the queen to return to Tahiti in 1847 and accept French rule for the sake of peace: see Henry Adams, *Tahiti: Memoirs of Ari'i Taimai* (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles, 1976), pp. 184–92.
101. O'Reilly, *La vie à Tahiti*, p. 449.
102. Queen Pomare to French President, 26 August 1851, PMB 71.
103. Robert Thomson, 30 March 1847, *SSL*, Box 20, folder 1, jacket c; *MM* 136, September 1847, p. 149. A number of missionaries wrote on the subject of the education of the royal children; see *SSL*, Box 20, 1847 and Box 21, 1848.
104. John Orsmond, 'Extracts from the Old Orsmond MS 1849', in Davies, *The History of the Tahitian Mission*, pp. 353–4.
105. Cuzent suggests that Ari'iaue was born in 1837 as he died in 1855 at age eighteen. O'Reilly and Tessier, *Tahitiens*, p. 453, incorrectly cite Cuzent as having Ari'iaue's birth year as 1835 and Henry as suggesting it was 1839.
106. He became Pomare V and died in 1891.
107. She was adopted by Tapoa, Pomare's first husband, lived on Bora Bora and became queen Maevarua I in 1860. She died in 1873, according to Henry, or 1878 according to Cuzent, *Iles de la société Tahiti*, p. 453.
108. He became king of Ra'iatea in 1857 and died in 1881.
109. He was educated by the French and played a strong hand in having the Society Islands made a French colony in June 1880; see Cuzent, *Iles de la société Tahiti*, p. 453.
110. He was also known as Prince Joinville and died in 1875; see Cuzent, *Iles de la société Tahiti*, p. 453; Newbury, *Tahiti Nui*, pp. 65–6; De Deckker (ed.), *Aggressions of the French*, p. 225; Haldane, *Tempest Over Tahiti*, p. 165.
111. Her other adult children died at the average age of forty, which is probably in keeping with the life expectancy for Pacific islanders in the second half of the nineteenth century, when depopulation was an acute problem.
112. See Herman Melville's vision of Pomare in *Omoo* in which he writes, 'the reputation of Pomare is not what it ought to be' and she is 'something of a Jezebel' in her private life, though he does acknowledge that her husband was violent and she suffered due to the actions of the French (Melville was in Tahiti just after Du Petit Thouars declared the protectorate in 1842). Melville's vision of Pomare also set the tone for numerous renditions that followed. Herman Melville, *Omoo: Adventures in the South Seas* (London: KIP Ltd, 1985), pp. 309–16.

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