

Christmas Carol
(Post-Christmas: 2005)

Dawn Baker Brimley

*At the ancient native Hawaiian "heiau" (temple
or sacred place) built of stone and still standing
in the forest above Oahu's Sunset Beach*

As though he were sculpted there, so still
is the only Shama thrush of the winter
dripping melody among dropping needles
high in this raining forest of ironwoods

above the dependable sun of Sunset Beach.
Here is this rosy singer who needs no audience,
no orchestra. He conducts his own score,
obbligato, a song of evening, various
and rippling, floating on streams of sky.

Secretive, a forest recluse, he will not stay
long, though we are attentive, quiet,
our car windows down, our mouths open
and forming silent "Bravos" to his shy high tenor.

Now, showered with sudden sun, he sails
away, swaying and flicking his long tail,
black and white and into the deepest green
of the heiau, ancient retreat of old
calm spirits, his safety, and his mate.

We the earth-bound take the dirt road
into night, hearing his ascending song,
a feathery ticking and clicking, now sky high
and lost.

The car radio crowds in from Honolulu
with its hard rock dirge of violence
rumbling and groaning, thumping and spewing
the daily death toll in an imploding land
as America's power slouches through Baghdad.