

JONATHAN YUNGKANS

Our Hands Are Light

a duplex after Conrad Aiken's The House of Dust (1920)

Our hands are light, singing with emptiness.
We built a tower of stone into the sky.

We have launched ourselves high, building a tower.
What did we built it for? Was it all a dream—

the dream for which we were building,
like the ghost of a music we have heard?

We hear ghosts, a dazzle of pallid lamplight,
a wind blown over a myriad forest.

Wind blows. The forest sings as it passes through,
eternal asker of answers in the street.

The eternal asker of answers stands
and lifts his palms for the first cold ghost of rain.

Cold rain ghosts his lifted palms, not answering.
Our hands are light, singing with emptiness.

ABOUT THE POEM & AUTHOR

“Our Hands Are Light” incorporates words, phrases, and lines from *The House of Dust* by Conrad Aiken (1920). About the poem and the process of composing it, Jonathan Yungkans writes:

In this poem, I followed a similar process as in “Forslin’s Jig,” reading Conrad Aiken’s poem line by line in reverse order and letting intuition have its way with overall logic and flow. This time, I also fell back on the poetic form of the duplex, which was created by Jericho Brown in 2018. In it, Brown combines aspects of the sonnet, ghazal, and blues poem: 14 lines of between 9 and 11 syllables each, arranged as couplets and with the second line of one couplet echoed in the opening line of the next. The first line of the poem is repeated at the close to bring the piece full-circle.

Jonathan Yungkans is the author of *Colors the Thorns Draw* (Desert Willow Press 2018) and *Beneath a Glazed Shimmer* (Tebot Bach 2021). His work has appeared in *Gleam*, *Synkroniciti*, *Panoply*, *High Shelf*, *MacQueen’s Quinterly*, and elsewhere. He lives in Whittier, California.

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