

**2017 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest**  
**Honorable Mention: Maximilian Topel**

Your voice  
I sense something on my skin  
Tenderness  
But like sand and time, you escape me  
although I have more

In the window of your eyes  
a view  
to the sweetness of the sea  
And I smile  
how can it be  
that until that moment  
you were never announced to me  
From the fine rays of light  
raining onto this place  
I can see

Do not leave me in peace  
I have had all that is tranquility  
imagined memory to please my sleep  
like buds of cotton  
that float on the crevices of my hands  
Like revelation in the dew of the mountain  
that I watch fall to the brilliance of the sun

And the mountain will continue to be power  
And the green places, the sugar of life  
without you

But they will have no color  
Nor culture  
Nor sickness  
Nor necessity  
And my soul will pale  
to return to her natural hibernation

Animate me  
in each moment my love  
animate me with your eyes  
that embrace my own  
with the sublime flavor of your lips

without you  
the hopes that I once saw living in my illusions  
go blind.

I cannot recount for you  
My younger days in old Havana  
Ridding the guagua from the synagogue to the tailors  
Where my grandfathers stitched my future

I do not remember the color of the balcony  
upon whose rails Marti's Rose lay  
Free from the clutch of her jailor  
Blooming to completeness in the warm Cuban sun.

I do not recall how my abuela's frijoles smelled  
As their scent kissed the salty sea air  
Floating in from the Malecón  
To refresh my hungry soul

I do not recognize the synagogue  
Where in my guayabera I prayed  
For peace and prosperity unto all nations  
As we had in our Caribbean home

For each image I know to be a reverie  
But in the absence of such dreams  
Who can cultivate the white rose  
The soul of our land

Arise we will as she climbs from the ashes  
Burn from the hopes of an uncertain nation  
Fertilized by the tears of memories imagined  
And those better forgotten  
We raised the bandera

I cannot recount for you  
My young days in old Havana  
Where with my brothers and I played  
Or of my nights at the Tropicana

But her people are passion  
And in passion there is no rest  
For my home, my Cuba Libre  
To let the old man at Dos Rios know

He does not fight alone

They pierce, like the fine edge of polished steel  
But with a feral rage that fades unto me in animus  
And though they cut  
the blood we share is too thick to flow  
It is the bond descended to bondage  
Of a heart once fresh drowned in the thickness  
Of the revelation written in that blood

And from there extended vacillation  
For her gaze was beyond me and  
Inhabited only by memories of autumnal infancy  
Upon the backdrop of a lilac sea  
Whose waves upon my life did never caress

But such serenity in my Ignorance to her cause  
Such disdain placed in the rut of intentionalism  
And derision folded my conscience, my consent  
I did shamefully leave to it

But it is all that exists. And all that remains  
If a frozen relation given to time  
I was not charitable. Perhaps it is my own gaze that is lacking  
And in anger.

And in nothingness.

There is no solace to be found

You speak from the pulpit of ignorance  
With words that are not your own  
With heinous hatred in your heart  
With no origin, reason or conscience

You spatter in them from a disease of the mind  
For intent is unknown to you  
Intimacy with the truth is nothing to you  
And infection spreads with your rhyme

I held you once in esteem  
Out of the decency of human companionship  
But it could be so.  
You who deny the tree of knowledge for a richer poison

And each word slashes like the scyth  
It cuts away at each man's soul  
With falsehoods that ring true  
Letting pathos take control

But I know you and I am not bound by you  
Nor shall I ever be  
I will fight you with this world's honesty  
And in truth of love or as the dust of the earth  
In truth alone shall I be free

an american portrait  
sits hidden in the shadow above the window  
a plainly fitted lace curtain  
to filter light hallowing the room

freely hung she wavers not with the wind  
sunk not by the burden of the oncoming storm  
nor is she blanched as she watches her children in their despair

and rise and still i rise  
these words here live  
etched deep into its heart  
come  
come  
you tired and poor  
you wearied huddled masses  
to weep in elation on the shores of this land fair

an american portrait hangs high in every heart  
an unforgiving reminder of dedication  
an illuminating pact with oneself and one's people  
bound in the burnished leather of a nation's histories

and with bold words and brazen actions  
hollowed by disregard, distain and disrepair  
comes the epitaph that we read in the journals  
haunting the browning grasslands without care

and beneath one of those great american portraits  
do I toil, out of respect, out of conscience  
to remember the exodus of my parents  
to reach further, to pay forward,  
knowing our portrait still remains to paint