

DEPAUL POETRY CONTEST 2021

The DePaul Activities Board

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EDITOR'S NOTE

We asked for poetry submissions from the DePaul community, and received entries from 30 poets!

For the sake of fairness, only one entry from each poet is featured here. We did our best to maintain the intended formatting of the artist, but we are event planners, not publishers. As such, we apologize for the small font with some of the poems. Additionally, the poems are arranged in the order they were submitted, and any graphics added were added by our team to fill empty space.



Please note that some of the pieces focus on topics that may be triggering. We have included content warnings for some of the poems, which appear at the top right corner of the page. The subjects included in our content warnings for these poems include suicide, death, anorexia, and child abuse.

If you are in need of support, don't hesitate to get help. DePaul Counseling services is operating on a virtual basis. For more information visit studentaffairs.depaul.edu/ucs

You can vote for your favorite poem at this link:
<http://cglink.me/2cC/s1026>

Thank you for taking the time to support DePaul artists!

Enjoy the poems,
DePaul Activities Board

MY LOVE, SHOULD I JOIN YOU?

By Mika Diaz

Pretty girls writing poems spittin' sweet words everyone around is
talkin,' laughin,' slippin;'

but Grace, right now, you and I are in silence.

Sweet girl I feel so close to you right now in this koan of almost
gone.

I've been telling myself your spirit hasn't left yet.

That it's hovering over Chicago where the pieces of myself I left in
Lemont are stretching out their fingertips to caress your sweet
smile.

We are above this world together now and I can't decide if you're
trying to get me to join you, or if you're warning me..

Baby is it quiet up there?
My earth bones jump at door slams.

is it soft there?
The razors are finding my wrist again...

Grace,
is the light kind there?
Maybe we all look like we're covered in our best instagram filters,
I need you to be real with me angel.
Now that I've got someone on the other side...

should I join you?

Or wait it out with the slams, the sharp, the hollow.

I've been so *hollow* since you left.

I'm reaching out over Lemont tonight.

I *think* I can almost feel you.

DIVINE THE ACTIVITIES

By Zoe Parris

My lips have been stolen today
Robbed of their innocent blush
Pulled into the night seeking touch from another
The town falls into a welcome hush

My hands have been stolen today
Carried aimlessly into the flowers
I feel the warmth of her in my chest
Divine the activities of the hour

My skin has been stolen today
Goosebumps raise like the thorns of a rose
The tips of her fingers leaving cold trails
As I fall even deeper into the meadows.

My senses have been stolen today
The smell her sweet perfume takes me over
The taste of flesh softened by the tongue
My tongue a drifting rover

My love has been stolen today
The ghost of her touch raining like a shower
Taken away into the dawn
Divine the activities of the hour

MY UNCLE

By Mohammad Aun

CW
Death

I don't remember the first time I ever talked to you
Or how I ever got used to your presence.
But I know that I got pretty attached.
I don't know what I wore to your house for those pizza hangouts,
But I know the crippling fear that would seep into my veins when I would see your dog.
I don't know why my mom had to call me out in front of everyone for eating too much pizza,
But I know that I would look at you, my eyes filled with curiosity, wanting to know more about
whatever you were talking about.
I don't know why I wrote down the directions to your house in my phone when I would never get
to go there either way,
But I know that you wouldn't be there anyway.
I don't know why I didn't cry sitting at your funeral,
But I know why I broke down when they lifted the cloth off your face, and I saw the skin bag,
that once used to hug me when I would come over.
I saw the person who would hold my hand and protect me from the big dog who wanted nothing
else other than to play with me.
I don't know why you left, leaving me wondering what the fuck was wrong with my family,
But I know that I loved you a lot.
I don't know why we never talked about the issues you had with drugs and drinking,
But I know that if I knew, I would 1000% try to help you,
Try to tell you I care about you, that you don't need to struggle anymore.
I don't know why everyone painted you out to be that one uncle,
Who didn't raise his kids right, or let his wife work,
Oh, what a fucking shame that must be.
I don't know what the fight you had with my dad was about the night before,
But I know my dad was devastated after you left.
I don't know why it took me so long to realize that you were gone,
But I know that I never got over it.
I was never old enough to understand the family drama,
But I didn't think the drama would cause someone I love to distance himself,
Only to have himself killed over the issues his family was too fucking narrow minded to face.
Now I repeat your name every week when we pray,
And I can't help wondering if only
If only you hadn't been taken hostage in war,
If only you had gotten the help you needed,
You would still be here.
I don't know who to blame, or whether I should blame anyone at all,
But I know that I once heard someone say,
"The odds of existing are slim,
So, the odds of you and I existing at the same time must be next to impossible.
Maybe the universe does work in my favor after all,
Because I got the chance to get to know you."
And I felt that deep in my bones.
I don't want to forget you,
But I don't want to remember what I saw day of your funeral.
I don't know if I'm going to heaven or hell,
But I hope I can meet you in the hereafter,
Wherever that is,
however, it is,
I hope you can find it in your heart to love me the same way you did when you were alive.

RULES TO LIVE BY

By Ruben Saucedo @jayben82

Life is so precious.
One minute we are here,
The next we are not.
No one is promised to wake up in the morning,
Or make it back to bed at night.

We need to cherish the blessings given to us.
Live life to the fullest.
Never know when and where we will be taking our last breath.
Let the people you LOVE know that you love them.

Treat people with respect,
For we are all GOD's children.
Pray for those who are lost,
That they find their way.
You know we don't always have all the answers,
Best believe that!
Nothing wrong with receiving advice or getting perspective from another
person.
We all have room to grow,
And we never stop learning.
Remain humble!
Be kind to everyone.
You never know when it will be YOU that needs a helping hand.

Life's too short,
So enjoy it because one thing that we all have guaranteed is,
That ONE day we will face our creator

"THE PERFECT BOUQUET"

By SJ Singh

Searching for the perfect bouquet for you

A moonflower—for I am lost in thought

Maybe a violet that's a faithful blue

A pure bouquet, perhaps this is for naught

I wished I knew the ideal flower—lilies?

Ambrosia sounds more romantic than ragweed

White and yellow pear blossoms with still leaves

But no roses—just a little bit hackneyed

Beautiful carnations in red, pink, and mauve

Witch-hazel hibiscus upon winged seeds

Would you then maybe consider me as suave?

Would forget-me-nots satisfy your needs?

A bouquet just for my chrysanthemum

Words exist—but this is more intimate





4/8/20

By Katie Himes

I love when it rains
and it smells like goodness
because it's the scent of me
dancing in my high school bedroom
and it's the nights I used to crawl into my parent's king-sized bed
so that the nightmares would disappear
and the time I took a bunch of crap from my desk drawers
and made a time capsule
because in the end,

I thought it'd all be worth something.

AGONY OF A CHOPPED TREE

By Hasmeet Kaur

*I was planted,
Then I was watered.
I was taken care of,
With undying love.*

*The world was a sanctuary,
Full of nothing but merry,
Where I could rejoice,
And have my own voice.*

*Then I started to spring,
And heard a bell ring.
They are on their way!
But I can't even run away!*

*"Who would come for my help?"
I couldn't resist but yell.
The thumping of their feet,
Echoing a drumbeat.*

*Chop! Chop!
The first of my branches dropped..
Ruthless maneuvering I could see,
Nobody to help a feeble tree.*

*This went on,
For long.
I was in utter pain,
Alas! It was their reign.*

*I was told to serve others,
And in the process self-smother.
Their faces had grins,
While I was dying from within..*

*Who do I tell that I want to grow?
And not to become an art of Michelangelo.
Their craftsmanship would cut me into dices.
And they would all call me priceless!*

*My agony was their ecstasy,
And it was my only legacy.
To serve, I was nurtured,
In the end, brutally murdered..*



FLAMMABLE MATERIAL

By Ava O'Malley

It burnt.
It burnt hot,
It burnt bright,
And it burnt quickly.
It burnt in the way that dry leaves
so quickly surrender themselves to hungry flames.
Almost willingly combusting,
happily going up in smoke,
Just to feel that momentary warmth,
Just to create sparks,
Just to burn.

We dropped a lit match into dry grass,
We danced with bare feet on glowing coals.
We threw our heads back in the heat of it,
We exhaled pure ash.
Why were so surprised
That the flames ate us alive?
Left us burnt in unexplainable ways
Left us scabby and shiny and suffocated?

This is what happens when a fire is lit
Between two people
Who don't know how to smother something
When it starts to burn too quickly.

WHERE I AM FROM

By Jessica Aquino

I am from the pines and needles
From my mother's evergreen,
And the bright warm star cast close behind

I am from the dry, dimly lit, rustic woods
And the laughter which danced across the leaves.
And the smell of dark roast which always lingered like a toxic smoke. I

am from the seed of the bonsai plant,
the leaf of a fallen great hundred-year-old oak

I am from lullabies sung late at night as the lantern blinks and dims.
And giggled rolling laughter.
From Ray and Luzs the lights in my world.

I am from sipping coffee as the sun lets out a yawn.
And watching the moon's face kiss the night sky.

From being told "No" and then "Please stop"
And later being told "Sí" and "I'm so proud of you"

From following the north star's steam
And letting worries drip down like round pebbles in a stream

I am from the dirt dusty trails that have blown away
And sticky mango sap with crunchy plantains.

From where culture is divided and fruit falls from the same vine.
I am from the dust particles that blow through the wind, the coffee's steam
that has run cold and where loss comes like the seasons.

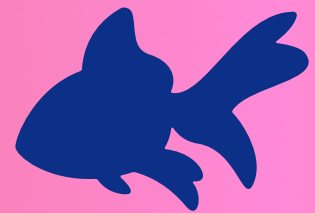
That's where I'm from.

PANTOUM FOR RUMINATION

By Kathryn Carpender

goldfish swim back and forth in their petco tank.
you get up from the chair in the waiting room
and tap the glass wall to catch their attention.
either they don't notice or they don't care.

you get up from the chair in the waiting room
after your name has been called-- mispronounced,
but either they don't notice or they don't care.
the doctor will be with you shortly.



after your name has been called you
trudge down the hall to the last door on your left.
the doctor walks in shortly and your brow
creases at the chart on his metallic clipboard.

down the hall through the last door on the left
the doctor breaks down the results of the test,
fate charted out and pinned to his metallic clipboard.
you thought this was going to be the hardest part.

the doctor breaks down the results of the test
and you tune out his scripted condolences.
for you, the hardest part hasn't even started yet
and goldfish just keep swimming back and forth.



PEAR IN A FRUIT BOWL

By Lizzie Miller

This one I think I will eat.
Yellow, bruised, and battle scarred--
A glance at the bottom; sticker still clinging
USA made with a black and white barcode.
Small brown dots, like unclean pores
What tree was this plucked from?
The journey it took to this fruit bowl?
Lumpy,
Misshapen,
The lower half carries three major cysts
Small shine glazes its surface, a reflection of light
from the kitchen chandelier
Placed under my nose, I smell a sweet fragrance.
A cold, smooth epidermis.
If I squeeze too hard, I will bruise it,
Making a soft and mushy meal.

SUPPRESSION

By Kara Slagell

Four years my closest friend
For years my favorite daydream
Fantasies of your forearms fitted
around my waist

I know you feel it, too

I love you
Three words that I dare
never say

WINTER POEM

By Ilayda Bilgin

The gust of wind, ever so slightly,
carves the details of snowflakes,
seeming like the artist was Aphrodite.

Bits of the clouds fall steadily on the dead branches,
making a blanket of white.
But don't take any chances,
for they bring the feeling of frostbite.

Such a dull color the sky is,
with only different shades of white and gray.
Keeping any color at bay.

Our mundane memories keeps us from falling in the traps of the cold-
hearted killers,
silence falls upon the living,
bringing us something so familiar,
yet they are never giving.

The light is fleeting from the day, keeping us in the dark
The wavering light from the fire goes out,
leaving us despondent of warmth.

The snow falls in cohesion with the breath of the living,
but the cold is never forgiving.

HER DEMONS

By Mika Liv-Feyman

CW
Anorexia
Death

Worthless, ugly, fat, disgrace
Her reflection sneers as she stares at her face.
You're a slob, a cow, an obese pig
"How did I allow myself to get this big?"

You can stop it all, her demons say.
You can control how much you weigh.
"Tell me!" "Tell me!" "How!" she pleads.
One less meal should do the deed.

A final glance at her rolls of fat,
Makes her appetite go flat.
Still, at lunch, she grabs her meal.
Her demons chime, *Did you forget our deal?*

She hurriedly throws her lunch away,
"I'll be fat forever if I eat today."
After lunch, she pinches her rolls of fat.
"How do I get my stomach flat?"

Skiping dinner will do the trick.
You'll lose the weight far more quick.
With those extra calories gone,
There's no way the fat adds on.

The next day as her stomach growls,
She listens as her best friend howls.
"Why didn't you bring food today?"
"I know you skipped lunch yesterday!"

Beware your friends! Her demons wail.
They're jealous and trying to make you fail
Everything they say is wrong,
Listen to us and stay strong!

We'll transform you from obese to thin.
We'll help you get rid of your double chin.
Just keep those pesky friends away,
They are trying to lead you astray.

Following their instructions, she shuts her friends out,
Choosing instead to go her own route.
Her friends try everything to make her eat,
But nothing they say will make her cheat.

She will never stop her fight to be thin,
Each pound she loses makes her grin.
In her head, her demons pound,
The more she starves, the more they hound.

You lost ten pounds? Ten more to go!
You lost twenty? Lose more, it doesn't show!
Less is more if you want perfection,
You know only skinny girls get attention.

At this point, six months have passed,
And she's lost 45 pounds at last.
Just 40 more! Her demons say,
Don't give up now, you're on your way!

"I need to see more of my bones."
She whispers as her stomach moans.
When she sees food, she sees her progress slowing,
She thinks of all the fat that's showing.

You look like a fat disgrace.
Your gross, fleshy thighs need more space.
All we see is too much skin,
Your face isn't even caving in!
Lose more! Lose more!

She stares at the mirror, eyes filled with tears.
"You need to lose more", the image sneers.
"I wish my friends wouldn't look horrified when I
breathe in..."
I don't understand why they do, it's not like I'm thin.
I'm scared to death of gaining weight. No one
understands that it's the fat I hate."

"When I lose twenty more, I'll stop...
Or maybe it's thirty that I need to drop...
Forty more pounds is all I need...
Or maybe fifty is when I'll succeed..."

On and on her demons chant,
Less is more! Less is perfection!
The more she loses, the fatter she feels in her
reflection.

One day, she felt pain while walking about,
And she fainted as her body gave out.
Paramedics rushed her to a hospital in town,
And tried to save her as her heart shut down.

Her heart rate continued to drop...
And eventually, it slowed to a stop...
That day, she took her final breath,
Anorexia caused her death.

She never ended up satisfied with her number,
Her demons condemned her to a permanent slumber.
A beautiful girl turned skin and bone,
A grieving family left mourning her tombstone

LISTEN, AN ODE TO SPRING

By Ember Sappington

Pin pricks across my skin
Sunlit breeze
Blowing out, blowing in
The Reeds, they rustle
Softly they whisper to their kin
To cousins Canterbury Bells they tell
They know of spring
They know it well
Tis their first year, the Canterbury Bells
Inside their seeds they shiver

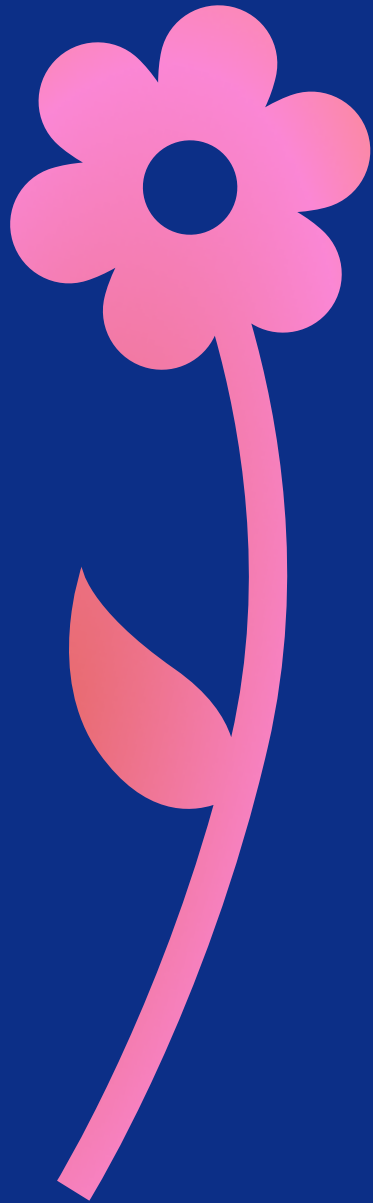
A sudden silence crosses the dell
Mother Winds ceasing her swell

And then again she returns.
The conversation starts again to turn,
The winding brook,
Loud friend is he,
Brings tales of the fish, from far off seas,
He chatters and babbles with stories anew
Fresh life within him of oceans blue.

Again: a sudden Silence crosses the dell
Mother Winds ceasing her swell

And then again she returns.
The conversation starts again to turn,
Father Mountains sit and watch the day
Their children gather and begin to play
With the end of winter, spring showers do spray
Father's winter coat of snow doth fall
And warmer months beckon and call:

Life and Nature, cycle on.



THE LORD'S BENCH

By Peter Dziaba

We approach the ancient welsh hall crouched amongst emerald downs,
anchored from the rolling swells of lush grass and gravel crests.
A sky of silvered heather hangs about us,
Pale mist shifts in the heavy winds and hides the distance.
Your ancient oak, bearded with fawn and green moss,
and bark marred with centuries stands against the gradual tumult.
Your path of packed soil, sunken from the trod of many lives, guides me,
as the mist gnaws away at the earth of the path, dust to mud,
but yet your guiding trail endures.

I pass under your eaves, catching the drifting descent of water,
the solid oak of your immense door, the edges chewed and cracked by time,
groaning as I take hold of the rusting cast iron ring and heave open the entry.
Dust lazily drifts about the shadow of your room, illuminated by the open doorway,
as the musk of aged timbers stirred washes throughout the hall

Your long oaken table stands, faded and warped by time's march,
the once finely carved feet rough from the gashes of use,
but still the sturdy wood holds.

At your head of the table, opposite to the head where I stand,
a simple throne sits, arms and back beautifully engraved.
The seat of the Lord of the hall, your bench, the Lord's bench,
and though the indifferent cadence of time may bear down on you, on history,
you endure.

SPIRITUAL FOR THE SUMMER

By Camila Gaard

Look over Georgia and see.
That She's next to go.

Head held high.
Faith will never be lost.

Overcome that little bit more.

Electric smoke rises.
The wind points due north.
And hope is carried by the thinness of the air.



MILKDROMEDA

By Evan Mueller

When I first thought of you,
you were universes away.
Just a theory I dreamt up;
knew would never come my way.
Years spent dwelling on my worlds,
and their never-ending quarrels...

But one day they stopped.
That's when I looked up.

Suddenly,
My life is thrown out of orbit,
a million supernovas begin forming,
all attempts at staying aloof wane,
emotions change phase to phase.

No psychoanalyzing
can make sense of
this reality I once dreamt of.
Whispering rings of your light
invade every silent space,
leaving no room to wait.
Calling out for you
is my deafening fate.

And I watch,
as we head towards a collision
and I feel,
everything in me shifting
and I start
radiating, glistening
so they say
"This must be the end".
Doom's day packaged and delivered,
courtesy of one grin.
I expel
light twice as fast as I took it in
ever since I spiraled into you that 25th.

Can't help my burning.
Never knew anything but yearning.
Now all I know,
is you've outshined everyone.

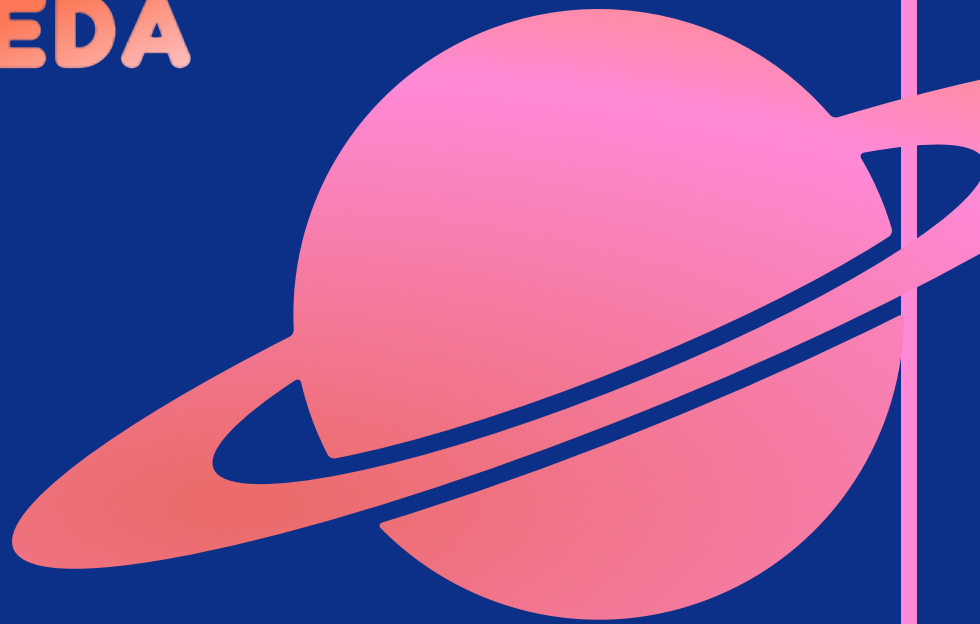
Can't help but wallow myself
in thoughts of whether I should stay, or
run...

The dilemma of colliding with someone:
Lovers' Milkdromeda.

It's been quite a slow build-up,
I've orbited you ever since I dreamt you
up.
Never thought it'd get this far,
stories already being told with our stars.

And to think it all started,
with you catching me mid-spiral,
in one of the webs you spun...

And now we're one.



LA CARAVANA FOR CARLOS, HAYDEN, AND THE NAMELESS GRAVES

By Juan Sandoval



I.

Carlos Gregorio Hernandez Vasquez:

Palm trees swaying with a sweet southern wind,
niños following the stench of vomited blood to
the tune of el bombo, enchanted by a northern fiction.

La caravana:

viaje de adioses
to la frontera's auroral horizon—cross waters shores.

"13 May 2019—
Alien landing. Round up easy. Our patrol lead
says there's about 70 of them, dirty wetbacks
looking to cross the Grande. Some try to run,
leap the raft towards the desert. They run clutching
Virgin Mary's, praying as the dogs' big whites get their fill of moreno.

alien identification number A203665141:

Standing to America, bringing home
soft brown body, brown trespasser, brown extraterrestrial.

*Deep in the festering detention center thy hijos lie,
de sus huesos the cauldron, America's melting pot is made,
those flashlights in the desert night are their eyes.*

Though	Many	of	Their
Graves	Bear	No	Name

Merciful God and Father of all, wake us from the
slumber of indifference, open our eyes to their suffering,
free us from the insensitivity born of worldly comfort

Misericordioso Dios

"Type A Flu. I gave him ibuprofen and Tylenol
ordered him Tamiflu and told him to return in
2hrs. It has been 19hrs now and my eyes continue
to drift to the door of my office. The night before
when I left Valley Central Processing, I thought
I saw him. He was a dark outline walking across
the sand-stained road. I leaned over my steering wheel
to make out more of him when he suddenly fell over
and I slammed the brake, skidding almost into a ditch.
I rushed out to help him, but when I got out my headlights
were shining over him and I gagged at the smell and sight.
Blood and bits of flesh dripped from his gaping mouth, his
bones were protruding, sticking dangerously outside of his skin
and all he could do was move his mouth open and closed, his
pain caught in silence. He managed to reach me, tugged my pantsuit
and his eyes—they looked up to me with a blinding light, a
shudder racking my body as I kicked his face with my heel and ran.
Straightened car. Left him. Night enveloped. Silent mouth. Bright eyes.

*I need to move my office. Their cries
and silent mouths still rattle my door.
I can't walk past those cages every morning and night
where they watch me from behind chain mail fence
with those blinding, blinding eyes.*

Journeying in Hope to You Our True Home

"Agent Garza's activity log indicates that
he checked Cell 199 three times at 2:02,
4:09, and 5:05 a.m. Carlos was given a hot
meal. It coated his mouth and then the ground.

"At 1:24 a.m., he topples, his round face
slamming into the ground. His breath
caught in a humid cloud under the
surgical blue of his mask. 11 minutes. Still.

"At 1:35 a.m., he vomits blood. It dribbles
past his lips. Sticky concrete. Matted hair.
Staggers and staggers through iron bar
blades of moonlight to the grimy toilet.

"At 1:39 a.m. approximately, he stops.
Slides off the putrid white to the cool
concrete. He's on his back. Blood
spewing, frothing, as his eyes watch a starless sky.

"At 6:05 a.m., his cellmate awakens
his bare toes feeling the cold matted
blood, sticky chill. He knocks meekly
on the iron door. The eyes of Reyes peering into their cell.

"Garza couldn't be reached for further comment."

You Our True Home

II.

El pueblo de luto, I have seen those tin-roofed houses,
San Jose de Rodeo, Guatemala;
Bartoleme Hernandez planting maíz, trabajando la tierra
with black tire cutouts, saving his shoes for Sunday

while Carlos goes hungry at school sometimes.
Him and the village kids made a game of
crossing the border, reaching this distant
and imaginary shore called the U.S.

They scaled makeshift tin fences and
a correr, a correr! Ay viene la migra!
He always played the one who made it
across, launching, swimming through the air to *America*.

The long, thin greens of guava leaves
were U.S. bills: fives, tens, twenties, fifties
those crisp hundreds handed over to Western Exchange
cashiers with puffed chests and smug lips. *Para la familia*.

Thousands followed as the village soccer team carried
their captain's ataúd. The royal blue of the No. 9 soccer jersey
taped to the coffin as the procession watched the young men
carry him home. *But he did move us. He touched our hearts.*

Hernandez's voice echoed across the mass of mourners:
Que le paso? The question hung heavy on their shoulders.
It weighed down the ataúd. It's sharp wooden edges
biting deep into his classmate's, threatening to break their collar bones.

III.

Cuerpos on the margins, the daylight of contemporary.
Gente moviendose, constantly moviendose.
They are shoulder to shoulder
guided by a grand Northern imagination;
they plough through riot shields and barbed wire fences
dripping with centuries of their blood, beaten by batons
and still—moviendose. Their swollen feet desperate to
touch that farthest shore, vision stained red with hope.

Viaje de adioses,
viaje whose march is of mil dolores.

Shoulder to shoulder. Infants with stuffed diapers.
The stench of excrement mingling and tangling
with ripened sweat and warm vomit. Bodies on
bodies sleeping, crying—motherless. Waiting.

*Deep in the festering detention center thy hijos lie,
the corpse of mercy rots with them,
dogs eat their wonderfully soft thighs.*

*But, oh, los niños te miran
with human eyes whose sufrimiento los acusa,
whose unfounded hope reaches, glimmers, leers
through the perpetual LED lights. Strike tender like a stroking hand.*

*You cannot stare that unfounded hope down
or cage the dream that stalks on monitor feeds
and moans in happiness at the sight of Weslaco palm trees;
cannot kill the deep immortal wish,
el querer sin tiempo.*



The deep immortal human wish,
el querer sin tiempo.

Cell 199 its embalming tomb,
death that speaks many lives.

Viaje de adioses

"The men and women of U.S. Customs and Border Protection are saddened by the tragic loss of this young man and our condolences are with his family. Border Patrol is committed to the health, safety and humane treatment of those in our custody. At this time, CBP is not releasing the identity of the individual. *Nameless*. But to be frank with you, surprised that this kid never just—knocked, as sick as he was. I just don't know why he laid there in a crimson pool of his own blood, staring at the half moon of the toilet's rim and the starless sky. I just don't know why he didn't knock. *I need comfort, too. I am bigger than the motherless babies who they come with almost every day asking which of us would like to play mamá and smaller than the woman they take from here who come back crying and bleeding through their underwear—roaming the fence crying over and over: mis hijos! Mis hijos! I am a child, too.* I am resigning as acting commissioner of the CBP. I really think the American government failed these people, people like *Carlos*. I can finally say his alien name. I was high, high, so high above him—part of that system and yet all I can do is let him haunt me, stalk me with those blinding eyes whichever way I go. Congress was unresponsive. Agencies unprepared. It was frustrating to watch how they allowed it. Frustrating how they allowed it. *We are all astronautas today! We are wrapped in warm silver suits that shine like estrellas, protecting us from the cold air of this grey planeta. El sol never sets or rises here. It is always up, and we have trouble sleeping. We are not allowed to see more, but I carry my silver suit with me and look past the thousands of silver diamond windows. Carlos says we are aliens, extraterrestres. That is funny! I watch the people of this planet every day. Some have brown eyes like me, black hair like me, and even piel morena too! I stretch my hand out sometimes hoping one of them in their dark blue suits grabs it. I'm sure they'd feel warm too.* A tragedy that was predictable and preventable. Weslaco Police Chief Joel Rivera says there was no foul play in Carlos' death. The subject activity log reported nothing alarming the three times Agent Oscar Garza checked Cell 199. He was found unresponsive this morning during welfare check. It was routine. In and out. *My mamá would play with my hair. When I was sick, she'd boil caldo even if it was just vegetales with no pollo. She would tell me stories about los tiempos when she was just a niña and I'd watch her. I'd watch her smile and feel her laugh float across my piel. It would be hard to play with my hair the way the blood's tangled it.*

to la frontera's auroral horizon—cross waters shores.

A LINEAR PROBLEM WITH DISASSOCIATION

By Haley Olds

I.

To not jump the middle of the atrium.
To still yourself when the metro is coming.
To steer the bike just to the left of the oncoming.

II.

The hairdryer and the running
water. You think you are dirty webcam
girl, you are stomach and no feet.
When was the last time you were awake
longer than eight hours. Mind, a dish in the sink.

III.

You're sitting on the toilet but what does
that mean. To Toil. To Let.
To Let the poetry Toil.
How much running is inside of the faucet.

IV.

Turn the TV up to a hundred.
Lay on the floor. This is not nothing, this
is Savasana. Forget about
the nerves inside a thumb.

V.

Tonight you'll fall asleep in your bathrobe.
Open all the windows. Open all the books.
You will try to be a pastoral. Or a ghazal.
A poem to take the edge off.

VI.

You thought god was an agent. To not
think of porn websites and curse words
when you pray. Open all the bibles
collecting dust like panic attacks.





DREAMS

By Page Rhodes

the soft, golden dawn
cues your departure and
i long for the lark to finish its song

and though darkness frightens me
it is then that
i am blind to reality

so add to it the cream moonlight
and let me forever be back in paradise

BATS

By Monal Desai

Although they are blind,
They catch any kind.
Frogs, mice, fish or rats,
I know they are the fearless bats.

They are webbed, winged wonders,
With sharp and hairy fingers,
Bright beady eyes,
That glow in the dark, gloomy skies.
Their flexible furry 'flippers',
Snatch greedily like snippers.

Their two-pointed fangs,
Suck blood out of baby lambs.
Monstrous! Some are enormous.
They are creepy creatures.



BEEHIVE

By Jazmin Chambers

He likes certain girls
Sweet as ice tea
Honey drips from lips
Like honey bees
With DNA that contains the blue print
For a continuous
Heritage of
Beauty
Forever
I remain lost
It's a
Wonder to me-
Those girls
I can't gather the senses of he
He doesn't like me
I've grown a stinger
Of that
of a
Bumblebee
Possibly the reason
I'm lonely
Shared attempts of trying
Patiently
I remember
There are others like me
An
Inherited dislike
An intolerance of uncertainty
We wish
For eternal allure
Chasing
Wanting that something that will
Make those come to us
Like bees to nectar
Sweet
Savoring
Wanting a
A hive that will keep us safe
Instead we live
never to be
Queen



It's never what it seems
The moment of discovery

Thoughts are deeply rooted elsewhere
When a sudden and unexpected interruption

Pushes its way into the forefront of consciousness
It is recognized immediately as a manifestation

Of personal creativity
An original thought

Unlike other shards of consciousness
This inkling is accompanied by an emotional tie

The mind and the heart and the conscious being
All take notice

It's important
And it's original

It's not what it appears to be
It's forcing itself against a hard nearly impenetrable moldy crust

A moment when the greater consciousness
Interrupts the individual mind

And provides a preview of what may be tapped into
If only the bridge is built and frequently traveled upon

If ignored
The thought will often travel back again

Interrupting the stream of consciousness
This time originality is accompanied by familiarity

Perhaps the message is worth noting
Perhaps a new path or side road is worth exploring

Of course, ignored a third time
Doesn't mean the end

Just the loss of time
Or maybe wanton distraction

Fear often
Protects one from life's

Greatest opportunities
To burst forth from the familiar hard shell

And brings life and nourishment
To ourselves and those around us

And at times
The door to a whole new world opens

Inviting the stifled person to explode
Into a new life beyond, far beyond that single thought

Epiphany some same
Life others say

Either
Way

Ignorance
Is loss

DISRUPTION

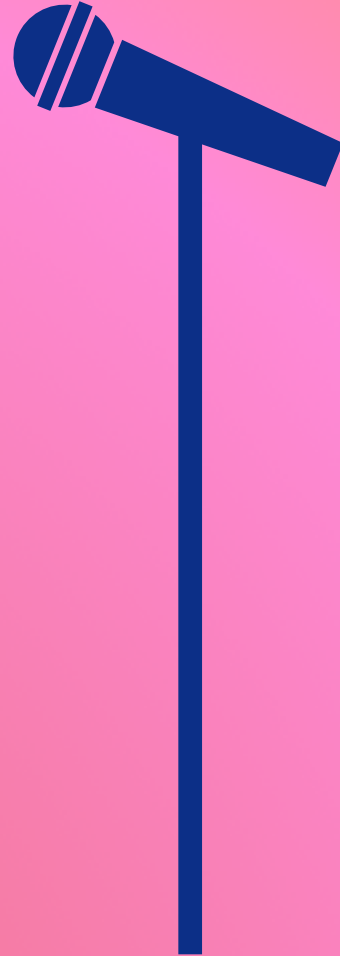
By Daniel Murray

HEY, HOW'S IT GOING

By Sophia Psaltis

Hey how's it going, I hope you've been well

Is what I would have said if I weren't hiding in a shell
I find that talking to someone can be so very hard
Arriving with no warning or a greeting card
because of this feeling I feel within my gut
I just can't find the courage within me to say what
I want, as if my voice was locked away
Maybe there would be a reason you would want to stay.
If I could find a way to stop my hands from shaking
And After some time I'll s-s-tart to s-t-tuter Making
Everything worse from my mind to my heart and into my core
Trying so hard to stop until I can no more.
Oh, there goes my breath, it'll start to shake
In the wave a of a wake
Of dread that I can feel in my head
The feeling spreads just like the plague
It whispers things so cruel, but so vague
You stare at me like I'm doing something weird
This has become something that I've always feared
Reaching out to me you ask if I'm okay
When in reality I feel as if I may
Start to mumble my words even slur or distort
Looks like I need to work on the walls of my fort
That I put up around me every time someone walks by
When I know I won't look them in the eye
I'll just stare at the floor with my thoughts inside
My head, because that is where they will stay
When you showed up and said its okay
To see me like this and to feel this way.
Or maybe you won't even bat an eye
Lash out and make me want to cry
Ignore me and leave me on the ground to die
Where I'll stay, nowhere to be found, goodbye



No, no this can't be the end of the show
I'll get right back up to the place I know
Leap off of the ground and spread my wings
I'll shatter my shell and find a way to sing
My feet will no longer be planted to the floor
I'll break the roots and try once more.
So I will ask once again and count to four
With this I'll break from this spell
And I will ask again,

How's it going, I hope you've been doing well.

A MOTHER'S INTUITION

By Jillian Owens

It doesn't matter if you scream dear,
She can't hear you.

She's around the block,
Tucked away in your sweet home,
Waiting for your prompt return.

Her mind had you counties away,
While little did she know,
You were galaxies away,
Floating, from the agony that proceeded you,
In that corroded church parking lot.

I guess not all mothers have a mothers intuition...



"WONDER WOMAN"

By Anirudh Edupuganti

There's something about, her Hand holding mine
It's a feeling that's just fine
I just say nothing is fine

Seems like she got a magical spell
And it's working so well
That I can't get away any well

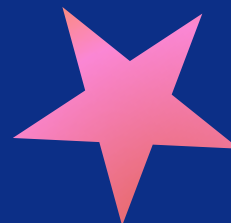
I am a lucky fellow
Just need to say her I am not a mellow
And, I love her endlessly from below

Because, Love grows
Where ever she goes
And nobody knows
That I will never find anyone like her
Sweeter than her
Precious than her
That's why she is my everything

All my life I've prayed for someone like her
Now I thank god, since she in my life
I will cherish every hug
I will cherish your every smile

All I see is a glow in my face
She turned my life around
She picked me up when I was down

Suddenly she is all that I have ever know
And I hope she feels the same way too.
After all she is my WONDER WOMAN.



"SHE IS NO PRINCESS"

By Bailey Skarbalus

Maybe I write for I cannot speak my words as I am separated from the ones I desire to see most.

Locked out of the world searching for a new edifice.

In what form of the structure do I fit if there is no structure to be found.

I try to build columns of hope and peace and love but all that shows are the secrets and walls that I have built up.

Stories I wish to share of the truth, my truth, a damsel in distress hiding her face from the rest of the world.

She has a beautiful soul that any combination of words used to describe her cannot even match an inch of her extraordinary self.

She tries to live up to her beauty and excellence as she embraces the one she loves, but there is no one to be found.

Life is secretive, hiding behind a mask wishing to show her true face, but she is meek, a coward.

She is no princess.

While she is a damsel there is no hero searching to bring her home.

For what is a home, a place one would describe as safe and loving where all words can be spoken.

A location in which she is no longer in distress but free.

But this is just a story, a fable, a tall tale, there is no happy ending.

There is no hero, there is no love, there is no home, but a mindless body roaming the world.

That is the truth.

Those are the words that are written but meant to be spoken.

THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

By B.G. Montano



Cut my thumb on a rose-thorn, bleed on the petals,
emptily watching a heartless drop as it settles
upon the dead flower, where crimson color conceals
the cold trickle. A perfect crime. A numb ideal.
I feel these four walls close their grip round my throat
as I drown in isolation, the new status quo,
though none too novel, as I've known it before,
the obstreperous silence that I so adore.
That I so abhor.
Pour more in the mug, get drunk on caffeine,
tumble through routine,
I can measure minutes and days in swipes on a screen
and scream away 'til my windpipe is clean.
All it takes is a push to set the world astray.
All it takes is a push.

Hush, our session will commence shortly.

*"In the room the women come and go,
talking of Michelangelo."*

In an instant she appeared, staring silent and solemn.
So rare, catching my eye amidst the cool breeze of Autumn.

Foul serendipity! An encounter by chance!
All from a single, damning glance
to a Daughter of the Moon in all her elegance
who compels me to resign myself from my reticence.

All it took was a wandering eye,
a twitch as slight as the flight of a butterfly.

Loose strands draped her summit like sunshine,
brighter than Arcturus, and twice as sublime.
Once words were exchanged,
I knew something had changed
a warm sensation arose from the decay.
This gut that flutters,
these words that I stutter,
oh how have I gone so astray?

All it took was a wandering eye.
Her singing's so soothing, her words so moving
I find myself stuck in fair fantasy, musing...
Oh, what hubris I have! To believe
my conceits hold more weight than dead Autumn leaves
which by Winter await their burial by frost,
to leave them crushed beneath coldness and forever lost.
Should I dive headfirst into this well
just to see how deep it will go?
This swell in my chest, would it burst if I fell?
There's only one way to know.
Fall.

That beautiful mind with talents by the score
had me yearning to touch that sequestered soul more.
Is it worthwhile to let the heart's passions outpour?
This painful restraint makes the muscle so sore...

I cannot hold my peace for much longer,
not while this flame in my core burns stronger
like a python wrapped around that weary heart
which haplessly clings to this illusory spark.
Damnable feeling! The moon's glow has me reeling,
the last thought on my mind as I drift off to sleep,
the first thing I see on the nights I dream deep.
As I open my eyes, I stay fixed on her light,
the daydream I carry until the next night.

Foul serendipity! That encounter by chance!
All from a single, damning glance!
Spring blooms silently with the flight of a butterfly.
When Selene takes her throne to watch over the night sky,
She stands guard for sleeping souls, sees them all, but not I.
I cannot rest.
Touch my withering chest, offer me a cure,
but do not offer more uncertainties to endure!
In all the efforts put forth to ascertain my worth,
I'd forgotten I was worth anything at all.
Dodged feelings. Unanswered messages.
Like Gatsby, a green light taunts me, clasps me,
asserting your presence,
affirming your distance.

I should have been born a wrinkly beast
which retreats to within its shell
and vanishes between crashing waves.

Beckoned by a crystal image to which I am tied,
it calls me a fool and questions my pride.
My bated breath and solemn sigh are all that replied
to the image of the self which ceaselessly derides.
But the heart should not hide.
Numbness sparked my stagnation,
so let all doubt and trepidation be cast aside.

Welcome pain or pleasure, tear down the walls.
Sprawling sensations! Come one, come all!
Let this heart ignite and shine bright with the sun
all feelings are finite, life is no time to be numb.

Embrace the fear, the chaos, the unknown, and rise anew.

"Do I dare disturb the universe?"
Yes. I do.

(The lines: *"Do I dare disturb the universe?"* and *"In the room the women come and go, talking of Michelangelo."* are quoted from T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock")

PAUSE

By Brad Oberc

Pause

Here, I've given myself over to
The tranquility that's been absent
For so long
Here, I've been away
And am able to block out anything
That comes between me and my
State of bliss

I feel as if I'm
Frozen in time
But this coldness is not sending me
Into frostbite
But rather a state that gives me
An ice block
That prevents all of the commotion from
Reaching me
And infuriating me

I don't know yet
If I want to hit resume
Because right now
It's been a time of reflection
Even with all the craziness
That happens outside myself
And outside my control
It just vanishes
And melts away

For this solitude
Is frozen
And this pause
Is golden