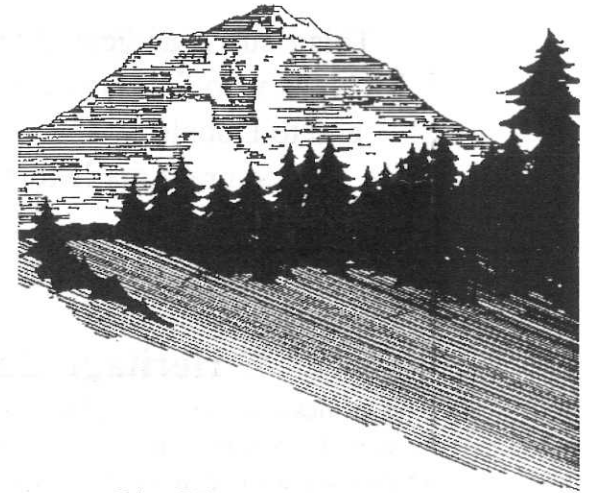


Pahto's Shadow



**Heritage College
Spring 1994**

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This issue is dedicated to Louis and Margaret McNew, who first conceived of *Pahto's Shadow*, and to Donald K. C. North, whose generous seed grant made this edition possible



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Pahto's Shadow is an annual publication of Heritage College featuring artists and writers from the college and the Yakima Valley community. We welcome poetry, fiction, personal essays, artwork, and photography which reflect the rich life and diverse heritages of the Valley. Correspondence and submissions (the latter by 1 January 1995 for the next issue and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope) should be sent to Professor Loren R. Schmidt, Arts and Letters Department, Heritage College, 3240 Fort Road, Toppenish, WA 98948.



Cover art of Pahto (Mt. Adams) and Heritage College logo designed by Terry Mullen, SNJM. "The trees and mountains in the logo symbolize the rural environment of the college and the appreciation of nature's beauty which characterizes the multi-cultural population of central Washington. The circle symbolizes the unity and mutual concern which the college as a community of learners strives to enhance. The vertical split in the circle represents each unique individual who, through education, discovers and develops God-given talents in order to achieve full human development."

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A Note to Our Readers

Loren R. Schmidt

Like all fruits, *Pahto's Shadow* reflects the soil in which it grew. Thematically, this journal reflects a sense of *place*: the geographic, ethnic, and cultural frames of the artist and the work. A quick perusal of the contents of this issue shows the patchwork quilt which makes up this place, this Yakima Valley. Our artists, both those here at Heritage College and the overwhelming number of respondents from the Valley as a whole, have flourished in a land which boasts both desert and mountain, both farmland and forest. In that land dwell folk from many backgrounds: Yakama and other Native American groups, Hispanic, English, German and others of European stock, Japanese and others of Asian descent *Pahto's Shadow* seeks to give voice to those heritages and to the Valley, the land where they now live. We hope that the voices blend here in harmony, not discord.

For the most part, the staff listed on the masthead are students here at Heritage College who enrolled in English 452 (Editing Workshop) this semester. Under my supervision, they helped define the magazine mission and theme, solicited manuscripts and artwork, selected those you now hold in your hands from the several hundred submissions, edited those manuscripts in conjunction with the contributors, laid out the final manuscripts on Aldus *PageMaker* (in 11 pt. Times New Roman text font and 22/33 pt. Jouilliard Bold Italic headline font, for those interested in such matters), and printed/assembled/distributed our final product. I am proud of their efforts and hope that you the reader will attribute what succeeds here to them.

A final note: I would be remiss not to give credit (and sincere thanks) to two others whose efforts greatly aided the production of *Pahto's Shadow*: our faculty secretary, Renee (Jaramillo) Sehnert, who spent many hours converting our contributors' submissions into "DTP-ready" on-disk formats; and my fellow Arts and Letters faculty member Sister Terry Mullen, who not only contributed the beautiful cover art but also gave generously of her time in printing and assembling the magazine



A Night on the Mountains

Juan José Vilafán Silva

Rogelio and I were at the Coyote's house, ready to start walking in the mountains. It was almost five o'clock in the afternoon. We met at the Coyote's restaurant in downtown Tijuana where the Coyote and I clearly established the conditions. The Coyote was to help us cross the border, and we had to pay him three hundred and fifty dollars. Food and a place to stay were included. Travelling with us were ten other men.

A few minutes later, the Coyote asked Rogelio and me, "Have you eaten?" Rogelio nodded and I agreed.

"Now listen to me, all of you. From this very moment you have to do what I say. You are my responsibility," the Coyote warned. "From this very moment you have to do what I say. You're my responsibility. Crossing the border is more than a simple game, it's a risky situation. I don't want to scare you, but the price of it could be our lives. Remember, if I say 'Hit the ground,' just do it without questions. If I say 'Hide in the bushes,' look for the densest spot and do it. If I say 'Run,' run without looking back, as if your lives depended on it."

The Coyote stopped for a while and looked through the window. When he glanced at his wrist watch, it was just after

five. I looked at the other men's faces. They were serious, as if they were listening to a priest in church. Rogelio—his skin brown, his hair and eyes black, his beard unshaved for the last four or five days—reminded me once again of my oldest brother. He had told me his wife and two children were back in Michoacan, living with his father-in-law because he couldn't give any money to them. I told him I wasn't married and my parents were living in Leon, Guanajuato. The night before we slept in the same room at the Coyote's house. The Coyote slept in a different room that had no bed, just a dirty blanket on the floor y una imagen de la Virgen de Guadalupe on the left wall. Nothing else.

At ten minutes after five, the Coyote opened the back door and said, "Okay, men, I hope you've understood what I said. Remember, if someone makes a mistake, all of us will pay for it." He shook the hand of the first man to his right. "Now shake hands with each other, and good luck to all of you. Ready? Follow me."

The last one out of the house closed the door carefully. The Coyote was in the front, walking quickly on a non-existent path, but with a definite place to go. The rest of us made a straight line, each one following the one who was walking in front

of him, almost stepping in the same place. I was walking behind Rogelio. I turned my head to the right and saw a lot of people by my side going in the same direction.

"What's going on?" I asked. "Where are all those people going?"

"To El Norte, like us," Rogelio answered. He pointed to his left and said to me, "Look at the other side." I did so and saw the same. I turned my whole body back and saw more people following us. I turned again to the front; more people were there.

"Oh, Dios mio!" I said in a soft voice and kept walking.

We passed the first hills. I saw, just in front of our noses, a big circle of tents. "Incredible!" I said to myself. There on the mountain was an outdoor market. The more prominent hawkers had their tents forming a big circle. Lots of people with ponchos on the ground were selling the most unexpected things.

A boy called to us, "Hey, hombre, buy some marijuana. I'm sure you'll need it. The price is twenty dollars." I looked at the boy. He seemed to be around twelve, the same age as my youngest brother, but his clothes were old and dirty, his skin brown, almost black. "If you need something stronger," the boy continued, "go to that tent." He pointed to his left where a girl around fifteen was sitting with a baby between her legs. "She's my sister. If you want to make love with her, you have to pay twenty more dollars." More than seven

men made a straight line to her tent. The boy continued trying to sell his products.

A little girl came and said directly to me, "Señor, señor, buy these apples, please." I looked at the little girl.

"Remedios?" I asked and put my right hand on her head. Remedios was the name of my little sister. I put my left hand into my pocket, took all the pesos I had in it, and gave them to her. She grabbed the money and threw it on the ground, crying, "I don't want it. It's Mexican money. I want dollars." I left the little girl with her fruits and the coins on the ground to attend another voice.

"Hombre, sweaters for sale. You're going to spend cold nights in the mountains. This is your last chance." The vendor was an old woman wearing a long black dress. She had a face full of wrinkles, gray hair, and sad-looking eyes. I took the last bills I had in my pocket and asked her, "How much does this brown sweater cost?"

"Twenty-five dollars," she answered.

"I just have seventeen. All right?"

"Are you crazy? Do you think I'm here helping lazy people like you? I'm not your mother."

"I'm sorry, I just tried to . . ." The old woman walked away without listening to my last words. She stopped with a group of men and one of them gave her twenty-five dollars. She came back to me and said, "This is business, hombre. This is business, don't forget it."

"Food," another woman called, "Mexicanos, tacos for you! You don't

know when you'll taste them again." To my left, a fat woman sat on a wooden chair. Her face was round, with a big mouth and few teeth. "If you don't want tacos, buy your first hamburger here." The tacos, ready to go in a big pan on a gas stove to her right, were displayed next to green and red salsa, chilies, jalapenos, fried beans, some green onions, and a basket with corn tortillas. She had another pan with prepared hamburgers, two heads of lettuce, a plastic bag with diced tomatoes, and another with cucumbers. All the food seemed dirty to me, but some men stood in line for it.

"Mexican flags here," a young woman called out. She carried a bunch of flags in her right hand, and in her left she had some dollars and coins. She wore a white T-shirt with the Mexican flag on the front and back and a pair of used blue jeans. Her long black hair, pulled into a ponytail, hung loosely around her dark face. A man approached her from her back and put his right hand on her butt. The young woman turned and slapped him smartly. "What's happening to you, hombre, I'm not selling myself. If you want to make love, there's a tent where you can do it." The man laughed, and instead of taking her advice, he left to buy some tacos.

"Selling Nikes! American tennis shoes! Maybe you're going to have a long walk," a child's voice said. The child, alone and eight, sat on a small chair surrounded by tennis shoes.

Everything seemed like a dream to me. Voices here and there, unknown faces in a

strange place, and people floating by, as if they were ghosts on the mountain.

"Buy a refreshment. On the mountains you're not going to find it easily. Don't believe what the coyotes say. It could be that you'll have to spend three or more days and nights without food and water, so drink a refreshment. No one knows what's going to happen."

Suddenly I felt something solid and cold on my back. Inside I felt as if my blood were going down to my feet, and I didn't move until I heard a voice behind my ear saying, "Buy this knife, hombre," I turned my body and faced a young man, "I'm sure you're going to need it tonight." I gave him a hard look and tried to walk away from him.

"Don't leave, hombre, I have something else for you," he put his right hand into the pocket of his long coat and took out a gun. "Maybe you think that a knife isn't useful, so what do you think about this gun? Bullets in it, ready to be used."

I tried to say something, but no words came out of my mouth.

"Buy . . . Buy . . . Buy . . ." I felt the voices in the inside of my brain.

Suddenly someone yelled, "Ayudenme, ayudenme, por favor. This old man made love with me and he doesn't want to pay me now." It was the young woman who had a child between her legs at the entrance of her tent, her brother beside her. The man ran toward the forest, but the young man who was trying to sell me the gun shot three times into the air. The old man didn't

stop, so the young man shot once again, this time to the man's head. I couldn't believe what I saw. I looked around and noticed that nobody cared about what had just happened. I left that nightmare market and sat down. Suddenly a boy yelled to me. "Hey, hombre, what the hell are you doing here?" The boy was adjusting his soccer glove on his right hand. "Are you blind? We're using this stone as a post. This is the goal, and I'm the goalkeeper. Go away." At that very moment, one of the boys from the opposite team shot the soccer ball from a long distance, scoring the last goal. "Goal! Goal! Goal!" the boy and his teammates celebrated. The goalkeeper threw his glove to the ground. He made some offensive hand gestures to me as I walked away. The game was over.

We started to walk again. We went to the top of a hill,

"Well, men," the Coyote said, "we're here. We'll wait for the night and cross the imaginary line that's right in front of us. Tomorrow we'll be in Los Angeles."

I looked to all sides; and all the groups of people had taken positions. I looked to the opposite hill where there were white and blue vans with men on horses and dogs beside them. On the horizon, a helicopter crossed the sky for the first time. The mountain invasion was ready to begin. The day was almost over, the night was coming slowly.

The thirteen of us sat on the ground, forming groups of two or three, and we started joking.

"Is it true there are gangs around

here?" I asked Rogelio. "Some friends of mine told me that they used to terrorize people in these mountains, raping women and men, and killing people sometimes."

"Yes, it's true," Rogelio answered, "but the gangs aren't the only ones we need to watch out for. Some Coyotes use us to get easy money. This isn't the first time I tried to cross. I did it before, but with a Coyote whose real business was smuggling drugs. On the road, we met up with an American on a motorcycle. The Coyote gave him a packet of cocaine, and he gave lots of money to the Coyote. And some of the officers in la migra hurt us just because they're tired of all this. They kill people, and when the bodies are found, nobody knows who was the murderer. La migra, the Coyotes, and the gangs accuse each other. No one knows the truth."

At eight o'clock the Coyote stood up and said to us, "This is the moment we're waiting for. Let's go!" It seemed to be an order for all people on the hill since they all stood up and started to run. It seemed to be also an order for la migra. They turned on the van's lights, the men on the horses moved themselves to different places, and the helicopter, flying in circles, turned the big light on too.

We formed the straight line again, the Coyote in the front, followed by Rogelio, me, and so on. Now we were walking on the U.S. side. Suddenly the Coyote listened to the steps of horses on the stony path and said, "Hide in the bushes and keep quiet." A couple of immigration officers passed by on their horses. Nobody said a

word for more than a half an hour. Nobody changed his position on the ground. I tried to contain my breathing, and the stars and the moon were my accomplices as we hid behind the clouds.

We started to walk again. When we were crossing a space without trees, a helicopter came and focused the big light on us. We ran back and the Coyote yelled, "Help me move this big stone. If we hide in this underground sewer, la migra won't find us." All of us pushed aside the stone that blocked the entrance, entered, and put the stone back. The inside was dark, wet, and cold. I could not see Rogelio who was walking just one step ahead of me. I felt the water seeping through my tennis shoes, and my body was shivering with cold.

Outside, the helicopter kept flying in the same place. Three vans arrived, and six officers got out. They looked around for us, but they couldn't find anyone.

We stayed in the sewer almost the whole night. Around five in the morning, the Coyote took a look and said, "Come on, men, time to leave." We could hardly move. Rogelio and I had cramps in our legs and our pants were almost completely wet. It was still dark outside.

"Can you hear the helicopter in the distance?"

I whispered to Rogelio, when we got outside. "Yes, the vans, too." Rogelio answered.

"The stars and the moon watch us like silent vigilantes," I said to Rogelio. "This has been the darkest and coldest night of my life, and the longest one." No answer.

We went to a little park for the last few hours of the night and tried to sleep on the ground in old pieces of canvas. The rest slept, but I couldn't. I saw the moon and stars disappear. The sunlight erased the shadows of the night already passed. A couple of birds flew together from the top of one tree to the top of another. The sunlight came through the trees' leaves, touched our bodies, staying with us the rest of the day. When the men who were sleeping opened their eyes, the cold was gone.

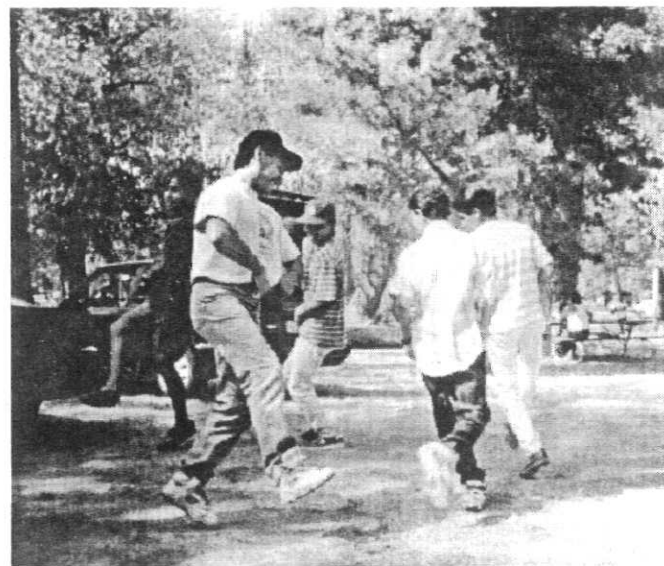


Photo: Basilio Rodriguez

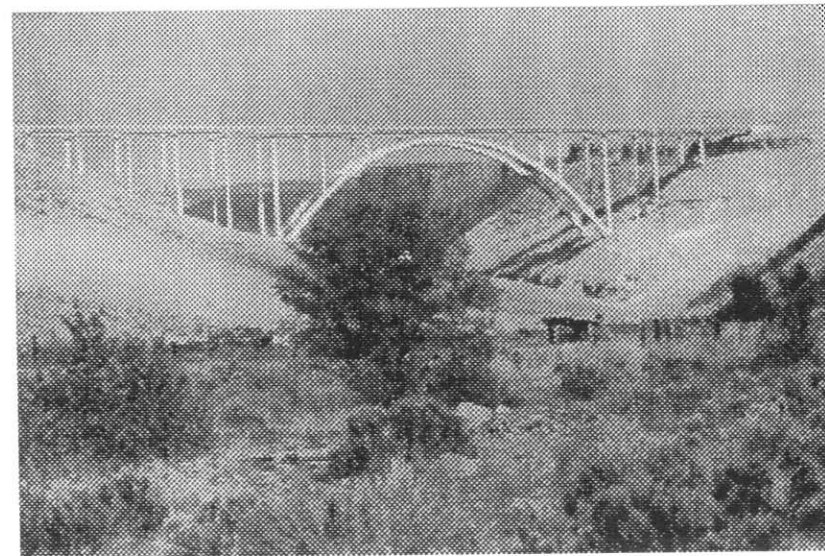


Photo: Michael Rudick

Becalmed
 ☯ in ☯
Nirvana
Gaijin

Perched beside magpie
 Eyeing the Gap.
 Cackling,
 Mocking the deathwatch scuttling below.
 Kicking stones, sounding washboard gorge
 Counterpoint to wind kazoo.
 Composing cacophony
 Visioning singularity's fall.
 Rising on stale wings
 Soaring through wormholes
 Charting multiverses unfolding within me.
 Yet old talons argues
 Whirling black and white, bids me stay.
 Till waking salts my tail,
 Binding me again to this horizon.
 Gratefully retrained to the Wheel
 To the promise of a sunrise
 And you.

Spirit Masks

Anonymous

During the winters, the people of the salmon and the cedar, the Nootka, Bella Coola, Tlingit, Haida, Kwakiutl, and the other races of human beings would gather in their great long houses to potlatch and to remember how Raven brought the light to the sky. Neither did they forget the many other teachings of the spirit world. To help them remember truly, they made songs and dances. When they remembered Raven, they would wear the mask of Raven that was carved from cedar and painted. The people made other masks too. There was Cannibal Bird, Thunderbird, Killer Whale, Sun The people made many different kinds of masks.

In the dances, sometimes the spirit being would speak through the dancer who wore its mask. Sometimes the spirit being would give the people signs and omens to help them to live right. In those days it was not easy to be a human being The people had to listen to the spirit beings and work hard to remember and understand the teachings of the spirit world. The people had to be strong and have courage because sometimes the spirits told them to do things that were hard and dangerous.

Nowadays some people say that there are no more human beings, only men who pretend to be human beings. They say that the spirits are dead because the Boston men

have killed them. Other people say the spirit beings have left us because we don't feed them like we used to in the potlatch.

Sometimes when I wait in my boat for the spring salmon to come to me, I think maybe I hear Raven speaking on the wind. I think that Raven is saying that the spirits have been waiting for us to be ready once more to listen to them and learn from them.

When you and I speak, we understand each other because we know about the same kinds of things, over time, we begin to talk about these things we know together as if they were somehow more than the shadows of our experience. They become become dry and brittle and they become *fact*. The word "fact" comes from the ancient word *facere*—to make. Our facts are the things that we have made, when we again find them after we have forgotten that we made them. We have forgotten that Raven does not speak through the mask. Raven speaks through us when we remember as we wear the mask. Like the original human beings, we too have made many other masks: the drunkard, the lost spirit, the wild man we have made many different kinds of masks. Now, again, it is time to remember together that we are human beings and that Raven is waiting to teach us.

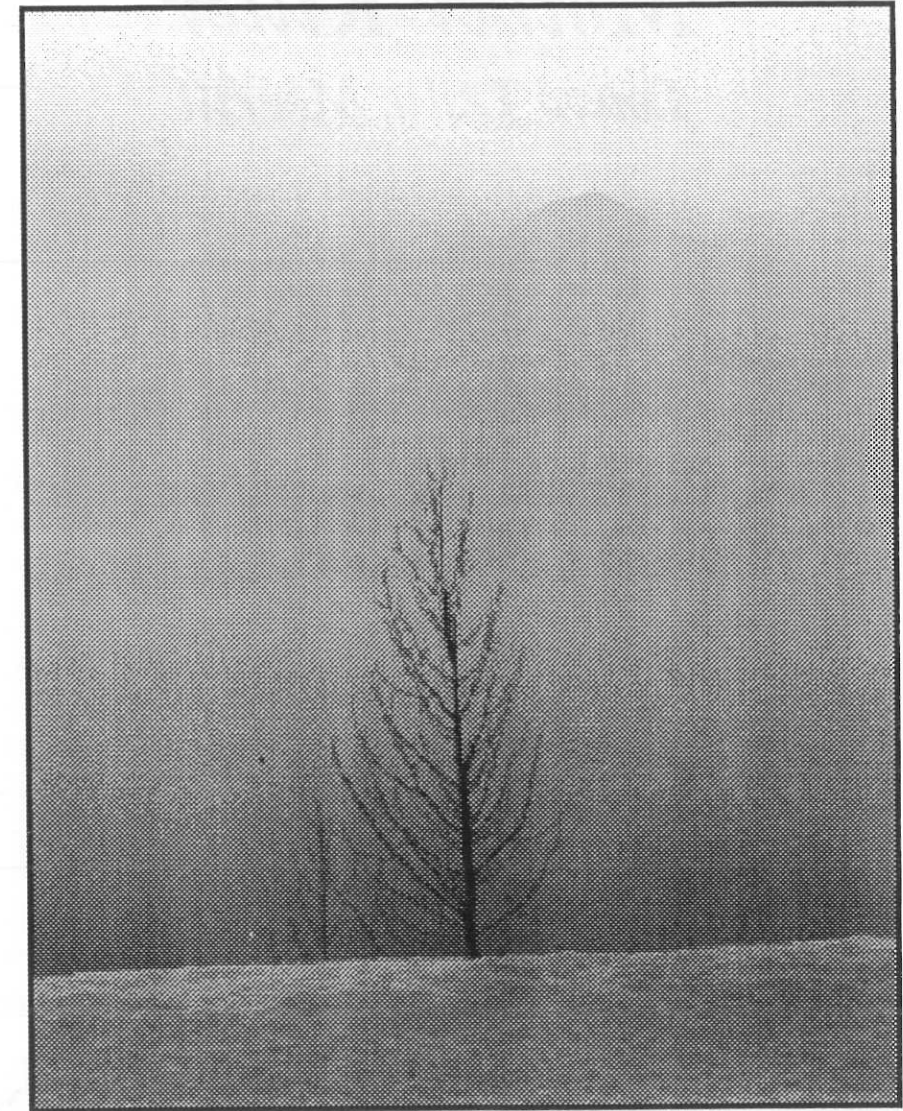


Photo: Anonymous

Mother Killer

Louva Leslie Merrill

The time had come and gone
For her infant to show his head.
The midwife frowned and told her,
"Your baby is probably dead."
But Bird Woman would not hear.

"He is fighting to come out!
I feel fists and heels kicking.
How can he be dead?" she moaned.
And the midwife saw a foot sticking!
"I'll try to turn him around."



The foot pulled back and
Her hand followed beside
As she felt for a back or a head
While Bird Woman screamed and cried.
The baby turned just a little.

A bottom she felt, and
Finally the baby's head,
But before he was free of his mother
Bird Woman was already dead.
Her blood had soaked the ground.

"I won't accept a son who would
Take his own mother's life."
His father left him there in the arms
Of the hovering midwife
As he turned away with disgust.

Her family prepared her for burial
Though the snow-covered ground was frozen.
They left the boy-baby with his father,
But his angry path was chosen.
He would hear nothing to change it.

When Bird Woman was lifted
To her platform on high
The babe was left with her.
"They'll journey to the sky."

He threw a handful of snow
On the covering deerhide,
And as he turned away,
Both he and the baby cried.

La Hamaca

María Isabel Castro

En los años 1860s por allá en el estado de Zacatecas, México, se llevó a cabo una historia extraña pero cierta. En aquel entonces, sólo había dos métodos de transportación. Todo se hacía a pie o en carretón. Los hacendados usaban carretón para trasladarse, mientras que los peones viajaban a pie o en bestia. Por esta razón, sus viajes duraban hasta días cuando tenían que viajar a la ciudad más cercana a comprar menesteres como medicina, comida o ropa.

En la Hacienda De Carrillo, así llamado por el nombre del terrateniente propietario, vivían el Señor Alvarez y su mujer quienes trabajaban para el hacendado. Como eran peones medieros, recibían una parte de las cosechas en lugar de sueldo y cambiaban el maíz desgranado en un pueblo cercano para satisfacer las pocas necesidades sencillas que no podía abastecer la hacienda. Con el transcurso del tiempo se veían obligados a viajar al pueblo para comprar manta para reemplazar la ropa gastada.

Después de haber desgranado lo que el trueque hubiera requerido, la pareja echó el maíz en costales de arpillera y acto seguido, los cerñieron por la mitad, convirtiendo así a cada costal en dos cilindros iguales, pareciendo éstos a dos

enormes salchichas deformes. Luego cargaron los costales de grano sobre los lomos de dos burros a manera de alforjas, uno de cada lado.

Para el viaje actual, la pareja decidió llevar a su hijito de seis meses, ya que estaba muy pequeñito y su mamá todavía lo amamantaba. Encargaron sus faenas a los hijos mayores y despidiéndose emprendieron el viaje penoso hacia Jerez, la ciudad mas cercana.

Cualquier mulero conocedor de esos tramos les hubiera podido avisar que era muy peligroso viajar de noche. Por las laderas solían merodear manadas de lobos que atacaban a los greyes, flotando como sombras sigilosas a la luz de la luna. Enterada del peligro, la pareja suspendió su viaje antes del crepúsculo y se puso a descansar por la noche en un sitio no muy retirado del camino principal. Descargaron los burros y los amarraron de un mezquite. El Señor Alvarez luego se puso a recoger leña para encender una fogata. Recogió suficiente leña para que durara toda la noche. La lumbre no sólo los iba a abrigar del frío penetrante de la noche del altiplano desértico, sino que también iba a mantener a los lobos a distancia. Cualquier peon sabía que ningún lobo se acerca donde hay lumbre.

Mientras la Señora Alvarez calentaba unas gorditas de manteca para cenar, su marido se dedicó a construir una hamaca para el pequeñito. Tomó un costal de arpillera que habían traído al propósito y agujeró cada uno de los cuatro vértices del costal rectangular con su cuchillo. Luego agarró dos mecates macizos, los metió por los cuatro agujeros, y los pasó por dentro del costal. Entonces ajustó la tensión de la hamaca, estirando los mecates. Para concluir, sujetó cada mecate a su mezquite respectivo con nudo doble. Estiró cada mecate para asegurar su firmeza antes de regresar con su esposa a cenar.

Su esposa había acabado de amamantar al Pequeñito y se lo dió para que lo colocara en la hamaca. El Señor Alvarez envolvió a su hijo en el rebozo suave de su esposa y alzó la hamaca lo más alto que pudo.

Se pusieron a comer los dos, a la vez conversando sobre sus planes del día siguiente. El cansancio tremendo que sentían no los permitió que alargaran la conversación. Mañana sería un día como hoy y necesitaban un buen descanso para poder continuar su jornada a la ciudad.

El Señor Alvarez se recostó contra el mezquite y se puso a contemplar sus alrededores. Lo primero que notó fue el silencio insólito de la noche. Era un silencio que le llenaba de desasosiego. Entre sus innumerables viajes a la ciudad, jamás había conocido un silencio tan denso y opaco como aquél. Hizo un gran esfuerzo para captar siquiera el chirrido de los grillos, pero lo único que se oía era el

crepitar de las llamas. Quizás todo el mundo estaba agotado.

Luego Alvarez alzó los ojos al cielo y vió que la luna empezaba a esconderse detras de unas nubes densas y negras. De repente se estremeció con un escalofrío que no fue a causa del viento zacatecano. Se irguió y se frotó los brazos. En ese momento se sintió tan solo que parecía como si fuera el último habitante de la tierra. Como queriendo reconfortarse, volteó a contemplar a su esposa, profundamente dormida. Al ver su rostro y la tranquilidad con que dormía, Alvarez recupero la compostura. Bostezó y se dió cuenta de su cansancio inexorable. Atizó la lumbre, se recostó, y pronto se durmió.

Un poco después de la media noche, la lumbre se empezó a morir. Las llamas disminuían con cada minuto hasta que sólo quedaron unas brasas moribundas. De repente, sin motivo aparente, los burros se pusieron nerviosos, rebuznando, parando las orejas al aire y encabritándose. Apenas se oyeron los pasos amortiguados, seguidos por los grunidos bajos, casi imperceptibles, de la muerte gris. Víctimas del vorágine de su propio pánico, los asnos fuertes murieron en la confusión del primer asalto. Los lobos se lanzaron furibundos sobre la familia Alvarez, devorándolos vivos entre chillidos espeluznantes y borbotones de sangre. Cuando los lobos habían terminado su festín cruento, no quedó ni siquiera restos de cuero cabelludo, astillas de fémur, o diente de burro. Se fueron tan sigilosos como habían llegado, como la pesadilla al despertarse uno.

Al día siguiente, después de haber dormido toda la noche, el Pequeñito amaneció llorando de hambre. Pero por más que llorara, nadie le hizo caso. Al rato, iban pasando unos arrieros por el camino no muy lejos de donde el Pequeñito se encontraba llorando. Oyeron su llanto desesperado y siguieron el ruido hasta que encontraron al Pequeñito todo destapado, rojo y empapado de sudor. Lo levantaron y lo consolaron con tortilla mojada con leche de vaca. Vieron el suelo, la sangre y ropa desgarrada. No tuvieron que ver las

huellas de lobo para saber lo que había sucedido allí.

Envolvieron al Pequeñito en el rebozo que le quedó de legado de su mamá y se lo llevaron a la hacienda donde trabajaban. Allí el Pequeñito fue criado por una familia que se apellidaba Méndez. Lo bautizaron Ambrosio Méndez, y cuando creció, le contaron lo de sus padres. El joven pasó toda su vida buscando a su verdadera familia, pero nunca la encontró.

Puedo constar la certeza de esta historia porque Ambrosio Méndez era mi bisabuelo.



Painting: "Chili Peppers," José Sosa

Reflection

D. R. Miles

I watch from the bank
And look into the water.
I see the whirl and the swirl
As the water swallows the rocks
And spits them out again.

Sometimes the water flows fast, sometimes slow
But flow it does, and with a purpose.
At times there is sound,
At times there is silence,
But the water is ever moving.

I stare into the water at the rocks,
And the rocks become wet and dry.
From the sight and sound,
Force on force, rock and water
I hear the noise as both collide.

Rocks resisting,
And water relentless.
But as ages past have shown,
Force and strength aren't always rock-like
Patience, like water, can overcome.

Thistle

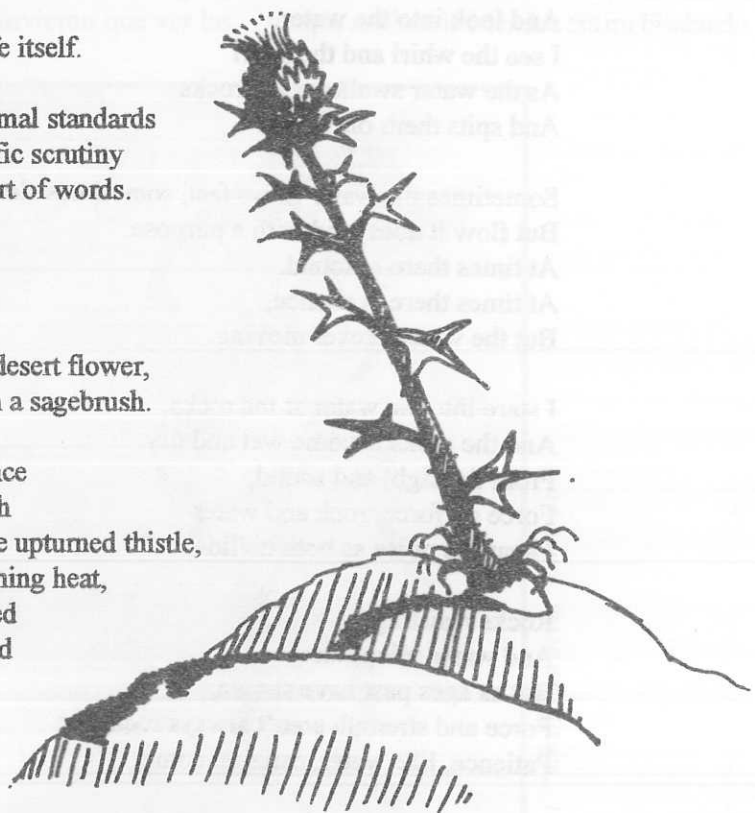
Susan Moon

The power to survive
is a tremulous thing,
a slender thread of life itself.

Immeasurable by normal standards
impervious to scientific scrutiny
indefinable by any sort of words.

Visions of survival
are plentiful enough:
wind-swept trees,
the stark beauty of a desert flower,
the surprise of deer in a sagebrush.

But the delicate balance
between life and death
is so easily seen in the upturned thistle,
still green in the parching heat,
roots gnarled and dried
save one fragile thread
joined to earth:
the living connection.



My father lost his job
and the family sits in the living room
quietly waiting for my father to tell us what is going to happen

Finally my father speaks:
“I don’t have a job; I think it would be best if we moved to Oregon
where there is work; we will live with your tia Dora;
trust me, everything will be all right.”

My brother and I sit stunned at the words
my father has just spoken

I squeeze my little sister’s hand
as she begins to cry
assuring her that everything will be all right
I help her pack her clothes into a huge green suitcase
that’s under the bed

Fields Presicilla Rodriguez

My brother, my sister, and myself
all lay in one bed
a bright colored wool blanket made by my aunt in Mexico
lay heavily on us
as if protecting us from everything we feared

The smell of Tecate beer swoops in under the door
and my sister is still sniffing

My mother sings loudly in Spanish
—the same song she always sings when she’s sad

The singing keeps us silently awake

I remember that day as if it were yesterday, an *ayer* not long ago.
“Muchacha,” I hear my mother scream.
“Keep working!”

I look up into the sky and wipe the sweat off my forehead
my hair tied back and my head covered with a red bandana

I look to the rows in the strawberry field
that my sweat is covering

It’s only 1:00

Familiar Waters

Don Dunn

Winter afternoons, gray in their light, often bring a touch of cabin fever. In doctoring illnesses her family may have contracted, my wife has learned many ways of quenching them. The medicine she administered this time was easy to take: "Go fishing!"

The light was fading fast, so the only place to go was a local stretch of the Yakima River. This was far downstream from the area that has grown to the class of catch and release that draws fly fishers from all around.

This part of the river once teemed with salmon and steelhead runs that coincided with each season. Unfortunately, things change. The El Nino effect on the snow pack, causing farmers to require more water than before, has taken its toll. The loss of smolts during migration due to the hydro dams and predation has also contributed to the decline of salmon and steelhead.

Still, this is not a story of politics, just a story of getting out.

Arriving at my destination, I looked at the house where my family one lived. Dad passed away eleven years ago, and Mom moved to be closer to my sister. I live across town from this spot on the river, but I had not fished it after Mom left.

Nonetheless, it was still "our house" that overlooked the river.

I walked to the door and asked for permission to cross their large back yard that once was our small one acre pasture. "Sure," the owner said, "park your car along the front fence."

I walked to the gate and stopped to look around. I smiled at the railroad ties that made up the fenceposts. My Dad and I wore ourselves out over twenty years ago, dragging those beasts into the backyard. There was the old shed with a lean-to on each side. The shed and front lean-to held enough hay to feed the three cows we kept back for winter; the back lean-to stored four cords of firewood. Now all they held was a riding lawnmower, some yard tools, and the kids' bikes.

The grass was well-groomed, and there weren't any meadow muffins to look out for. I remembered standing in this same spot with Dad years ago, looking over the river in silence, wondering if the steelhead were running. Now I was wondering that same thing, and for a moment—well, you know.

I walked down the path that led to the river, stopping for a moment to pull up my hip waders and smell the scent that the river always gave off there. To some it kind of

stinks because it is mixed with rotting leaves and stagnant pools left by the spring floods. To me it just smelled like the river.

My first cast was made to the fast water, letting the line drift in the current to slower water. The weighted, #4 flame marabou fly looked good as I pulled the line in for another cast. I really didn't expect to catch a steelhead because the number of those that return to this area to spawn is less than one percent of the smolt that migrate to the sea.

"The medicine she administered was easy to take: 'Go fishing!'"

I moved down river some and smelled a real stink. Thinking "What died?" I looked around and found the carcass of a fall run chinook. "All right," I thought, "here's one that made it!" After looking around a little more, I found a total of ten carcasses. "Maybe this is going to be the trend," I said aloud.

I waded offshore only a few feet so as not to disturb any redds, the spawning beds. My casts fell short of where I had wanted them to go, but that was okay; I was in familiar water, just like those chinook had reached.

The light was fading fast; there was only time to make one last cast and then

head for home. Turning to leave at dusk, I saw the lights come on in the house I had once called home. The sensation of coming home after a long absence fell heavy. Memories of coming to this part of the river with Dad on the pretense of working on the fence came to mind. Maybe it was because this occurred just after Christmas, I don't know, but I could hear Dad say with a chuckle, "Think we've worked on the fence enough for one day?" Looking at the carcasses, the light in the window, I answered, "We've worked on the fence long enough."

The next day I decided to give these familiar waters one last try before my 1993 fishing license expired. I read the morning paper over a cup of coffee before setting out for the river. An article stated that as of January 1, 1994, the Department of Fish and Wildlife would close steelhead fishing in the Yakima River altogether because of the low adult and smolt steelhead population. In all likelihood, this would be the last time I'd fish this portion of the river.

Upon reaching the Yakima, I decided to try the same spot I'd fished the afternoon before. My casts were made halfheartedly as realization of the fishing future of this portion of the river set in. I felt no excitement at the prospect of catching a fish. There would be no more standing on this familiar spot overlooking the river and thinking, "Wonder if the steelhead are running"; there would be no more returning to these familiar waters.

Fragile Blue

Judy Moran

Syringa clung the trail
with her pungent bridal crown,
as their ponies splashed the prairie
with white and black and brown,
where winter winds had sown the snow
that hushed the land and hid the gold,
and spring's soft sun had warmed
and borne the Salmon's Terror Water-child.
The Camas' fragile blue had come and gone,
her black seed pods rattling in the breeze,
her spikes still lush and long.
It was time to dig the bulbs.

Above the waves of deep pitched mounds
that hawks and gods had viewed in awe,
blue silhouettes of death they seemed
as White bird dreamed below.
Who heard the volleys' rounds
ricochet ricochet?
Who saw the pebble bodies come
tumbling down . . . tumbling down
the purple mountain walls?
How, toy soldiers, did you bleed
such crimson seeds of rage
to wipe an ancient nation from its ground?

White Bird still dreams in summer leaves.
Nez Perce have come and gone.
The Camas bulb shrinks
smaller . . . smaller,
and blooms a fragile blue.

(Start of the Nez Perce War at Whitebird, Idaho)

The Reckoning

Judy Moran

There is kindness in the air,
sunbreak moments that leave us breathless
and wondering.
We devour them.
We refuse them.
We brace for their disappearance.

Divide my heart
and give it to the hawks.
See them soar!

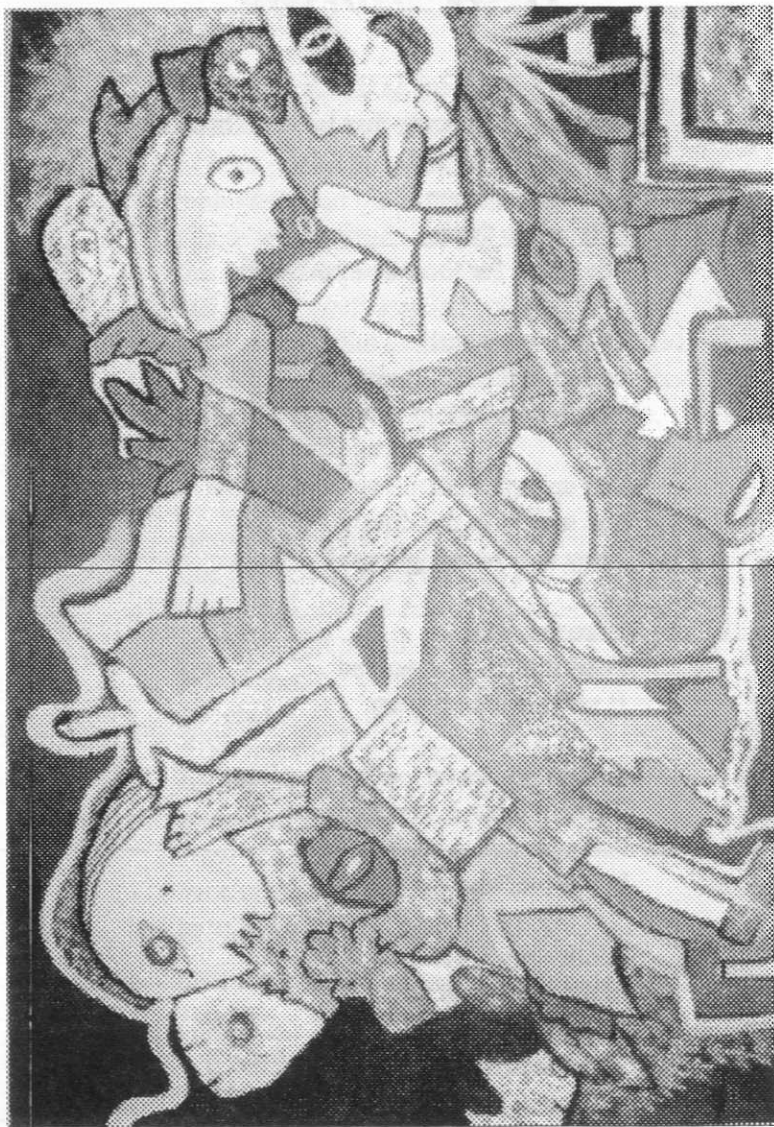
Cut up my mind
and give it to the dumb.
They will be enlightened.

Bare my soul.
Feed it to the tormented.
It will ease their pain.

But do not leave me in one piece.
The kindness in the air,
the sunbreak moments
break me, tear me to bits.

Scatter my shattering
to the wild cold wind.
In some sunbreak moment that leaves us breathless
my shattered scattered dust
will please the earth.

Painting: "Mother and Child," José Sosa



Sandcastles and Children

—such delicious fun to sit in the warmth of the beach
and the sun. Creating and recreating

a world of imagination

without time.

The inventiveness of children happens

in a world without time.

They are forever "at the beach" creating and recreating
with all the fruitful powers of their imaginations.

They make their own time

to explore life with new eyes. Children are wise.

They know that life, like sandcastles, is fragile.

They cling to their imaginative realities. The
sandcastles are theirs—though washed away with the tide.

Children glory in creative power.

Treasuring the timelessness of their play.

Adults, forever scolding/rushing/hurrying through
life—forget all they know.

Carol Smith

Life is fragile.

It washes away with the tide.

The powers of our imaginations will, once again, bring us
into a world of wonderment/limitless horizons.

Let us cherish stubborn independence and cling to the
worlds of our imagination, creating and recreating.

Timelessness is a gift of childhood.

—if we are wise enough to receive it—

a gift of life!

Dear Jesus

Pablo Cienfuegos

María,

Remember when we were kids and Tía Esperanza came to live with us? She was good to you. I never explained to you what happened. It was wrong. You are right to be mad. Like Papá, I never was good at talking. Since Mamá died, though, I've been troubled. Since I'm not so good at writing, I sent you these letters Mamá wrote me over the years. Maybe they can make it right for you. You should go to nurses' school. Mamá was right. You're good with those things. Thanks for everything you did for Mamá. Take care. Some of the letters are smudged from a coffee spill. Try to read them best you can.

Jesus

September 8, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Como estas, mijo? The summer has been too hot here. I don't know—I should probably move back home to San Antonio. These cold winters are harder and harder on me. The boy across the hall leaves for the Army soon. There won't be anyone to shovel the walk. Shirley says they might be raising the rent. It's hard to leave here, mijo. Your Papá and I ran the store for so

long. Oh, there I go complaining again. Mr. Lowenstein, across the hall passed on yesterday. Maybe Diós will take me soon. I'd hate to be a burden. Like Tía Esperanza. She was so hard on you kids. We were already poor, and her pension ran out All that oxygen. Oh, there I go again. Why do you even read my letters Jesus, is beyond me. I had the carpets cleaned a week ago. The man looked not to trust much. Do you think he will rob me? Not much to take. How're Dolores and Marcos? Hug them tight, and kiss them for Abuela. I'll try to remember to send them those birthday cards. Better late than never. I'd better close, mijo. The mailman just came. Hasta luego.

Mamá

September 23, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Como estas, mijo? How are Dolores y Marcos? Kiss them for Abuela. These last few days were cooler. Fall's coming sooner. Mr Lowenstein's son-in-law came by. He asked if I wanted Mr. Lowenstein's African violet. I guess he heard how much I had admired it. It will probably die. You know your Mamá is so bad with plants.

Do you think I should go to the memorial service? They're always so depressing—people crying. Especially since they're Jews and all. Not like us. Remember Papá's funeral? You were so fuerte, mijo. You didn't cry. Just stared off into the distance. Did you ever cry? Oh, there I go rattling on. Your sister is doing fine. She told me to quit worrying about the carpet cleaner. She said they all dress dirty. I never trust dirty white people. They steal things. I thought he stole Tía's shawl off of the sofa. María found it yesterday. I'd better go water the violet. Vaya con Diós.

Mamá

October 1, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Querido. Everything is fine here. The weatherman is saying winter will come early this year. María told me I say the same thing every year. Do you think so? I'm not sure my pension will hold until the end of the month. The toilet broke yesterday, and I had to get a man to fix it. I'm sure Diós will take care of me. There I go rattling on again.

How are Dolores and Marcos? Sorry I missed Marcos' birthday. My gout started acting up again. I didn't get out of bed for three days. Even praying ten rosaries didn't help. Praise Diós, María came by to check on me. The man who fixed the toilet was nice, but they say to watch out for those kind. Is \$49 too much

to pay for a bowl chain replacement? María said it was too much. He said it was complicated. María told me he didn't steal Tía's shawl. It was behind the couch. Oh, I must sound like Tía. I swore I'd never quejarme like she did. Remember her in her shawl screaming at Papá to put his cigarette out? She would forget her medication and start screaming about ashes blowing up her oxygen tank. He worked hard. He was a good man, mijo. It was good of him to give up so much for her. There were nights I was up with Tía, and Papá would even give her his blanket, so she would quit screaming. Oh, *The Honeymooners* are on cable. I'd better go. Write when you can.

Mamá

October 15, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Querido. All is well here. I just got back from Dr. Kowalsky. He said my blood pressure is fine. At nights my chest hurts sometimes though. I sleep longer than I used to. He's a nice man, but I'm not so sure he's current on his medical journals. He has a new nurse. I'm so glad. Mrs. Clark was so old and grouchy. Maybe María will be a nurse someday. She's so good with those things. When I was young, we used herbs you know. Diós help me if I can't even pronounce the names of my medications.

Thanks for the kids' pictures. When are you coming to visit? I told Papá at the

cemetery last week you might come for Thanksgiving. I know you're busy.

Shirley said they're not raising the rent after all. My pension will last the year. María said I'm not being like Tía Esperanza. Do you think so? She was so sick and all. You couldn't blame her for screaming so much. The pain being what it was?

She raised me and your Tio Juan all alone. Diós bless her. Remember the time you kicked over her oxygen, and she squealed? Your little eyes got so big. It still makes me giggle mijo. She was so sick. You couldn't blame her. Oh—there goes my chest. I'd better close. Hasta luego. Kiss Marcos and Dolores for me.

Mamá

October 29, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Diós help me! It's La Noche de las Brujas soon. If the spirits are kind to me, maybe Tía will visit. Don't tell María, but I'm going to set out tortillas and pan dulces for Tía. María tells me the old ways are of the devil. She just doesn't understand—like you, mijo. When someone is with you so long—you miss them hard sometimes. One day Diós will let me see her again. That nice young priest came by last Wednesday. He gave me confession and some Hail Marys. I don't tell him about the old ways. They don't understand. Remember when you were 6 and I first told you of the old ways? Mijo—you were the

only one I told of the spirits in our lives. Do you leave Tortas and pozole for Papá. With all the cooking for Tía, I don't think I can get to it. Make sure you leave pozole for Papá. He likes that. You used to get so nervous about La Noche. You always just wanted to go Trick or Treating. You understand why I kept you home those nights now though. You're older. You understood more than anyone. Remember the pozole. Here comes María. I've got to go.

Mamá

November 5, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Querido! Praise Diós—Tía visited on La Noche. We talked about life and what happened. We had a good time. Don't tell María. She doesn't understand the old ways. It was grand. It's snowing harder here now. María said she would have Gilberto come over and shovel the walk. He's such a good boy. I wish I had more to pay him. Are you coming for Thanksgiving? I hope you like this card. I found it yesterday at Walpock's drug. Remember when you used to run down there for sodas? You were such a good boy mijo. You still are. Thank you for the flowers. Here comes María to take me out shopping again. I don't know what I'd do without her. Hasta luego.

Mamá

November 20, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Como estas mijo? A lady in a plaid blue dress moved into Mr. Lowenstein's apartment. She asked to have the wallpaper changed to that ugly floral print they put down in 2A. Can you imagine putting those tiny daisies in your living room? She says she's a science teacher. Mijo, I'll tell you a secret. I don't think she likes men, if you know what I mean. She acts rather peculiar. She plays violin music at ten in the morning. Hijole! I'm starting to get a headache from it mijo. She also cuts her hair in an unnatural way. It's too short—like a man. María says she's just college educated, and that she likes different things. I think she's just not natural. How are Dolores and Marcos? Kiss them both for Abuela. Do you really think the government will cut my pension? Aye, Diós, I don't know what I'd do. Mr. Lowenstein would turn over in his grave if he saw that wallpaper. I'd better go water the violet. María got the special flower food I asked for. It's adjusting to me. Hasta luego.

Mamá

November 25, 1972

Dear Jesus,

María said you aren't coming. Por qué no mijo? Can't you get off work for just Wednesday and Monday? If it's too expensive, Dolores and Marcos don't have

to come. They could go to her Mamá's. No—that's not right. Forgive your Mamá. So long I watch T.V. and feed the cat—I forget you're too busy. I understand. When Tía was sick, night and day was busy like craziness. I didn't know when to sleep or eat. Life gets busy at times—I know. Maybe next time you could come with the family. Ya entiendo. No te me preocupas. The man came and fixed the heat vent. It was cold in here last week. The wallpaper is cracking in places. If it wasn't that ugly floral print, I might have it replaced. The styles today don't suit me. Could you maybe come for Christmas? Just think about it. It's the end of the year—maybe María and I could send money. Listen to me rattle on. Forgive your Mamá. She's old. Hasta luego.

Mamá

December 29, 1972

Dear Jesus,

It was so good to see you! Diós answered my prayers and heard my rosaries! Marcos was so big! You looked sad, though, mijo. Is something wrong with Dolores? Papá used to look that way. I couldn't take care of him like I should have—with Tía sick and all. Remember the Christmas Papá forgot the Christmas tree? We did the best we could—it turned out to be a sweet Christmas, with your school drawings for presents. Did you see they're still hanging in the bathroom? They make me smile. You were such a

good boy, mijo. Don't let the world preocuparte. Tía screamed so much that Christmas Eve that I gave her too much medication and put tequila in her coffee. She always demanded coffee. That's why she slept so good. The doctor knew I did it, but he never said.

You want to hear about your silly Mamá? I thought the T.V. man stole Tía's shawl and called the police and María. María had taken it to wash it. She called the police and let them know it was okay. She's so good to me. Oh! That lady is playing violin music again. I'll have to lay down with this headache. Take care. Hasta luego.

Mamá

March 5, 1972

Dear Jesus,

Quiero. Your Mamá feels como una burra. María told you, I know. I make tortillas every morning for 63 years. Why, I fell and burned myself—Dr. Kowalsky said it was a mild stroke. But he's not current on his medical journals. The flowers you sent!—Que bonitas! I think it was Diós letting me know to be careful of that woman across off of 32nd. If I was in San Antonio, I could get the yerbas I need. Not here though. María said they're of the devil. She doesn't understand. I have two new medications that are supposed to help. They take more of my pension. I'm supposed to take them every other day. Don't tell María. I'm so glad

I'm back home. María is so good to me. She buys me tortillas now—but they're not the same. Don't tell her—I'm going to start making them again. Dr. Kowalsky says not to hope for much. I'm not going to be Tía Esperanza. She was a good woman when she was busy. She was hard—but good. She had to be hard to raise me and Juan. Juanito ran around a bit. He had a hard head. In that bed all day she turned sour. You can't blame her. She was so sick. Gilberto did good at shoveling my walk and watering the violet. Time to take my medication. Write if you have time.

Mamá

March 13, 1973

Dear Jesus,

María found out about me not taking my medication. She got mad and said she would pay for it. For me not to worry. She also put my bed close to the T.V. and the phone. She says she wants me to come live with her and Gilbert. I said no. I won't be a burden like Tía Esperanza. The lady in the plaid blue dress turned down her violin music. She introduced herself yesterday and brought an apple pie. She's nice. I must have been wrong about her not liking men. Her hair is getting longer, too. Gilberto brought me new glasses yesterday. The old ones broke when I fell.

The birds told me that spring will be early this year. I'd better recover soon, so I can tend to my garden plot. The fresh

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The birds told me that spring will be early this year. I'd better recover soon, so I can tend to my garden plot. The fresh

tomatoes make the mole taste so much better. Does Dolores make the mole as good as me?—Oh, what a question I ask. Ignore your Mamá. My medication makes me write funny things. Remember when Tía yelled when you closed the door loud that day? She screeched that you were of the devil. She was sick. Her medication said that—that curse she said wasn't a true one, because she didn't have her mind. You dropped your lunch box and ran to the store. It took me four hours that night to calm her down. I didn't get to explain to you—you were so new to the old ways. Oh! There's an Andrews Sisters special on T.V. Hasta luego.

Mamá

April 12, 1973

Dear Jesus,

Quiero. Easter was so beautiful. That new priest gave mass in Latin! I so miss the Latin services. We had to learn the catechisms in Latin, mijo. I remember asking the priest before my first communion if angels protected us why did we need the yerbas for the devils. His eyes got so big. He gave me 50 Hail Marys and 75 rosaries. I did them faithfully—then I asked Tía why Diós was so mad at me. She said, "Diós no tiene la problema. El Padre no quiere luchar para la comida de los espíritus. El es un gordito, no?" Can you imagine a priest needing more food? I still giggle, mijo, at that time. Look at mass Sunday, mijo—see how fat the padre

is. For once all my apartment works. *The Honeymooners* are on cable. Hasta Luego.

Mamá

May 11, 1973

Dear Jesus,

Quiero! Papá's old store was robbed today! They came in at closing—just like that Christmas eve when Tía was sick. Remember? I was so afraid when I heard the police. Officers woke me me up and asked me if I saw anyone. Mijo, you know I didn't. I fell asleep during the *Tonight Show* every night. I was so afraid. I was so frightened. Just like that Christmas eve. You were so brave back then, mijo. You were only sixteen—but you took care of me. The funeral, the arrangements. You even cooked breakfast for María. I'll never forget how she would complain about your tortillas. "Flour bricks" she would call them. You were such a good boy, mijo. The police's blue lights flashing in my bedroom from their car tops. Too many memories, mijo. The officer called Maria. And she calmed me down. I thought the officer took Tía's shawl for evidence, but I found it behind the T.V. in front of the bedroom. I'm so frightened mijo. Please come home. I need you to take care of me. Papá's gone, mijo. How can I keep going? The neighborhood's not the same. I don't know the people. Not like when I came with Papá from San Antonio. María's good—but she's not Papá or you. You're so fuerte. You know man things.

The Korean people all speak Chinese. I don't understand. You have to come home mijo. I dropped my glasses. My Sunday dress with the purple flowers is gone—the one I wore to Papá's funeral. Mijo, come home. I'll stay here until I hear from you. I won't beat you anymore. It was wrong. Just come home, mijo.

Mamá

May 14, 1973

Dear Jesus,

Forgive, mijo. The robbery made Mamá loco. Dr. Kowalsky approved for María to give me more medication. I was so scared, I probably wrote things that weren't true. You know how crazy I got at the funeral. You know things always happen that people don't mean. Mr. Lowenstein told me once his wife had an affair when he was trying to get over her passing on. Mrs. Lowenstein wasn't that type. I knew her for years. Mr. Lowenstein was just hurt, so he said hurtful things. He's probably explaining the same thing to her right now in—well, where ever it is that Jews go when they die. Tía hurt sometimes too. It was her hurt talking mijo. There was a day right before she died that she told me, "Jesus is a good boy. I shouldn't treat him so badly. There's a powerful evil in me right now Ana. Tell that to Jecus." She started kicking the T.V. that night, so I didn't get a chance to tell you. I guess I forgot until today. It's those loco days that bring back memories. The

man is coming tomorrow to spray for roaches. Tía used to tell stories of how they would roast cucarachas in Mexico, when Abuela found them in the flour. "La harina las hizo gordas." I still giggle at the fat cucarachas story. Now I pay someone to kill them. What a strange life. Gilberto is checking on me after school, everyday now. He's a good boy. María told me that he's getting good grades, and starting to notice girls. Did you get my birthday card? Here comes Gilberto. I'd better go. Hasta luego.

Mamá

June 7, 1973

Dear Jesus,

Miss Olsen came over today. She brought me dinner too. She's a nice lady. She said she traveled to Mazatlan last year. She laughed when I asked her if she had a boyfriend. She said I sounded just like her mother. The T.V. is starting to show reruns again. They don't make shows like Ed Sullivan anyway. The man was by to check on the air conditioner. I coughed for an hour after he blew the vents out. Can't they do that without the dirt? The carpets were just cleaned. Gilberto will have to vacuum now. Gilberto might get a job at the market. He won't come by as much. He's such a good boy. The windows need cleaning. The smog makes them cloudy. Oh well. At least a little sun gets in.

Mamá

tomatoes make the mole taste so much better. Does Dolores make the mole as good as me?—Oh, what a question I ask. Ignore your Mamá. My medication makes me write funny things. Remember when Tía yelled when you closed the door loud that day? She screeched that you were of the devil. She was sick. Her medication said that—that curse she said wasn't a true one, because she didn't have her mind. You dropped your lunch box and ran to the store. It took me four hours that night to calm her down. I didn't get to explain to you—you were so new to the old ways. Oh! There's an Andrews Sisters special on T.V. Hasta luego.

Mamá

April 12, 1973

Dear Jesus,

Quiero. Easter was so beautiful. That new priest gave mass in Latin! I so miss the Latin services. We had to learn the catechisms in Latin, mijo. I remember asking the priest before my first communion if angels protected us why did we need the yerbas for the devils. His eyes got so big. He gave me 50 Hail Marys and 75 rosaries. I did them faithfully—then I asked Tía why Diós was so mad at me. She said, "Diós no tiene la problema. El Padre no quiere luchar para la comida de los espíritus. El es un gordito, no?" Can you imagine a priest needing more food? I still giggle, mijo, at that time. Look at mass Sunday, mijo—see how fat the padre

is. For once all my apartment works. *The Honeymooners* are on cable. Hasta Luego.

Mamá

May 11, 1973

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Mamá

June 7, 1973

Dear Jesus,

Miss Olsen came over today. She brought me dinner too. She's a nice lady. She said she traveled to Mazatlan last year. She laughed when I asked her if she had a boyfriend. She said I sounded just like her mother. The T.V. is starting to show reruns again. They don't make shows like Ed Sullivan anyway. The man was by to check on the air conditioner. I coughed for an hour after he blew the vents out. Can't they do that without the dirt? The carpets were just cleaned. Gilberto will have to vacuum now. Gilberto might get a job at the market. He won't come by as much. He's such a good boy. The windows need cleaning. The smog makes them cloudy. Oh well. At least a little sun gets in.

Mamá

July 2, 1973

Dear Jesus,

Miss Olsen came by yesterday. She brought me dinner. She's a nice lady. Her hair is getting longer. She has traveled somewhere in Mexico, but I can't remember where. I guess her mother asked too, about whether or not she has a boyfriend. She laughed when I asked. I found Ed Sullivan reruns. That was the best show. The man came and fixed my air conditioner. It's a hot summer. Gilberto is working at the market, so he doesn't water the violet so often. It's getting a bit brown around the leaves. Its blossoms are gone. Here comes Ed. I'd better close. Hasta luego.

Mamá

May 20, 1973

Dear Mamá,

Your mijo has been bad for not writing before now. You worry so much that you're Tía Esperanza. You're not. You're my Mamá. Some of those things you've been talking about, I'd forgotten. Dios makes it okay. I do remember the fat cockroaches story. It used to make me sick to hear about Tía eating cockroaches. To this day, I check my flour every morning. María is good to you.

Mamá—there used to be hard parts in me. Dolores and Marcos make them softer. Don't worry about Papá. He's just smiling at you. He always did. I'd better close before this gets messed up. I never was good with words. Te amo.

Jesus



Photo: "Education Is for Everyone," Joan Haifter

Idaho January

Gwen Goodey

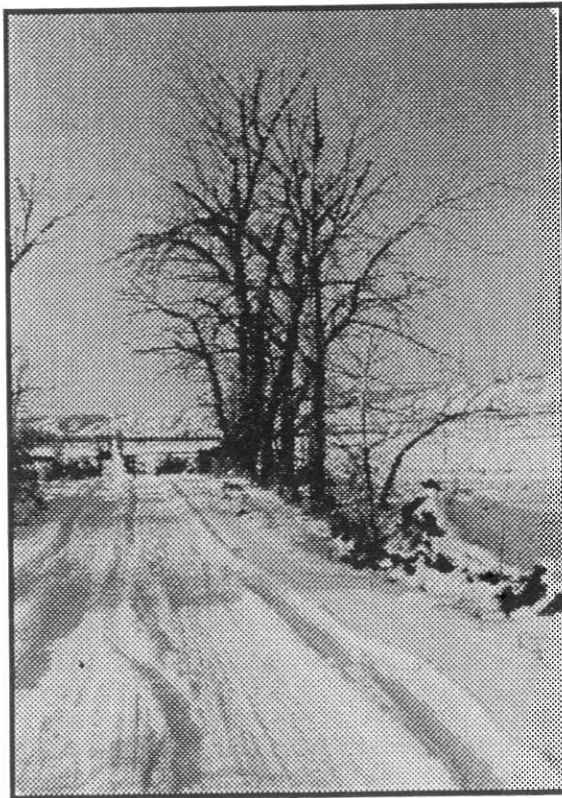


Photo: Michael Rudick

I walked straight,
I thought,
Carrying a fork of hay and bucket of fresh water
Through thick new powdery shadowless snow
Up the hill to the pasture gate.

Turning,
I saw

The serpentine o
curve o
of o
my o
path o
Punctuated o
by o
bucket prints o
made o
with o
each o
stride o

And wondered:
Do I always reach my goals this way?

A Theory of an Indian

Leah Sue Aleck

Think how the old chiefs saved our reservations for us.

Think of the Indians who are yet unborn.

Indians are human beings who must be treated with Dignity and Respect.

The Indian once held the entire American continent.

We cannot go away from the place where our hearts are buried and leave the graves of our mothers unwatched.

The white man has disrupted our lives for many, many years.

We have survived our land—for what? For building dams, for storing atomic waste, for building the white man's fences and farms, for waging war, for having our fishing waters condemned for electricity, for what they call civilization.

The promise of government being established was their way of defeat or death.

It was because of tradition that the old chiefs encouraged the stronghold of our culture and religion; it is the only way we will survive.

From Inside This Box

Regina L. Gamet

From inside this box the world's a frightening place,
where my thoughts and my feelings I never need face.
Where talk about feelings won't ever rise,
from inside this box it won't seem like lies.

From inside this box I don't have to see,
that there's pain and there's heartache inside of me.
Not knowing expression, mind full of fear,
from inside this box I can't see the mirror.

From inside this box I never will grow,
I won't face reality and therefore be whole.
I won't look to the past and seek what was wrong,
from inside this box I won't learn to be strong.

From inside this box I'll cry and I'll scream,
I'll learn to accept that life holds no dreams.
I'll look to the future with contempt and disdain,
please lend me your hand or in here I'll remain.

The Cat Never Laid a Paw on Me

Ken Harper

In order to give my wife some peace of mind at night, I installed a motion detector. I, of course, had no intention of doing anything if the lights did come on; they were supposed to give my wife a peaceful night's rest. Two nights after I installed it, my wife and I turned out the lights at 9:00 p.m. and said our good nights. A couple of hours later, the security lights popped on, illuminating our bedroom. Now, I was for ignoring these lights, brushing them off as the wind rustling leaves or a cat doing a jig on our driveway which had caused the motion detector to come on. I had decided to go back to sleep when my wife said, "Aren't you going to see what's the matter?" Trying to ignore her was my first consideration, but realizing that she was not about to let this rest, let alone me, I decided on the argument approach: "It's only a cat or the wind; nothing to worry about, go to sleep." She grumbled something I couldn't understand. I felt relieved; now I could doze off again.

This was not the case. There was a swarm of moths fluttering in my stomach. I knew what must be done. I got out of

bed, acting very upset that my sleep was disturbed. Grabbing my cream-colored robe and slipping my feet into my soft, cozy, white slippers, I attempted to put on a menacing face. Quietly I walked up to the door that faces the driveway and peered out the window. At this point, I was hoping to see some branches moving about. I had no such luck. Had I known then what I know now, I would rather have faced a mass murderer. My misery would have been short-lived.

What I found was a cat—no special looking cat, just ordinary. He or she (I didn't know which it was, nor did I care) looked neither overly stupid nor exceptionally bright. It had an orange tint to its sandy-colored fur and darker orange rings around its middle. As I look back on my ordeal, one thing that did stand out was the look of confidence the cat exhibited. There was no fright or fear in its look, just determination as it perched on my back porch railing.

Since I had gotten up and made it this far, I decided to take out my frustrations on the cat; after all, it did trip the motion detector, right? I wanted to make a tough

impression on it when I opened the door, and a sloppy-fitting robe with my belly hanging out wasn't right. I undid the drawstring on my robe and tucked in all the loose parts, then tightened up the drawstring while sucking in my stomach. I gave the cat a stern look out the window, hoping this would be all it would take. It sat there staring back at me. I grasped the handle, jerked the door open, and said in a loud whisper, "Get outta here, cat." I said it quietly 'cause I didn't want to wake the neighbors or my family. I gently shut the door and looked out the window, expecting to see the cat's rear end departing my porch railing. Instead I saw two eyes still staring at me. I was startled for a second but decided either it was hard of hearing and I was too quiet or it was a foreigner and didn't understand English. Be that as it may, I knew that either way it would understand if I spoke English loud enough. I opened the door again and in a louder, more angry tone said, "Beat it, cat!" It sat there staring at me. I knew then it was here to challenge me for the porch.

I decided the best approach would be to lurch at the cat, which was about eight feet from me. Unbeknownst to me, the lights from the motion detector had alarmed the neighbors whose house faced the porch on which the confrontation was taking place. The couple next door had been watching this whole scene from their bedroom, peeping between parted mini-blinds. I started out the door with my left foot and jumped forward, landing on my right foot.

It's not entirely clear what happened next. One thing for sure is that my foot landed in a two gallon plastic bucket partially filled with cold, soapy water. At the time I wasn't sure what had a hold of my foot. I stumbled forward a foot or two, hobbling around with the bucket stuck to my foot. The cold water splashed everywhere. Needless to say, by this time I was no longer being quiet. Between the expletives that exploded from my mouth and that darn bucket clomping on the porch, the whole neighborhood was awakened.

I knew I was going to fall on the porch floor, but I had one last chance to get that cat. It was out of reach, so I stretched as hard as I could, threatening the cat in every way I knew how. I landed on the porch floor with a loud smack and was humiliated by this time—otherwise, I might have felt the severe pain in my foot.

I looked up. At the door stood my wife and two children. On the porch railing was the cat. All were staring at me. I looked at the cat and could swear its lip and whiskers on its right side moved upward as if it were snickering. The cat looked at me, my family, and then glanced around as if looking at the neighbors who had come outside to see what all the commotion was about, finally peering back at the two neighbors who were peeping through the mini-blinds.

There was a hint of victory in the cat's eyes as it landed on the porch with a thud. It slowly meandered off the porch, its tail raised straight up, a sign of conquest.

El Gallo

Presicilla Rodriguez

Cigarette smoke fills the barn
bleachers are set up against the wooden walls

In the middle of the barn
a fence shaped into a circle

Inside the circle
two roosters, two men

Near my father sits "Don Julio"
the richest man in the barn
he's tall, light skinned, and fairly handsome
he wears gold rings and a thick rope necklace with a cross on it

He and my family
have long been friends
he tells good stories about witchcraft and curanderos

The barn is now filled with people
waiting to start the bets on the two roosters

The two men in the ring begin to tie the razors on the roosters' feet
the betting starts

A fat American man in snakeskin boots takes everyone's money
and then he signals the men to start

The two men throw their roosters at each other's
making them mad—and wanting to fight

The shouting begins and Mexican music is blaring

The red-tailed rooster jumps onto the black-tailed rooster
I can see the blood on the dirt

The black tailed rooster doesn't move . . .
he's dead

People start to collect their money
Don Julio won one thousand dollars

The winner carries off this rooster
proud—and also a lot richer

The second man
tosses his rooster into a green wheelbarrow that's outside the ring

The next two men come into the ring
with their roosters in hand

Only one carries the winner



Photo: Michael Rudick

*Mi
Sangre
Ruben
Sanchez*



Etching: "Incomptible Virtues," J. R. Travis

Self-Portrait Bunky Echo-Hawk

I will paint my self portrait now, and what shades of gray and pastels I will use, what carelessness my frayed brush will move with. I smoke cigarettes, burning moments away, feeding time with waiting, sketching. I will smoke even when I paint, and perhaps the smoke will add a certain tint to the portrait, perhaps it will become the certain quality that you just cannot put your finger on. You will look at the painting, at me, at what I've done, and you will frown wondering. You will see splashes of Pawnee and Yakama, and every other color that makes me the ethno-mutt I am, I will use the #8208 as the dark I lay down first, the foundation of the painting, because any art I create is nothing without that enrollment number. There are others that make me lucky, others without enrollment numbers, without even a zero. It makes me caress guilt in being so lucky, to be of colors and to have #8208; it forces me to see other people of the same colors without numbers, and also by any standard, they are no artists. I will paint for them, too, and the color I will use is a color inappropriate and new, a color dripping from my eyes and in the thin sweat of my skin. My portrait will make you cringe for every time I ducked when called an "Indian," my paints will retell the stories of international parties my sister went to, parties where she was the only Pawnee and Yakama, parties when Germans, Japanese, Czechoslovakians, and French people thought she was a person from India with citizenship in America. I will paint her struggle and her frustration with not being acknowledged for her race, and that color requires no paint on the canvas; no, instead that color requires that special part of the eyes, that part that allows viewers to talk arrogantly about a piece of art. But you, viewer, will not speak that pompous language over dinner and wine after you see my painting, for there is no arrogance in discovering the truth that existed before you could speak. You will frown looking, thinking, wondering, *Where could the feathers, beads, and blankets be?* You will wonder, *Just where are the traditions?* And I will paint in eye-straining colors the truth of it; those feathers, beads, and blankets, those traditions, are too precious and too scarce to find. Instead, with haze I will paint boxes of commodity cheese, bestial bottles of alcohol, lazy school shacks, tribal houses, the absence of languages, bruised half-breeds and laughing full-bloods, the powwow circuit, and a clock telling "Indian Time." I will title my self-portrait "#8208" and sign it the same.

My blood is not pure; it consists of two different nations.
My blood is Spanish, the Conquistadors.
My blood is Azteca, the ancient ones.

My blood rebels against itself, yet it is one.
My blood is pure and has a deeper red color than all other nations.

My blood runs in my veins, a proud blood of destiny.
My blood is unique, yet it is old and wise.
And it is young.

As my blood rebels within me, I also rebel against my carnales for unity.
If the ancient ones had been left alone, I would have peace within myself.

Lucha

Constantino Gamboa

Constantino nació en aquella parte del universo tejano en una vecindad llamada <<El Tule>>, llevando ese nombre por el material usado en la construcción de las viviendas. A su padre, un campesino pobre, no le alcanzaba para comprar madera. La casa olía a Café Combate, humo de cigarro, manteca de cerdo, tortillas recién hechas y a tierra húmeda. En su casa sólo se conversaba en español y hasta la edad de seis años el niño no tuvo contacto con otras personas además de sus parientes.

La primera vez que sintió que el alma se le escapaba por la boca como una mariposa nocturna fue cuando era desterrada a <<la escuela>> donde la señorita <<tichr>> le hacía pronunciar los sonidos quebradizos y ásperos del inglés. Cuando trataba de refugiarse de las vocales guturales que le trastornaban en la comodidad del habla casera, las maestras le regañaban. Aprendía a callarse. Las láminas de los libros de lectura y civismo, siendo las láminas casi lo único que entendía, presentaban familias de apellido y aspecto sajón. Estas consistían de los dos padres, y <<Dic>> y <<Chein,>> los dos hijos reglamentarios, ni más ni menos; el perro <<Espát>> y el gato <<Paf>>.

Toda esta versión de la realidad le causó tanta confusión, que por segunda

vez se le fue el alma, y esta vez tardó en regresar hasta el instante en que la tichr le habló para que contestara una pregunta que no había oído. A esa edad temprana se enteró de que él existía entre dos aguas . . . la cultura oficial y la cultura familiar, que peleaban por su alma como Cristo y Satanás.

Las tichrs no se molestaron en aprender su nombre y conjuraron para atrapar su alma en una red onomástica. Tendieron Constantion, Constance, Constantine y Tina para ver si lograran que respondiera. Además, le era imposible pronunciar ciertas vocales del inglés. A veces las distorsionaba tal forma que la tichr le ridiculizaba.

Hacia los últimos años de la primaria, las tichrs le interrogaron sobre los antecedentes culturales de sus padres; al saber que eran de México, declararon que México era un país que sólo aportaba una vida de miseria y embrutecimiento a sus habitantes pululantes. Una tichr opinó que si trasladaran al hombre más fregado de los Estados Unidos a México, allá sería al par de la gente más rica de la República.

Algunos de los asaltos dieron en el blanco. Hasta la fecha siente el escozor al pensar de la ocasión en que iba de compras al centro con su mamá y ella le hablaba

español, lo único que sabía y él le decía que por favor, no hablara tan fuerte para que no la escuchara la gente. Pero por lo general, su alma evadía las muchas trampas que le tendieron las maestras y los compañeros de clase. Aunque se vestía de cowboy, entonaba esas canciones desgarradas del corazón mexicano cuando ésto resquebraja en el solvente del aguardiente. A los grandes les era imposible suprimir el suspiro de <<Ay, que muchachito. Es muy mexicano,>> antes de sumirse de nuevo en la maraña de su soledad pétrea.

A menudo no le era posible asistir a las clases los nueve meses del año lectivo reglamentario porque era de familia campesina golondrina que transitaba toda la costa occidental de los Estados Unidos en pos de trabajos agrícolas temporales. Algunos años sólo lograba asistir seis meses a las escuelas oficiales cumpliendo ésto en los planteles de dos o tres pueblos polvorientos sucesivos. Se esforzaba heroicamente para pasar las trancas de provincialismo e ignorancia institucional y para mantenerse al nivel de aprovechamiento de los demás alumnos.

Y los vuelos de su alma mariposa felpuda entre las dos realidades continuaba pero también la vergüenza de saber que iba a seguir negando a sus raíces mexicanas. En la escuela preparatoria en la clase de historia se realizaba el interrogatorio, ya bien conocido, sobre los antecedentes culturales de cada alumno como afirmación de solidaridad gringa. El rogaba que se lo tragara la tierra para no

tener que participar en discusiones ideológicas de esa índole. Cuando le tocó constar su origen dijo, <<mexicano, supongo.>> No negó identificarse como mexicano pero tampoco era afirmación definitiva. Sintió el aleteo secreto de su alma que se agitaba en su crisálida.

En la clase de la historia universal cuando se trataba la historia de México, la única referencia fue el ataque de Pancho Villa a Columbus, <<Niu Meksico>>. Este breve episodio concluyó con la declaración terminante de que Villa sólo fue bandido y cobarde. Constantion-Constance-Constantine-Tina quedó maravillado ante la posibilidad de que ésta fuera la única aportación que hiciera México a la historia universal pero no había a quien acudir para aclarar sus dudas. No había obras de consulta sobre México en la biblioteca regional y mucho menos en la biblioteca escolar.

El alma renacida estiraba las alas traslucidas y Tino, Tino a secas, sin pretensiones o apodos, emprendió la recuperación de todo lo que le había sido hurtado, arrebatado o simplemente robado, comenzando con el español. Todas las noches se ponía a escuchar un programa de música mexicana en la radio. Los fines de semana se iba a las películas mexicanas que a veces se exhibían en un cinema de un barrio pobre de la ciudad. Pero al hacer ésto no hizo caso omiso de los estrenos en los cinemas de la otra parte de la ciudad donde se exhibían películas en inglés. Los fines de semana cuando no iba al cine se iba a un salón de baile en donde tocaba un

conjunto de musica Tex-Mex. Creo que ni una sola vez asistió a un baile colegial. Como se aproximaba el egreso de preparatoria fue a consultar a la asesora escolar para que le diera una orientación tocante a las carreras. A la asesora ni siquiera se le ocurrió la posibilidad de que era apto para estudios universitarios. Le echó un vistazo al muchacho de estatura baja y peso liviano y le declaró que tenía la estatura perfecta para ser jinete. Esa fue la primera y última vez que el joven utilizara a esa asesora.

Unos años después de que se graduó de la preparatoria, le cayó una carta certificada del gobierno federal que anunciaba, "Greetings, Uncle Sam needs you." Conscripto, cumplió una temporada de dos años en el ejército. Pero ahora se reunieron todas las condiciones para constituir el *momento coyuntural*. El gobierno le había otorgado una beca para cuatro años de estudios universitarios. Asistió dos años al colegio de bachilleres del Valle de Yakima y otros dos a la Universidad de Washington. Allá fue donde cursó clases en español y sobre la diáspora chicana de los Estados Unidos. También cursó clases de literatura e historia española. Cada día que transcurría se sentía más y más orgulloso recuperando así los cimientos de la cultura, historia y autenticidad que le había sido negado. Se iba sintiendo cada día más cómodo ser bilingüe; la vergüenza se iba disminuyendo. Algunas personas le comentaban que una persona bilingüe y bicultural vale por dos; y si uno se pone a

reflexionar, es muy cierta esa observación.

Este estado de llegar a un delicado equilibrio entre dos culturas es imprescindible para vivir, convivir, y trabajar en una sociedad donde uno nada entre dos aguas. Para este joven, ahora ya una persona adulta, le fue difícil lograr este equilibrio, pero cree que si no ha logrado alcanzarlo, cuando menos ha llegado a un nivel en donde se siente cómodo. Sabe que la lucha continuará porque cada día se presenta ese mismo desafío de mantener ese delicado equilibrio para que no se repita la misma historia de aquel entonces.

Ahora me encuentro en la universidad Heritage College terminando mi carrera universitaria que comencé muchos años atrás. En mi trabajo de tutor en el Academic Skills Center, se me presenta la oportunidad de conversar con estudiantes que quizás estén experimentando las mismas dificultades por las cuales yo pasé. Algunos se sienten muy desanimados y piensan abandonar sus estudios. Yo comprendo bastante bien sus dudas y desaliento y trato de ser una fuerza de inspiración para ellos.

Etching: "Irreconcilable Differences," J. R. Travis



Sonnet I: The Bride

Kimberlee
Shearer

The faith of innocence is powerful
For the adultered mind; the spring is true
That falters not in pathways of the skull
But follows lines bespoken by the few.
When cold eyes meet the gaze, sincerity,
Expectant, full of promise, blissful ease
Then stone brows fill with thoughtful charity
A mask to hide the strife without release.
So purity bedevils with its smile,
Alight with trusting heart and inner peace,
The dark of my besoiled soul and guile
Must hide to meet the white of your belief.
Unwavering strength of purity's sweet trust
Upholds the gate of my soul, full of rust.

Age Thirty Eight

Lisa M. Herndon

When I dream
I shed this body
Who has become a burden to me
And I dance
Naked
 Caressed by wind
 And liquid loving light.

When I dream
I shed these rules
Who have begun to bind me
And I dance
Naked
 Graced by movement
 And solid healing night.

When I dream
I shed the years
Who are leaving their marks on me
And I dance
Naked
 Blessed by music
 And ethereal spiritual fight.

Autumns

Lisa M. Herndon

Shuffling knee-deep through a park,
oaks gone gold in chill autumn air,
 My heart's harvest,
 self-perpetuating passion,
 perceptions fine-tuned
 on you and me,
and our summer slipping away
in cool October wind.

 I pluck a leaf
 of prismatic perfect form
 and
 vow
 never to forget this one
 blazing day of my life
love encasing every fiber of my soul
blanketing my world,
golden leaves buried every single blade grass in the
park

still more gold tumbled through the air
and trembled in the breeze.

 I trembled too,
 knowing
 so many years,
 so many days
I'd once vowed never to forget
yet had.

feelings forever and moments golden
falling from my memory
 just like
 golden oak leaves
 in a park
in autumn.

Transfigurations

Cat Candle

When I was nine years old, I turned away from my mother—for a while. It happened like this: Mom and I were playing a game of Monopoly one evening in late October when we heard a knock at the front door. Mom rose to admit a ruddy-faced, elfin man and a tall, pale woman. Boisterous greetings were exchanged, and the guests were seated on the couch. The man took a bottle of wine from inside his coat and told Mom to fetch some drinking glasses. Mother went into the kitchen for glasses, simultaneously telling me to put the game board away and go to bed. I put the game board away, but instead of going on to bed, I slipped back into the living room. Mom and her guests were too busy breaking open the wine to notice me as I curled up in an easy chair.

After Mom had drunk a few glasses of wine, she began to change. She began to recite all her real and imagined grievances in a droning, whiny voice. She sat on the floor and put her head on the man's knees, seeking consolation. The man patted Mom on the shoulder and said, "That's all right; that's all right" as he refilled the empty wine glasses. The woman became bored and fell asleep. Her forgotten cigarette sent up a thin spiral of smoke. The room became dim and dense with the smoke of many cigarettes. And the sweet, heavy odor of wine added to the oppressive density of the room. Mom was

crying now and talking incoherently through the bubbles of thick saliva that formed in her mouth. She had said everything she could think of, so she went back to the beginning and started over again. The man continued to listen patiently, patting Mom's shoulder and saying, "That's all right." The woman began to snore.

I wanted the man and woman to leave, but then I would be alone with Mother. I wanted Daddy, but he was on a hunting trip. I wanted to get away from the room and the people in it, but there was no place to go. At last I ran into the bedroom and jumped into Daddy's bed and pulled the covers over my head.

A long time later, Mom staggered into the room and got into the other twin bed without undressing. I pretended to be asleep, and after while I wasn't pretending anymore.

Sometime later, I was awakened when Mom jumped out of bed and vomited on the floor.

"Beth, help me, I'm sick," she begged. I ignored her plea. I ran to the safety of my own bed, fighting the sick feeling inside my stomach. Mother followed after me like a child.

"Let me sleep with you, Beth," she said.

"Mother, go away," I answered. But she came to the bed and got in, crying and

saying that I didn't love her. Before I could answer she was asleep.

I considered what to do next. I couldn't go back to Daddy's bed because the vomit was in that room. I couldn't stay in bed with a drunken stranger there beside me. While trying to decide whether it

would be worse to leave or to stay, I fell asleep and the long night passed.

When I awoke late the next morning, all traces of the night before had been removed and the stranger had changed back into the mother I loved.



Photo : Basilio Rodriguez

*When
Our
Harvests
All
Have
Ended*

*Guillermo
William
V.
Castaneda*

When our harvests all have ended,
Heavy-shouldered work days done,
When the leaves have changed their color
And canals have lost their run,
Won't you come and let me hold you
In the failing evening sun?

When our harvests all have ended,
Spring-frost wilted injuries told,
After endless pre-dawn risings
And the "grass" is cut and sold,
Won't you come and let me cheer you
In the morning's misty cold?

When our harvests all have ended,
Copper cherry branches bare,
After tiring shifts of graveyard
And the packing of the pear,
Won't you come and let me soothe you
In the burning noon-day air?

When our harvests all have ended,
Hop-cones, bitter, dried and baled,
When the apple bins are empty
And grape harvest monies hailed,
Won't you come and let me love you
In the autumn's moon-lit vale?

When our harvests all have ended,
Heavy-shouldered work days past,
When the snows have filled the Valley
And our earnings reached their last,
Won't you share your life beside me
In our yearly season's task?

Oh! Please share your life beside me
In our yearly season's task!

*Ode
to the
Mexican
Man*

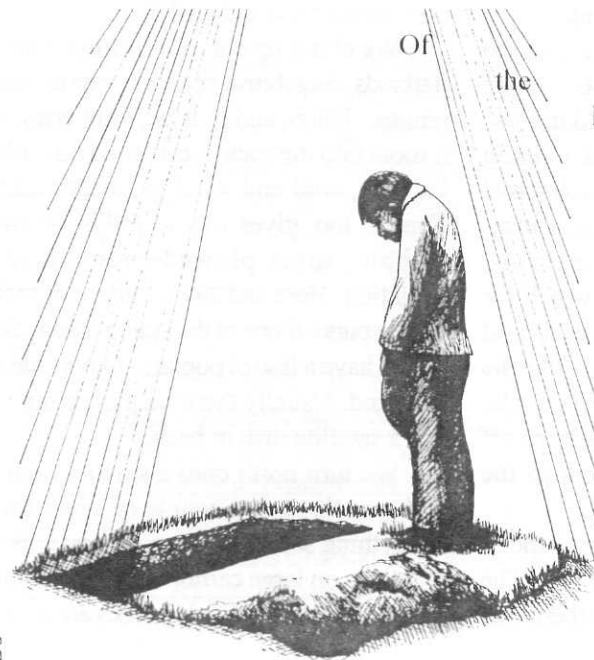
There are no known relatives the obituary said,
Of the Mexican man, a farmer found dead.
Died after falling from a high work stand
Deep in the hops fields, this itinerant hand.

Born in Texas, moved away,
Rosary Sunday, let us pray.
1920, year of birth,
Sixty years on this earth.

Corporal in the army, World War II,
Fought under Bradley, and Patton, too.
Loved his country in every way,
They'll bury him Monday in a pauper's grave.

Worked for years among hop-cone leaves,
In fruits and stoop crops, like you and me.
Let's say him a prayer whenever we can
Because there are no known relatives

Of the Mexican man.



*Guillermo
William
V.
Castaneda*

The Way to the Lake

Loren Sundlee

Shortly after dawn I turn up the driveway toward the crimson lip of sky on the eastern horizon. The air hovers around freezing. Frost laces the ditch grass and the near naked limbs of the birches. My father-in-law is waiting as I arrive. We load his old Starcraft boat into the back of his pickup; I transfer my gear from my Honda; we say our farewells to my mother-in-law and curl back toward the highway. The November sun slices across the hills, envelopes the cottonwoods and aspens along the river—all browns, grays and golds. Even the slate of the river reflects the sun's amber.

Marty has fished the Northwest since he came west from New York in 1946. He has spent more than four decades hiking the Cascades, planting fingerlings then hiking back when the time was right to catch some. His memory is almost as good as a map. Early in the drive our words come slowly, as if they are thawing out. We watch for hawks, pour some coffee, inhale deeply of the space of the broad valley. Soon, like the landscape, we open up and talk. Just talk, no radio, no tapes. The highway drops off and we begin the sinuous descent to the Columbia.

"This used to be a real pretty spot," Marty says as we approach the river. "The water rushed through here . . . and there was

a little island just up from the bridge a ways." He points upstream and I see an island as clearly as if it were there. "Then they put in the Wanapum Dam." No regret, no nostalgia. He's just telling me something. Just talking. The sun highlights the west wall of the Gorge that rises a couple hundred feet and flattens off at ninety degrees. The river seems to move slowly, almost sluggishly. But boaters know what all that moving matter can do, how the winds can come up instantaneously and capsize them, and how that amiable current can pull swimmers downstream and exhaust them.

We climb up out of the Gorge onto the flatlands. Sagebrush skulks in vast unbroken ranges. Tough and twisted, hunkering low, it roots into the rocky scabland and endures the heat, cold and wind on sheer tenacity. Then it, too, gives way to fields—some in stubble, some plowed—reclaimed by irrigation. Here and there, a house or mobile home spurs off one of the siding roads. Some places have a line of poplars. Others haven't bothered. Usually there's a pickup out front and a satellite dish in back.

We turn north onto a smaller highway and ease through a couple of small towns. Everything seems smaller. Shops look like paintings on large cardboard boxes. Single-story, post World-War II houses are stamped

on neat lots. One almost expects them to be connected by an extension cord which someone plugs in at night. I speculate on the lives inside, people who spend most of their days within the borders of a few city blocks, people who, if they daydreamed a little while taking a walk, could find themselves in the middle of a field. They nestle into the coarse land like agates.

Then we hit the first lake. Cliffs launch upward, marking the prehistoric path of the Columbia before some natural cataclysm turned it onto its present course some fifty miles to the west. We drive in the old riverbed and imagine the ferocious power of the rapids. To our right the walls develop gradually—a giving and taking away of hills until the first butte rises, and behind that a ridge of basalt, irregular and stark.

It's a quality-fishing lake. No gas motors, no barbed hooks. Keep one fish only. Above the boat launch fewer than a dozen vehicles are parked. The lake is half a mile wide and several miles long. We can see four boats widely spread. A few others hide behind islands of rock off the western shore. We ease the boat into the water and I take the oars. Marty casts a black woolly worm, and I pull us through the cold, still water.

High clouds have drifted in from the west. Sun filters through, and soon I'm warmed by the rowing. We've had big winds here that made trolling a constant duel. One pause on the oars could spin the boat around, tangle the lines, let the flies sink and snag in the weeds at the bottom. Today is not like that. The air hangs content, the water lies

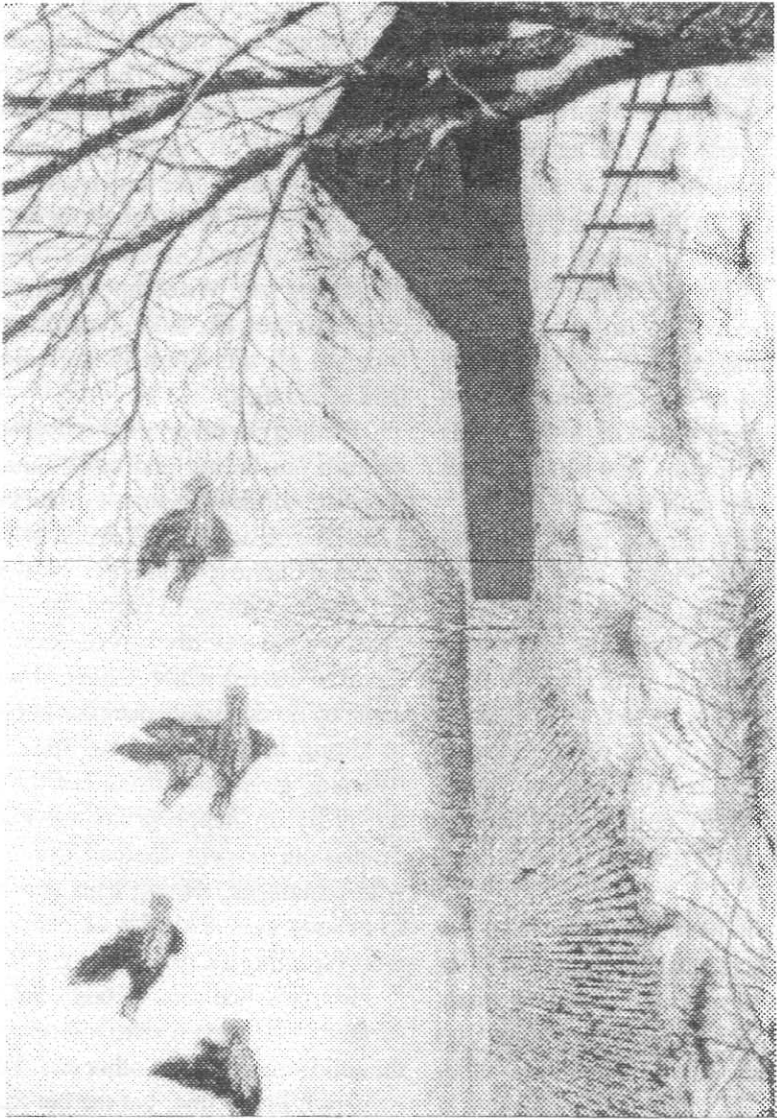
flat and glassy. We pass over an area fruitful in the past. We're expectant. The oarlocks squeak as the oars dish into the surface. Both of us stare at the crescent of line that droops from our rod tips to the water.

Fishing is primordial. It's not merely the old need for food. The earliest humans didn't separate practically from spirituality, food from soul. It was all one. Some of that spirit still resides. We may try to disguise it in various ways. We compete for the biggest, the largest quantity, or the most unique way of catching fish. We compound fishing with other activities, like talking and drinking big. Beneath all this there is something that fishing satisfies.

Finding our favorite spots unproductive, we turn out farther and circle south. We speculate on why they aren't where they used to be. We come up with several theories, all of which blame it on the fish. Now we talk, not about anything in particular. Over the years we have tacitly agreed upon suitable topics to discuss while fishing. These have come by no deliberate decision but by years of sitting in the same boat speaking and listening, gradually sifting out the sand of unworthy or inappropriate subjects. We discuss our favorite football teams, people who sustain us, fishing trips and partners from long ago. No idea or philosophy is worth spoiling a day of fishing.

Marty's line zips through the water's surface. He snaps up the rod tip and feels the solid strength at the other end. I drop the oars, pull in my line, get the net ready and wait. It takes five minutes to bring the big cutthroat to the surface, and when he sees us

Painting: "Quail Running," José Sosa



he dives again. Marty muscles him as much as he dares. Still, the fish runs and dives. He brings him back toward the net. The fish sees it and dives again, crossing under the boat, and finally can fight no more. I feel the strain on the strings of the net as I lift it from the water. For the first time I see the fish's girth and the gradual lightening from its red-brown back to its silver belly. Marty holds him up for me to get a better look; his upper back is mottled red, the distinctive cut of crimson flares beneath his gills. Exhausted, it quivers in Marty's strong hands. Then it flexes its entire muscular body and flips free into the bottom of the boat. The barbless hook falls away. I pick up the fish, but I know that I don't really have it, only the mucous through which it shines. If it decides to leap again, I can't possibly hold it. I look at Marty. He appraises the fish. He can keep one. He probably won't get another one like this.

"Put him back," he says. I grip the cutthroat as best I can, leaning over the side of the boat and hold it under water. Now I learn what the battle has taken. It should be able to swim away easily, but it lies, inert. I move it back and forth slightly, hoping to stimulate its gills. For almost a minute I cradle it there. Then with a single whip of its tail it pulls away, plunges down and melds with the dark. We take turns casting, let the flies sink, and I ease into the rhythm of rowing.

For those early humans, fishing must have been a participation in a mystery, a summoning of the fish from the deep as much by dream and chant as by lure. To

them, what brought the fish was not just the taste or appearance of bait but the ritual invocation before, during, and after the catch. Each landing affirmed that they were living within the circle of nature.

When the cutthroat strikes, it is like the jolt of an electric fence. I drop the oars, snap the tip up, and feel the surge against the line. Impulsively, I spin the reel. With any slack it could spit out the barbless hook. Immediately I learn my mistake. Too much tension; the fly pulled away. Had I given it more slack, I might have been able to play him out and net him. Next time I'll use that experience. Now we troll and hope for another chance.

Throughout the morning we have heard the pop of shotguns in the brush below the eastern wall. "Chukar," Marty says. About a third of the way up, several caves burrow into the rock. Smoke has blackened the ceilings where neolithic tribes cooked their meat and warmed themselves. On the opposite side, a shelf maybe fifty yards wide and a quarter of a mile long juts out halfway up the cliff. It has the only trees visible in any direction. It seems accessible only by a tough climb from below, or with ropes from above, or possibly by a long walk from the north end of the lake. Marty speculates that one person in ten years sets foot up there. I feel the old itch to touch new ground.

We have observed how the cliffs appear monochrome brown at a glance, but out here on the lake all day we notice subtleties. In the morning they had an orange cast, as if the sun were picking up flecks of iron; later, they will turn green like a face in shadow.

Now, as we pause for lunch, they are mauve with dark pockets. Rows of horizontal strata, each ruler-straight, climb the cliffs. Each one marks some ancient geological event more enormous than anything human history has recorded.

After lunch, Marty takes a turn at the oars. He has caught two fish and released them. I've had nothing but the one strike despite trying several different fly patterns: woolly worms, woolly buggers, Carey Specials, even a gammarus-type shrimp pattern that Northwesterners call a Nyerges nymph. None work for me. We talk to a few others in boats with humming electric motors. They aren't doing much better.

The sun angles toward the lower, southwestern horizon. By three thirty we turn back for the launch. With the door coming down on the day, we renew our intense watching of the lines. I tighten the fingers of my left hand around the handle of the rod ready to set the hook—but not too hard. We are barely thirty yards from the launch when we decide to reel in to avoid the weeds. Marty makes three turns and feels the strike. Mine comes in clean, and I watch him play the strong, stubborn cutthroat. Like the others, this one dives and runs until it is run out. Marty lifts it from the net, and we admire. It isn't as big as the first one, but it's deep and firm. It's sides glisten as if radiating its own light. Marty says, "Put it on ice."

This will be our last fishing of the year. We have had better days, but it doesn't matter. As we drive back through the sagebrush and small towns we talk very little,

having touched all the usual topics. Lights come on in the mobile homes and on the cars on the highway. As if folding up the day, we retrace our path toward the Columbia, up into the valley, back to people who expect us.

My son is five. Probably he will be a fisherman too. Though we tend to reject our parents' obsessions, we affirm their loves. Fishing may be poorer ten or twenty years from now—or it may be better. I may be tempted to reminisce about the good old days, but I hope I resist.

In the future the way to the lake may be lined with tract houses and mini malls. The shores may be blanketed with motels, R.V. parks, and mini-golf courses, swamped with boats and float tubes. Then, as in all times, we must ultimately take what nature gives us. We who stare into the opaque waters still pull out mysteries.

A week later our two families barbecue the trout. The one fish feeds us all. We bite into the firm, pink flesh, and in our way become hooked on what we have caught. Nature still works its circles. Since that day we have stopped keeping fish. They seem scarcer. The competition is decidedly keener. Now we put everything back. In doing so, we sustain some hope that there will be fish and that my son will partake of the rite of going and doing, of casting, watching, feeling, talking. For that process, after all, is the catch: the pulling from our days of things strong and shining.



Photo: Basilio Rodriguez

About the Artists

Leah Sue Aleck based "A Theory of an Indian" on stories her grandmother told her about times long ago and times today, teaching her the Indian Laws of tradition and culture. A Wanapum/Yakama living near Harrah, Washington, she was raised near Priest Rapids Dam on the Columbia. Her childhood home lies between the Yakima Firing Center which wants to expand and the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

William Guillermo V. Castaneda has lived in Granger since 1971 with wife Pegi and children Tasha, Tino, Keri, and Ricky. A former Toppenish HS teacher and present executive director of the La Clinica Migrant Health Center in Pasco, he received E.E., Ed., and M.B.A. degrees from the University of Washington.

María Isabel Castro is a student at Heritage College.

Pablo Cienfuegos, a local writer, lives with his wife and two children in Moxee. He finds inspiration for his stories as he works with migrant children in a nearby school district.

Don Dunn is an aspiring fly fisherman and writer. His dream is to hand down his passion for fly fishing to his children, hoping that it will inspire as great a love as he has for this grand lady called Nature.

Gaijin, scholar and gamesman, writes poetry which seeks to rivet an eclectic background (including many years overseas) to the humble iron of everyday experience.

Constantino Gamboa is back in college at Heritage to finish the degree in Spanish which he started long ago. He likes to go on early morning jogs and to make furniture in the Shaker style.

Regina Gamet sees writing poetry as a big part of her life because it helps her express her thoughts and feelings. She wrote "Inside This Box" during a very trying time in her life when, after years of counseling and learning to express herself, she once again felt trapped. Being able to express her feelings in this poem helped her to see beyond the box.

Gwen J. Goodey was born and raised in Idaho and lived in Germany, Okinawa, and the western U.S. She has her B.A. from Idaho State, her M.A. from Brigham Young University, and is currently working on her teaching certification at Heritage College.

Joan Haifter is a Para-Educator and amateur photographer. Her photo shows some of her "Special Needs Students" who are part of the Self-Contained Resource Room.

Lisa M. Herndon has been learning and growing in Washington all of her life. She returned to college at the age of 32 and began her teaching career in 1991. She is bilingual (English/Spanish) and, thanks to her wonderful students at Wapato Middle School, multi-cultural. Her work with the Central Washington Writing Project has changed her life forever—another poet out of the closet (or journal, one might say!).

Linea Jimenez trained in commercial art and serves as editor of *Eagle's Eye*, the Heritage College student newspaper.

Louva Leslie Merrill is American, photographer, poet, daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, Bible student. She loves God, His people, and His world.

D. R. Miles is a Section Manager for the Pacific Northwest Laboratory and is a member of the Native American Staff Diversity Enhancement Program.

Susan Moon finds her writing inspiration in the Horse Heaven Hills where she lives and works with her husband and three sons on a dryland wheat farm. She also teaches in the elementary grades.

Judy Moran has had the good fortune in life to live in many parts of this country and experience the beauties of its forests, mountains, deserts, and farmlands. Blessed with insatiable curiosity, she has grown to know its people and their cultures. These are the source of her inspiration.

Sister Terry Mullen designed the artwork for *Pahto's Shadow* in 1992. She's glad to see it appear again.

Basilio Rodriguez is the Director and President of Los Bailadores del Sol, a Mexican folk dance troupe located in Yakima, Washington. His photos show group members performing at various functions.

Presicilla E. Rodriguez is currently a senior at Oregon State University majoring in psychology. Her writings are based on actual experiences and observations. Born in Toppenish of Hispanic parents, she is working towards writing a book on Hispanic issues and history.

Ruben Sanchez, a Heritage College student, is interested in psychology, philosophy, and linguistics—both classical languages and modern languages such as German. He also likes symbolic logic and mathematics. This poem was written when he was involved with the Chicano movement in California. He hopes to become a writer of both Chicano psychology and literature.

Kimberlee Shearer is in the process of graduating from Heritage College with a B.A. in English.

Carol Smith has always enjoyed writing, though for the most part it has been academically oriented. She considers it a great joy to give oneself the opportunity to reflect and create and finds responding to the demands she makes of herself especially challenging.

José Sosa grew up in Sunnyside, Washington, and is pursuing a degree in education at Heritage College in hopes of one day becoming an art teacher. He enjoys wildlife and considers himself ecology-conscious.

Loren Sundlee has published short fiction, non-fiction, and poetry in the U.S. and overseas. He teaches at West Valley High School near Yakima, Washington.



Photo: Basilio Rodriguez