



***Auē Rona* by Reihana Robison. Wellington: Steele Roberts Aotearoa Ltd. RRP: \$25. Soft cover with jacket, 68pp, ISBN: 978877577857. Reviewed by Jani K. T. Wilson.**

As a composer of waiata, I was eagerly and instantly sutured into **Reihana Robison's**

lyricism, melody and wairua in *Auē Rona*, particularly when she expanded beyond known versions of Rona (the woman in the moon), ngā atua (Māori deities), and the taiao (environment). For those unaware of the story of Rona, Māori believe that she was kidnapped by the Moon for using slanderous words against him, and has since been held to ransom there. Her story is memorialized in a well-known whakataukī (aphorism, proverb) “Kia mahara ki te hē o Rona” (Remember the fault of Rona), a reminder to take heed of words of warning. In this collection, Robison's writing weaves some particularly compelling inflections into this well-known kōrero.

Many poems in *Auē Rona* conceptualize how Rona may see the Earth, how her regret of not taking heed of the Moon's warning weighs her down, the children she left behind, the mokopuna she will never meet, and small, simple things she misses. However, an example of where Robison goes beyond the known story of regret, is in a Haiku where Rona confesses “Mister Moon” is her lover, and in another poem entitled ‘Moon to Mother Earth’ Robison considers Rona a gift from Papatūānuku to the Moon, and suggests the Moon laid in waiting for his chiefly companion as promised by Papatūānuku, an interesting twist on the ancient kōrero. Here, Robison boldly entwines new hues to a story that has conventionally been concerned with Rona's transgression and her resulting ransom and victimization, rather than how her life was forced to evolve once transported to the Moon, including falling in love with her captor.

I enjoyed the themes in *Auē Rona*, and was particularly taken by Robison's take on unexplored paradigms of the Rona kōrero. As a collection though I felt at times my attention was propelled away as certain terms and themes diverted from Rona which distracted me, and I was literally left wanting more of Rona.