

dole street

Copyright © 2001 by Juliana Spahr.
All rights reserved.

One hundred and fifty copies of this book were made for Subpoetics, Self-Publish or Perish initiative in July of 2001 in Honolulu, Hawai'i. Fifty of these copies are numbered 1-50 and are distributed to Subpoetics subscribers. Most of the additional copies were sent to various friends that have stayed at 2955 Dole Street over the last four years.

Thanks to Cynthia Franklin and Bill Luoma for advice on content. Thanks to Jackie Thaw for advice on design. All errors are, of course, my own.

Eventual archive for my Subpoetics, Self-Publish or Perish initiatives will be on the web at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~spahr>.



I live and I work on Dole Street. So I walk up and down Dole Street.

Dole Street is named after Sanford B. Dole who was born in Honolulu in 1844. He was president of the Provisional Government (1893-1894) and the Republic of Hawai'i (1895-1898), and first governor of the Territory of Hawai'i (1898-1903).

When I first moved to Dole Street, I thought that it was named after the Dole of pineapples. But that was a relative, James Dole. James got the land for his pineapples from Sanford's governments. Sanford Dole was an annexationist. He felt that Hawaiians should not be allowed to vote in the new democratic government that he helped establish: "I believe it is exceedingly necessary to keep out of politics this class of people, irresponsible people I mean."

Dole also wrote satirical plays about the current events of his time. They tend to mock King Kalakaua. They call the King things like Emperor Skyhigh. Dole and friends also called Kalakaua the “Merry Monarch” because he liked hula and mele.

Dole Street is two lanes wide near the university. But between Wilder and Punahou, it is often only one lane wide and when two cars meet, one must pull off to the side to let the other car pass. Dole runs in the ‘Ewa and Diamond Head direction (which is more west and east than anything else).

As I am always walking on Dole Street, I am always thinking about Dole Street.



The walk along Dole Street is often boring and hot.

Last year I was given a very small camera that I could keep in my backpack. I started taking pictures of stickers people put on their cars as I walked to and from work. Most of the stickers that I saw had to do with girls, Hawai‘i, and surfing.



Companies like Local Motion and Roxy that sell surf products especially like to use this trinity of girls, Hawai'i, and surfing to advertise their brand. These companies sell Hawai'i as they sell surfing gear and accessories. They like images of girls in bikinis with hibiscus behind their ears. Or images of girls surfing in grass skirts. They are about Hawai'i in the way that Gidget is about Hawai'i (continental import that sells Hawai'i to the continent and then it ricochets back to Hawai'i). It is said that Roxy does not make large size clothing because they do not want their brand name on big girls.



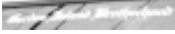
The back windows of trucks are popular places to put stickers. Giant girls in bathing suits with provocative poses often go here. Or sometimes a big huge fish skeleton that advertises a surf brand.



Often cars pile up references. There might be a mechanized hula doll, one of those whose hips shake when turned on, on the dashboard. Then a sticker on the back window of a hula girl with exaggerated breasts wearing only a lei and a grass skirt and posing like a 50s pin-up girl. Beside this, a statement of faith in the power of hooters. You can buy the hula doll at any of the thousands of ABC stores in Waikiki. She comes with a pink or green skirt that is made out of plastic and she has really big hips. The ABC offers a discount if you buy five or more to take home as gifts. It seems that girls on cars help boys in their twenties. The west is best when girls go Pacific such cars say.



Not all stickers on cars are only about male desire. Some might be about self-identity (Kaua'i girl) as much as they might be about desire (Kaua'i girls!).



Kaua‘i Boys is also a band. Every island except O‘ahu seems to have its own stickers. There is one for Kaua‘i that says “Garden Island Brotherhood.” There are also stickers that go across the front of the windshield and that say something like “Molokainian” or “Tongan” or “Tahiti To‘a” in 4” letters. There are stickers that say “Hawaii Built” or “Maui Built” or “Maui Built Hawaiian.”

Once I noticed that someone had altered their license plate and had taped the words “PONO N KAINAHE” over the rainbow that decorates the license plate. I know that “pono” has a lot of meanings such as goodness or righteousness or equity or proper respectfulness. It is in the state motto and it is often pointed out that the state doesn’t even uphold its own motto. Pono is also a band. But I don’t know what “kainahe” means except that it can be used as a woman’s name. I can’t tell if this is a slogan of some sort or just another sign of desire between men and women.

Where these cars are parked, and before the university proper begins, Dole Street has a huge cliff on its mauka side. I do not know who owns this land. There are trails along the cliff and dirt bikers ride down them and rush out into traffic if they don’t brake quickly. Homeless people climb up the paths to a series of caves where they sometimes spend the night.

After the parking ends, there is a bee’s nest tucked into a small opening in the side of the cliff. The bees have made so much hive that it is spilling out,

exposed to the sun. Eventually some of them will swarm.

In one spot near the bees, someone has spray painted “ku‘e,” or resistance, along the sheer rock.

After the cliff is Manoa Stream. Dole Street passes over it. The stream travels from the back of the valley where it tends to rain more. The growth next to the stream is rich and the trees from the stream shade the road. When I am walking to work, the shade is always a relief and I often stop to look at what is growing in the stream. The other day I noticed these trees: wiliwili, kukui, ‘ōhi‘a lehua, African tulip tree, and koa haole. Kalo grows along the banks. I don’t know if the kalo was planted there by humans or if it was dropped there by an animal. There is a lo‘i nearby, a terrace for growing dryland kalo, that is run by the Center for Hawaiian Studies (one of few departments at the university that actively educates students in ongoing resistance to colonialism). The stream is diverted so that it circulates through the lo‘i constantly bringing in fresh water.

After the stream along Dole Street are two public art projects. One is called “Gate of Hope” and it was made by Alexander Liberman in 1972. It was commissioned by the state and paid for by a fund that was made by a law that required one percent of construction appropriations be used for art (a fund that was flush while the island was building in the 1970s and 1980s but is more or less worthless in the recession that has defined the state since the 1990s). The sculpture is some orange tubes arranged in a modern art-like pattern. “Gate of Hope” has a little

sign in front of it that says that it refers to engineering principles that allow people to build complex structures. The joke though is that the sculpture looks like a giant hand giving the finger to Waikiki off in the distance.

The other is called “Chance Meeting” and it is by George Segal. It was also commissioned by the state. It is a sculpture of three people standing around talking in high realist fashion. These people look haole in feature, are very short (around 5’ tall maximum), are older, and are dressed for late fall on the east coast. Next to these people is a complicated sign that says “mauka” and points to the mountains, that says “makai” and points to the sea, that says “‘Ewa” and points ‘Ewa, that says “Koko Head” and points Koko Head. Despite this sign, the sculpture is a classic example of inapplicable public art and inattentiveness to the local. It often makes me laugh to think of these people conversing confusedly in their raincoats in the hot sun about the terms mauka and makai (terms that tourists learn on their first day on the island). In my more generous moments, I like to read this sculpture as an example of the clash between the local and the continental that so defines the university. An ironic comment of sorts. I see my often hot, confused, and regularly inapplicably dressed self among the figures. But the term “chance meeting” bugs me. To me, the sculpture is only interesting if it, like Dole Street, speaks of how three haoles never meet by chance in Hawai‘i. Its representation is so specific, and so not representational of life in Hawai‘i, that it does not seem neutral, or chance, at all. Maybe another way to read the sculpture would be as the lie of realism. Often people

drape leis over the necks of the figures or put traffic cones on top of their heads as hats.



I like the stickers of Dole Street mainly because they tell of connections between humans and humans or between humans and the land and all the lovely possibilities and sad humiliations of these connections. But Dole Street is a road and it connects things in other ways. There are three private schools and one research university (the only one in the state) on Dole Street. St. Louis, a catholic high school is at one end (near where I live). Dole passes through the middle of the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa (where I work and why I live in Hawai'i). At its other end is Mary Knoll, another private school. And across the street from Mary Knoll, but not on Dole, is Punahou, an elite private high school. Punahou was founded by missionaries for their children and the children of ali'i. After annexation, it became notorious as the haole school, attended mainly by the children of settlers who wanted to get their kids out of the multi-ethnic, pidgin speaking public schools. The school casts a large shadow in the psychic imagination of the state. It tends to be mentioned with reverence or hate, rarely with anything else. Many politicians attend it, go away to college on the continent, then come back to run the state.

I do not want to make too much of these connections or to suggest that it extends to the level of conspiracy. It is rather more mundane. Houses, after all, are in between the schools. Parts of Dole Street are middle class and parts are more working class and people of many different races and ethnicities and concerns live on it.

But the names of streets and buildings and schools and parks always tell a history. And in this sense, Dole Street is another poem about bad history. In Hawai'i, an official street name that is a haole name means the street is one of the older ones (named in the middle years of the 19th century most likely) and it usually is named after some annexation or post-annexation figure. (Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini who wrote *Place Names of Hawaii*—this book made this essay possible—notice that street names are limited to these categories: discoverers, missionaries, business men, educators, politicians, and military officers.) Dole Street is intersected by a whole series of streets named after less important haoles who are less than honorable and who would have known one another by forces other than chance. It is this cluster of haole names that interests me. 86% of place names in Hawai'i are Hawaiian (again Pukui, Elbert, and Mookini). Only four of the streets that intersect Dole have Hawaiian names. There is Punahou of course. But for many, the private school occupies the name. The other streets that intersect Dole with Hawaiian names are Kānewai (water of Kāne; named after a healing spring in the area), Ho'onanea (to relax), and Halekula (school house; probably referring to Punahou). These streets have a different story to tell, one I haven't yet learned.

I think this cluster of haole names has a lot to do with the swirls of schools located on Dole Street. Haoles brought the grade and classroom centered education model to Hawai'i.

In this sense, Dole is the spine of the reddish centipede. I have even seen several on Dole Street. Centipedes are carnivorous with chewing mouthparts and legs modified into poison claws. They can get over six inches long in Hawai'i. When they bite, they leave a permanent black mark.

Starting from my apartment, the first street on the centipede is Frank Street. It goes up the hill from Dole to St. Louis Heights. It is named after Brother Frank who came to Hawai'i to teach at St. Louis in 1883.

Then come the series of roads that traverse the university. They are East-West Road (named after the East-West Center), Donaghho Road (named after a math professor at the university during the early part of the century), Bachman Place (named after a president of the university in the 1950s), and University Avenue. Around the university, Dole Street is not so much like a centipede. The geography here is built on a whole series of haole (and/or institutional) names stacked on top of one another. There are no university buildings named after Hawaiians. Yet up until student protests a few years ago, the university did see it fit to name a building after Stanley D. Porteus an Australian who liked to write papers on genetics in which he supposedly proved with maze tests things such as "the worst defects of Hawaiian temperament are his deficiency of planning capacity, extreme suggestibility, and instability of interest."

Dole Street around the university is a closed system of sort, one that illustrates how power clusters in close patterns on top of geography as in the topography map of a volcano crater where the lines are drawn closer and closer together to represent depth or like those images of the various human circulatory systems in the body that are brightly colored and show interconnected yet separate systems of movement through the body.

At the edge of the university, is Dole Street's one bar, Players. Players waitresses are required to wear short skirts but are not required to have any waitressing experience to get hired. Across the street from Players is Founder's Gate. Founder's Gate is two stone arches with benches on opposite sides of the street. One side of it reads "maluna a'e o na lahui apau ke ola ke kanaka" and the other reads "above all nations is humanity." I have never seen anyone sit on the benches. But there is no reason to ever sit at this intersection as it is very busy with cars and the benches look very uncomfortable. I like it that the funds for Founder's Gate were raised by 2,664 individuals each donating \$1.

After the university, on this side of Dole Street the sidewalk disappears. Dole Street gets narrower and it is no longer a major thoroughfare. I rarely walk this part of Dole Street. My knowledge of it is more academic than lived.

After the university area comes Wilder Street. Samuel G. Wilder arrived in 1858. Wilder Street used to be called Stonewall. Queen Ka'ahumanu had prisoners build a wall along it in the 1830s. Clerks in Wilder's office petitioned for the change. There isn't much

evidence of the wall anymore. Instead this intersection has a lot of fast moving traffic turning onto the H1 freeway. Wilder had a shipping business. He also laid a lot of railroad track for the transportation of sugar cane. He named one of his locomotives Thing of Fire, a name that was given to him when he first arrived. Like most annexationists and haole settlers at the time, he was involved in sugar. Because fate is what it is, or because fate urges us not to celebrate being called a thing of fire, his son fell into a vat of boiling syrup at the sugar mill and died from severe burns.

Then Griffiths Street. Arthur Floyd Griffiths was the principal of Punahou School at the turn of the century. He was an unremarkable principal. Griffiths is half a block long. It leads into a concrete bunker and a fence. Hibiscus tries to grow along the fence. The fence has signs that say "Guard Dog on Duty" and "Posted: No Trespassing" every two feet. Behind the fence is a lush garden with lots of papaya.

Then Farrington Street. Wallace R. Farrington has a street, a high school, and a highway in his honor. He was the governor of Hawai'i from 1921-1929. He established Hawai'i's Bill of Rights and Declaration of Rights. The two gave Hawai'i federal lands for public education and ended discrimination against Chinese and Japanese citizens who had been unable to travel freely between Hawai'i and the continent. Because he was editor of the *Evening Bulletin* (now the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*), there have been several positive historical profiles on him in the paper in the last couple of years. He did fight racism against Japanese and Chinese (the geographical prominence of his name is probably indicative of the emerging

alliance between haole and Asian settlers that so defines power in the state today). But he strongly supported annexation. And in 1924 he called the National Guard in on striking Filipino plantation workers. Breaking this strike ended organized resistance against the Big 5 plantations for over a decade.

Then Metcalf Street. Metcalf is named after Theophilus Metcalf. He was involved in a lot of things really early on. He was marshal of the old fort and he also did surveying and financing and sugar milling in the 1830s. His daughter, Emma M. Nakuina, later wrote down the story of the creation of Punahou Spring. This is a big intersection with lots of traffic coming from Waikiki. Pedestrians are supposed to keep off and use the stairs when they get to Metcalf.

Then Oliver Street. Oliver P. Emerson does not seem to have done all that much as far as I can figure out (and it is a small street about four feet away from Metcalf). He was a missionary. But he spent the prime of his life converting those on the continent. He was, however, related to the Emerson family: a family of missionaries and translators. There are two other streets in Honolulu named after the more prominent Emersons ('Emekona Street and Emerson Street). Oliver P. Emerson also owned a collection of achatinellidae.

Then Spreckels Street. Claus Spreckels is a much more important person with a much longer street. Spreckels was a California sugar industrialist. His dealings in Hawai'i are like the kiawe (several grow on Spreckels) that was brought to Hawai'i in the

1800s as horse feed and with its deep root systems it has lowered the water tables throughout all of Hawai'i. Before the overthrow and in attempt to avoid dealing with the haole settler elites, Kalakaua struck a deal with Spreckels, granting him water rights for sugar in exchange for a cash gift and a loan. This was an attempt by Kalakaua to obtain financing independent from the current system of taxes on haole settlers (his merriness, his spending of his tax money to preserve and extend Hawaiian culture in various ways, was upsetting them). Spreckels was much hated by figures like Dole because he supported Kalakaua over them. Dole parodies Spreckels as Herr Von Boss in his satires. Spreckels was an astute businessman and because of his water rights was able to monopolize the sugar industry in Hawai'i for some time. It is said that you are "wai wai" if you are a rich man. Or you are, like Spreckels, "water water."

The story of Dole, Spreckels, and Wilder, despite their disagreements, is the story of Hawai'i being allowed to modernize only into a one industry town. Kalakaua had a choice between sugar or sugar. Then it was sugar, now it is tourism. Eventually Kalakaua tires of Spreckels's hubris. Kalakaua pays off his loan and then ousts Spreckels. Yet history continues.

Dole Street dead ends into Punahou.



In the story of Punahou, there are twin rain spirits: Kauawa‘ahila and Kauaki‘owao. The twins are abused by an evil stepmother and they flee when their father is away. Their stepmother pursues them and as she chases them they run down into the valley and hide right behind where Punahou School is now. They hide for a long time. Eventually, Kauaki‘owao starts to long for a bath.

Kauawa‘ahila calls on the mo‘o Kakea, a maternal ancestor, who controls the water. A mo‘o is a lizard. Kakea is a generous mo‘o and not only provides the water for a bath but also diverts some of his water supply to establish a spring there. Kauawa‘ahila plants kalo around the spring and this attracts people and it turns into a settlement. This settlement though eventually attracts foreigners who do not respect the water, who plant water lilies from afar in it, who build a church overlooking it. After this, the twins return to the upper reaches of the mountain (in the meantime their father has returned and killed their stepmother and then himself in anger and despair). They rarely return to Punahou. Dennis Kawaharada

who tells this story in *Traditions of O'ahu* notices the use value of this story in that it “describes rainfall patterns in Makiki and Mānoa and an innovation in agriculture (digging an irrigation tunnel to make relatively dry lands productive); it also establishes water rights at the new spring.”

Dole Street runs along the mouth of the Mānoa valley. The back of the valley is lush because of the rain from Kauawa‘ahila and Kauaki‘owao. But Dole Street and its foreigners tends to be drier.

Punahou school has a famous stone fence covered with night blooming cereus, a cactus. A seaman brought the cactus from Acapulco and gave it to a missionary teacher at Punahou years ago. It not only still grows there, but the cereus grows all over the dry areas of Oahu. Like many of the plants brought from afar it has taken over. It has a huge white bloom that opens at night and then wilts in the morning sun. Bees are attracted to it.

The apartment I rent has cereus growing on a ledge out the bedroom window. It grows up a concrete fence and over the top. The neighbor always knocks it over when it reaches the top. He so does not want anything growing near him that he has paved his whole front yard.

The Mānoa valley is mauka to my house. Kaimuki is makai. Kaimuki is hot and dry (it means oven for cooking ki and it is a small shield volcano). I do not know what neighborhood I live in really. When

people ask I tell them I live at the intersection of Manoa, Kaimuki, and St. Louis. I live at the intersection of moistness and dryness.

I am obsessed with the cereus out my bedroom window and I watch its buds to make sure I see each one bloom during its season. In the morning after it blooms I go outside and watch the bees that have gathered inside the wilting blooms.

While the story of Dole and Wilder and Spreckels is not my story, I am a part of Dole Street's swirl of connection whether I like it or not. A swirl that is like the system of the separate lines on the topographic map that are inside each other but are not a spiral and never really meet. Like the systems that circulate fluids and energy throughout the body but never mix. I live on Dole Street because I teach at the university.

Punahou school tells the story of their name in their publicity but they do not tell Nakuina's version. They tell of an elderly Hawaiian couple who prays for water and is told where to find it in a dream. There is no mo'ō who shares his water. There is no settlement as a result. And then no complaint about the foreigners who arrive and build twenty story hotels.

Dole Street does not lead to any water. Rain avoids it. Near Frank Street is a cistern but I have never noticed it to be full.

When I walk home from work, at the first vista I see Diamond Head. But by the second vista, the one that will dominate the walk, I can only see the buildings of Waikiki. The buildings of Waikiki fascinate me.

They are smooth clean buildings, built after the late 1960s. They have no fire escapes; no water towers; none of messiness that defines most city scapes. While the buildings are of different heights, they all look related. The skyline of Waikiki is the image of a silent scream.

It is often said that Hawai'i is unique because of its syncretism. The beautiful colors of the bougainvillea on the hillside above Dole Street are pointed out. The sweet song of the java finch will be mentioned. The quaint cadences of pidgin will be remarked upon. The word "local" will be embraced. The beauty of young girls of indeterminate race or ethnicity will be celebrated. The sweet sounds of songs played on a ukulele will be hummed.

And they will be right that all these things are wonderful.

But what I have learned from walking up and down Dole Street is that one cannot just celebrate syncretism. It comes with a complicated history. For syncretism to matter as a way out of all the separatisms that define us and their potential turns to absolutes, it can't be simple. Simple syncretism has been used again and again in Hawai'i to erase the power dynamics that make it a colonial state. The fact that certain people had to meet the values, languages, and desires of certain others who suddenly arrived because they could not survive otherwise while those who arrived had a choice about whether they would meet the values, languages, and desires of those who were present often gets overlooked.

One could point to how Dole Street runs almost parallel to Wai‘alae (mudhen water) and Ala Moana (ocean street) and say how wonderful it is that there is room for the indigenous and the immigrant in Hawai‘i’s street names. But on Dole Street, names do not mix. And geographies do not mix as Dole Street marks the edges of the valley. It is not that Dole Street is an absolute or succesful example of separation. Things meet on Dole Street as they meet everywhere. It is that Dole Street mainly tells a certain history, a history of how the arrival of western education and its separations and refusals to mix came with and was propped up by settlers who came mainly from the continent and their powers. It tells a story of unchance meetings. It tells a story of how the educational system socializes and westernizes more than it adapts or mixes. And it tells how when those who enter that educational system change, this change is celebrated as a meeting. It tells an old story and how it is also a current story.

I need to think about Dole Street’s history because I am a part of Dole Street as I walk up and down it. I came to it as part of this history. As the stereotypical continental schoolteacher, I need to think about how to respect the water that is there, how not to suck it all up with my root system, how to make a syncretism that matters, how to allow fresh water flowing through it, how to acknowledge and how to change in various unpredictable ways.

The artist Kim Jones walked across Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles one day with a huge apparatus on his back. In the photographs of the event it is hard to tell exactly what he used to construct the apparatus

but it looks like sticks and mud tied together in a loose, boxy sort of nest. It looks like the land. The apparatus appears heavy and unwieldy on him. It extends above his head and off his back several feet. He wears some sort of mask that makes his face featureless as he walks. He is generic as he carries his apparatus. In some photographs, Jones draws a version of this apparatus over images of himself. One shows him crouching in Dong Ha Vietnam in full camouflage with the apparatus drawn on his head.

Kim Jones, in carrying a heavy and unwieldy nest, on his back out in public, might have an answer.

Nests draw things together and have many points of contact. They swirl into a new thing. All sorts of items end up in them. I found one the other day on Dole Street that was full of twigs and leaves and feathers and gum and plastic string.

Daws, Gavin. *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1974.

Hargreaves, Dorothy and Bob. *Hawaii Blossoms*. Lahaina: Ross-Hargreaves, 1958.

Jones, Kim. "Wilshire Boulevard Walk." *Chain* 8 (2000). 98-99.

Kawaharada, Dennis. *Traditions of O'ahu: Stories of an Ancient Land*. <http://leahi.kcc.hawaii.edu/~dennisk/Oahu/welcome.html>

Kobayashi, Victor N., ed. *Building a Rainbow: A History of the Buildings and Grounds of the University of Hawaii-Manoa Campus*. Manoa: U of Hawai'i, Manoa/Hui O Students, 1983.

Pukui, Mary, Samuel Elbert, and Esther T. Mookini. *Place Names of Hawaii*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1974.

Smith, Clifford. *Hawaiian Alien Plant Studies*. http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/cw_smith/aliens.htm

Vann, Michael G. "Contesting Cultures and Defying Dependency: Migration, Nationalism, and Identity in Late 19th Century Hawaii." *The Stanford Humanities Review* 5.2 (1997): 146-173.

Watten, Barrett. *Bad History*. Berkeley: Atelos, 1998.