

raspberries

I collect raspberries in my ribs—
Sweet, tangy, soft, thirst-quenching things,
Freshly picked from the vineyard of
Your lips.

I'm not sure where they grow, whether in
Your brain, your heart, your stomach, or
How they spawn, whether they start as
Small seeds,

Or if they grow long ferns that poke,
Prod, pry your throat, waiting for air,
Sun, your mouth to open, to be
Breathed out.

Once in the wind, I raise my hands
To catch them. I hold firmly, but
Not tight, not to kill, but to keep
For good.

I place them on my tongue, but I
Don't chew, just swallow whole, and they
Roll down my neck, nestle between
My bones.

My veins latch on to them. Their juice
Infuses with my blood. Do you
See they keep me alive and warm,
Your words.

Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō

Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō,
Named for your song
Your song has died
With your name.

Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō,
Named for your island
Your island we have ravaged
And your kind we have slain.

Above the cicadas’ chorus you sang
Your lonely duet.
On that final day, hope
Was a thing with black feathers—
Crying out for a beloved
Who did not exist
Who never would, never could
Never knew you did.

You, Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō,
Never did you know
Trilling your buoyant notes
You were the last of your kind.

Never did you know, Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō,
She never would return your steadfast cry.
Never did you know
Why.

Now your hollow song echoes
Between trees, above empty nests
Among other melodies we will
Never hear again.

We will never
Stop ravaging
Will we,
Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō?

Columba livia

Sky rat,
Gutter bird,
Bred to carry, bred to serve, bred
To beckon at our call
And now we call you
Awful names.

Feral thing, kicked and
Tortured, wire traps line
Windowsills and roofs—your
Habitat, your
Home—you were
Bred to live here, with your Creator.

Damned to hell, by your Creator,
Scrounge for crumbs beneath our
Feet. We pollute and poison your
Street. We scorn your
Orange eyes, and loathe your
Curious beak.

“But,” you plead, “I am no
Different from your precious
Dove—the white bird you
Capture only to release. Why
Can’t my iridescent plumage
Receive the same appreciation?”

Aphrodite’s sacred bird,
Utanpishtim’s messenger, they
May not have been so gray, but we are
Bred to find our way
Home, bred to pluck the
Olive leaf—why this punishment?”

Your Creator shuts the window,
Locks the door, rolls tight the
Paper bag. Still, you walk beside

On sidewalk, street, and power line
Waiting for a taste of bread,
Bred to wait your turn.