

Hammill Peter

"Something About Ysabel's Dance"

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In the new hotel on Fiesta Night
the staff are bored;
Donna Ysabel dances, zombie-like,
the guests applaud....
The colour is local,
the tourists are tanned
the natives are restless
and everything's second hand.

Places disappear, but the names endure
as alibis;
memory's hazy here, no one's really sure
of how time flies....
Well drunk the bass player
cries into his beer -
are Ysabel's mother
or Ysabel dancing here?

After hours all the couriers are in the bar
round the corner
with the drivers in a game of cards...
In bursts Ysabel, her hair let loose,
her limbs set free;
on the tabletops she's dancing to a memory -
conversations stops and every eye
is turned to see...
something about Ysabel's dance.

It's a shrinking world, it's a fun-packed cruise,
a museum trip:
skirt the native girl, check the rabid dog,
rejoin the ship.
There's no Charlie Mingus,
his Tijena's gone...
This smile for the camera
is all just a tourist con.

But after hours all the couriers and drivers know
of a cantina where there's every chance
that she might show, and maybe Ysabel
will dance the dance for real again,

her mother's footsteps, vice and virtue,
lust and love and pain.
There's something here
the anthropologists dare not explain,
something about Ysabel's dance

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