

**Mother of Pearl
(For Es)**

Black-Pearl girls in business suits
degrees up their sleeves
flowers in their hair
prayers in pockets
expectations
high as heels
pushing boundaries
building bridges
change falling like rain around us.

We look to mother-of-pearl women
with wisdom teeth smiles
can you walk a mile in their jandals?
can you climb those mountains
build those bridges?
change falling like rain
all around us.

These are women who
walk like taupou
talk like matapule
delegate with a broom in their voice
laugh like waves on the Hihifo side
power to turn reefs into the silk stockings
of sand.

They teach you to politic like dancers
slow precision of the ta'olunga
where every movement counts
slipperiness of the siva
where you move, without moving
fire of the tamure, hips making all the
decisions.

They teach you that in Aotearoa
your koloa is carried within
our 'ie-toga are our families
woven with patient, faithful hands
our ngatu are our stories
lavish with symbols and sign.

Our women friends
are flowers, we wear in our hair
the bold tiger lily, spirited moso'oi
elegant orchid, delicious hibiscus

Reminding each other
Savai'I calls
to put a few sweet summer grains
of Manase beach
into every
traffic-clogged
Auckland
morning.

Karlo Milla

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