

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 'ahu
of the Ko'olau'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

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 22, Number 2, 250–251
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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

ī'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