



A Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the fall 2025 issue of *Da Pūeo Press*!

When curating this inaugural issue, I found myself returning to a single question: how do we come to know and care for the world through story and art? The collection of pieces gathered here is a reminder that narrative, whether poetic, critical, or reimagined, is a form of relationship. This understanding of narrative as relational guided the structure of the issue itself, beginning with works that anchor us in the fundamentals of place and memory.

We begin with “Roots,” works that ground us in place, memory, and identity. Riley Jose’s poems first bring us into different locations from her Nana’s garden to a photo developer’s shop in Ke‘eamoku. These poems remind us that the everyday carries the moments that linger long after they pass. By honoring the lived truths of Hawai‘i’s people, I continue this grounding through my own poems, a trio from my collection *I no like cook*, that reveal the stories threaded with labor, humor, resilience, and cultural memory. Together, these poems form an ode to Hawai‘i’s past and present. We then shift into narrative with Kathleen Saito’s chapter from a novel project. What unfolds in “Meet Me by the Banyan Tree” is a quiet exploration of how the past reaches into the present.

From there, “Retelling” invites reinterpretation, turning toward myth, media, and imagination to ask how inherited stories evolve within changing cultural and ethical landscapes. Alohalani Kahalekulu’s adaptation of a popular children’s story is reimagined through a distinctly local lens, weaving Pidgin, ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, and multigenerational humor into the journey of Koa and Keilani. This story is a celebration of family, language, and the joy of retelling familiar tales to reflect the world we know and love. Continuing this theme of return and re-rooting, Tatiana K. Hernández Wright’s “‘O ‘Oe Anei Ko‘u Makuahine?” retells *Are You My Mother?* through a kanaka lens, following a keiki carried far from her ‘āina in search of belonging. Written in ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, her piece honors the resilience of diaspora and the timeless truth that ‘āina is both mother and home.

Shifting from storytelling to ethical inquiry, Nicole Quibol’s “Kantian and Utilitarian Ethics in the film *On the Basis of Sex*” highlights how ethical theory can illuminate the stakes of social change, particularly in the struggle for gender equality. By connecting film, philosophy, and lived experience, her paper underscores the relevance of ethical frameworks in evaluating real-world struggles for justice. Rounding out this section, “The Encampments: Review, Reflection, and Call to Action,” by Danya Abdeljawad, offers a thoughtful review of the film

The Encampments. This piece summarizes the film, the discussions that followed, and the broader context of student activism connected to the movement for Palestinian liberation.

Finally, “Reflection” broadens the scope to situate creative and critical voices within larger conversations about community, craft, and conscience. Kaci Koizumi’s personal essay, “A Love Letter to Writing” reflects the author’s evolving relationship with literacy that captures her journey from childhood to the present. Written both to herself and to other writers who have wrestled with reading and writing, this essay honors the slow, deliberate process of finding one’s words again through reflection and practice. Carrying this momentum from introspection to analysis, Alfred Tufono’s essay, “A Postfeminist Critique of Bravo’s *The Real Housewives*,” draws on Rosalind Gill’s postfeminist framework and Judith Butler’s concept of performativity to interrogate the intersections of gender, race, and class within a widely consumed reality television franchise. By situating the series within academic theory and media critique, this paper reveals how popular entertainment can illuminate complex ideas about identity and power.

To top off our lineup, Whitney Mai’s essay, “Final Paper: Ethical Cosmopolitanism,” explores ethical cosmopolitanism that emphasizes fairness, empathy, and sustainability in everyday life. Using examples from Hawai‘i, including community responses to the 2023 Maui wildfires, this paper focuses on how local knowledge and collective action demonstrate that ethical engagement is practical and necessary. Following the exploration of ethics in action, Tre Zamora’s “Ki‘i o ka Hana” opens a meditative space to trace the flow of ‘ōiwi knowledge across generations. Blending ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i and English, its layered forms and careful composition reflect the enduring strength of ‘ohana.

The progression of this ensemble embodies the spirit of Aloha ‘Āina which is a culmination of love of land, connection, and responsibility; our cover art contest winners also capture this progression: First-place winner Jheanna Mae Carlos’s *Natural Bond* portrays a girl lying in a kalo patch, honoring the mo‘olelo that kalo is our elder sibling and reminding us that caring for the land is an act of familial love. Second-place winner Chloe Chen’s *Take Flight* showcases Hawai‘i’s mountains, native plants, and a pueo in flight, reflecting the artist’s commitment to Aloha ‘Āina. Third-place winner Tre Zamora’s *Aloha ‘Āina* celebrates the principle of mālama i ka ‘āina, portraying land as family and illustrating how caring for the land nurtures life, community, and heritage. Together, these pieces capture the many ways artists honor our connection to ‘āina and the love, respect, and stewardship it inspires.

To love the ‘āina is to remain rooted, to re-see what has been passed down, and to reflect upon how we might respond to it. The order of this issue, then, is not accidental as it moves in a cycle of grounding, reimagining, and renewal. In assembling these works, I hope readers feel that movement from the inward to the outward, from the local to the universal, and to recognize an ethical imagination that grows, like ‘āina itself, through care and attention.

May the words in this issue root you where you stand and open new paths of seeing.

Aloha nui loa,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Hōkūlani Racoma'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'T' and a long, sweeping tail that loops back.

T. Hōkūlani Racoma