

2002

The Wailua

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Recommended Citation

Silva, Jenny (2002) "The Wailua," *Exile*: Vol. 48 : No. 1 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol48/iss1/10>

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The Wailua

I. The Wailua

River Soul kayaks down the Wailua in lilikoi cups.
Eat the small fruit and let the seeds grow into a vine
that entangles the body in a web of prayers and early morning.

Swim in the river hands.
Jump into the river voice.
Taste the river mind.
Drown without dying.

How can you sit on the white driftwood at the bank
while I chew on Soul.
Soul is not on the bank with you,
on the old driftwood,
on the weeds freshly sprayed by the haole man.
It is with me, playing with my toes
on the river.

You say there's dog piss in the water,
cat feces up my nostrils,
disease impregnating my pores.
I tell you "no more leptospirosis here."
Your eyes whisper worry
but they must see my child-self playing
with the spirits on the lava rocks.
I lay on the Wailua,
soak in air, and let
my fingernails become leaves.

II. The Hudson

It does not smell like rain here when it's raining.
Clouds over the Hudson menstruate,
bleeding darkness into the water.
And when it's sunny,
evaporation binds the dark particles
onto the air that you breathe.

Jump into the water and try to be a fish,
you become a dog instead.
Try to swim as a dog,

and you become an orange donkey,
call for help as a donkey,
and you become a duck with no wings
who must swim in the bloody waters
until the stench marinates its flesh thoroughly,
burning the flesh away.
Then I must make lavender flowers out of your bones,
bury them and pray
that the Hudson soul will not devour yours.

I won't jump in and
you won't either.
Let's stand here and watch the city
eat the river
and vomit it out from a distance.

III. Water

Your tears and mine look
like the dew on the taro leaf at dawn
that drips onto the ground to bathe
morning soil.

You cry
as you wash my hair,
pouring pitchers of warm water
onto its strands,
as you massage shampoo
onto my scalp.

It must be because you are sad to see
the water slide off of my head
and into the basin.

--Jenny Silva '02