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## Poetry by José Angel Araguz



## Listening

Augustina spoke for an  
hour the last time  
you saw her. Eyes  
that perceived nothing beyond  
the white clouds cancer  
left her with looked  
out across the ceiling  
as her voice carried  
people she'd seen disappear.

You listened as sons  
walked past the hospital  
lights and called from  
different cities, talked of  
work or lack of  
work, of coming home  
as if a tide  
had risen, kept them  
walking farther north. You  
listened as cousins fell  
from the lips of  
gossip, gone so long,  
it'd be bad luck  
to even speak their  
names, names she spoke  
as if having them  
heard summoned from silence,  
faces never seen beyond  
their youth back before  
her eyes. You listened,  
wanting to hear her  
fill the sky with  
all the family lost,  
all the faces remembered  
as only she could  
remember them. You spent  
days afterward staring after  
clouds, seeing each one  
change to nothing familiar.  
When the nurse came  
and motioned for you  
to leave, you said  
nothing, only bowed  
your head. Her voice  
kept to its whispered  
grit a moment more  
while the nurse could  
not help but bow  
her head and join  
you in listening to  
what you may never  
understand beyond that hour,  
to what another may  
have mistaken as prayer.



## On Touch

Touch is the first drug.

There are rocks where I stand, and grass. My bare feet ruminate: touch by far is kinder to the soul than speech.

Enter the ocean, touch swarms.

Each night, you close your eyes and fall into that touch of the first time the body slept before you learned to call it night.

Absentmindedly, I touch the lampshade; the shadows in the room shiver.

Touching, letting go, returning to touch: we love with the persistence of flies!

The blades of the ceiling fan keep to their circle. That shudder of blade and light, that mix of air: is it touch?

How fast these words, dear pencil, dear clutched one—what we do blurs at the touch, at the fragile turn of a second.

Each night, you close your eyes, your eyelashes clash, your eyelids yearn and yearn to seal, but only touch.

Lint trap of dreams, where everything collects onto a screen, a clouded dark that at the first touch falls apart.

## On Touch

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At the end—without touch—the body stops sharing what it knows.

Not the paper, but the words are a skin—not the ink but reading is touch.

You step outside, and your body knows the weather. When you die, you leave this weather behind.

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José Angel Araguz, PhD, is the author of *Rotura* (Black Lawrence Press, 2022). His poetry and prose have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry International*, *The Acentos Review*, and *Oxidant | Engine*, among other places. He is an assistant professor at Suffolk University, where he serves as editor-in-chief of *Salamander* and is also a faculty member of the Solstice Low-Residency MFA Program.

For more information, visit José Angel Araguz's website, [The Friday Influence](#) [8].

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