HUMUHUMUNUKUNUKUAPUAA

The humuhumunukunukuapuaa swims

Through the waters of Hawaii with a swish of fishy limbs.

There are many curious aspects of its story one might share,

But merely to pronounce its name is something rich and rare: *humuhumunukunukuapuaa!*

It’s snout-nosed like a pig, its teeth are sharp and cruel;

It doesn’t make great eating, but it’s good as cooking fuel;

It sleeps wedged in the reef to keep predators at bay;

But all that matters much to me is it’s so cool to say: *humuhumunukunukuapuaa!*

It’s more than I can handle—there are words I *have to say*—

In play, but also prayer, and as much in prayer as play—

For love of incantation, in praise of the collision

Of sense on sibilance, diphthong on glottal, stutter, lisp, elision—

To list, to limn, to moan, to mean, to mouth, to taste, to tongue—

In whisper, cry, mixed metrics—to hear them sighed, or sung:

*Galumph, gallant, galoshes, the Buffster, chuffed, chunked, chimp,*

*Balloon, lagoon, maroon, meringue, harangue, shebang, shrimp, blimp,*

*Chinoiserie, gesundheit, burritos, velcro, flail,*

*Hohum, hoho, harumph, hurrah, uh-oh, ahoy*—all hail

The dictionary and sea of them! O snook! O tang! O bass!

O fangblenny and sweetlips! O halibut and wrasse! O *humuhumunukunukuapuaa!*

ARGUMENT OVER THE LACK OF HAM IN A HAM SANDWICH

"That little bit's a bit too little!"

groused his guest, Floyd Freud, annoyed,

half-strangling on an adenoid.

"I was not a little nettled

to find I bit upon a void."

The vendor of this bit of victual,

one Lloyd Boyd, not a bit unsettled—

Lloyd Boyd enjoyed the spittle-spraying

sputter of irked jerks like Floyd—

not just "a bit" but "not a little"

meaning "a lot—it's jot and tittle

of what had got Lloyd Boyd employed—

surveyed the thrust plate, stated, "It'll

have to do—your bite destroyed

all the hard evidence. Which was brittle."

"This restaurant I will avoid!"

returned the customer. "Regret'll

be your lot, you shitty little

humanoid Lloyd Boyd!"

But Lloyd just stood there, noncommittal—

till bit by bit Floyd's bile was scuttled,

his belt was buckled, his bill was settled—

until, still bitter, and still nettled,

but blotting his chin of lettuce spittle

he'd added as tip a less than gruntled

not quite two per cent remittal—

a little spent; a lot annoyed.

(first published in David Shultz's *Hamthology*)

THIS CHIGGER

this chigger slips under the pores of my finger

to suckle and plunder the knuckle and linger

*this harvest-mite larva, this halver of smallness*

*this carver, this snacker, this chigger, this fullness*

this chigger grows bigger and thicker and stronger

the longer and quicker that sucker can pucker

*this halfpint bloodsucker, this dipstick bloodswigger*

*the fatter the better, no matter, go figure!*

and all of its rigor’s to maul and warmonger

to prick and to bleed and to feed its red hunger…

*this picknicking stickpin, this midget ditchdigger,*

*this swaggering smidgeon, this pinprick gunslinger*

this snatch of madsong marks the itch that I scratch at

and each mounts in vigor till which will be bigger

this finger these fidgets this itch or this chigger?

*this stabber, this stinger, this dagger, this trigger,*

*this mugger, this grabber, this chugger, this chigger*

MOLLYCODDLED COLLIE

*[intro rhythm: "Model of a Modern Major General"]*

*Uncle Wally and Aunt Molly lived in Raleigh. They were scholarly*

*and godly, and yet oddly, they talked bosh and twaddle, jollily.*

*I never knew quite what was true, nor cared! If I could follow it*

*I'd swim to any line they cast, and take the bait and swallow it…*

My Aunt Molly's collie, Dolly,

said my jolly Uncle Wally,

gobbled polliwogs and lollipops off polystyrene plates,

and at Christmas, in her folly,

Molly swaddled her in holly,

and they toddled off to ride the trolley with Aunt Molly's dates.

When this mollycoddled collie

waddled swaddled in her holly

to the front door of my not yet Uncle Wally, Molly's date,

he said, "Golly, aren't you jolly!"

and admired them both—Aunt Molly

and sweet mollycoddled Dolly in her holly-swaddled state.

When I'm melancholy,

I think of Molly's Dolly,

how that mollycoddled collie modeled holly, and the spell

that she cast on Uncle Wally—

whooping, "Oh my gosh and golly!"—

because that holly-swaddled mollycoddled collie (twaddled Wally) modeled holly jolly well!