

Reihana Robinson

Poem Notes

Imam of Papeete

A poem toying or interfering with how tourism interferes with other cultures. How tourism sells everyone down the drain. How sooner or later there is nothing left.

White Girl's Blues

Set in the Marquesas, how beauty can inflame injustice.

Other Mothers

A short history of women, the blends when cultures mix and as whanau carry on. The relevance of ways of seeing aroha.

Portion of Flesh

A delicacy a tragedy, all in a day's work. The majesty of an amazing navigator talking past another.

Poet Notes

Reihana Robinson has been published in USA and Pacific. Her work explores social and environmental issues. Artist, writer, organic farmer. Auckland University Press published her collected poems as part of AUP *New Poets 3*, 2008.

Poems and stories have appeared in *Landfall*, *Takahe*, *Melusine*, *Cutthroat*, *Enamel* and anthologies including *Te ao marama contemporary Māori writing*. She was the inaugural recipient of Te Atairangi Kaahu award for poetry.

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Imam of Papeete

Radiant voices rise
Over a sea of woven hats
Pure white bonnets lost in praise
-Hallelujah

All at once from the pulpit
Jack-in-a-Box pops up
Is it the Imam of Papeete
Speaking in tongues to girls
Coerced and giggling?

Tourists in pareu click
And before you can say
Allaahu Akabar
The Imam of Papeete is on Facebook

Scorned by pockmarked adolescents
Lounging under banyans

For the old people
The old world is passing

Boys and girls will find
What it is to lose the world
First to the faithful
Thence to the faithless

White Girl's Blues

Gauguin moves south west

*-I have come to an unalterable decision—
To go and live forever in Polynesia
Then I can end my days in peace and freedom
Without thoughts of tomorrow and this
Eternal struggle against idiots**

Sucks on a guava kiss of helpless sea
In the silence of Tahiti's night
Amid *mad* vegetation

Soyez mysterieuse

Hey white girl
Does it ever cross your mind
To unravel a boy
To rattle the doors of denial
To banter and rant
And run barefoot?

Crabs bats rats
Devouring seed

Hibiscus flushing your cheek
Frangipani filling his nose

**Paul Gauguin October 1894*

Portion of Flesh

Cook cooks turtle
This portion of flesh

Cook cooks goat
This portion of flesh

What revolts all his men
Scattered among stones and kidney ferns
Astrolabe overboard
Is this portion of flesh
Taken from man

His hefty interpretation
Ends his cooking days

It is this misstep that leads
Him into the cooking pot

His wisdom hostage
To his manliness

His God shuddering
Stumbles

And the island paradise
Accepts
His portion of flesh

Amen

Other Mothers

Flintlock downed her dusky brood
Scows claimed her livelihood
Her trees her soil her seeds
But the fire in her kitchen kept burning
Crossing the creek to collect puha
And the fires keep burning
There are other whaea but they lost the race
As race it is from dark to light

Shrapnel maiming your sons
Hunger shaping your world
A haggis in the grease-stained kitchen
Window open to a great pear tree
And a nor'easter fit to blind sheep
Half an egg to be shared with a neighbour
Yes times were tough

In your sunshine kitchen of one million steps
You conduct the daily food rituals
Filling me and your moko whatever the weather
Tapping linoleum into another year
Past napalm and phosphorus
Rendering in desert lands
Past tie-dye and barefoot
Pregnant and not up north this time
Your loving arms
Your sunshine kitchen
Your fingers shaping food
And the drum heart beat translating
Mother