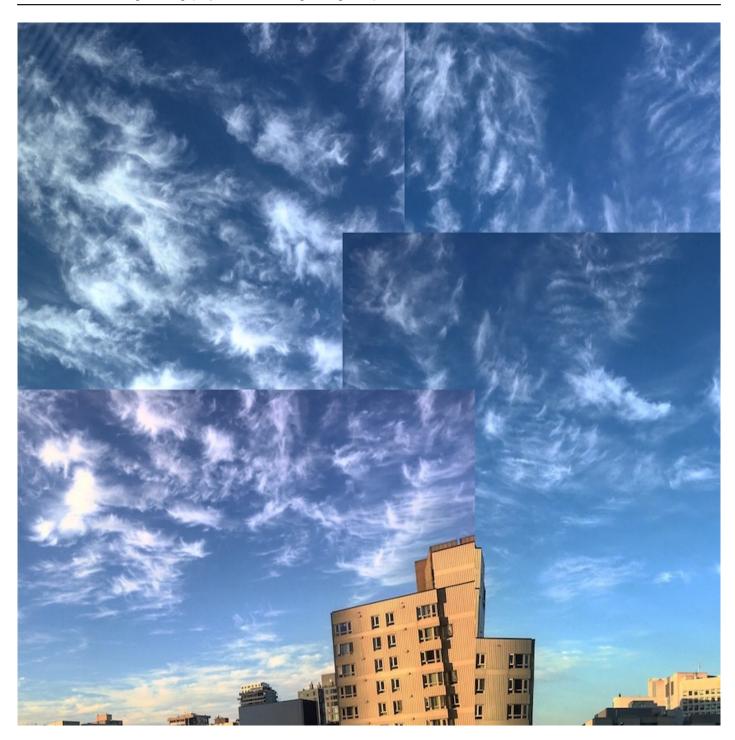
## On Touch

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## On Touch [1]

July 11, 2022 <u>Poems</u> [2] <u>Grief</u> [3] <u>Illness</u> [4]

# 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.

 $(function(i,s,o,g,r,a,m)\{i['GoogleAnalyticsObject']=r;i[r]=i[r]||function()\{\ (i[r].q=i[r].q||[]).push(arguments)\},i[r].l=1*new Date();a=s.createElement(o),\\ m=s.getElementsByTagName(o)[0];a.async=1;a.src=g;m.parentNode.insertBefore(a,m) \})(window,document,'script','https://www.googlege 2 of 5 analytics.com/analytics.js','ga'); ga('create', 'UA-18260536-1', 'auto'); ga('send', 'pageview');$ 

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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.

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.

#### **Art Information**

• "Thinking Wisps [5]" and "Writing It All [6]" @ Nelson Lowhim [7]; used by permission.



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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