

Hot Chocolate is—  
the boom-boom of my pulse,  
the flowers of my brief fainting  
spells.

\$4.00

# PECAN GROVE R E V I E W

the boom-boom of my  
pulse,  
the flowers of my brief  
fainting spells,  
the warmth of  
imagination,  
the Spanish tongue that  
huuummms  
inside me,

own the hall minding my own business  
walks up and Richard's the type of guy you  
k to because if you don't he'll just follow you  
and he won't leave you alone and you can  
walk down stairs, in and out of buildings,  
Richard won't take the hint because he'll just  
keep on walking and keep on following you

## Volume I - Spring 1996

on coming and coming like the Energizer  
you can run but you can't hide from him and I  
to the sky and scream, "why," but the an-  
o be believed because you see he's Richard.



# PECAN GROVE REVIEW

St. Mary's University  
San Antonio, Texas

Volume I ■ Spring 1996

PECAN GROVE  
REVIEW

St. Mary's University  
San Antonio, Texas

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# Pecan Grove Review

## EDITORS

Lynnette Gonzales  
Gilberto Lucero  
Darren Meritz  
Michaela O'Brien  
Charles Pettit  
Maggie Solomon  
Kathleen Sturgeon

## COVER ART

Charles Pettit

## FACULTY ADVISOR

Diane G. Bertrand

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**MERIDITH ALVAREZ**

**KISS**

no thinking  
just feeling  
body heat  
arms  
legs  
hands  
neck  
Oh neck  
eyes closed  
not knowing  
vulnerability  
warm breath  
lips touch  
tension throughout body  
slowly  
covering body like glove  
suddenly relaxed  
shiver down spine  
pulse rises  
windows steam  
sheepish grin

DIANE G. BERTRAND

## BLUE WATERS

*For my father-in-law, Nick P. Bertrand*

In this picture, your tanned face  
is wrinkled from year-round fishing.  
Your blue eyes are lightened by wisdom,  
skimming the surface like salt foam.  
Your voice comes from smoky pipes,  
scratching over the words.

I recall the nights I caught you  
watching baseball on television and  
listening to another game on the radio at the same time.  
Easily you could tell me what team,  
what inning, who's batting,  
and what mistakes in statistics  
each announcer just made. Amazing.

You bought funny birthday cards and  
wore a bowling shirt that read, *Nick's Chicks*.  
Family birthdays and Sunday bowling were ritual.  
You made sure a visitor never left your living room  
without leaving a signature and note  
in your *Guests* book.

I still know that squeeze of your hand and  
your dry kiss off my cheek.  
And I still know the surprise of pain when I write about  
our last visit together in your hospital room.

I wish you could share the little boy  
who bears your name.  
He is my squiggly worm baby, my newt boy,  
and now my fisher son.

His father stands beside him in the salty surf,  
embraced by moving waters.

My thoughts ebb and flow between the two Nicks  
I love now and stories I've been told of two Nicks  
who fished many blue waters ago.

I still carry you with me  
like my son carries your old tacklebox.

When I unlatch a clasp, I touch the different compartments  
inside myself holding memories of you.

## I, THE CAMERA

It was one of those moments ripe for a picture:  
Father, son, daughter in a backyard setting.  
Under ice blue skies and creamy clouds,  
father, son, and daughter worked together  
in the patchy grass, digging to plant.

With a red sandpail shovel, my daughter tips up  
clumps of caliche and gobs of mud.  
Nicky-boy has a yellow plastic shovel his size to  
follow his Daddy's digs. The boy is mime  
and shadow of Daddy, who rotates between an iron  
shovel and a two-handle digger in order to  
dig a deep, wide rectangle.

Our little girl ends her pat-smooth-pat  
to wander off for a rock  
(like one she's seen on visits to Papaw's grave).  
Nicky-boy, bored with shoveling,  
kicks through the mound.  
He has discovered a hill to some imaginary land.  
Daddy gauges with an eye and plunges  
deeper into the earth.

He remembers that bold pup who scaled the fence and  
went traveling for two days only to woof,  
"Good morning" with a thief's rope still dangling  
from its furry, huggable neck.  
He recalls his fawny companion who  
grew older, mated, grayed,  
and would have enjoyed sunning its balls  
on a day like today.  
He digs a deeper, wider, rectangle . . .

I cower inside, waiting, watching.  
I band-aid her scrape off a stone  
I hand out the body bag  
I glimpse the stiff, perpetual pose before it's covered and  
planted.

It was one of those moments ripe for a family album:  
Father, son, and daughter in the backyard  
working together on a family project.  
Their efforts now rectangle in the grass;  
a child's scribble marking Jabber on a jagged, flat stone.

KATHERINE FORBRICH

INNER VOICE

You were a voice that once haunted my mind  
you would call me stupid, a fat slut  
and control my every thought.

At times you excited me.

"Look at the scale,

you only have ten more pounds to loose."

No matter how my stomach roared

you kept me from eating

when you let me eat

you made me eat a lot

in secret.

One handful after another

then, as if you had control over my limbs

you hunched me over a porcelain commode

and forced my finger down my throat

The joy I felt when the food

shot out of my mouth

I stared at it

floating in the water

as if it was some great masterpiece

and you reminded me how stupid and fat I was

you gave me a deep down desire to die.

You have been gone some time now.

my hair has grown back

I have meat covering my bones

sometimes, in my insanity I miss you

but I pray to God you never return.



# LYNNETTE GONZALES

## THE FACE OF AN ENEMY

Eyes are mud  
covering a rain-drenched grave,  
piercing my soul with an  
icicle stare under  
skeptical slashes of coal.

Nose turns up and away  
from a rancid smell of  
failures, undeserving  
moments of success, flaring  
nostrils with mocking scorn.

Lips slide into a sarcastic  
smirk slapping my life  
with its insulting sneer,  
parting for the lashing  
of a forked-tongue.

Here's an expression worthy of  
the abusive attitude.  
The face of an enemy holds  
my gaze. The mirror's  
reflection stands alone.

# THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

*For Jerrett Millan*

Voices echo with  
promises to walk ahead.  
Lifeless one-way streets  
offer several  
possibilities,  
none taken  
to futures as priceless as  
dreams once shared.

Proud steps taken with  
head held high,  
hopes exposed until  
potholes swallow souls  
before  
minds change.  
Trips and falls  
cancel the travel.

Walking exhausts spirits  
longing flight leaving  
failures behind  
empty of essence  
wrong.  
Footprints fade  
as tears fill  
remaining memories.

Left staring at  
the road not taken  
only impressions  
flood angry minds  
mourning  
bastards who  
gave up too soon  
but too late.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Harsh  
Bitter  
Nothing but hate in her voice  
Hostile despise  
For me.

After four tries, the engine finally roars.

It's all my fault.  
What's the use?  
Why live on in the misery?  
Why not end it all  
For both of us.

It screeches to a halt.

I have no purpose  
Except to cause anguish  
Of need  
Pain  
And death.

It jerks its way to the stop sign.

I'm not worthy of this  
Not life.  
I deserve neverending darkness  
Painful  
And equal to my life.  
Loud knocking rocks its frame.

I'm not worthy of her love  
Or kindness.

I deserve to die.  
Destroy the cause.  
Set her free.

Without reason, it stops.

Good-bye . . . forever.

One final crank, and the car stalls.

MONICA M. GONZALEZ

## ADIVINA . . .

*Adivina de donde soy . . .*

Mi piel, me dicen, es cafe con leche.

Cafe oscuro es mi corto pelo.

Alta no soy y me acusan de estar en los huesos.

*Adivina de donde soy . . .*

Pregunta el señor de la migra,

"Are you an American?"

Digo, "Yes!"

Duda algo; me mira mas de cerca y sin apartar  
su mirada repite: "Are you an American?"

Le contesto, "I said yes."

Finalmente me deja cruzar el puente.

Vengo de una familia de cuatro hermanos,

mis padres y una perrita, "La Pepper."

Papa me habla en ingles, y mama?

Mama en espanol

*Adivina de donde soy . . .*

La maestra nos dice: "No Spanish here —  
forget about it!"

Pero llega el recreo!

Alli jugamos, reimos, nos escapamos

en espanol, o por lo menos, en "Spanglish."

La maestra nomas se nos queda viendo.

Voy a la iglesia catolica San Lucas,

alli, "La Morenita," Ntra. Sra. de Guadalupe,

nos cuida desde su santuario.

Celebramos las Posadas y "Christmas Day,"  
las Pascuas y el "Easter Bunny,"  
el Cinco de mayo y el "Fourth of July."

*Adivina de donde soy . . .*

Mi tierra no es nada mas "the U.S."  
Es America, es Mexico, es Texas.  
Nos llaman hispanos, chicanos, mexico americanos.  
Para nosotros, "the third world of America,"  
la frontera, es nuestro hogar.

Prefiero los huevos rancheros a los "scrambled eggs."  
Mama nos deleita con menudo picante,  
humeantes frijoles, fajitas, arroz, posole...  
ay, todo tan riquisimo!  
Desde chiquitos aprendimos que  
"con buen hambre no hay mal pan."

*Adivina de donde soy . . .*

Soy ciudadana Americana, y vivo en los Estados Unidos.  
Me enorgullezco al decir esto!  
Pero hay algo mas, algo que necesitas saber.  
Quiero decirte que mi nombre es  
"Monica" en lugar de "Monica."  
Quiero que comprendas el porque de  
"Mexican American" y no solamente "American."  
Quiero que aceptes que "baseball, hot dogs and apple pie"  
no satisfacen mi "sueno Americano."

Ahora, mirame una vez mas  
Y adivinaras de donde soy.

## GUESS WHERE I AM FROM...

*Guess where I am from . . .*

My skin, they tell me, is like coffee with milk.

Dark brown is my short hair.

I am not tall and I am told I am thin as a rail.

*Guess where I am from . . .*

The INS officer asks, "Are you an American?"

I say, "Yes!"

Skeptical, he looks at me more closely and

without taking his eyes off me he asks again,

"Are you an American?"

I answer, "I said yes."

He finally allows me to re-enter my homeland.

I am from a family of four siblings,

my parents and a dog, "La Pepper."

Dad speaks to me in English, and Mom?

She talks to me in Spanish.

*Guess where I am from . . .*

Our teacher tells us: "No Spanish here —

forget about it!"

But recess comes around!

Then we are free to play, to laugh, to escape

in Spanish, or at the very least, in "Spanglish."

Our teacher just stares at us.

I go to St. Luke's Catholic Church;

there, "La Morenita," Our Lady of Guadalupe,

watches over us from her sanctuary.

We celebrate las Posadas and Christmas Day,

Easter Sunday and the Easter bunny,

Cinco de mayo and the Fourth of July.



*Guess where I am from . . .*

My land is not only the U.S.

It's America, it's Mexico, it's Texas.

They call us Hispanics, Chicanos, Mexican Americans.

For us, the "third world of America,"  
the border, is our home.

I prefer "huevos rancheros" to scrambled eggs.

Mom delights us with spicy menudo, steaming beans,  
fajitas, rice, posole . . . it's all so tasty!

Ever since we were little we learned that  
even "bad" food can satisfy the hungry person.

*Guess where I am from . . .*

I am an American citizen, and I live in the United States.

I am proud to say this!

But there's something more, something you should know.

I want to tell you that my name is

"Monica" and not just "Monica."

I want you to understand why I say

"Mexican American" and not simply "American."

I want you to accept that "baseball, hot dogs and apple pie"  
won't satisfy my American dream.

Now, look at me once more,  
and you will know where I am from.

GLENN HUGHES

## CRAFTSMAN

*For Ken Powell*

I

The craftsman, shaping the wood  
with stained hands, knows it has its own life.  
Filaments of metal scrap have theirs,  
and hand tools passed from friend to friend,  
and also the soggy green islands,  
appearing by day and disappearing by night.

II

Part of the process is windblown nightmare,  
emerging from it with cracked lips,  
telling the tale, lifting a beer,  
squeezing the concertina. Wind scattered  
the eleven disciples who had stayed afloat,  
but in the end they were together, drinking and singing  
the ballad of the risen mariner,  
the music wrung from havoc.

III

It's ten years since you drove us over Chinook Pass  
with our stacks of boxes of peaches and tomatoes  
from the fields near Yakima,

Suzy up front, me and Harriet crouching  
in the dark of your '46 Dodge panel truck,  
and tired and giddy, you saw

the once in a lifetime chance to glide up  
an unfinished freeway spur that hung in midair,  
and we soared, and stopped at the tip

where you cut the engine. And there we were,  
poised over the rain-soaked valley, exhausted,  
pointed nowhere. And you laughed with gleaming eyes.

#### IV

Two trucks in the snow, battling it out,  
then banging up Guemes Hill at midnight  
through the frozen evergreens.

Boredom was never a match for you,  
and the salty coil of meanness  
never able to suck you in.

Floating your cabin across Guemes Channel  
straight for the mark of surprise,  
you give the measure of the possible, now as then.

## EARLY WINTER

The rain falls day after day,  
the drowned leaves turn darker and darker.  
I read and reread your letter,  
as if its beautiful words could change things.

FRANCESCA LOPEZ

PROUD?

Why can't I speak Spanish?

A scared  
Young  
Mexican girl

Unable to utter a word of English  
New to the country

America

The other children  
Made fun of her  
Blamed  
Their  
Accidents on her

Punished  
For wrongs that  
She did not do  
Unable to defend herself  
She swore to teach  
Her children English

Sacrificing her  
Native tongue  
For the fear of  
Her children's ridicule  
My mother's mother  
Balanced pride  
Between two countries

## THE DEADLY SIN

Amidst the darkness of the forest  
We stumble through this unexplainable irony

In The Beginning

We think it nothing more  
Than a childish struggle for  
An uncovering light;

Control

Unconsciously reaching out,  
The trunk is opened.

The sweet taste of the  
Ripely picked apple  
Becomes bitter.

Rivers that once charmed  
Are now fully uncovered.

The demons are we who  
Unwillingly abide,

Swimming in the juices of the  
Sensational fruit,

Feasting on its meat,  
Never satisfied until

We reach the core,  
Only to find that we

Have choked on the seeds.

GILBERTO LUCERO

## HOT CHOCOLATE

Hot Chocolate is—  
the boom-boom of my pulse,  
the flowers of my brief fainting spells,  
the warmth of imagination,  
the Spanish tongue that huuumms  
inside me,  
liquid love  
making,  
finger  
painting  
all over my naked body,  
the penetrating spirit that  
dwells between my thighs,  
kneading dough,  
greasing a cake pan,  
bubble baths,  
a mid-day nap,  
yellow mangos,  
kaleidoscopes,  
accidental touching,  
real life fairy tales,  
and freshly baked poems,  
it is the  
boom-boom  
cha-cha boom  
that makes me want to  
drink more.

## MORDIDA

Muerdes mi corazón como si fuera un placer de los dioses.

¿Crees que en mis lágrimas nacen las estrellas?

¿Encuentras delicia en mi tristeza?

¿No escuchas las palabras que salen de mi boca  
enamorada?

Tu me intoxicas a querer.

Querer tanto y todo.

Querer tan simplemente sentir el temblor de tu respiro.

Querer tu amor volcánico debajo de mí en una cápsula de  
amor tan fuerte y firme que no se puede equivocar su  
potencia.

Dime que sí, para conquistarte.

O dime que no, para suplicar otra mordida.



## **BITE**

You bite into me as if it were  
a pleasure of the gods.

Do you think that stars are born in my tears?

Do you find my sadness delicious?

Don't you hear the words coming  
out of my infatuated mouth.

You intoxicate me to love.

To need you completely and endlessly.

To want to feel the tremble of your breathing.

To want your volcanic love beneath me in  
a capsule of love so firm and strong that its  
potential is undeniable.

Tell me yes so I can conquer you.

Or no, so I can plea for you to bite into me once  
more.

# THE ONE

This was the one. This one was finally it.

Marco, who was in and out of love on a daily basis, who puts his heart into envelopes and sends it off to girls hoping one will respond, hoping one will return his love. Marco who gets his haircut the way his current girl friend wants it. Marco, who has had a million hair cuts in his short, twenty-two years of life.

They walked into the bar, Marco with Anna. Like a young married couple from an old black and white movies. Perfect! Perfect! They sat at their usual table, the one in the corner where the light could hardly penetrate the smoke. Marco knew what he was going to do. He was going to rip his heart out and give it to her. It was his gift to her, it was supposed to be forever.

He called the waitress over and in a few minutes they were sipping on beer and feasting on a bowl of popcorn. But tonight was different. Tonight the dim light, coming from the ancient light bulb, made her look evil. Her lips twisted. Her face wrinkled like when you leave a handkerchief in your pocket for years. No warmth, ugly.

But tonight was the night he would declare his love. Marco crushed up his fear and tossed it behind him.

He told Anna "this is me, this is you," he placed two pieces of popcorn together, "and this in love," and placed another piece on the furthest corner of the table. "Would you like to get to LOVE with me?" Marco drew his hand out as if he were releasing a dove into the night sky. There it was, the formula for happiness, for love right in front of him, in popcorn.

He stared into her eyes waiting for her warmth to come alive again. But it was like looking into a vacant parking lot.

Anna in between chuckles said, "Marco, get real. We've

only been seeing each other for eleven days!" Her peeling laughter smeared his declaration of love all over him, as she went on puffing on her cigarette.

Marco felt the darkness of the room spinning around his eyes. Anna, his girl, The One, the girl he had worked so hard to get, the one he would do somersaults for, the girl he would die for rejected in one unsightly-common-petty look, a look that could spoil milk, a look that ripped his heart out for him.

So there he was, sitting alone, with her. Another unfulfilled relationship under his belt. Marco sat up, grabbed love, devoured it, and downed it with a mug of beer.

KELLY MAJORS

## CANTALOUPE

Maybe she found him irresistible because he smelled like cantaloupe.

Odd, she thought, since she was allergic to watermelon and honeydew. Sometimes bananas.

Holding his heavy head in her hands, she tested him for ripeness, careful not to bruise.

He was hard and green for awhile, so she kept him nested in her blue glass fruit bowl

until the flies found him, and then she remembered him too and took two Benadryl before

plunging knife first into his darker skin, tasting him orange, waiting for the familiar prickle

where her tonsils used to be.

## DREG

he was everywhere  
on the plane & in her pants  
(tight, complicated places)

she saw him once in a white balloon anchored by an  
aimless clown,  
tautly bobbing from his pale limp wrist  
and cratered on the crescent moon? or  
encased deeper in oozy river mud?

remember.

she squirted him tersely with lemon  
and solemnly ate him on a cracker with pepper and too  
much horseradish.

then saw his grin in the doughy brown ankles of the  
woman on the bus  
and cursed him as he gaped through dense dregs at the  
bottom of her coffee cup

feeling precariously insane, but bright with his company,  
she was no longer alone

# TWISTER MARQUISS

## POSTSCRIPT TO EARTH

Do you hear it?  
Dancing among the clouds of indigo  
The beating of the drums  
Once it sang,  
But tonight it speaks.

Do you feel fear?  
Blue accents of Violent conversation  
Hear the roar of the sky, furious  
Ask it to share its anger with you  
You are not afraid.

Cold  
Cold is the night  
Lit by the flame of gods  
On the newly formed seas of wet grass  
Departing candles flicker in the clouds

The sky sleeps now  
The wind brushes gently through the trees  
There are no birds or crickets  
Only the night and you.  
Appreciate the conversation . . .

A cricket  
Now rest, for the gods do.

EARL McDONALD

## SKY WARRIOR

The corners of his eyes are deep ruts,  
wrinkles earned searching between sunbeams.  
His temples are the color of the cannon powder.  
He hates war,  
but it's his job.  
Like a war-horse that shies away from the sound of gun-  
fire,  
he has no purpose when the guns are silent.  
The warrior, who hates war,  
only finds meaning in battle.

## IN JANUARY

Stone gray clouds drape the tombstone skyline.  
Ash specked snow blankets the frozen streets.  
Pale shadows trudge on slush trails.  
Short, somber days blend into the night.  
The wind whispers,  
it's  
winter in Berlin.



DARREN MERITZ

## PAPA AND THE HONEY

After travelling on my nearsighted horse for what seemed like forever, I took up work in a meat market in the North; my task was to slice, one might say, and I rented a loft that was a few stories up in the town square, where I could look out and see all sorts of bustlings about at dusk. It's strange, because I remember going into a few of the shops when I got into the North, and everything was sort of musky. Cobwebs and dust all over. Everywhere.

It was always dusk in the North, now that I think about it. It seemed so old. There weren't ever really any children around. And if you saw them they wouldn't be playing or anything. Nothing like hopscotch. But that's not to say that they were particularly sad.

I don't exactly know where Charlie came from. That is, he never really brought it up. But he was the boss at the meat market. I imagine his father was boss and the father before him. That's kind of how it worked in the North. Not exactly passing down a legacy, but more like security. What was done was the way it was done. And Charlie did it that way and so would his sons and daughters, when their times came.

Charlie never really said much. Maybe nobody from the North said much, but I remember Charlie and I remember at first all he ever told me was to make sure the cuts were even. The cuts had to be even in the North. According to Charlie, that is. When I asked him why he wouldn't answer, and I asked him often. I don't know if that's because he didn't like to talk about it or if he just didn't know.

"Sharp and clear, Charlie?"

"Straight and precise," He'd correct me. "Always straight and precise, boy, and not so many questions."

It seemed like it should be sharp and clear to me, in any

case. But I did what he said, for awhile.

If there'd been days and nights I'm sure I would've worked many. But there weren't. And if for days on end you've ever sliced what seems like a thousand sides—rump and hindquarters included—you'd probably begin to object, too. And it's not that I have a bad work ethic; I'm not lazy or anything, but it was always dusk and I couldn't see so many cuts. Blood and gristle. Always at dusk. Always straight and precise.

So I began to question Charlie. Again and again I asked him about the point of keeping these cuts so clean and even, keeping them so straight and precise, and he'd always say, "Don't ask. In the North we don't ask these kinds of questions."

"But why not, Charlie? Why so straight and precise?"  
And he wouldn't answer.

Then one time, after I must have asked and asked, Charlie got real red in the face and stuck a cleaver in the workbench—in the workbench right near where I was cutting, and without really moving his teeth he uttered, "Because Papa said."

So I didn't ask him again for awhile. Blood and gristle. Always at dusk. And I guess he commended me for that because soon Charlie opened up a little bit. He told me he had a flat not too far from where mine was. And he saw, too, what I saw from my window.

So we'd sit and play chess a whole bunch. As it seems, that was all there was to do. Knight to Queens bishop three and the like. And that was okay for awhile. But I was getting bored. So I started asking Charlie about chess, and why we played really. But he never got into it. He'd just move and say, "It's your move."

And I moved my piece, but just for his sake. And I imagine he was doing the same—moving because that was the thing to do. Not why or anything, just that Papa probably said to move. Charlie never said it was because that's the way Papa wanted it, but I don't think he ever re-

ally thought about it. I think Papa didn't really want him to think about it.

"Where's the night and day, Charlie?"

"I don't know," and he looked down, "I think Papa said something about it. Something about not needing it."

Papa didn't want him to think about that, either.

"Oh. And what little light we do get? Where does it come from, Charlie?"

"Down South, I think, but I know Papa said we don't need it. So I don't concern myself with it much. Down South isn't too far. Your horse should get you there. But Papa said not to go. Papa didn't even like to talk about it. It's been Papa's conviction, and the Northerners' conviction as well, that in the South, a man-sized candle burns right in the middle of town. And it's the man-sized candle that makes it extra warm, I think, in the South. Extra bright, too, now that I think about it. No one's real hungry from what I understand of the South."

There's something about the North that sure makes it seem old. I can't quite grasp it, but the dusk, and the constant cutting. There's something about it. It's not that I have anything against the North, nothing against its old ways and such. But I got sick of seeing cobwebs and dusk all over the place. Something so mundane. Rote after many, many years. Children neither laughed nor cried. Workers neither prospered nor starved. Not living. Not really dying, either, but just breathing.

And I suppose the Northerners were used to this way, but pretty soon I was choking, and I couldn't really handle all the dusk and cobwebs and such any longer. So I mounted my nearsighted horse, bid farewell to Charlie and the meat market with a hearty handshake and a promise to cross paths again, sometime, and I headed down towards the brightness, until I found myself where the South was.

It was a clandestine operation down there. The Northerners hadn't really known. After all, it was only Papa who had seen the path of light. But it isn't my problem, neces-

sarily, although I didn't exactly know too much about Papa when I rode into the South.

The gates of the South—golden gates. And always open, I might add. And it smelled like polish, the whole town. The roads weren't dusty and to honestly say there wasn't a mark of dust in the place. Cobblestone roads and that smell, as far as I could remember. A smell of polish all the way from the gates up until the man-sized candle in the middle of town, where at the bottom read the inscription: "Papa's not watching."

So maybe he wasn't. I mean, who was I to really say? And in any case, the South seemed kind of tranquil. Kind of tantalizing too, I guess. Younger people. Clear complexions. The whole works. A bottle of wine in the cafe. And then maybe another.

"A sensuous need, perhaps?" the waitress asked.

"The daylight," I said, "It must be convenient for your people to work in such bright light?"

And she grimaced. "Oh yes, work. You must be coming from the North, I gather? Yes the light and the work and all that. But the night . . . a sensuous need? Some honey, perhaps?"

And it had really been a long time since I had any honey. It wasn't like that in the North. I mean, they had honey, but they didn't talk about that and they probably weren't even thinking about it. So it was honey for as long as the evening lasted. As long as the evening ever lasted. And I wished the evening would last forever, but it didn't and over the horizon I saw the sunrise, my lips very sticky. My tongue noxiously sweet.

"We have more honey in the South than anywhere," she told me. "We lavish in our honey, in the evening."

And that's all well and good, I suppose. When the waitress took me around, showing me the South and showing me how excessive the Southern way really was, I sort of got used to that honey. And after awhile, there was nothing I could really do but be like the Southerners. Honey, as I

found out, became a product of the South soon after a young group settled far away from the North. They wanted to be so far away from the dimness that their children would never know about it. The only problem was it was so far away that the Southerners forgot what it was to be without the night and day. And the honey, for that matter.

The waitress escorted me for a long time while I was in the South. And I was quite content, really, forgetting about Papa and what he'd probably say and consuming all the honey I could—all I wanted. And the honey consuming me. The waitress was pleased as punch, most of the time, unless there was a problem getting the honey, which usually wasn't the case, but she got nasty and brutish. And I suppose I did as well, but could hide it a little better.

"Where's it come from? The honey, I mean." I asked the waitress, while in a sticky stupor. And with a slur she said something about the light, and the honey coming from the light. And I heard something real sharp in that, so when the light came, in the daylight I mean, I left her sleeping and went to the candle and asked around. A man in suspenders and a tie told me, while he was taking a break, that it wasn't too hard. "Just a little beeswax and a touch of flame," is what he told me, "and a distilling chamber. The archives have the blueprints, but they don't like to let too many strangers see them."

"And the South? It has this distilling chamber?"

He pulled his pants upward, "Why the South has the largest distilling chamber around," he said, "the South's never to go without honey. Our children will not know what it is to be without honey."

And I believed him at the time. So what was the harm in further indulging myself and the waitress? And we did, as it turns out, evenings on end, until the sun rose. No qualms, albeit for me to complain in the sight of a bit of honey. And no qualms in the waitress either, being she didn't know much beyond the honey.

Then I noticed one evening, when it was particularly

dark and my lips were particularly sticky, that very same man, in suspenders and all, somber and cold. Pale like he had just taken a visit up North.

"That light'll dim real soon, son. I'd get out of here if I were you. Out of here while I still had the chance."

"A problem with the candle?"

"A problem with the flame."

And I paid heed, but I don't know if it was exactly in the best manner. When I went to the archives the first time, the lady was real clear in letting me know that I wasn't allowed to see the blueprints. But when I went for the second time, I just took a little honey, gave her a bit and had some myself, and it was real easy getting inside and seeing how they made the light and how they distilled it to get the honey.

I broke the glass and took the prints. I found a couple more jugs of that honey at the waitress', and I saddled my nearsighted horse just before it seemed like the candle was about to burn out and just before it seemed like the whole town started getting nasty and brutish.

In what would've been a couple of days in the South I was knocking on Charlie's door. He was sleeping, as it turns out, and he didn't take the chain off the door when he first answered. "You've been in the South," Charlie said. "Papa doesn't like the Southern way. Papa doesn't like you around here."

"Come on, Charlie. It's been so long and I've got so much to tell you. It's what the people of the North don't know. It could be better for the Northerners. I've even brought a couple jugs of honey."

And his eyes got a little big, "A couple jugs, you say." He was quiet for a moment, probably not knowing what to do. "You know, Papa wouldn't like that. Papa doesn't take kindly to that honey."

"Yes. But what does Papa know?"

He took the chain off the door. I grabbed the jugs and headed in.

"Papa, as it turns out," Charlie began, "has seen darker days than both you or me. And surely darker days than the Southerners."

"Yeah. Apparently they're in a real bind down there. Candle's burning out or something."

"Papa knew it would happen. That's why the Northerners live as they do. In the eternal dusk, because Papa knew the light would bring honey. And with that honey comes a sickness." Charlie paused. "Two jugs?"

"As it turns out I also got the blueprints. We can build us a still, Charlie. You and me, all the honey we want."

"Papa didn't want his children to see so much dimness. But he'd always remind them of it, because dimness is a good thing not to forget. The only thing is Papa's children didn't teach their own children about the perils of too much brightness, and this thing you say about the candle spells real trouble. Many young and angry people don't understand what it's like to be in the dark."

"Yeah, Charlie. How about I break open one of these jugs?"

"You say you got blueprints?"

**JOHN MOORE**  
**REMEMBERING THE BEATLES**  
**AND A WAR**

I am trying to keep my memories whole,  
before it is too late to reach them.  
For in the deep, lightless lakes of my mind,  
change inexorably comes, at first slowly, but now . . .  
more quickly it seems.

Imaginary voices come raining in the night  
pounding on the rooftop of my head:  
"Hey, Jude . . . don't make it . . . bad."  
But the feeling is all gone now  
and the rain has stopped forever.

Oh, tonight I need a hug.



BARBARA MULLER

UNTITLED

tickle

Tickletickle

Blam!

\*sigh\*

Gesundheit.

FLOYD NICKLEBERRY

WINNIE

The memories flow  
Like the swift water over a dam  
The image of your face with a loving glow  
My Dear Winnie, my Dear Winnie,  
Why did you have to go?  
I can still smell and taste your presence  
The aroma of chicken frying is everywhere  
Tea cakes baking in the oven  
Nothing can compare  
You were there when I fell  
Casting your magic spell  
You never had to speak the words I love you  
The sparkling gleam in your eyes always told the truth  
Your gentle voice soothed my soul  
Oh God! Why did you have to get old?  
Why couldn't I have loved you harder?  
Now you sleep for eternity  
But my Dear Winnie, we will never part  
You are still here  
Tucked away snugly in my heart

## DEATH OF A SOLDIER

The squeal of the engines tells the story  
Down towards the ocean at a rapid pace  
A soldier's death without glory  
Body scattered without a trace  
At least the fish will be happy tonight  
Death stares me in the eye  
Time stands still just as I have heard  
The deep blue water of the water beckons  
Never thought this would be my day to die  
Poised in anticipation of my demise  
My life in review was no surprise

The film rolls with vivid scenes  
Carefree days of yesteryear  
Friends a many and I at play  
Passion for adventure burns inside  
Tough and gritty without a fear  
Army green was for me to wear  
School behind me I raise my hand  
To make my mark in a far off land

To boot camp I went with wide-eyed wonder  
There I met a man with a voice like thunder  
With his firm hand, I was molded anew  
I took the stress and I took the strain  
In any situation I knew what to do  
My newly found knowledge added inches to my chest  
I would fight the enemy with eagerness and zest  
It was with pride and honor that I boarded the plane  
Deep inside I knew things would never be the same  
War would be my ultimate test

The skies in Vietnam were heavy with clouds  
Vietnam, no longer a war story in another soldier's mind  
There I was, it was my time to shine  
Would I succeed or would I fail?  
With my determination, surely I'd be the difference  
As time passed, there were many lessons learned  
How does one handle his own insignificance?

My time is up and I must depart  
Back to the WORLD where rice bugs are not meat  
Where danger doesn't lurk behind every tree  
Where my girl waits with open arms  
Where hamburgers and fries are what I'll eat  
In spite of all the good that lies ahead  
I pause to think of all the dead  
Those who won't see  
Those who won't eat  
Those who won't love  
Ever again  
In Vietnam, I leave a part of me

The plane lurches forward with a roar  
Eyes open with a shock  
Parachute in hand, pilot at the door  
Is this the way it is meant to end?  
Down! Down! The plane descends.

KONISE NOLDEN

**GUILT**

Again, I see his face in all the places  
I do not care to see.  
Once I saw him in the moon;  
he dared to look at me.  
"What are you to me," I say.  
"I am nothing to see," says he.  
"But always, no matter where you go,  
You will be looking at me."  
I sleep with the light on  
to help me forget my bad deed.  
But then I see him looking through the draperies.  
"Oh, stop it now! What have I done?"  
It was not a life, you see.  
It was just a month, no bigger than my fist,  
And I have already forgotten my seed.

# MISERIED

Damn. My brother's dead . . .

# CARLOS PEÑA

## THE HOLY PUNCH

Mayor Hollberd had called the town meeting, knowing full well that the time did not exactly make too many of the folk happy. He did know, however, that the reason for the meeting was one that not many knew about, but those that did felt very strongly about the issue. The situation in question concerned the actions of the local priest, Father Drobney, a former heavyweight boxer who joined the cloth after killing a man in the ring. There had always been some folk who were suspicious of Father since he had come to Littlewitch. Some say he became a priest to escape the mob. The elders here took that rumor to be so true that they switched religions and started attending the Baptist church down the way in Spirndale. There's a little Jewish place across the tracks here in Littlewitch, but nobody went there because this is a rural community where most people survive on pig ranching and pork meat.

Tonight's meeting didn't seem to be affected by that. A small portion of every race, religion, and background of Littlewitch's four thousand crowded into the Littlewitch Catholic Church. I must say it was interesting to watch the people come into this holy place, especially those who were unsure of what to do when they walked in.

Farmer Callanen came in with his wife, but without their little boy, Lance. Rabbi Silverman from the Jewish place came in wearing his beanie, which made Lucy Tillman's baby girl laugh. Old Man Harper was walked in by his boys, Jimmie and Johny. He was dressed the way all of us who grew up in Littlewitch remembered him, dirty old suspenders and uncombed silver hair. Jimmie and Johny were considered by the local girls to be the perfect young country boys, what with their farm grown muscles and all. To the average onlooker those boys really cared for

their pa, but to those who knew Old Man Harper like I did, they could care less if he fell straight down and broke some part of his face . You could even say that even though their bodies were right there holding him, their minds were somewhere other than Littlewitch.

The Perez family were newcomers to Littlewitch. There were all kinds of rumors about them. Minorities are just that in Littlewitch. We got one Mexican family, two single Black parents, and the German guy who's never really around, but likes to spend lots of money on stuff he calls rare antiques, but seems to be the same old everyday stuff around here. They all meet with Father Drobney about once a week. They talk about minority type stuff I guess, whatever that might be. Sometimes I think it must be kinda tough for them, what with none of 'em came here without some kinda rumor getting started by the ol' Garner sisters at tea time. We got a sermon about that from Father one time, but I think that did more harm than good.

Speakin' of those old sisters whose mouths used up more energy than the rest of their bodies, the three of them were sittin' in the back pew talkin' bout how Mr. Freeman, the single Black father, and Ms. Johnson, the single Black mom, belong together. By the look on his face I figure he knew what they were sayin', but was too much the gentleman to tell the old flapmouth windbags to hush up.

On the whole, the Church was full to the brim and everyone was jabber jabberin' about what had happened between Father and Farmer Callanen. I seen some pretty strong emotion on all sides of the issue. I know how I felt about it, but at the time I was more curious about where Sheriff Mann was. The congregation was gettin' pretty restless, and Lucy Tillman's baby girl had got to cryin' somethin' terrible, which made me want to shove my cigar in her mouth just to shut her up.

Just then Father walks in and the place quiets like someone had died or somethin'. He walked in from the back of the Church and turned his eyes to his feet as the



Garner sisters scowled at him with their wrinkly eyes and pointed their bony old fingers at him. Mr. Freeman reached out to pat him on the back as he walked by and whispered somethin' in the Father's ear that made him look up and smile somewhat. That stirred up some people real good. Old Man Harper made an ugly noise as Father passed by him, and his boys looked like they wanted to say somethin' too, but they held back.

He walked up to the front of the Church and never looked up. People were jibberin' and jabberin' and pointin' and such. All the while Father kept his eyes to the ground. He looked like he'd grown some grey hairs on the side of his head, though his hair looked pretty unkept, which was unusual for Father. He was always nice and neat. I noticed the Rosary in his hands, which made me think he was prayin'. The way this crowd was actin' one would figure he needed a prayer or two.

Then Sherrif Mann walked in.

"Well, it's about time," one of the Garners said.

Sheriff walked to the front of the Church and stood next to Father. Father kept his eyes to the ground, and Sherrif didn't do much of anything besides look at him.

"Well," Sheriff finally said, looking at the crowd, "I'm sure most of you here know why you're here. Anyone here who don't?"

"Well, " said Mrs. Callanen, the farmer's wife, "I know what the sisters say, and I know what my husband says, but I want to know what Father Drobney says."

There was unified agreement by the gathering, which made Father look up from his Rosary.

"Well," he said in his Irish accent after taking a deep breath, "I was talking with Ms. Tillman about first communion lessons for her little girl when we heard Lance screaming from across the street. I excused myself to go see what was the matter, because Lance has a tendency to not look out for cars when he crosses the street. I know because of that time I pulled him out from in front of a speed-

ing tourist's car."

"I remember that!" Mr. Freeman yelled from the back.

"Well," Father continued, "I ran around the corner to see Mr. Callanen smack Lance across the face. Now I know that Mr. Callanen is strict on discipline, but I could have sworn I saw him smack Lance closed fisted instead of open handed."

There was a rush of jibber jabber that came out of the crowd. People were sayin' all kinds of things about Farmer Callanen. Father looked relieved.

"Then," he continued, "I ran across the street and tried to pull Lance away from him, when he pushed me down in the street."

"That's when I came around the corner and almost hit Father with my car," my missus burst out.

"After I got up out of the street I felt an anger I hadn't felt in a long time." Father stopped himself and took a deep breath.

"So I punched Mr. Callanen square in the jaw. It was like slow motion. My fist hit his jaw, and I watched his feet leave the ground. He landed with his back on the hood of his car. He slid off the end onto the ground because I had knocked him unconscious."

"I can vouch for the unconscious part," said Dr. Smith. "He had to have his jaw wired because it was broken in two places."

Another burst of jibber jabber came from the crowd.

"Pretty good punch," one of the Harper boys said.

"The reason we're here, people," Sheriff screamed over the chatter, "is because Mr. Callanen is seeking that the town vote to have Father Drobney removed from our Church and sent back to his Diocese. He has made it known that if the town does not grant this request he will file charges against Father, and have him arrested tonight."

More chattering arose.

"I'll say this much," Mr. Freeman spoke out, "if I were in Father's place I would have done the same thing, espe-

cially if he was pushed in front of a car."

"Hog-hockey!" Old Man Harper stood up on his own. "The position of a priest is set. He is supposed to be peaceful and honest and keep his business in the Church. If he tried to come between me and disciplining my boys I would have knocked the man to kingdom come. My family is my business!"

"But that doesn't mean punching him in the face!" I could see Mr. Freeman's Black face turn red as he yelled out. "Lance is only six years old! I'm surprised your boys don't punch you back when you beat them!"

"Keep your place, boy!" Jimmie had to keep his dad from tossing his cane across the pews. Johny put his face in his hands and let out a deep breath.

"If anything," Ms. Tillman yelled, "Father should have tried to calm Mr. Callanen down and take him straight to confession and counseling."

"Hog-hockey!" Mr. Harper cried. "He should have kept to himself."

"A priest has no right to be violent!" Sherrie Garner, the middle sister spoke out. "A priest is a leader, a teacher of the ways of Christ. He should be a pacifist, not a killer! I think that what Drobney did was wrong and out of line!"

Mr. Freeman jumped out of his seat and threw an upset look at her. "He was keeping that little boy from being beat up! The man is not a killer, and I think he is serving as a leader by watching out for Lance!"

"I think he's no example for our children!" Sherrie Garner yelled out. "He betrayed his word to God and this congregation. He's proven himself a blasphemer."

"Well if we're talking about being good leaders and setting good examples," Mrs. Perez spoke out, "What is making Mr. Callanen better than Father Drobney? The man punched his boy in the face in public! Why are we ignoring that?"

"A man has a right to do what he pleases to discipline his children!" Old Man Harper was standing again. "We

should remember that we're not here to prosecute a responsible family man who may have gotten carried away one time, but we need to figure out what to do about Drobney."

Rabbi Silverman stood up and looked over the crowd. That alone shut some people up quick. "All I have to say is that someone's concept of family must be pretty sad when a man of the cloth has to beat some sense into him." With that he left.

"So, what should we do?" Sheriff had finally remembered to take off his hat.

"I say that those of us here should vote. Anyone who ain't here don't care enough!" Old Man Harper shouted.

There was a rush of agreement.

"Okay," Sheriff said, "I guess we should vote on whether or not to have Father removed from our Parish. We'll vote by show of hands. Anyone eighteen or over can vote, don't matter if you're a landowner or not." Mr. Harper made an ugly noise in response.

My missus was asked to count and keep score.

"All those opposed who want to keep him here."

I watched Jimmie Harper raise his hand. His old man grunted at him.

"What, boy?" He stood up and grabbed Johny by the arm. "Come on boy." He looked at Jimmie. "You're no son of mine. Get up, Johny."

Johny stayed in his seat and put his face in his hands.

"Come on, boy, 'fore I swat you with my cane."

"I'll hit you back."

Mr. Harper stood there in awe. The sisters had their mouths hanging wide open. I could see Mr. Freeman smiling.

"I'll swing too." Jimmie stood up and stared his pa square in the eyes.

While Sheriff was busy trying to calm the two down my wife counted the votes.

"He stays."

There was a rush of excitement from the crowd as Ms. Johnson ran up and gave Father a hug. Mr. Callanen stood up from his pew and handed Sheriff a piece of paper.

"Well," Sheriff said, "Father, this is Farmer Callanen's paper to press charges of aggravated assault. This is not an easy thing to say, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to take you in."

There was another burst from the crowd.

"I can't believe this!" Mr. Freeman screamed from his seat.

"This is an insult!" Mrs. Perez added.

"Way it should be." Old Man Harper puffed as Ms. Tillman helped him walk out. "You gonna cuff him or not, Sheriff?"

"Have some decency!" I couldn't help but yell out. "The man is a priest and this is his building."

"This is a man," Sheriff said to me, "and this is the Lord's building. Mr. Callanen may have broken the Lord's law of spare the rod and spoil the child, but Father broke man's law. Until anyone files charges, the Lord will have to punish Mr. Callanen. It's my job to be responsible for Father."

I felt my blood begin to boil as I watched Sheriff put the cuffs on Father and walk him out the front door. To be honest I really couldn't tell what I was doing, but I remember walking out the side doors and finding Old Man Harper waiting and yelling at Father.

I felt my face flush red and my fists burn. Then there was a snap and swish as my arm flew out. I felt a crunch as my fist landed on the old man's face. I felt a great relief as he fell to the ground and bled from his lip.

"You're no father of mine."

Young Jimmie and Johny stayed at my place that night. For the first time in ten years my little brothers slept under the same roof. That night we stayed up late and talked about what happened to Farmer Callanen and what I did to the old man. Eventually we all agreed that they both got

what they deserved.

As for Father, his bail was paid by Mr. Freeman and the Perez family. He got called to his headquarters, whatever that's called. He never preached here in Littlewitch again. I think I heard one of the Garner sisters say that he had been transferred to some all boy's school. He's a boxing coach, and teaches some kind of class at a local university for young couples wanting to get married.

Other'n' that life hasn't changed much here in Littlewitch, savin' that Farmer Callanen don't talk too good no more, and Mr. Freeman and Ms. Johnson did get married at that nice little Baptist Church. Go figure.

CHARLES PETTIT

RICHARD HEAD

I was just walking down the hall minding my own business when Richard Head walks up and Richard's the type of guy you have to stop and talk to because if you don't he'll just follow you while talking to you and he won't leave you alone and you can walk up stairs, and walk down stairs, in and out of buildings, through them and Richard won't take the hint because he'll just keep on talking and keep on walking and keep on following you because he's like the Mummy or Frankenstein's Monster from some old Universal Studios monster movie or something because he just keeps on coming and coming like the Energizer bunny rabbit and you can run but you can't hide from him and I could raise my fists to the sky and scream, "why," but the answer is too simple to be believed because you see he's RICHARD and the Richards of the world are super-than-human and super-than-natural forces and you can walk up stairs and down stairs and in and out and through buildings and he'll be following you but if he isn't following you it's because he's already there waiting for you and he's waiting for me and he's doing it now because you'll turn the corner and he's waiting and waiting and waiting to talk to you about politics and the weather and religion and God only knows what else but he's out there every time I open my door because he lives next to me and I can walk any time of the day to see him cornering the residents and they look at me as if I could charge in to their rescue and whisk them away by lying about how we were going somewhere but I can't because I'll get pulled in too and he'll never let me go, so I run as fast as I can like the other day when he cornered Tammy to show her the "really interesting thing he put on his door" which was only a freaking postcard with a picture of his home town so she said, "great, how

architecturally sound,” and I just laughed as I ran away when I had my chance because I have to steal the moments because he’s coming and I don’t know what to do because he drives me crazy with his talk about sex, politics, religion, the weather, and the architecturally sound, and it’s all got me so bothered that I don’t even watch CNN anymore because I just have to turn to Richard to hear about world events, and sex and politics and religion and the weather and I just go back to my room because he’s unstoppable, an unstoppable beast and I can’t believe the terror I live in and I can’t stand the every day of avoiding useless and painful conversation, so I shot him.



# TENNESSEE RHEA

## RIPTIDE

gliding across each breaking wave  
resting on the crests  
her strength enchanting  
her beauty submerging  
my salted eyes are blind

helpless

trapped in a whirlpool  
an unraveling spin  
dragging me  
drowning me  
drenching my mind  
deeper and deeper i fall

her heart, a starving abyss  
draining my spirit dry  
how i long for the moon to show me the way  
in the wake of this changing tide

## NOT TOO FAST NOT TOO SLOW

the rooster is crowin  
and sausage is sizzlin in my nana's kitchen  
papa's sippin black coffee on the front porch  
and talkin to those bob-whites-

i jump off the devan  
slapping my bare feet against the linoleum floor  
nana burned the biscuits again  
papa says they taste better that way

papa showed me how to sop up  
the that thick white gravy with my biscuit  
but i'm still partial to nana's apple butter-  
it's sweeter than honey right off the comb  
papa says its so good it'll make your tongue slap your  
teeth out

i still haven't seen that  
i think he might be pullin my leg

after breakfast i like to fish  
fishin is best after breakfast  
strollin across those lush green pastures  
feel like silk on my feet  
compared to the gravel driveway  
one of these days i'm goin to cut my foot on cow shane  
if i don't use my head for somethin besides a hat rack  
at least that's what papa says  
i wonder what he means by that

that pond is as smooth as a baby's bottom  
in the mornin  
until i cast my jitterbug in as far as i can

and let it plop in that dirty old water  
rippin waves all the way back to me  
across the water

not everybody can fish with a jitterbug  
you gotta turn the reel just right  
pitterpatterpitterpatterpitterpatter  
otherwise those bass won't touch it  
i guess they like things the same way i do  
not too fast, not too slow

MAGGIE SOLOMON

## FIRST KISS

Can it be rape  
if it's just your first kiss.  
And you say NO.  
If your back  
has welts from  
the door of a red metal locker.  
If your face is burned  
from an unshaven beard.  
If he only asks for a hug  
and you say YES,  
cuz he seems real nice,  
but then  
he kisses you.  
Is it rape?  
If you push him  
on his shoulder,  
but he holds your arms down.  
If you want to scream . . .  
If you want to cry . . .  
If you want to throw up . . .  
When you remember  
his slimy hot lips  
on yours cold and dry  
from fear.  
Is it rape?  
If you think  
you shouldn't have talked to him  
If you think  
you should be the one to hide  
If you think  
maybe you wanted to know  
what it's like to kiss.

But you never  
But you never  
But you never  
wanted him to teach you.  
You wanted the nice boy  
who takes you to the movies.  
You wanted the boy who says,  
"I won't let anybody  
hurt you."  
And someone else kissed you first.  
And no one else can be your first kiss.  
Is it rape?  
Is it rape  
if you have to confess it  
to someone who might think  
you wanted it.  
If you have to remember  
every time  
someone else wants to kiss you.  
If you're too  
scared  
to kiss the nice boy  
with soft hair and gentle hands  
because What if he  
holds your arms down.

Is it rape  
if you have nightmares  
of dark eyes too close  
and slimy hot lips  
and your back has welts  
from the door  
of a red metal locker  
and you say NO  
and you say NO.  
Can it be rape?

## EXTRAPOLATION

I want you  
to light upon my arm  
with a butterfly touch  
that sends hurricanes  
to my soul

## **IN MEMORY**

The spirits of your grandmother's dreams  
walk upon your heels.

Their hands resting on your shoulders  
and voices whispering in your ears,  
they place pictures on your eyelids  
that create for you worlds  
where you can breathe in the life  
of women long dead.

The songs they sing in your sleep  
follow the rhythm of your blood  
and the hymn of time's fugue.

SHERRY STATMAN

## DREAMING IN AUSCHWITZ

Men shouted while people shoved on all sides, Sara could not breathe. Steam blasted into the crowd, making the shoving and shouting worse. There was a second blast of steam and a whistle.

A child whimpered and cried Abah! Emah! Sara only knew scattered phrases of the language of her grandparents. She tried to speak, but no words would come out. She tried to move, but was too tightly flanked by the sea of brown and black wool coats.

Women were crying and men were shouting. Sara was being pushed forward by the arms and legs of others. She had no sense of hot or cold, but could only feel the urging of the crowd. Forward, move forward.

Broad, white hands in sleeves with brass buttons at the cuffs came from somewhere and snatched a red-headed baby girl away from the woman standing beside Sara. The child screamed and was gone.

"Schnell! Schnell!" a voice shouted and a strong arm shoved her through a low door into a dark space filled with female forms. She could not see faces, but she could hear their hollow, terror-filled cries. Bodies were crushed together, tighter than the crowd outside had been. Sara could feel her heels sinking into the something soft; she was standing on someone. The crying gradually stopped as the women became too terrified to make noise. The room started moving forward, rocking from side to side. Someone urinated.

Sara had felt this rocking and heard the click- click-clack noises on the antique railroad that ran in a big circle outside her hometown. Her Dad took Sara on the train ride when she was twelve because she'd never traveled other than by car or plane. He thought she should know about the past.



Sara thought of trees and how they smelled because it helped her to deal with the stench. A woman's elbow was in the small of her back, legs and thighs intertwined with her own, and she could feel the quick, hot breaths of others on her face and in her hair. Her mouth was too dry and her mind too tired to produce sounds.

There was blackness and the sound of breaths and moans and the click-click-clack of metal wheels on metal track. Sara tried to turn her head upward in hopes of seeing light from above, but her face was now embedded another woman's hair. Click-click-clack, click-click-clack. The hair made its way into her eyes and nose, but she couldn't lift her arms to wipe it away. Sara's feet were frozen and she her stomach was turning from the sickly sweet smoke and waste all around her. Whatever was beneath her feet had become wet and stiff.

I don't understand this. Where am I?

Sara tried to think about happy things like her new house, the David Erickson painting she bought last week, her green convertible that was getting a fresh coat of paint, and the balcony where she could see the Austin skyline. She couldn't hold on to any of these images for too long. Her head was filled with cloudiness and confusion and cold.

The boxcar stopped abruptly and the mass of bodies were thrown forward. When the thick metal door slid open she saw a blond-haired soldier. He was wearing a gray uniform with shining black boots. There was a gun in one of his hands, and a stick in the other. He wore a black band on his left arm and stood next to a barbed-wire fence.

Soldiers were pulling stiff bodies from the train and shoving the other women into two lines. Sara was put to the left with a group of young women. The older women were shoved to the right. Sara knew what this was and she knew the women in the group to the right were going to die.

In high school, Sara's history teacher spent an entire class hour discussing what happened in the camps. The strong ones who could work went to the left, the old or frail

went to the right to be exterminated. Was this really happening now, didn't it happen sixty years ago?

Earlier in the evening at Mezzaluna, Joe Martin, told a joke asking how six million Jews could easily fit in a Volkswagon. The punchline was "in the ashtray." Joe was the only person at the table who laughed. Someone explained that Sara was Jewish and a tense moment of silence followed when neither Sara nor Joe knew what to say. He made it worse by saying that she was too pretty to be a Jewish girl because all the one's he's known had been ugly. They had all been dark, he said, and had dumpy bodies. He said that there were some attractive Jewish women in Europe, and that it had something to do with the Nazis letting the good looking ones live. He thought he was being witty. She excused herself to the ladies room to punctuate the conversation.

Sara's group were marched across a yard and down a hallway. Everything was dark, even the sky was the color of smoke. Sara could see large, brown eyes from behind fences in the distance. No one said a word, until a woman in a blue coat broke the silence Yit gadal yit gadash, s'hmea rabah the faint voice began. It was the first line of the prayer for the dead. A soldier yelled and she quit speaking, Sara wished the woman could have finished.

It had bothered Sara that Joe didn't know she was Jewish. She hadn't been to synagogue in a couple of years and she rarely wore a star of David or chai. Many of her friends had never known any Jews and, like Joe, probably expected them to fit a certain stereotype. This stereotype did not include the green eyes and sandy blonde hair Sara inherited from her mother or the long, lean bone structure she inherited from her father.

Women were herded down the opposite end of the corridor, their clothes had been taken and their heads had been shaved. They were too afraid or too exhausted to hide their nakedness from the leering young soldiers who stood against the walls.

This is not happening.

The concentration camps happened to nameless people in slide shows. It was her history, her people's history, but Sara had never owned it. She did not want to believe that it had happened. Grandma Manya would show Sara a picture of the four beautiful sisters who did not come to America in 1929. They looked a little like Sara, as much as she could tell from browning seventy year-old photos. The faces in the photo were somehow not real and Sara could not imagine them as living beings who laughed and danced and fell in love and married and started families and disappeared. Six million is an impersonal, innocuous estimation.

Sara hated her high school civics teacher for lecturing on war crimes like they were a scandal in a grocery store tabloid. Sara didn't care to know how people were efficiently gassed or cooked. How human skin was made into lampshades and body fat into soap. How Dr. Mengele tortured pregnant women and twins and experimented by cutting, freezing, burning, and trying to dye eyes blue. It made her uneasy and ashamed —Sara knew that classmates who knew she was Jewish would stare at her to gauge her reaction to the gory descriptions. Even her closest friends would sneak looks to see what expressions were crossing her face. They were all seemingly unmoved.

A prisoner carried a bin full of hair and clothing outside. He was dressed in rags and his skin draped down his cheeks, three of the fingers on his right hand were missing. Sara wanted to wake up.

She knew it was a nightmare now, a product of too much wine and Joe Martin's ignorant remarks.

A woman with a newly shaved head walked towards Sara, her ear was bleeding from a razor nick.

Consciousness was tugging Sara out of the corridor and into her warm quilts. She about to wake up . . . She wanted to wake up...another second and my eyes would open, but something drew her back to the corridor for a moment.

"Sara," the woman whispered "Remember me."

KATHLEEN STURGEON

**SACRIFICE**

Drive to Stonehenge?  
That's not part of the job,  
I said.

Nannies do not take bairns  
To godforsaken  
Circles stained with  
The blood  
Of unsuspecting  
Ancestors.

But Matthew and Robin,  
9 and 13,  
Do not leave me  
Alone.  
I say no  
One hundred times  
Until I am cross  
And my throat is dry.  
Then I say thy will is mine.

The mini the folks  
Lend me is not  
Worth one pence.  
It rattles like  
An empty vessel  
Blown by the wind  
Down a road  
Abandoned long ago  
By lowly shepherds.

Do thirty years pass  
As we argue  
And cry  
And pray  
Our way to Stonehenge?  
The bony gray rocks  
Arise in points  
Through the fleshy earth.

Tourists stand in line  
To enter the ruins.  
A man in black says  
(Paying thirty pence  
For a detailed map  
Of the burial mounds)  
"I've wanted to see  
This godly  
Skeletal place."

Matthew, Robin, and I  
Walk around the circle  
Of uneven, bulky stones.  
Is each a silent epitaph?  
Are they gray,  
A lesser form of black?  
A white rope surrounds  
The largest of the stones.  
A sign above says, "Noli me tangere."

Are the stones fossils then?  
Or do they breathe  
When the tourists pass  
And the earth bears no footprints?  
Does the fog descend at night  
And feed the grass,  
Do the stones  
Soak up the moisture and arise,

Like Lazarus?  
A man in white  
Hands out lilies.  
He waits for my donation  
But I ignore him.  
He walks away  
With lowered head,  
Chanting that only money  
Preserves traditions.  
He says they do not come free.

## CANDY TAFOLLA

### SYNESTHESIA

Imagine for a moment that each time you cook a chicken and taste it, instead of feeling several sharp points in your hand, you feel a perfectly shaped smooth sphere, you would know the chicken is not fully cooked.

Or what if each time you hear a trumpet sound you see a bright scarlet red, and each time a beeper goes off you see blinding red jagers before your eyes.

Or imagine you are a composer and with each composition you not only hear the music as it develops, but colors and patterns begin to form too. With the beginning chords you see only one color evolve into a monochromatic pattern. Eventually, as the music evolves you see that one color joined with another and they begin to blur into one another, not unlike the color bands in a rainbow. Finally, as the composition you are working on climaxes you see a complex pattern made up of a dominant color which is flecked, striped and studded with other colors, all play before your eyes.

Now imagine that you are a medical doctor being told these experiences by one of your patients. You run a series of tests but they all come out negative. Since you can find no physical explanation for what the patient is experiencing, you tell him that it probably is nothing and it will eventually go away.

The experiences described are caused by synesthesia, a rare condition affecting only a small percentage of the population. Synesthesia comes from the Greek words "syn" meaning together, and "aisthesis" meaning sensation. (Cytowic, 5) A person with synesthesia experiences an involuntary stimulus in one or more of his senses while experiencing a voluntary stimulus in another of his senses.

Synesthesia in its pure involuntary form has never

been fully studied because of the lack of consistency in the answers given by synesthetes of the same type. For example, a synesthete who experiences colored hearing hears a note being played and states he sees the color red, while another synesthete hearing the same note says he sees the color purple. This inconsistency has been very discouraging to any who attempt to study synesthesia and may be one reason as to why there is little known about it. (Bernard, 42)

Another reason may be that some synesthetes usually hide their condition from others because quite often their interpretations of what they experience are misunderstood. Usually hearing someone talk about how as he passes a maple tree its smell illicitly a feeling of texture and depth that he feels as if he is passing his hands over a sculpture piece by piece, can be misconstrued as bizarre and ridiculous.

By hiding their condition synesthetes usually feel alone and cut off from others. Synesthetes who try to talk with others about their experiences are often met with disbelief and ridicule. For instance, by telling a friend that after knowing someone for a long time her voice begins to take on a certain color, feel and texture to it. My friend would misunderstand this and think I am only making mental associations with a person's voice. I then try to explain that that is not it at all. What I experience is purely involuntary. It happens suddenly and unexpectedly after I have known someone for a long time, like my roommate.

I lived with that person day and night and all of a sudden I realized that person has a brown earthy color to her and her voice illicitly a sense of touching something smooth; yet not as smooth as glass, because I feel small indentations and striations. So I tell my friend that my roommate's voice has an earthy, polished wood feel to it. My friend advises me never to tell another person about this because they might think I'm on something or worse that I should be locked up.

It is this type of reaction that usually causes a



synesthete such as myself to be ashamed of what we experience, so we hide it or go to the extreme of trying to pretend it does not exist at all.

A recent in depth study into synesthesia done by Dr. Richard Cytowic, a clinical neurologist, is detailed in his book, *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*. Although Dr. Cytowic's methods for basic research on synesthesia seem unorthodox by some in the scientific community, his work answers many questions for those of us who have this misunderstood condition.

After discovering that an acquaintance of his has synesthesia, Dr. Cytowic took an avid interest in it and began doing research on it. (Cytowic,5) Once Dr. Cytowic realized that there was not enough studies done on synesthesia he decided to conduct his own. (Cytowic,63)

Synesthesia as studied by Dr. Cytowic is discounted by most of the medical community because of its subjective nature. (Cytowic,71) Since people affected with synesthesia often describe their experiences using metaphors and descriptive language; doctors who can not find a physical cause for what these people experience are quick to dismiss it as nothing more than imagination.(Cytowic, 120)

Dr. Cytowic though, uses the subjectivity of synesthesia to argue its validity. He argues that the heart of clinical neurology is built upon the subjective experiences of its patients. He goes on to say, ". . . many people intuitively feel that research based on experiential reports is 'unscientific' because it is not objective." (Cytowic,71) In addition he cites various medical conditions, such as epilepsy or migraines, in which doctors rely on the subjective experiences described by patients to better diagnose and treat these conditions.(Cytowic,72)

Through his work Dr. Cytowic discovered that many of the forms synesthetes experience are elemental, quite often they see and feel shapes such as triangles, spheres, and lines. Hardly ever does a synesthete experience anything as complex as a full landscape or a complete image

of a Grecian statue while hearing, smelling or tasting something. Sometimes it is difficult for synesthetes to explain the sensations they have during their synesthesia. Consequently they often rely on metaphors and highly descriptive language to describe what they experience. (Cytowic, 120)

The synesthetic experiences of Michael, one of Dr. Cytowic's subjects of study, is a good example of using metaphoric language. When eating something with a minty flavor he would describe his parallel sensation of feeling a smooth, cool glass column with his hand. Dr Cytowic asked Michael why he describes his sensation as such, and in an effort to refrain Michael from using metaphoric language he asks him to only describe the basic elements of what he feels during his synesthetic sensation. (Cytowic, 121)

At first, Michael tried to explain how he came to the description of feeling a column by saying he feels something tall because of the sensation that it goes on forever. Then he feels around the back curve which makes him think of a column. When he touches it, it feels smooth with no indentations on its surface so he likens it to glass. Finally what he touches is very cold, hence Michael's description of feeling smooth, cool glass columns with the taste of mint. (Cytowic, 122)

In addition to finding out about the elemental forms experienced by synesthetes Dr. Cytowic also found medical proof to support his theory, that synesthesia does not occur in the cortex of the brain, but in the limbic brain. (Cytowic, 151) He derived his theory from Paul Maclean's model of the triune brain. In which the brain is broken up into three parts; the reptilian brain, the paleomammalian or limbic brain, and the neomammalian brain or cortex. (Cytowic, 21)

From this model and his initial experiments, Dr. Cytowic deduced that because synesthetes experience only elemental forms, synesthesia could not occur at the high-

est level of the brain, yet because they are conscious of what they experience it does not occur at the subconscious or lowest level of the brain. Thus the synesthetic experience must occur at some level in between. (Cytowic, 88)

By performing a Cerebral Blood Flow scan on Michael, Dr. Cytowic discovered that while having a synesthetic experience Michael's blood flow in his cortex dramatically decreased, showing that synesthesia does not occur in the cortex, but in a lower level of the brain, namely the limbic brain. (Cytowic, 150-151)

Two of three book reviews written on Dr. Cytowic's book, one featured in the *Library Journal* and the other featured in *Publisher's Weekly* were quite favorable. Yet, the third review featured in the *New York Times Book Review* and written by Michael Gazzaniga, director of the Center for Neurosciences, demonstrates what some experts think about Dr. Cytowic's work, as well as his methods in studying synesthesia.

Gazzaniga categorizes science and writing into either good or bad and in the case of Dr. Cytowic's book, Gazzaniga rates it as both bad science and bad writing. (Gazzaniga, *NYTimes*)

Gazzaniga starts out his review by saying anyone who does not believe rationality is the essence of human experience would find a supporting argument for their view in Dr. Cytowic's book. Yet Gazzaniga does not agree as to how concrete and substantial that argument is. (Gazzaniga, *NYTimes*)

Gazzaniga disagrees with Dr. Cytowic's findings on synesthesia, saying that Dr. Cytowic is wrong in suggesting that human beings are essentially irrational creatures with only "a thin veneer of rationality." (Gazzaniga, *NYTimes*)

Gazzaniga is wrong in saying this because what Dr. Cytowic does in fact propose, is the limbic brain which is the seat of emotions, along with the cortex has an important role to play in how our minds work and synesthesia is evident of this. (Cytowic, 152)

When describing synesthesia Gazzaniga says it is a rare condition in which the people affected "see colors when they hear numbers called, sense shapes when they taste tomatoes or hear sudden sounds (not thunder) when they see lightening bolts." (Gazzaniga, *NYTimes*)

In his description it appears as if Gazzaniga is making light of the symptoms experienced by some of the synesthetes described in Dr. Cytowic's book. For example in the book a psychologist named Victoria indicates that she has colored hearing synesthesia, and sees blinding red jagers with the high-pitched sound of a beeper. No doubt this is who Gazzaniga had in mind in his earlier description. (Cytowic, 48)

It would appear that Gazzaniga has not only misunderstood how synesthesia works but the symptoms of the condition itself.

A dominant theme I found throughout my brief research on synesthesia is, it is still largely misunderstood and disregarded by many, especially in the medical field, and I must ask myself why such a rare and unique gift is often put aside by non-synesthetes and synesthetes alike.

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# **Pecan Grove Review**

## **Volume II**

### **Spring 1997**

Submissions are now being accepted from St. Mary's University students and faculty for the next issue of *Pecan Grove Review*.

Writers may submit up to three typed pieces, no more than ten pages of prose, or 40 lines of poetry.

**Deadline: November 1, 1996**

Each entry must include: **Name**  
**Title of work**  
**Category**  
**Address**  
**Daytime phone**

Selected writers should be prepared to submit an IBM disk (WordPerfect 6.1 only) within ten days of notification.

Submit writing to:  
**Ms. Diane Bertrand, Faculty Advisor**  
Office: CH 401  
Phone: 431-2003





I want you  
to light upon my arm  
with a butterfly touch  
that sends hurricanes

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**Twister Marquiss**

**Candy Tafolla**

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**Cover Text:** Gilberto Lucero, Charles Pettit & Maggie Solomon

the flowers of my brief  
fainting spells,  
the warmth of  
imagination.

cause he just  
bunny rabbit a  
could raise my  
swer is too sir