

Serie Barford

Poem Notes

Have been thinking and talking about diaspora to friends and family: people leaving homelands, why, what they leave behind, what they take with them for the voyage, what they hope to/actually find in the new land, what they plant and harvest – literally and metaphorically. Somehow roimata toroa got into a conversation (think it started off on frigate birds) and I was fascinated by how and why albatross cry and various explanations (stories & scientific) for this. These ideas tied in with korero going on about Matariki and that's what inspired 'The Seven Sisters, the hibiscus and the birds' poem. I feed the birds every day, sometimes with Vogel's bread because Vogel means 'bird' in German, and they seem to like the one that has the 'ancient grains' in it and I end up eating the French stick crappy stuff if I feed out too much.

Poet Notes

Born in Aotearoa to a German-Samoan mother and Palagi father and grew up in West Auckland. Is preparing to return to Kanaky (New Caledonia) for a short trip, before beginning her Seresin Landfall Residency in Malborough. Recently published in The Contemporary Pacific vol 22, Maui Ola, Brèves 91, Making Settler Colonial Space, BMP and coming up in JAAM 29 and Phantom Billstickers 2011

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The Seven Sisters, the hibiscus and the birds

the Seven Sisters have risen
and their brightness tells us
the crops will be generous this year

opening the French doors to my garden
I notice one pink hibiscus has survived the storm

she blinks prettily at birds gathering
on saggy powerlines for their daily bread

I toss ancient grains into the gathering winds
amaranth, millet, quinoa and spelt

the birds peck vigorously at the crumbs
hopping and chirping as the lone hibiscus nods

Albatross Tears

sometimes life's a labyrinth
twisting around itself
like knotted intestines
or kelp stranded in rock pools

and souls travelling west
their direction assured
by the setting sun

feel pity for our tangled state

they see rows of kumara
taro, potatoes and bok choy
neatly planted and tended

but heading out to sea
they know that the planters
and the eaters will all disappear

and the wandering albatross
will weep for distant shores