



PARA NUESTROS DIFUNTOS



Sitting in a Room with My Dying Grandmother

She fought the good fight,
the enduring one that suffers,
the persistent one that rejoices.
She kept the faith,
a faith hungrily soaked up
in the inequalities of a 1920s
South Texas, Mexicana, existence.
Her “strange, eventful history”
told her to be grateful for the little things
and to pray for the great ones.
Me, her grandson, not knowing the
real totalities of the trials that subdued,
like my father or my aunt did,
a matured faith from three children who died
before her,
and a husband who tested her in more ways
than she bargained for.
So what do I take from her life?
I take it all— the furious flaws,
the stifling struggles, the transcendental triumphs,
those last tender moments
when she held her daughter’s hand
and her last breaths,
those stories of her life,
the winds of her wonders,
became the stuff of a family’s
myths and legends.

— Gabriel Fernández



Sapphire for Granny

She taught me the language
She tried and laughed at my accent
Taught me the culture
So when I built an *ofrenda* for Granny
I remembered and carefully,
lovingly placed
Pan de muerto y *calaveras* around
her picture
The only picture of Granny
And a beautiful
Bottle of Sapphire Gin



How she laughed when she saw that
Did your *abuela* love gin?
No, I doubt she ever tasted fancy spirits
But she would have loved
that blue bottle
So pretty with the marigolds
We sipped the gin and remembered
Granny’s sun leathered face and
Gentle bony hands, always busy

Now she’s gone, my sweet friend
And my soul aches
As I remember and carefully
Place marigolds y *pan de muerto* around
Her picture, the only good picture
And *calaveras* y a beautiful
Bottle of Sapphire Gin

— Lois Olivia Heger



Shades of Brown

Café con leche
to start the day
Xocolatl
divine drink of Aztecas
Barbacoa tacos
with Big Red
Bohemia
cerveza fría to quench the thirst.
Burnt image of Jesus
on tía Lola’s tortilla
Los abuelos
portrait in sepia
mother’s gentle hands
braiding my hair.

Emma
her quest for justicia
Willie
su voto es su voz
Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe
morena
like me.
Pecan stained fingers
calloused and blistered
dirt
on migrant worker knees
mestizo eyes
full of yearning
Rio Grande
murky river of hope and dreams.
—Sally Gaytán-Baker

COME HOLY SPIRITS, COME

Come Holy Spirits, Come
Come, ye family of saints, come.
Come to this thin place,
for this is the place.
Come at this time,
for this is the time.

We meet you here
so one of us can stay
and go across with you

Come holy spirits, come
Come, ye family of saints, come.
for we have added another saint.

— Pablo Piñeda



Artwork: Ravi Zupa