

*Monsters, Zombies, and Addicts: Poems*, by Gwendolyn Zepeda (Arte Público Press)

reviewed by Alyssa Godina

*Monsters, Zombies, and Addicts: Poems* is a poem collection written by Bayou City's first Poet Laureate, Gwendolyn Zepeda, and published by Arte Público Press, the leading publisher of contemporary and recovered works by U.S. Hispanic Authors. Zepeda is the author of three novels: *Houston, We Have a Problema*, *Lone Star Legend*, and *Better With You Here*. She also has published a poetry collection, *Falling in Love with Fellow Prisoners*, and a short story collection, *To the Last Man I Slept with and All the Jerks Just Like Him*. The poems within *Monsters, Zombies, and Addicts: Poems* are divided into 4 sections: Addicts and Obsessions, Monsters and Warriors, Zombies and the Bitten, and Animals and Nature.

Zepeda's observations of mundane affairs and the troubles that linger in her life are spun into unique poems. She is inspired by any event or small detail that refuses to leave her mind and keeps her up at night. Instances with discrimination, drug dealers, anxiety, ex-lovers, breakups, drunk guys singing karaoke, and young girls being sexualized make up these thoughts that haunt her. She illustrates the graveness of reality while flirting with the reader's imagination as seen in "Five O'Clock" where she writes, "Behind her eyes, the scenes / are red and wasps buzz in / her ears, her steps are muggy." Her imaginative language within the poems create an entirely new perspective to consider regarding ordinary, everyday activities such as receiving dental work as in "New Teeth": "I didn't get to talk. Because I lay there as a canvas. A canvas that / can hear its artists working." The theme of individuality continues in the form of the poems as each one is structured differently from the one before, ranging from abrupt, straight to the point poems ("Blue Eyeliner", "Dog Walk", and "Unspecified

Design Anxiety”) to long, flowing narrative poems (“New Teeth”, “Aunt Sylvia”, “Recipe for Fun”).

Zepeda shares her life and introspection with the readers through the poems as she explores the world of what haunts her and faces the monsters that manifest in her life. There is solace and support to be found in her poems of heartbreak, hope, and distress. This collection is for anyone who is no stranger to the struggles of everyday life and has a few monsters lingering within their own life.. She provides insight on how to face their troubles so that “the devils won’t follow you anymore”.