

2016 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Second Place: Kate Yuhas

Claudius

That one might smile
and smile and be a villain:
a misdeed so deceitful
its acrid taste seeps into
the pores of
those who love,
those who trust,
leaving scars
deep to the bone.

From the Eden
that was but a dream
freely falls Claudius,
he of that smile,
the true snake
that did bite
old Hamlet,
tempting Eve into
pleasures and sorrows
unknown.

That one might smile
and smile and be a villain:
a soul so corrupt
it cuts through all
good and honest feeling,
rotting that silky smile,
leaving teeth like
gravestones, mossy and
pungent with the stink of death.

Be no more that one
who smiles and smiles
and is a villain.

[Inspired by William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*]

The Dance

She floats across the floor,
light as a butterfly in flight,
her eyes sparkling
diamonds of Cassiopeia.
Cheeks as if rouged,
she swirls in the ocean
of her pleasure,
a sea foam of petticoats,
a purring cat of
la Belle Époque.
One, two, three,
one, two, three.

She steps deliberately
across the brown earthen
floor, held close
in the arms of him.
Counting her steps,
She keeps time to the beat
of the orchestra,
the beat of their hearts,
ending only to
begin again.
One, two, three,
one, two, three.

She listens to the music
of la vie quotidienne:
peals of laughter,
murmurs of far off
conversations,
of shared moments,
tapping of feet,
swishing of crinoline,
a rustle of leaves
in the crisp air.
One, two, three,
One, two, three.

A dance of life,
a waltz of love,
a momentary ecstasy;
All but an
ephemeral flower,



blooming and wilting,
only to be reborn
again.

[Inspired by Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Dance at Bougival*]

Little Angels

It lays lightly on my bed,
a cloud of dreams
enveloping my sleeping
form in warmth
and comfort like
one of her hugs.

As I look upon this
beloved relic of my
scooting, not crawling, years,
I think of the love she
had for her little angels,
her persistent dedication
and perseverance.

I see her warm,
intelligent eyes,
clouded with age,
yet sparkling with curiosity,
her thinning,
yet perfectly coifed hair;
her pride and dignity.

I imagine her then
nimble hands working
slowly but surely,
painting her first masterpiece
of mossy rocks in
evergreens and beds of roses,
concurrently imperfect and perfect.

I envision its crocheted diamonds
pointing "Straight Ahead"
into the future as if
her words of love have
been knitted into her
work of love,
a constant reminder of
the superwoman
herself.

In A Manner of Speaking...

I was a subtle blur in your horizons, that's all.
All of them, not just one, the drippy-faucet ones and
Defined, ongoing ones, I felt them all but left you anyway,
Soft and shaking for a big, paralyzing moment because what if this was *it*
And you had broken it
With existence?

But *it* won't swallow gulps of air and spit up stained-glass lungs like poison,
Won't swallow the glass, then, hoping
It will mend itself and fill up for her from the in-side instead;
It won't feel like the veranda you built for her
Is burning, because the garden you planted beneath it
Has just burst into flame-flowers itself,
And the hose you had preemptively placed nearby in a fruitless effort
To foresee the fiasco was never really a hose at all.
Please pause.
You see, it's not you, it's me,
You see, I don't remember
The candle-lit puddles of sheets, sheets, sheets, at least unless I read
Anne Sexton, whom you despise.
Then I do, but still I can't kiss the tips
Of your fingers, your finger-tips to draw scintillating statics
Anymore.
I don't remember lying down in the grass with you, being
Not two trees, but one, or touching your face and feeling the fullness
Of the world, propagating relentlessly through our roots.
That was Rumi.
I won't let myself remember, but I think you are strong.

Once, you swung from an eleven-thousand foot bow-tie
Latched to Arizona sandstone, sweat from your forehead clamoring
To reach your chin, palms and forearms covered
In scarlet, parabolic burns, with the Colorado River seducing you-
And you resisted its cooling, amorous call
A mere half-thousand feet below.

When you let your parachute straps give over to oblivion,
And the horizons you originally thought were static
Fade into waterfall mists,
When you stop thinking about starts and stops,
When change becomes so continuous you can't see your own outline
Against the wondrous panorama of the universe
You will forgive me for forgetting.
And I promise she will never, ever let you go.