He Mele Aloha

Brandy Nālani McDougall

me ka mahalo nui loa

Everywhere are the ihe
    you’ve helped to carve
    from the whispering kauila,
    the barbs hewn

by eager hands that hurl them—
    the same that anticipate their return,
    and catch them mid-flight.

There are the hulu
    you’ve woven alongside us
    into the ‘āhu
        of the Koʻolau’s folds,
        the makana of kalo,
        niu, ‘uala, ‘ulu, mai’a, and i’a
    this ‘āina has fed you, too,

and the ‘ili‘ili birthing themselves
    in the na‘au of Papa
    bathed by the rain of Wākea—
        they’ve shown you
        how they make themselves
            mountains.

And everywhere, we are beginning to hear
    our voices rising with yours
    like a pahu
    invoking Manaiakalani
from the writhing depths of Pōuliuli,
while the wa’a of Māui
is unearthed and ready
to guide us over the waves.

Glossary

‘ahu: cape or cloak
‘āina: land
hulu: feathers
i’a: fish, meat
ihe: spears
‘ili‘ili: pebbles
kalo: taro
kauila: a native tree
Ko‘olau: windward mountain range on the island of O‘ahu
mai‘a: banana
makana: gift
na‘au: gut
niu: coconut
pahu: drum
‘uala: sweet potato
‘ulu: breadfruit
wa’a: canoe