

Shapiro has synthesized a tremendous amount of material and has delivered a lucid, compassionate history. His prose is clear; his sense of narrative detail sharp. Shapiro says he is at work on a companion volume, one that will deal in greater depth with the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and beyond. *White Violence and Black Response* is an impressive overture; we eagerly await the sequel.

—Peter M. Ostenby
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Gary Soto. *Baseball in April and Other Stories*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990) 111 pp., \$14.95.

Gary Soto's previous prose collections (*Living Up the Street: Narrative Recollections*—1985, *Small Faces*—1986, and *Lesser Evils: Ten Quartets*—1988) all contained stories about growing up, but this latest book focuses exclusively on the trials and tribulations of children and young teenagers. The eleven sketches in *Baseball in April* range in subject from broken Barbie dolls to championship marble tournaments, and all reveal a compassionate, understanding insight as well as the deft handiwork of a fine writer. For those who do not understand Spanish, the author has supplied a short appendix with translations of words and expressions. Artist Barry Root's dustjacket depicting a red pickup full of boys and baseball gear is a splendid one that invites the reader to delve into the volume.

The title piece (a revision of a story of the same title in *Living Up the Street*) shows how young boys and their springtime enthusiasm for baseball evolve into summertime disinterest when distractions such as television and girls gradually draw them in different directions. "Broken Chains" sketches the adolescent concern for physical development, while "Seventh Grade" is about a boy who takes French in order to impress a girl on whom he has a crush. Soto explores family relationships in "Mother and Daughter" and "Growing Up," and provides sketches about youthful enterprises that begin as failures but turn out as successes in "La Bamba" and "The No-Guitar Blues." All of the pieces are well-written and engaging, but the best is perhaps the last in the collection, "Growing Up," about a 10th grade girl who decides she is too much of an adult to go on the family's annual vacation. She remains with her godmother, alternately bored and terribly concerned that her relatives have been killed in an accident. When the family returns with tales of great fun and excitement, they go out to eat together and her thoughts reveal to the reader that she has learned how important they all are to her.

The subject of ethnicity comes up only briefly in a few of the pieces, and then only as incidental detail as Soto chooses to dwell on literary matters and not sociological ones. In "The No-Guitar Blues" the protagonist ponders a lost dog's social status: "He saw that it was sort of a fancy dog, a terrier or something, with dog tags and a shiny collar. And it looked well fed and healthy. In his neighborhood, the dogs were never licensed, and if they got sick they were placed near the water heater until they got well." When he returns the animal to the owners, the young man is amazed by the "house with its shiny furniture and a television as large as the front window at home." Soto draws other comparisons between the Chicano world and the Anglo one, but he is too fine a writer to focus extensively on social justice (or the lack thereof). His subjects are young people grappling with universal problems of youth, and their social status is not really important. What is important in the stories in this collection is the author's presentation of very real human beings and his sympathetic and warm tone. The young characters can be described as lifelike, humorous, affectionate, mean, scheming, anxious or afraid, and always believable and likeable. The book is a pleasure to read.

—Carl R. Shirley
University of South Carolina

Gary Soto. *Who Will Know Us?* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1990) 69 pp., \$8.95 paper.

Gary Soto is one of America's finest poets, a writer whose previous collections (*The Elements of San Joaquin*—1977, *The Tale of Sunlight*—1978, *Father Is a Pillow Tied to a Broom*—1980, *Where Sparrows Work Hard*—1981, and *Black Hair*—1985) have received wide critical acclaim, not only from Chicano critics but from others as well. In this latest volume Soto again demonstrates that he is an accomplished literary craftsman with a great deal to say. The forty-one poems are presented in three untitled sections and range from pensive reflections on old age and death to poetic accounts of seemingly trivial daily activities. Chronicle Books, in its first foray into the field of poetry, is to be congratulated for this handsome volume, printed on fine paper and with a lovely cover illustrated by Scott Sawyer.

The majority of the poems are serious and thought-provoking, but the fourteen in the first division stand out as fine examples of somber, yet lyrical verse. "A Red Palm" is a long apostrophe that documents the routine of a bone-weary farmworker, and "Another Time" presents a longing image of a dead father. "Eve" deals with a young couple's first sexual encounter, while "Moses" evokes a beautiful, loving memory of a dog the poet has previously portrayed with great affection in one of his