

2012 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Second Prize: Anitha Menon

Supplication

Will(Yes, will you, *will you*, look past your scorn,
See the months, the years I've mourned,
Ripped to shreds, trampled. Torn,
From *your* flesh, I was born.)
You(dark eyes of a snake, deeper skin.
My only, my soul, my nearest kin,
Whose words still boom, like coins on tin,
Whose heart I've seen, whose home I've been,
Shared my mind, made it spin,
cut my throat, beat my shins.
Forgive(v. to grant pardon for or remiss—NO no *no*.
Dandelions, destroyed with one blow
Stay the scars of long ago
To hell, I've gone; again I'll go
Fire! I plead, but not this woe
They've moved on, but even so
Your loathing grows
My venom flows
So words I throw:
Just let me go!

...my eyes hang low.
Does the truth show?
Want you to know
I loved you so.
Keep me in tow.
(Don't let me go.)
Me?

Pernambuco Lessons

He, Apollo's miracle child,
 Could make the music spill
 From his wooden pail.
 Effortless, easy like a cadenza.
He tipped its scroll and the rhythms dripped.
An alchemist!
 Turned base notes into gold.
 He held its waist, caressed the bow.
 Calm-eyed, smooth,
 He made Brahms pour,
 Prokofiev, too.
 He knew my heart's tune (better than I).
 The strings moaned,
 Pregnant with potential.
 Each second,
 I was reborn.
 "Now you try."

I, bastard child of mediocrity,
 Make the strings scream, scream: *Miserere*.
 Threaten the melodies, shake them forth.
 Beg, plead
 With this wooden sepulcher.
 Force my fingers into its belly,
 Pull out premature strings of notes.

I try to study it, like quantum mechanics.
Grip the neck with force F ,
Move my fingers at rate v ,
Pray for y minutes and solve for x .
No solution.
I check my calculations, all the while wondering, wondering why?
All I want is music,
But all I hear is noise.

Scarred Knees

She came to me
Face slick with tears,
Translucent with sorrow.
Clutching her knees (her scar-torn knees).
They had laughed, tossed their glossed hair,
Rolled Their glass eyes (They, cut from velvet,
Who boys wanted to take for rides in their Corvettes,
Sewn up where you can't see, and tailored.)
Ugly, They said.
I took her in my arms. Kissed her knees:
Shatter Their porcelain, peel it off. Look—
Lonely black chasm, sucking and.
Nothing else.
Something Elmer's glue can't fix.
Peer under *your* skin, my
Clementine. Inside you
Lives a willow tree, who bows to the wind.
(She never breaks)
Its roots, your scars.
Braille,
A map,
Strength for those who have none.

Improbable girl; darling child.
Empires will collapse, worlds will fall.
But still, you'll dance, wildly on.

Phoenix

It
Crawls,
Ponderous.
Paws the flesh
That lines my back,
That lines my chest.
Guilt devours me, incites the flame.
Eats my flesh and feeds my shame.
What eyes can see! What ears can hear!
When you've lived a thousand years.
Memories clip what wings I have,
Red plumage for a plume of ash.
Fly away when caged by fire?
When I am my own funeral pyre?
Aeneas—could even you survive,
The inferno of my mind?
Mercy! Mercy! I entreat,
A god that I will never meet,
Save my soul and give me peace,
But flames don't cease
These flames
Don't cease.

And when they do, should I rejoice?
To re-see all that I've seen, twice?
A thousand years, my spirit bore.
Damned, to bear a thousand more.

Circle

Diverge from one point,
Or infinitely many.
Will she never end?