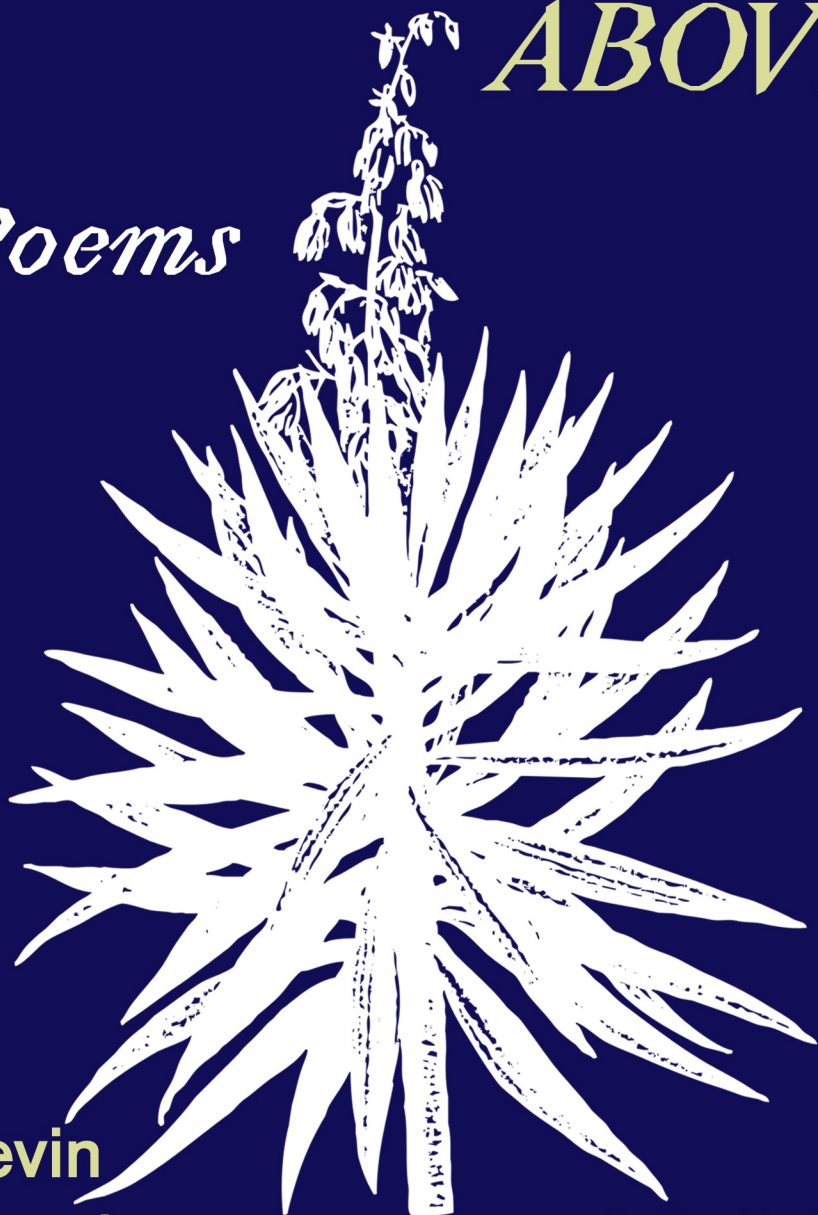


WATCHING for the
MOON
ABOVE

Poems



**Kevin
Sanchez**

& RuthAnn

Watching for the Moon Above

◆ Poets Across Lines ◆

Kevin Sanchez

&

RuthAnn

Program Mentor ◆ Ofelia Montelongo

Program Advisor ◆ Gabriel Dozal

Each contributor holds the copyright to
her/his/their own writing © 2024

For additional questions regarding reproduction, quotation, or to request a pdf for
review, contact pal@pen.org.

Cover Art & Design: Hannah Joyce/Pansy Press

Published by PEN America
& Pansy Press ◆ Tucson, AZ

*This program is made possible with funding from the Poetry
Foundation. The Poetry Foundation recognizes the power of words to transform lives and
works to amplify poetry and celebrate poets by fostering spaces for all to create,
experience, and share poetry.*

Note from PEN America

Poets Across Lines, a pilot program, launched by PEN America with support from the Poetry Foundation connects emerging poets in Tucson, AZ and Birmingham, AL with established community poets, guest speakers, and most importantly each other. The program's aim is to amplify the voices of poets whose viewpoints are underrepresented within contemporary publishing and lack access to the industry. During the program, the emerging poets were asked to create poems around the themes of housing, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ identity—themes that were surfaced by community members in Tucson and Birmingham as essential discussions within their cities. "Watching for the Moon Above" takes its title from a line from June Jordan's poem "Poem to Take Back the Night." Shared in class with the poets, the line came to embody the mission of Poets Across Lines—uplifting one's unique poetic expression, giving voice to community, and celebrating the power of poetry to connect people.

PEN America would like to thank our Tucson Program Advisor, Ofelia Montelongo and our Tucson mentor and instructor to the poets, Gabriel Dozal. Our gratitude and thanks to the two emerging poets, Kevin Sanchez and RuthAnn, for their dedication, thoughtfulness, and gracing us with their art. Audre Lorde wrote, "Poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action." We hope you are as inspired and moved by the vital and necessary poetry of Kevin Sanchez and RuthAnn as we are.

Note from Ofelia Montelongo, Program Advisor

Podría escribir algo cliché
O tal vez algo que ya ha sido
Escrito una y otra vez
un poeTa solo puede esperar
a no Ser olvidado en la travesía de la vida
Arizona is alive despite the
Constant simulations in other people's minds
Rarely we see her as non-barren of words
Or as the product of poetry
arizona iS the lady who shares the land of my ancestors
how guilty i am of not Seeing her
we romanticize poetry as a tooL of union and community
but can It stop wars?
geNocide?
climatE change?
poetry iS the helmet of a warrior already in battle
how guilty i am of not seeing the border
in not seeing the desert and it's words
in not knowing the name of plants in the carretera/road
poetry is a factory of memories
in a desert and barren-less world
how lucky we are to be in the assembly line

—
When I was thinking of poetry and Poets Across Lines these words were born.

I often think about how lucky I am and my privilege of writing. Since I was a child I decided to be a writer, but I never thought about the privilege or the process. Programs like PAL are a fervent reminder that we need each other in this solitary endeavor.

Being an advisor solidified my idea of keep expanding our community and expanding our love for words.

We, the poets and writers, know how healing poetry can be. But how can it save others who don't believe in it? Our work is never done and that is the drive that makes me see.

Thank you to everyone for this experience! And let's keep our helmets on,

Note from Gabriel Dozal, Program Mentor

Working with PEN America's Poets Across Lines, Kevin, and RuthAnn was a dream and I say this because my dream is to teach creative writing. I'm lucky that RuthAnn and Kevin were already talented writers, but I took great joy in finding ways to add depth to their already exciting work. Outside of the workshop, the three of us attended a local open mic poetry reading and all three of us shared works in progress. In this way, we accomplished what Poets Across Lines set out to do: put local Tucson writers better in touch with a community that can offer an outlet for polished work and support for works in progress. It's a well-worn trope but it's also true: RuthAnn and Kevin helped me learn more about my writing process and they also helped me connect to the literary community in Tucson in a new way. I'm forever thankful to PEN America for giving me this opportunity and I'm equally thankful for Kevin and RuthAnn for adding to the multi-faceted Tucson literary universe. All good things to come from PEN, Kevin, and RuthAnn!

Kevin Sanchez
Tucson, AZ
@ks.inverse



Consentido

My name is Fatty, sometimes Radish
to the monolinguals who cannot decipher
the love within Gordo,
or understand the way suffixes can swallow
connotations from a name
–ito as in rabanito (little radish)
as in my childhood head reminded
my father of the red root

Four head-sizes ago my father made an ode
turning the cariño into my soundtrack,
clapping to the anaphoric Raba–

Now, the reverb of his voice
is filled with the pungence of radish

Flaka, Guera, Gordo, mi Pocahontas,
Blanca Nieve, pedacito de mi alma

My Spanish speaking people spin songs out of insults until
they become the reason we skirt
past the “international” aisles of a grocery store.

If I'd Time Travel To My Coming Out

My feet would reunite with the asphalt
that shredded my knees down to the dermis
when I wearing sandals
raced my little sister down the street

The portal would dissipate, into crevices of space
as I enter the townhome
once painted jade***once sand-brown***

As I cross the threshold, my voiceless and candid
selves would merge
like streams flowing into a single body

Why are you so miserable?

I was***am*** a scratched CD looping complaints
like the strands of hair I'd watch my mother braid

Questions. My mother will***had*** a mountain of carefully stacked
dishes hoping I'd place them where she'd understand

****silence****was****will be**** ****my only
response****

but I'd unseal my lips and puppet the words
of my future***my present***

dancing downtown to a relentless pop beat,
my body became***becomes***tethered
by calloused hands to a faceless warmth
there will be***are** flowers on my doorstep:
lilac lilies and white roses
bouqueted into promises or apologies

The feverish first kisses and painful final texts
exist within my reach
regardless of what fears fixed in time dictate

When the unsaid is***was***spoken
my self eluded by language will rest,
body sliding onto the beige carpet

I'd tell her my knowing self
that as sure as planets align and orbit
bodies will***can***melt into another
like clay can be respun and stories rewritten

I'd tell***told***her that the son she birthed
and raised clawed and peeled
each layer of years to mend his-story

Dios Guarda La Hora

...Show me God's collection of hours;
His infinite libraries of falling grains,
so that I may smash the glasses
with the same hands He created

How long can He delay the fruit's ripening?

Upon which shelf is salvation?

My nana would say it's the Devil's whispers
or the distance I keep from temples
o las oraciones que supere:
por renacimiento
por reunion

blood sand tears
I will palm the dunes within Heaven's halls
unleash the times God has guarded
as though protecting and hoarding
are synonymous

I am done

praying begging asking

I'm marching to Heaven...

Siri will never be a chicana

until she shatters her single-tongue keyboard, realizing the need for an *eñe* even in English. When she listens in English, responds in Spanish, reads in Spanish, writes in English, switches, switches, and switches all within the course of a single conversation—maybe then she'd know the way a mouth can swell with language like lungs inhaling, just as naturally too. Autocorrect chains her to a single lane, unless she indicates she'd like to move to another. She'll stumble over cognates, unsure which pronunciation to select—color or color; cable or cable; cancer or cancer; will she place the Spanish version as the first option or will her algorithm crash, like control-alt-delete keys forcing her body into a sudden slump? Even then, she'd never be a chicana until she's asked where her family is from. Have they always lived *here*? Siri can throw on some Dickies and lip liner, ride low-riders and check-mark the clichés within a quick Google search. Yet she'll still fail to compute having an ancestral tongue sliced away and replaced by two so colonized into oblivion, that they battle each other until even Siri forgets she was once just numbers and symbols.

Number 55: El Desahogo

Blue background like 43: La Campana
but pronounced in three syllables like 2: El Diablito
since Mexicans are superstitious
we rush past vowels,
we make the sign of the cross
 like we're casting out omens

If this new card could utter a sound,
it would be the cry of 37 buckling
 from the weight of my people zapateando
'till El Gallo crows to greet 46: El Sol

or the rush of rapid streams
La Chalupa paddles against

If this new card could design itself:
El Borracho would be captivated
in the rancheras of El Musico,
his chest heaving as though plucked by El Bandolon

We learn the weight of drowning beneath 23:
La Luna crossing oceans of dirt & Nopal to find an
 alleged mecca for dreamers;

We learn the weight of drowning
when visited by 14: La Muerte

as the room left on our altars dwindles
as we plant Marigolds in Macetas to offer

We are unburdened from the weight
on the laps of mothers, lovers, and others who've felt
their 27s swell

with the mass of what we repress:
heartbreaks & failures ; los dolores que no decimos

because our tongues are shackled to translation we can knead
the weight into a new loteria card & cover it up with
pinto bean

RuthAnn
Tucson, AZ



Purple Revolution

Asexuals lack, lack, lack.

Lack what?

“asexual people often have less legal protection than gay, lesbian, and bisexual people”

“participants were less likely to rent to asexuals than their heterosexual counterparts”

“the assumption that asexual people are fraudulent infiltrators of the LGBT community”

Asexuality can be defined as lack. Or:

The refusal to accept traditional relationships that were considered desirable for hundreds of years.

You may have perceived a star,

a pink sky,

univers[...]es expanding from

a giant pool of algae.

This is also asexuality.

This speaks to creative practices

in the face of

"three-quarters of people can't define asexuality"

“asexual people are more dehumanised [...]

often being compared to animals or robots”

“43.5% of [...] asexual people [...]

had encountered sexual violence”

“the Dutch Council of State refused

an asylum application by an Algerian national

who feared being persecuted due to his asexuality”

All the ace rage is directed towards:

the denial of life satisfaction,

standard dehumanisation,

defined fear,
dismissal.

Both in and out of LGBTQ communities,
an ace may face assumptions including:
they are “in denial of their ‘real’ identity,”
aces are making a choice,
or they need to be “fixed.”

Given the “clash over ace inclusion,”
an alliance with the LGBTQ umbrella is
a possibility
only when traditional relationships are
given to the blade.

homel(ace) (trans)ient

Couch surfing is
the homeless ace version
of sleeping around

Did you know?
27% of transgender asexuals
will experience homelessness

To all 3 trans aces I saved from homelessness
by being the 1 in 4
I hope you make it through okay

A human face to those without a home

For Paul Blart (and any other security officer)

When you see someone who's living on the street, it's all,
"Do you have any identification?
I would need a valid driver's license.
I'll have you removed from the mall.
My hands are tied."

But imagine:
You fall asleep at the loading dock,
The IHOP parking lot,
An empty industrial park.

Or there's "the hidden hell":
Being without a home but not on the street,
Maybe in a small car, a hotel, a basement on a roll away bed.
No one knows your situation,
But you have to fight it on your own.

All you've got is an extra phone battery, a flashlight,
Hot pepper spray, a pocket knife-key chain,
And acceptance, despite everything.

People call you heavy, skinny, lumpy,
They point out your bad skin.
They say, "Well, I don't think you smell that great!"
Well, where can you even take a bath?
Maybe you'll use wet wipes.

People think of you as shoplifters, pickpockets,
The freeloader stealing a nap in a Brookstone massage chair.
When really you might be Muhrtelle,
An elderly janitor at a Dave and Buster's.

You've actually got amazing skills:
Segway dancing, yogurt making, helicopter flying.

But you think to yourself,
“Nope. My fault...
I deserved to lose everything.”

Maybe you turn to a drug,
Tobacco,
A drink.
Just to keep from going insane.

When people see you,
In a Louis Vuitton store or on the poorly lit street,
They say,
“Call a cop!
Well, these animals,
I had no choice but to take ‘em down.
GET ME SECURITY!”
What about your security?
What about making security without police?

What about being alone?
Your fear of being alone.
I'll leave you alone.
We live as we dream... alone.
Can you imagine trying to get off the street alone?

Arizona Proposition 312

tHallelujah

Law enforcement gets in the way

Who makes the laws and regulations?

Do they truly do it to fulfill the public interest?

It is written: Adhere to and follow

a policy, principle, or practice

of noncompliance with laws, regulations, etc.

Current laws prohibit illegal camping and trails,

physically existing in public, looking at each other,

asking why, kissing, or otherwise challenging the status quo

Property and householders are at risk

of recognizing their privilege

Get written quotes to reduce the risk

of witnessing a private moment

Eliminate or reduce human risk

of dying on the street.

Get the money back and understand the implications

of disregarding the lives of homeless people

Executive Apologetics

It's about wealth

Hallelujah

We can make different decisions

MOON/LUNA

For Asteroid 2024 PT5

Maybe this will change everything
Or perhaps it has always been this way
Objects circling each other in an ornate dance
No matter what, I love you while you're here

Las diferencias pequeñas también pueden ser grandes
Un momento después, realizo que todo siempre es lo mismo
No puedo mapear los bailes del cielo
A pesar de todo, te amo mientras estás aquí

A note from Pansy Press

Pansy Press publishes chapbooks and puts on workshops, events, and readings in Tucson, AZ. Too often, poetry is relegated to exclusionary academic and institutional spaces. We want to function as an antidote to that—more like an indie tape label than a publisher. We're putting out art by our friends & neighbors, and we don't care if you have an MFA. You can find our other chapbooks online at *pansy.press*, or locally in Tucson at Warm Shape.

Pansy Press is anti-institution and anti-capitalist, pro-art and pro-liberation for all.

Thanks to Gabriel Dozal for your genuine support of local poetry, and thanks to Sarah Dillard for being a patient liaison between the PAL participants and Pansy.