

## On New Year's Morning

On New Year's morning, the world was never older,  
or more congested with quiet, the vibrant hush  
of zebra doves and mynahs about their business of bugs  
and seeds, immersed in gestures of love and territory.

Wind jostles grasses and shrubs as those green eruptions  
wish to be swayed. Rumbling surf on the coast  
defines silence in a way that human voices, splitting  
such amplitude, can never drown. Music is played out,

and all windows are a white meaning empty. Clouds cast  
gray from ridge to peak, and in this light,  
the mountains are spectral and spare, capped like brats  
with conical crowns. All the drunken fools are dead

to this world, clothed in bed or damp on toilet tiles.  
Car alarms shrill not, yet neither do they beep nor buzz.

Even children are unseen and unheard. Dogs nose  
through yards, but there's little evidence of anything new

in the air or on the ground, but scraps of ripped, red paper  
scattered by the noise of midnight, lying still in the street  
near the notion that something significant of minute  
and moment stumbled past in the dark last night.

## Ode to a Mosquito

me ke aloha pumehana

Hail to thee, lithe sucker! Mosquito, you are the human totem for the new millennium. (Dare I say, last millennium? Perish the thought!) Yours are our worst favorite and familiar features.

You blew into the islands with us on the west wind. We carried you here in barrels with the wonders of a world we stole, cash, cannons, cars, and big bombs to crack the islands and salt

the springs to our cosmopolitan taste. You are worldly, human-wise, and your facts are itchy points, red and raised on every face.

Truly, you are the sleek, slick, sexy vampire of the spirit. You are like we are. You suck blood. You disseminate disease. Your injection is our dejection. Your whine pierces our sleep.

You seek heat and prey upon all the breathing who burn with life, and you strike them where they lie. Your hunger knows no end.

You breed in stagnant places. You hunt your hot, red food through dark miles. You add insult to injury, for you steal blood and shit beneath the skin before departing. You leave an itch and a welt

when you fly, your belly bulging. You are the grand colonizer, an explorer, a bug of discovery, the Columbus of insects. Native

nowhere, you colonize the world. You sing your constant song beyond the web of wire in balmy darkness above my head. If truth is beauty, and beauty truth, your whine magnifies each passing year.

## Poet Lesson #53: How to Pick Up a Lover

First, get a car.

It should be reasonably clean, inside  
and out. Dentless. Cool, if possible.

Fairly new or fashionably old.

Next, cruise.

Drive streets a new lover might walk:  
near the library, the post office, the mall, the university,  
the bank, the grocery store.

Finally, roll slowly to a stop. Don't honk.

Wait for a glance. Smile.

Say, "May I give you a lift?"

Most important:

Leave a dog-eared copy of Dickinson's Complete Poems  
on the passenger seat.

## I Saw the Muses

after Leonardo Sinisgalli

Of course, I saw the muses. Didn't everybody?  
Nine bag ladies strung their tents of tarps and stolen  
shopping carts in 'A'ala Park next to the concrete

abstractions of the skateboard rink. They held forth,  
as in the old days, beneath the leaves of the banyan  
and the monkeypod trees. One tubby lady sheathed

in scarves danced in the dirt, and another recited epics  
by heart. One told the fortunes of the past. Two sang,  
and another stared at the sky as if the future lay there.

Their songs clung to my shoes like the sticky pods  
scumming the sidewalk and the street with hope.

## The Sleeping Indian: Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Outlined in the tempered blue of the sky, townsfolk see  
in a far mountain range the image of a sleeping Indian.

But this Indian is not in repose beneath sun, moon, or stars:  
this Indian is dead. He lies in state, in full eagle-feather

head-dress, arms crossed on his chest, and his form sloping  
to the last peak of his moccasins. This Indian is ready

for flames the setting sun will cast upon him before driving  
him into the dark. In the morning, his image will return,

rising once more on the horizon, the only Indian remaining  
in the landscape to remind us again of what we've done.