

Ho'o'la'a'ia

(I hold you sacred)

Kumu Keli'i in prayer
with a voice like a drum
opens the forest
In a gesture of rain.

IKU MAU MAU, IKUA

We carry gourds of seawater
roped over our backs, red
in the red fish's gills,
wind in a helix, taro in hand,
to enter now the mouth of trees,

IKU MAU MAU, IKUA

Primordial click of the wood birds,
scream of the branches, and night again
in the dense jungle, miles from the sea;

twice the moon cycle
in the night-moon forest, flicker,
wild snorts of the tusked beast,
digging through roots, dreaming of Pele,

IKU MAU MAU, IKUA

In an effort to find the native
and immense arbor
of the primary Koa,
release our gourds of salt water in the roots,
courtship, expeditions,
chiefly colors of the red fish,
Laka dancing in the ferns.

With a powerful stroke
the tree crashes down as the horns of water exalt;
with ropes and fire and rain and wind
there is vertigo
earth temples, molten exploitive and destructive,
goddess of affliction, worship,
holographic waterfalls,
at the center there is birth,
magnolia, bird sex, pigments,
refractions of blue,

I hold you sacred, the tree spirit is flowing

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We with knuckles of wood,
the wild tonnage of Koa tied, noosed
around its snout and tail like a wild animal
resisting the sea, we
come in great respect, malama ka ainá

we work the Koa down through the trails,
the tree runs free,
we charge down the ravines, uncontrollable,
the tree spirit is flowing, in madness, in ecstasy, indignant,
IKU MAU MAU, IKUA

blow the horn shell, the water is calling;
circular birds and moss domes
above alcoves of bone and coral,
the sea is drumming through tunnels;

cut branches move like oars
under the shaped body of the wood,
shaped and carved
during the descent, the dragon demi-god M'o'o
shaped into an outrigger canoe, ready for the race, chanting

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and us, now, in the center of the tree,
our paddles churning the water as we row, chanting

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in the lava, in the moon and jagged sea,
intense and full of applause.