

The Shell in Silk

My father, whitening,
leached of rage and spear of justice,
now leans to my mother.
In his terribly,
exquisitely earned wisdom
even he does not see why he
sheathes his sword,
circles to her light.

Like an alabaster moth,
young and delicately flawed,
she floats by his side,
straining his sorrow,
curving her wings to hear him say
she is beautiful.

In their house above the black cliffs
he rubs her beautiful legs.
Bougainvillea filters the light, the room
in an aubergine wash.
Outside the screens, above the wet grasses,
spirit and rain are sheeting the mango trees.

She is everything he could never desire
or hope for,
a gift in an unopened silk envelope
left on the pillow,
a secret carved in the grain
of the perfectly turned koa bowl
gleaming in the rose and yellow light
of the quiet room.

—Nancy Baird