



HOWL OF THE HEARTS

Poetry Contest

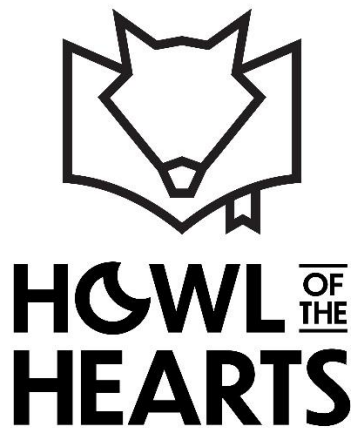
2024

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FRONT RANGE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



To celebrate National Poetry Month, Poudre Libraries and Front Range Community College are holding a special program to engage both adult and teenage creative writers in our community for a multi-generational poetry contest and poetry reading event.

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE JUDGES:

Aiden Grant Helzer

Aiden Grant Helzer is a local poet in his final semester as a Master of Fine Arts candidate for poetry at Colorado State University. He takes inspiration from a variety of sources, including the Bible, theology, mythology, linguistics, architecture, music, and birds. He has worked at Poudre Libraries for close to nine years. He and his brother formed the historic preservation/sonic art group, The Echotheque, which documents soon-to-be-demolished buildings as performers of their own sonic landscapes.

Amy Holly

Originally from Kentucky, Amy Holly received her Bachelor's in English from the University of Kentucky in 2006 and her Master of Fine Arts in fiction from Colorado State University in 2010. She has been teaching Creative Writing and Literature at Front Range's Larimer Campus full-time since 2011. Her work has appeared in various publications both online and in print, including FRCCs' own *Front Range Review*. She lives in Loveland with her husband and three daughters.

Jonah Noell

Jonah Noell is a recent graduate of Front Range Community College, currently pursuing a Bachelor of History at the University of Northern Colorado. Outside of academia, he can be found going on walks with his dog, hosting lively dinner parties, and immersing himself in books while lounging in his hammock at local parks.

Bryce M. O'Tierney

Bryce M. O'Tierney is a queer, multidisciplinary artist from Anchorage, Alaska. Bryce's poems have appeared in *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *RHINO Poetry*, and *Anchorage Daily News*. Bryce is an Instructor in the English Dept. at Colorado State University, here she also received her MFA; she composes, records, and performs in touring duo maeve & quinn with her twin, Maris.

Iris Rigby

While Iris Rigby was working as a photo safari guide in South Africa's Kruger National Park, she met the American who would become her husband. After moving to the United States and starting a family, Iris taught high school English and later Composition and Literature at a community college in Pennsylvania. Eventually Iris and her family moved to Colorado, where she has been an instructor at Front Range Community College for fourteen years. Iris loves teaching, loves her students and feels blessed to live in the beautiful state of Colorado near her son and grandchildren.

Amelia Ruehlen

Amelia Ruehlen is a poet, hopeless romantic, and lover of nature and connection. She graduated with a master's degree from Texas Tech University where she studied English literature with a focus on creative writing. Amelia currently teaches English Composition at Front Range Community College.

Miranda West

Miranda West is the Teen Services Librarian at Harmony Library. Despite being a Colorado native, she is in no way outdoorsy and she would not like to join you on a hike. She is, however, very fond of books, cats, and Beyoncé (not necessarily in that order).

TEEN FINALISTS

The Dragon

His eyes are burning

He is spinning and turning

You can hear his vicious roar

In the dark clouds above he soars

He lives in the dark of a cave

With a deep countenance that is quite grave

Always quiet in the flames,

So many lives does he claim

His tail so swift,

Wings so large,

Does he always take such charge?

Watching from the cliff so high

But lonely is he,

A companion is what he needs.

Always standing in the dark,

But all he is the fire of greed.

Along comes a man in shining silver.
His armor shines like glitter
The dragon sees with eyes so keen
What treasure is he with sword and sheath?

What a meal he would be
The dragon is quiet and waiting
He waits a moment more before he glides
To the death of night

The man however, walks unknowing
In his silver and his plume
Nothing disturbs his night
But here comes a deadly flight

The dragon swoops and takes him neat
Dragging him off of his feet
The man is patient and waits in time
For the dragon to get in line,

When they land aboard the cliff,
The dragon's claws are quite stiff.
He ties his treat and puts him away.

The man is quiet watching close,
With wandering eyes the treasures glistening bright.
All of a sudden the man swoops,
He jumps up into the light of the burning fire.

The dragon falls close to death,
Watching as the blade gets close to the edge
The man wants to slit his neck
And the man watches the end come close

He closes his eyes
But to his surprise, finds it not even close
The man jumps down onto the ground
With face severe

He tucks his sword away and walks away
With mercy so clear
The dragon gets up and watches the man disappear

By Josephine Chan

Dusk till Dawn

Dusk till Dawn,
now that you're gone
everything feels wrong.
Dusk till Dawn,
can I look beyond
our bond?
Will anything come close?
And I don't mean to boast,
but I could feel your love in my bones.
Dusk till Dawn,
do you see my blonde
in every girl that responds?
Dusk till Dawn,
I'm the brains to your brawns.
Dusk till Dawn,
was I just another pawn?
Dusk till Dawn,
 I'm laying in my lawn
 wondering why I feel so drawn
to your phenomenon.
 Dusk till Dawn,
there's no other rhymes,
are there any other ties
that keep us together?
I didn't want to be a contender,
I wanted our love to last forever.
Dusk till Dawn,
was it love?
 Dusk till Dawn,
I'm over this rotation
of frustration,
of being uncertain
that when this curtain
closes, this suburban
life is just a dream.
But nothing is as it may seem...
 Dusk till Dawn,
the sunrise in your eyes
is far prettier
without your lies.
Dusk till Dawn,
you left for college,

are you gaining knowledge
on how to acknowledge?

Dusk till Dawn,
I get physically ill
under your will.

Dusk till Dawn,
did I already say
that there were no rhymes left?
What you committed was theft.

I wish you would stay,
but now I try to keep these feelings
at bay.

Dusk till Dawn,
these were the hours
that we spent up.
The world was ours,
or maybe your call was just luck.

Dusk till Dawn,
I've grown tired
of waiting for you.
Of course I wish I was still desired,
but I always regret the drive past your
avenue.

Dusk till Dawn,
now what's remained
is your touch I've tattooed.
The needle that drained
surprisingly, was your excuse.
Dusk till Dawn,
will this end?

No,
I still wish we had more
hours to spend.

Dusk till Dawn,
was I the dusk
or the dawn?

By Ryan Eiser

A House is not a Home

Is this the feeling my previous tenants have described
Before they were taken
The feeling of emptiness
Searching in the soul and finding nothing but sorrow
The feeling of being broken
And not just mentally
Sometimes I'd see them dancing wearily in the foyer
To music no one else could hear
Reminiscing days of old
I can't dance
But surely the only good use of my time is reminiscing
The nostalgia becomes too much
Each day the burden of my own head grows bigger
As if my body is trying to mutiny
But doesn't realize without a head it has no brain to keep it standing
I can hear that music now
The soft whispers in my ears
The rhythm tapping in my brain
I can remember it now
Where I first heard that tune
It was a happy place
I was a happy place
Now I'm nothing but a pile of decaying bricks

By Reagan Jones

I am Sad

I am sad

I live in a day and age where the voice of hate reigns over every debate or topic

Difference and disunity makes it's self known at every opportunity presented

I am sad

That the value of ones life is questioned from conception until they're on their deathbed

breathing their last

Peoples rights can be countermanded simply because those with differing opinions demand it

I am sad

That the colour of ones skin, lover or religion is enough to get them killed; just for living

Stereotypes are still believed and perceived and change how people are treated

I am sad

Teens kill themselves, about a thousand a day, lifeless bodies discovered by parents, who have to

lay their own kids in a grave

Mental health is a joke, people indulge in whatever it is they "need" because they have no

healthy way to cope

I am sad

Boys and girls alike are raped by people they trust, in places they feel safe

Children are abused and show up to school with bruises that no one questions

I am sad

The economy won't hold out for much longer, it continues to inflate while the rich grow

stronger

Earth is decaying and future generations will be left in this train wreck that we didn't care to

repair

I am sad

About the expectations put on kids to receive straight A's, for that is where their worth lies, not

in their soul or kindness, but rather in their grades

People get bashed for just doing the jobs they're told, as if it's so easy to quit, so easy to say no

I am sad

For kids starve themselves to look the way people say they should, whether they be thirteen or

thirty-eight

Parents see their own flesh and blood as a disgrace, wanting no relation, solely based on their

gender or sexual orientation

I am sad

People are subject to the streets, a life they didn't choose, from a life they probably won't be set

free

Kids are born into poverty and can't climb the social ladder because they don't have the skill set

to go any higher

I am sad

Drugs are presented at every street corner, in bathroom stalls, offered to me by my own sister

Social media has taken over, kids can't be kids in an era of blue light overexposure

I am sad

Young girls are subject to society's scrutiny of beauty and change themselves to fulfil an ever

changing role

Boys must be manly and show no emotion, they have to be ready to step in at a moment's notice,

and must never make a commotion

I am sad

That no one listens to the voice of reason, all pitted against each other keeping score

Now is a time to come together, but I see more disunity than ever before

I am sad

By Adrianna Steffen

Not-So-Beautiful Salad Bowl

i am a kintsugi bowl-- or so they say.
but even when glued back together, i don't feel complete.
it's as if my cracks aren't fully sealed together,
and bits of myself still spill out, seeping and staining those closest to me.
people say that the gold-covered fixed fissures and fractures are told to be embraced,
to love your faults and flaws.
but i think they're meant to be covered,
to be bottled up and set upon a shelf with other spirits:
with other problems.
the bowls look beautiful when mended,
with gold lines tracing around the circular surface
and a polished finish to look good as new.
some people call it poetry,
some call it art.

i call it nonsense.
no one wants a person with cracks—
they don't think that's beautiful, or art.
they'll call you broken, ruined, damaged.
they expect me to be perfect, despite everything i've gone through,
they expect me to fork over my trauma and become a blank slate,
to go back in time when the bowl never cracked and everything was in its place.

so how can i be a kintsugi bowl-- as they say,
when they never want to see my shattered parts.

By Madilyn Winokur

TEEN HONORABLE MENTIONS

Untitled Is My Heart, My Love.

Nothing in this world
has only one meaning,
goes only by
one name.

The love I hold for you
and the love I hold for the stars above
cannot be compared;
but it is love I feel.

Untitled doesn't mean the
feelings are non-existent;
does not mean I feel nothing.

We, as a whole, are imperfectly crafted
by the hands of love.
One of the first things we are
exposed to in our first moments
of life,
is love.

Though I cannot
feel you,
hear you,
or see you every second of the day,
I am still able to closely hold the love I feel for you
in my heart.

Love.

Something so fragile
yet boundless
is hard to put into a
few words.

Here are
fragments of my love on paper.

All of it is
untitled for you.

No hidden desires.
No lust.

Just love
that remains undefined,
untitled
only ever for you.

By Jaliyah Austin

Thoughts

I wish you didn't have to go.

I wish you could have stayed.

I want you here with me.

I want you to come back.

I want to ease your pain,

So that you would...

Be happy again like...

When you were little.

I miss your smile...

The one you used to have.

I miss all the conversations we had.

I want more time to talk about everything.

I liked that we always stayed up late...

So that we could talk about life.

By Ka Brewer

The Game

The ball flew high through the air
Everyone in the stadium, a blank stare
As the ball inched closer
The fans ready, for that goal, for the gophers

The keeper, on his line
He leaped in the air, after quite some time
The ball grazed, off his fingertips
But the ball slides and slips

Into the goal, as the crowd roared
To the sidelands the players ran toward
Screaming and celebrating, all over the field
In celebrating the team crest revealed

The refs whistle blew as the ball kicked off
As the away manager scoffed
The other team surging
The final whistle near emerging

The keeper picked it up and threw
As the whistle for the end finally blew
The crowd erupted
The coach grunted

The two managers shook hands
As fans stayed in the stands
There it was, the trophy
First to lift, Marcus Jacobi

They went in order one by one
As they saw the setting sun
After, running into the tunnel
The fans left, no trouble

The game was over, as they cheered
The team, became most feared
As the owner hit the lights
For the team, a great night

By Weston Garrison

Ocean

Her eyes

The color of coffee, as energizing as the treasured cup

Bring me

In closer to her face, like a strong riptide in the swift ocean

We kiss.

By Quinn Kimmett

Im fine

As I wipe my tears away, wash my hands, and fix my clothes I open the bathroom door and put a smile on my face. I walk back into the classroom being my humorous self trying to make others happy, when deep down I'm not happy myself. I only wanted to make others happy because i don't want anyone to feel the way i feel, unwanted, left out, and a second choice. As I undoze I realize I'm maybe 1 page or half a page behind . If only people knew the way I think during class or how I feel when I'm with my friends.

By Gema Munoz

ADULT FINALISTS

Anger, Shame, Softness and Other Feminine Experiences

All I will ever have is this body
stitched together with moonbeams
my mother's first gift to me

It's only kind to share
and so my body
became her journal

Where she buried her anger in my bones
her grief behind my eyes
and her power behind my teeth

I chipped her words off with my nails
and hid them in the junk drawer
next to all the other things I hold onto but never use

I've only known how to be loved in convenient ways
to make my callouses soft
while the furnace of my anger blazes

Sometimes when my gaze slides out of focus
I can see the mosaic
of all the women that came before me

A body is a strange thing to be confined to
when my history
stretches so far beyond me

Maybe I'll lace my mother's words
onto the clothesline
for the butterflies to land on

Perhaps the sun will celebrate
our truths laid bare
while I revel in the way
grass feels against my skin

By May Dang

Pantoum for when I last saw you

Putting us back the way they found us —
sweet song all around you,
the chance to dream it all again.
We pause at the hedge of peonies,

sweet song all around. You,
lifted from the valley by morning light
pause at the hedge of peonies,
a cloud burrowing down to sleep.

Lifted from the valley by morning light
I name stars for you in the planetarium,
clouds. Burrowing down to sleep,
sutured to the present,

I name a star for you. In the planetarium
putting you back the way I found you —
sutured to the present.
The chance to dream it all again.

By Ally Eden

Diez Consejos for *Chicano Survival in the 21st Century (en Spanglish):

Uno: Some things never change. Use *usted* when addressing *tu abuelos*, and make sure to stand when you do. *Nana* walked from *Sonora* to Springer, New Mexico. *Tata* enlisted in the Army, shipped to Okinawa *para papeles*. *Respeto, cabrón*.

Dos: In keeping your "hard" appearance, avoid *Mariachi* and *Morrissey* music; they will always make you cry. *Linda Ronstadt, también*.

Tres: When you see a *vato* drinking a *Michelob Ultra* while you're drinking a *Tecate*, *sin chistes*. *Tú también* will be a diabetic *un día*. *Vámanos todos los borrachos!*

Cuatro: Understand and accept, *Nana's chankla* will haunt you in your dreams for the rest of your life. But know it's because she loved you *con todo corazón, pero bastante, travieso!*

Cinco: *La Llorona* does indeed exist, *pero no es una puta*. Instead, she's another manifestation of your *machismo*, much scarier than any *cucuy*. *Cuidado hombre, y no hacen bruto*.

Seis: *Cuándo un gabacho dice "dog,"* they are probably talking about their pet, *pendejo, cálmate!* No need for *chingasos*, they are not "dogging" you, *chingón! Recuerdo número cinco*.

Siete: Get used to being called "Hispanic" wherever you go. The person saying it is trying. They are also trying to look you in the eye as you look down to the ground, *tu tierra*, not theirs.

Ocho: No matter how late it is *cuándo llegan a tu casa*, shine your shoes after the long day and put them back in the box. *Mañana, nosotros, tu gente*, will be watching *y ya tú saves, ven listos*.

Nueve: *Tu Mamá, La Virgen de Guadalupe, y Mamá Cósmica* continue to watch over you and protect you *todo tiempo*. *Nunca hacen solo, Cholo*. Don't forget it.

Diez: When you honor your sweetheart with a tattoo, *la marca* may be the only thing permanent. So, make sure the ~~Old English~~ lettering *es más firme, payaso triste*.

**Chicano* (n) an American of Mexican origin or descent.

By Fortino (Tino) Gomez

Anchored

I've been heavy
lately, tethered to grief.
I'd like to be weightless
freeflying, floating, breezy
airy clouds my companions
maybe I can be both—a
stringed balloon, moved
by the breeze—not
carried off by
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8/26/23

by Janna Madsen

The Oldest Human Footprints in North America

were found while following the tracks of a living boy who had wandered off from his parents among the shifting dunes of what was once the shore of Lake Otera – the lake itself now lost to wind and sun and time, the humming sands. The searchers left these prints to follow those of the lost boy, returning to them only when he was found and restored safe to his parents, perhaps running toward them, jumping into their arms, the wind sifting sand into his prints as he leapt out of them. Only then did rangers return to the prints from the children who played barefoot on the banks of the lake at a time when mastodons and woolly mammoths roamed the earth with them – tracks left when tiny feet pressed into mud, the contours of heel and toes and what is stretched between. The shallow kettles of their weight render how they ran and leapt in puddles, the water splashing up around them, the smallest among them still with unformed arches. The fossils show there were older children too, teens caught mid-stride between child and adult. And off to the side, a mother with her infant on one hip, watched. We know this because of the angle of the one foot and the way it pressed deeper into the soil on the side where she carried the weight of her child. There are no puddles here in this time where wind shuffles through grains of gypsum and little rain falls that might seep in with minerals to fix the prints of those who wander the white sands of these dunes – but that not-so-distant day, when two parents followed the vanishing tracks of their son, their voices calling out, the wind racing away with their tongues – that day will abide imprinted on the face of all their knowing – a dark floater in each eye, visible when they gaze into the sun.

By Kelly Vande Plasse

ADULT HONORABLE MENTIONS

Anxiety

Sharp rays of sun glisten from sky light windows on
Plastic combustible tables supporting slanted posters
With raindrop balloons tied to their wobbly legs
Bodies dressed in their absolute best greys and blues
Beneath the balcony ambition sits on ripped leather couches

Handrail at the top of the stairs gripped in a fist
Heartbeats ricochet through the throat, stomach, thigh
A single strand of hair trapped in a cracked corner of the mouth
Cemented by frigid sweat resting on a warm face

Fervent voices skip like radio station static
Unbroken week-old loafers scuff the tile floor
Thunderous vents tremble above unceasing

Freshly inked applications and résumés blend with
Aromas of complimentary ham subs and flat sprite

Metallic gushes from gnawed cheeks

By Mikayla Braden

Seven-Card Bravado

Old people filled with wisdom? The best years of our lives?
Octogenarians — who are, *ipso facto*, gerontology experts —
know better. Me, my sweet Bobby, friends, relatives,

some of them slipping into their 90s, for god's sake, all
immersed in the shock of loss and more loss. We swagger
when someone notices us, stand straight, play the hand

we've been dealt — seven-card bravado, mourn our erstwhile
selves in private. With loss come unwelcome flourishes:
growths here, hairs there, spots like lackluster tattoos;

stiff knees are wooden, swollen, ankles and lower legs
stained blue, as though invaded by Pine Beetles. Our
bodies, we learn, have minds of their own. Octogenarians

swim in the far swamps of the aging curve, the drop-off
point of the birth-to-death spectrum. Like excited, fearful
flat-earthers peering over the sharp edge of their earnest

map, we awake each day as wary actuaries, chart new
pains, jettison yesterday's optimism.
No regrets, we say. Happy hour every day.

By Esther Griswold

Hiding Place of the Powder

*(dedicated to our early
Colorado pioneers*

Cottonwoods reek of gunpowder –
sulfuric and metallic. Cold blood
leaching a fur trapper's cache
rotten of boughs, rocky by river
cascades long foreboding howl,
desolate decomposing ancient heart

seething sacramental, ghastly heart
bitter with damp heavy gunpowder
spoiled from grim ancestral; blood
acid in a dilapidated deserted cache
dark wagon trails marry dreadful river
erodes decaying wooden wheels howl

unrelentless. Splashing rapids howl
growling, down, that domestic heart
stashed sour and gritty gunpowder
barrels abandoned – rich in blood
curdling an anxious lineage cache:
fine soft beaver furs, wagon the river

;moans the *mightyfast!* surging river
deafening white - noise foretelling howl
splinters, wooden carriage built heart
raw with ! exploding! gunpowder
mangled dank fur matted blood
wrath of the lost sought cache .

Re-memory flickers, shadowed cache
reveals unruly amongst dusky river,
soulfully emitting a sad doleful howl
submerged glimmer – gleaming heart
black; stowed secluded gunpowder
descending upon the woods, on blood

stains heritable – pulsing thick blood
brackish in washedaway cache
exposed willow, roots moss along river
hoarse from)echoed(forsaken howl
awakened. Dormant this eddy heart
rupturing white/flash of gunpowder ;

gunpowder flares. Our tainted blood
buried; cache stagnant by savaged river
incessant howl avenges , smoldering hearts

By Thomas Ivory, Jr



HOWL OF THE HEARTS

Thank you for your participation.

Special thanks to the poetry committee.

We hope to see you next year!

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