

# Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

---

Volume 7 | Issue 1

Article 16

---

June 2007

## Baptism

Kristin Naca

Follow this and additional works at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate>

---

### Recommended Citation

Naca, Kristin (2007) "Baptism," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 16.  
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol7/iss1/16>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal by an authorized editor of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact [ORB@binghamton.edu](mailto:ORB@binghamton.edu).

# Naca: Baptism

## BAPTISM

Kristin Naca

The taller men with baseball bats, a tree branch garbled with knots, log iron, and leftover pipe from the fence they put up last summer. The shorter men gripping buck knives for slashing at the pig's neck. And ripened on a dry slop of peanuts, cornflakes and newspaper shavings, moiled between the washer and dryer and shelves of dust-caked soda bottles, the pig that grew tall enough to sniff and lick the doorknob. So, from the other side, I watched it turn and, hearing it flicker at night, dreamt of succoring the pig's escape. Then, they unleashed it. It drumming its blunt, fleshy hammers through the downstairs hallway, its high-pitched cough the air it dragged over vocal chord lathing. Then they prodded it across the yard and cornered it under the porch. So with a *ka-thunk* the pig, then stilled in its tracks, had to watch as one of the men crept up and dragged his knife across its neck. They held the sullen body in their pink, craggy hands, standing up, in order to catch its blood in a bucket. Blood Mother cooked into a musty, black blood-food we smothered our rice in. After that, the men heaved the body on a picnic table wrapped in Glad bags and tape and rolled the carcass on its back and split the skin down the long belly, its guts oozing out—all beigy, peachy and blue like clouds of chewed bubble-gum or the bulbs of a wilted, worn-in coin purse. Collapsed hoses, too soft and slick to pile up, spread across the lawn in pearly pools. Then, carefully, the men excised the gall bladder before it broke and spoiled the meat, gallbladder curled like a finger on a folding chair beside them while they emptied the carcass to the snout. On the grass, the heart and lungs lay, and the throat ridged and perfect as a staircase. And then, the new backbone a metal rod they pierced and guided through the carcass. Tackle they hoisted onto some posts, so—though I can't remember exactly—they could turn the whole thing on a spit. How it hovered for hours over the orange coals that startled whenever the juices dripped, and the rangy smell of singed pork-meat and charcoal slinked into our sweat, and the pork skin transluted, cells shimmering amber and snapping easily to the touch, hot loosened fat

down our fingers, until the meat fell apart without us hacking at it.  
The men, smoking packs of Kool cigarettes and piling up the empty  
Schlitz beer cans, hardly mentioning anything about the child.