

Postcard From the North Shore

Tamara Sellman



The road away from Haleiwa
and its canals of red mud
led to thunder at Waimea—

waves whitecapping the beach
along a highway stalled by
bumper-kissing traffic.

The radio announcer confirmed
the pipeline contest ahead
as we puzzled over exotic reefs

of fruits and nuts bulging
through chicken-wire at road's edge.
Then, strings of parked cars,

pedestrians in board shorts,
leaning walls of surfboards
usurped the scenery. We were There.

We tempted tourist juju at first,
craning to spot idols in glassy swells
below us riding winter's legendary

thirty footers, but ESPN scaffolds,
binocular fans standing astride
the hazard tape stole our view.

I still don't remember why
we decided to keep going. Maybe
it was the way I'd cranked the radio

for steel guitar, bare feet against
the vinyl windshield. We sucked kona
candy for hours, you invented words

in Ks and Ps to sing in rounds
while the girls laughed themselves
to hiccups. I studied Puu Kainapuaa's

emerald crown in 5 p.m. light
for cliff-diving gods among her tropical
skirts, distracted again and again

by fingertips still fragrant:



of plate lunch made by a haole
woman in a panel truck no longer

white for its graffiti—spicy garlic
shrimp over rice on styrofoam,
eaten greedily under mango trees.

