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Mi Patria

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Mi Patria

HOLLY M. VANDENTOORN

Texas is the place I miss the most—
Big state with big attitude.
Cowboy boots and ten-gallon hats,
Buckles as big as you ever saw,
Big, gold and silver shiny rodeo scenes.
And the old rusted pickups—I'm not sure
If I'm talking about the trucks or the bars.

Walk the dirt dusty roads, with a dry, sweet smell
that'll
Soak up in your olfactory receptors and
Is as thick as the white fluff stuff, cotton growing
there.
Misthuhs and missus glow red here,
The misthuhs with the leather skin, cracked,
looking like a beef jerky, *carne secadora* so good that
You could taste the salt not yet on your tongue.

But I digress.
Texas is the place that I miss most.
A wand of wind waving over the bluebonnets
Green stalks corroded with cobalt hues.
A green cacti stands staunch as a colonel in the
Mexican War with his red *bandera*. And then you see
more
in the sandy yard and suddenly becomes cactus.

Days hot enough to make *el diablo* sigh, and
no rain yet. Emerald grass abounds not, but
more like topaz, that is yellow-brown stalk-sticks of
thirsty crunching under your feet until you squish
on a chameleon. A slender tongue darts out and in.
The pecan tree and the fig tree, they're the only green
things because they are what matters in all this.

After the melting sun descends into night thick
as honey and as amber too until a smear of strawberry
jam appears on the toasty sky. A little apricot, and
of course you can't forget the marmelaide, we like 'em all.
And the sun drips away like a scoop of blood-orange
sherbet you set
out at noon. You get left with the likes of an unpatriotic
flag—all the stars and none of the stripes. *Negro* as crow.

For all of its great command of nature,
Its glorious color and texture, golden and green;
Gravel and dirt; smell the dirt too and taste the fruit
thereof: the best pecans you ever did taste.
Between the t'bacc smell and mammaw's wash,
You almost taste the rain, you see the waves of cobalt
Wash over the crystal blue sky, *mi patria*, Texas.