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Onomatopoeia: Hawaiian *Coquí*

“Twenty-eight days of continuous rain damaged the agricultural industry [in Hawai’i] and left over 3,000 dead and thousands without shelter, food or work.... Plantation owners began their campaign to recruit workers from Puerto Rico.... Today there are nearly 40,000 Puerto Ricans living in Hawai’i; the[ir] culture and traditions are very strong.” – Darde Gamayo

Obscene cruise lines skirt the coast
past “Magnum, P.I.”’s theme song,
sprinkle nursery rhymes of government strategies,
plant ideas filled with *Arawak* and resistance.
Treasures transplanted against choice
stuck in homesickness, sugar, and lava
as *Coquí** conquer a new space
(due to the lack of natural predators).
Establish domain over tourism, exports, and property values;
40,000 strong and eating sacred acres
pushed into colonizer corner and negative ideals,
(for that’s the American Dream),
and for the first time Puertoricans become the invasive species.

For there is always a need for pennies;
copper minted, blood-tinged, sacrificial.
Indigenous families exchange invasion for security
as *porto-rican* slave contracts trade *Pasteles* for *Poi*.

Collect surplus at the plantation store
while *Coquí*s crave sugarcane
with *Bango* number tattooed on Puertorican hearts
 in hand,
 in pocket,
 around throat,
 a choking hazard
disguised as a survival guide in between the hyphens
of an internal memo from the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association.

For when imports add status and homegrown values are passé,
symptoms of trauma transform anxiety
into homelessness and claustrophobia within our own brown bodies;
as Captain Hook sifts through green-grey roots
searches out veins (any gold long gone) discolored, rusty, lost.

A neo-colonial *Hālau*-caust that matches my community's scream
with someone else's ancestors.

As Hawaiians attempt to teach *Hā'ole* ancestral connections
without breath, outside the hyphen, a stolen rallying call:

#wearemaunakea

as Hawai'i sing songs and birth Puertorican warriors #puertoricoselevanta;
a meager attempt to distance a multiverse of what should never have been.

A croak. A dying imprint. A final act of revenge,
one *Coquí* at a time.

Note

* *Coquí* frogs were accidentally introduced to the Big Island in the late 1980s on imported nursery plants. Beloved in their native Puerto Rico, *coquí*s in Hawaii lack the natural predators that keep their population in balance, and their numbers quickly exceeded population densities of their home range. On the Big Island, *coquí*s are recorded to reach densities as high as 2000 frogs per acre, more than twice the number found in similar areas in the Caribbean. – Hawaii Department of Agriculture

Work Cited

Gamayo, Darde. "How the First Puerto Ricans Arrived on Hawai'i Island." Centro De Estudios Puertorriqueños, Centro Voices, 14 Sept. 2017,
<https://centopr.hunter.cuny.edu/centrovoices/chronicles/how-first-puerto-ricans-arrived-hawai%E2%80%99i-island>.