

POEM FOR MY FRIEND PETER AT PIIHANA

We all live
 on islands.
And you and I've
 wand-
ered far this day
on one: on Maui
enroute
 to Hawaii
which they call
 the Big Isle.
I've gone farther than you have
because I find myself
catapulting away
from you as if afraid
 to meet,
then back.
 Though it is
a horizontal zig
 zag
I thought
 of the vertical drop
of young men,
 a rope of hemp
around their feet
in the initiation ceremony
down a sheer hill
that (without skill)
could easily crack the skull.
We've seen the beautiful
 pink
anthurium plant,
 part of it
erect out of its broad
adamic leaf, the scarlet I'iwi
bird
 and the strange boned
gorgeously formed
 and mixed

native girls with hibiscus
in their dark hair. That far
sheer, ancient wind blown mountain,
lush
 at its base,
 its long
feminine
 erotic lines
partly shrouded
 hushed
in mist,
 the sun sometimes just
catch-
 ing for a moment
the rocketing red
 ohia-lehua flowers
which spring up
 in the wake
of volcanic fires;
the yellow mamani
clustered like a family
 of friends
on their stalks in bril-
 liant patches
along hills
 and roads above
the native
 houses
or falling terraces
 of taro fields that
run
 stretching down
 like quilts
or tawny animal pelts
toward the sea again.

II.

You are patient with the pain
I keep
 which I can
neither explain
 (even to myself)
or escape. And therefore I half
begin
 to love you, Peter,
as your quick black hair
lifts as gentle
 as your brown eyes still
seem
 in the wind
that shifts from higher up the sacred ground.
At Piihana you stand
 where Kamehemeha shed
the blood of young Hawaiian Men
in thankful sac-
 rifice
some few of his bat-
 tles won. (He was
turned on to blood
 by Captain Cook
and showed
 a tenacity like
that of the later ministers
 of Christ.)
The stones of the heiau
 now
are the horrid black
 of that
old
 dried blood.
Once before, you said,
 you took
three
 of these
holy stones away
 and they've

caused you more cursed grief
 than
 you deserve, Peter, my friend,
 well meaning thief.
 But there's just
 too much
 dangerous life
 in these ghosts they've left behind.
 Perhaps
 the sensual red Af-
 rican torch singer
 should first have made you wonder.
 For my part
 I
 wonder if the urge to rape
 an orphan child
 and steal
 his semen,
 leaving his bones all
 broken up
 and black
 inside the private temple of his flesh
 is like that sacrifice
 by which Kamehemeha thieved
 young life
 for himself
 and for the wife-
 ly earth into which
 it still soaks
 slowly back.
 It
 drips
 in the enormous mother vein
 or extended island cunt
 left by lava tubes
 we found
 and went
 through
 underground.

Kamehemeha had less mana than
his son
you said, my guide,
and less even
than his queen
whom he therefore needed
to approach naked
on his belly
like a baby.
A thousand youths he threw
(or like a mad Circean swineherd drove)
over
the Pali,
Oahu cliff
of sheer
fall and of
sure,
overwhelming beauty—
where the wind's so strong
it sometimes
hangs
you or wafts you back again
like a sorcerer's wand,
or like the spores of ferns
or the cork-like
seeds of screw-pine
the waves will float
for months.
My own seas, my winds,
are weak today
and I
depend utterly on you,
who do not know,
so now
you walk
suddenly out of my sight
if only for a minute
and I begin
to trem-

ble with the panic of it.
My eyes drop at once
from this beautiful island place
to my own two feet
which I see

monstrous
in their blackened socks

split

by plastic thongs
into two club shaped parts
like the frozen lava flows
from Haleakala.
The naked feet of Hawaiian
men

and women
are graceful as their hands.
But my feet
are black and swollen
because I've died in this exotic heat
that gives

life
to all other manner of men

women and plants,
the hanging red
heliconia, the hundred orchid kinds,
and tamarind.

III.

Peter, my absent
friend,
the blood of boys, flowering,
may keep
an aging king
alive, but not me.
I should have healed my grotesque feet
in the silver pool
in the valley of Iao
at the green root

of its great
 rising, aged pinnacle.
But I did not.
And now again, it's too late.
For Christ's sake
 Peter why don't you come back!
If you're really gone for good
would
 you at least
 respect my wish?
On my Maui grave
I want someone to leave
a half
 empty bottle of wine
(perhaps some food
 for our continuing need.)
And don't let
 some kid
steal it from my tomb!
Just give me that
 blood red funeral urn
at my foot. Perhaps an Uwekahuna, wailing priest,
may wander by then
 toward home
and in the trained spirited light
from his lean body
you will all see
the gorgeous white plumeria trees
that fill
 my cemetery up like girls.

IV.

Thank
 God
 or Madam Pele
whose firey
 goddess home has been on Maui
and is now in the still smoking

sometimes flowing
young Volcano where we head—
the desolation blasted stretch
on Hawaii.

Or thank someone I say—
even A'puaa
the lusty pig
god whose prick
is like
a cork
screw.

Thank one of them that you
are walking back in sight again.
I know you've been
looking for green leaves
to place on
the stones
of the heiau
in hope of a safe passage
for all of us.

But please don't
go
again, Peter.
(That's my oracular
message.)

Don't leave,
and don't let me drive,
but get me out
of this astonishingly bloody place
and after this
please keep such terrible beauty to yourself.