

## **Sprout**

My father taught me  
to give young shoots space —

Choose the thigh-high baby banana,  
slide the blade of the shovel  
down the side of the mama,  
lift rootlets, soil, the whole being, out.

We held that pink and white sprout  
like a prayer, fed the world to its hole,

tucked  
it into ground,  
pressed cool earth down  
with bare feet.

*Grow well, little tree.*

That was me!

## Side Effect, Pū‘ainakō<sup>1</sup> Highway Extension

For Gaizo, a lei-maker

I drove to the uplands  
for new leaves poised  
like small white rosebuds,  
for pink-and-white pūkiawe,  
medicinal shoots of burgundy  
and the lava glow of lehua blossoms

all picked with an eye to arranging, to patterns,  
to the brow of the dancer adorned by my lei

but — on the way

my station wagon bumpadumpa-jerkjerk - j-o-l-t-e-d  
over excavator tank tracks blasting into — haaaah?

my grove!

it was rammed  
down  
like my heart  
among the scraped-out  
scrunched  
flung  
trunks and  
bark

---

<sup>1</sup> A note on pronunciation: Hawaiian vowels sound like Spanish vowels; a, e, i, o, u sound like ah, ay, ee, oh, oo. In Hawaiian, each one glides into the next without a stop except for the ‘okina, or glottal stop, which sounds like the break in uh-oh. A line over a vowel means you hold it a little longer than usual. So Pū‘ainakō is pronounced Poooo’ah-ee-nah-kohhh. It all glides together except for the break before ‘aina.

## **Who But You**

‘Ākala‘ula,  
native raspberry girl  
who but you fresh-picks salads  
for a tile table  
with fuchsia ground-orchids,

scrubs your mother’s  
iron skillet,

casts  
her dance  
beyond death,  
stands at that crossroads  
holding the tissue of scars  
like a delicate  
bouquet?

Few but you  
have seen  
my start, dear heart —

when again will we walk  
in silver light  
over low bridges  
where mountain plants  
drop seed?

## Gathering

Hala (hah-lah):

1. pandanus, a thorny tree whose leaves are woven into mats, hats, fans, baskets, & sails.
2. to move from one stage of life to another

O hala barbs  
and centipedes  
dropping  
from the folds  
of leaves,  
O bright eye-catching browns,  
Wake us!  
Make us  
come to our senses,  
gather our  
thoughts.  
Gathering  
is our connection  
to Earth. As the  
moon tips her tides  
and trees cast  
their drying leaves  
into the groves of our hands,  
we gather ourselves,  
attend to weaving,  
accepting,  
receiving;  
give  
freely as you,  
Trees,  
who gather  
and breathe  
for us.

## **Floating on Love**

Mo'ō (moh-oh): a lizard, water spirit, descendant, grandchild

*I can float on your love*

My daughter dances in my arms,  
doing back-bends  
in the pool of reflections,  
dives through a grove  
of red shrimp,  
brings up a coconut fork,  
a spatula—

*Daughter mermaid! hurry up,  
get the food! come to our new home  
on the gray stump in the black sand*

*there is a leaf, here is a cup  
a sip of water from a kamani shell*

*we float on the love of trees  
we float on the love of ancestors  
our ancestors are the trees*

sings the mo'ō