

NICOLE ROLLENDER

Cave Burial

*In one form of traditional Hawaiian burial
the body is tied into a fetal position and placed in a cave.*

The mothers who take his heart and stomach out
know how it feels to bury a child-man, his sea-mouth

sunken, eyes like sleeping cities. They polish his ribs
with cloth and salt the holes where time flowed

through. This cave will hide his body, and someday
boys will try to find it, believing a pinky knuckle

or a fragment of his cheek bone threaded
around their necks will help them dive

straight and true into the ocean, between anchor
and maidenhead, shark shadow and long fins,

until they rise back up with an oyster shell.
Cracked, a pearl bleached like the dead man's eye.

Exposed, it doesn't know where to look.



ABOUT NICOLE ROLLENDER

Nicole Rollender is the author of *Arrangement of Desire* (Pudding House Publications 2007), *Absence of Stars* (forthcoming in 2015 from dancing girl press), and *Little Deaths* (forthcoming in 2015 from ELJ Publications). Her poems have been published in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *THRUSH Poetry Journal*, *Kenning Journal*, *Salt Hill*, and *Ruminate Magazine*. She received an MFA in creative writing from the Pennsylvania State University, and she is the media director/editor of *Minerva Rising Literary Journal*. She is also the executive director of professional development for the Advertising Specialty Institute, and she edits *Stitches*, a publication for commercial embroiderers and apparel designers. She lives in southern New Jersey. Her website is located at www.nicolerollender.com.

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16 November 2014

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