

1972

Poem for My Friend Peter at Piihana

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Recommended Citation

Logan, John. "Poem for My Friend Peter at Piihana." *The Iowa Review* 3.1 (1972): 19-26. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1306>

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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.

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.