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THE PECAN GROVE REVIEW

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The Pecan Grove Review staff would like to extend thanks to all who shared their work. The quality of the submissions received made the selection process difficult; your talents are greatly appreciated.

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The editors sincerely appreciate Louie Cortez's invaluable assistance in the publication of this journal.

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POETRY

Ka · lei · do · scope
by Victoria Saldaña

Ka · lei · do · scope \≈\ v.

1. A cylindrical object of mirrors and colored glass which reflect multi-colored patterns that change as it spins and moves. Typically found in the goodie bags at young children's parties, and thrown away a week later. 2. A mirage/ hues and shapes / patterns snaking/ together then apart in / psychedelic patterns. / Eyes left wide / heavy in trance / from the metamorphosis. 3. An apparatus / to see what the naked eye / cannot—a hidden world / breaking the barrier. / A world of / colors and lights—just on / the other side. / A new world. / Secrets held in / cylindrical walls.

Dementia, Living gone
by Em Bejr

He stood in the middle of the living room
“What are you looking for” she asked
He gazed left waited
Walking sideways to the right

“A brain”
he uttered
looking around the room
as if he’d find one
lying atop his pile of
aviation books
or next to the Vietnam coffee mug

Standing firm
a posture from his pilot days
He is groundless
in a living room he’s shared with her for 28 years

He didn’t know he was forgetting
Phone messages went missing
Numbers no longer aligned

74 years living

now gone

I Know I Am Home
by Samantha Michelle Guajardo

I know I am home when the aroma of coffee and *pan dulce* wakes me up in the morning,
and I am greeted by *mi mamá* yelling,
“*Andale, vas a llegar tarde a la escuela.*”
I know I am home when *mis primas* watch *telenovelas* in my room,
while boasting about handsome *chicos* in their classes and their new *huaraches*.
I know I am home when *mi mamá* is blasting *Los Tigres del Norte* and singing the lyrics.
I know I am home when *mi familia* makes *arroz con leche* after mass and *mi papá* lets me mix in the raisins.
I know I am away from home when the faint aroma of ramen and old textbooks wakes me up in the morning,
and I am greeted by my roommate yelling,
“Hurry, you’re going to be late for class.”
I know I am away from home when my friends watch Netflix on my laptop,
complaining about overdue assignments and their strict professors.
I know I am away from home when I am blasting *Los Tigres del Norte* and the resident assistant asks me to lower it down.
I know I am away from home when I make *arroz con leche* for my roommate and I let her mix in the raisins.
Even though I am away from my family,
I still carry a piece of home wherever I go.

Liberation
by Jamira Richardson

They say liberation can be found
in the weightlessness of a woman's shoulders
once she's shed the burden society has imposed
on the tumbled forest of coils
springing free from her heavy scalp.

Often shrouded beneath the curtain of curls,
today my gaze recoiled from the jarring juxtaposition
between the blur of gleaming silver,
punctuated with a shrill *snip*,
and the soundless descent of the stormy clouds of
black cotton
floating past my shoulders to rest in a heap at my feet.

They say liberation can be found
in the weightlessness of a woman's shoulders,
but it had yet to appear in the roiling depths
of the eyes peering back at me as I caught sight of my
reflection.

Liberation had yet to appear in the tears streaking my
cheeks,
leaving molten-hot shame burning in their wake,
or in the quivering warble underscoring the voice
I used as a weapon against my mother,
hurling insecurities in the parking lot—
where we stood at an impasse
paved by twisted conceptions of beauty.

Revelations
by Valeria R. Garza

What arrogance! To think that I
could possibly harness the lightning
and ask it to blaze, if only for a second,
into the darkness I cannot understand.

How dare I presume
that the crackling grey thunderheads
would deign to place their crooked smiles
into the care of my callow hands!

People come and go, but places remain,
the soil and stone under years of change,
witnessing what was,
what is,
and what will be,
as the sought seek each other
by the paradise tree.

Hidden away, in a corner seldom trod,
it stands, a quiet guardian,
arms outstretched and laden,
quivering with the weight of hope
and sweetness just out of reach.

But the wind, when it rushes through,
will not embrace its rustling friends,
grown from seed, nut, and acorn,
only to be brought to earth again -
To whom will it confide then?

Through the night, it dances lightly on the edge of
sleep,
'til with a sudden breath it gives

life to a dream,
whispering words that are muddled by morning
- traceless, shapeless, yet bursting at the seams.

So whither is fled the moonlight beam?
Where is it now, the lost in-between?

Perhaps I'll find it
under the paradise tree.

To Her Persistent and Entitled Man:
A Response Poem
to "To His Coy Mistress" By Andrew Marvell
by Samantha Schulte

If I had but every minute of every hour
And the joys of life were in one large tower,
I would climb to every single story,
And enjoy them in all their glory.
I'd prefer this than live with you and your mistress be,
Allowing you to adore every inch of me.
How unfortunate a life it would turn out,
Having naught but your love to shout about.
No hopes, no dreams, no things of my own;
Just a sad girl with only you as a home.
Oh, how boring it is to wait thousands of years
For you to express that you love one of my ears.
And what a shallow love it is that you cast
For my heart to be adored the very last.
You say that this love grows on and on,
It seems to me nothing more than a con.
If you think putting my beliefs before a boy
Is what makes me come off as coy,
Then what you tell me I reserve
Is not something that you deserve.
But I am aware of the race time runs,
And how fast it goes to be number one.
So I want to enjoy the finer things in life
Rather than settle down and be your "trophy wife."

A true man sees beauty from within;
He does not try to force one to give in.
I shall preserve my virginity as I please,
As nothing you say will make me open my knees.
If old age is all it takes for you to combust,
I would not feel comfortable giving you my trust.
And yes, my boy, we both shall die
Before with you I'll ever lie.
So now while my youth is full and bright,
I must enjoy life; I guess you're right:
You think all that matters is this ever-present lust,
But I firmly believe that true love is a must.
It does not matter how often the sun sets,
Through to me—is something you will never get.

Devil's Trills Sonata
by Carrie Ross-Villarreal

I dreamt a symphony
of sleep paralysis last night,
and in this dream,
Tartini came to show me
how to dance the waltz of virtuosity.

Agile fingers tripped along
the string of my being,
their allegro moderato promenade
striking carnal chords of hunger.

While I rode this cresting wave —
this swelling expectancy of ecstasy —
the devil trilled the
the bitterest pleasure
in my ear, and
I reached for you
in the liminal space
between the notes.

The reverberations of sound
held in abeyance
resonated within my diamond core
and shattered,
pulling me out of myself and
into the cosmic embrace.

The Voice
by Christopher Mullenax

I look for forgiveness in the Vantablack stare of their
anger; I fear it does not exist.

No matter, the rattles lurking beneath my feet slither
and hiss at my fate.

I cry out to the sins of my past;
my tears enveloped with the faces of the unknown.
I can feel the blood flowing through my veins, like a
crimson waterfall trickling down my limbs.

Can you see it?

The shadow that manipulates my conscience. It plays
with my soul like a marionette, its tongue lapping at
the torment of my anemic body.

Its darkness surrounds me as I am condemned to
follow its path; no resplendent particles of hope can
illuminate its corridors.

The forgotten echoes of my past linger in the distance;
the nightmare I cannot awaken from; no compassion or
clemency; no swift annihilation.

You seek upon me the inherent rights of your revenge;
your honed edge awaits my subtle flesh.

My eyes dilate as I absorb the emptiness of the
obscure;

my shadow's voice no longer revered.

Communication of the Fallen
by Thiffany Yeupell

An avalanche escaped.
My words tumbling out,
my thoughts racing.
Not one person spared.
I kept talking and talking
words of pain, of hurt
which took no prisoners,
showed no mercy.
I am not alone,
yet I'm the only one
spouting these sentences.
They stand before me.
Silent as an evening in the desert.
No one has stopped me.
Why won't you stop me?
I can't stop me anymore.
I spoke my piece.
Please, speak for my peace.

Silence deafens my ears, yet
the dull throbbing in
my head rises.
Little is
heard.
My head is empty
Focusing solely on
those replayed
words.
My body remained.
My mind
escaped.
But too
late.
W o u n d e d

White Sands
by Valeria R. Garza

What happens when images don't suffice?
When words, sounds, last only for a quivering, infinitesimal breath
before they disappear into themselves?

The silence settles, pervades everything –
beyond the distant rumbling of tires,
beyond the voices that are floated away
as soon as their lilting cadences touch the air.

How can a small, pink dot,
 rising curve
feet and with the of the dunes,
 sinking
expect to find anything in the stillness?

Do the star-threads *s u s p e n d* her?
Do the crystal tendrils *a n c h o r* her?
Or perhaps, do they work in tandem,
propelling and drawing her through the vast labyrinth?

For a moment, she is timeless, unafraid
as she goes on... and on..... and on..... and on.....
not lost, but not found either,
seeking in the silence,
not realizing that she is sought
by the source of the search.

Beauty doesn't seek attention.

It seeks *her*.

“A Song for Our Lives”

by Mary Lynne Gasaway Hill, Ph.D.

For the Students who have encouraged us to March for Our Lives

Arma virumque cano Troiae qui primus ab
oris ...¹

I sing of arms and the man
who from Troy was tempest tossed.

Arma virumque cano Troiae qui ...
I sing of arms and the man of Orlando²
who slit the pulse of dancers.

Arma virumque cano Troiae qui ...
I sing of arms and the man of Las Vegas³
who silenced the harvest of song.

Arma virumque cano Troiae qui ...
I sing of arms and the man of Blacksburg⁴
who arrested the spring of commencing.

Arma virumque cano Troiae qui ...
I sing of arms and the man of Newtown⁵
who unleashed the advent of discontent.

Arma puerosque cano Troiae qui ...
I sing of arms and the boys of Columbine⁶
who crushed the flowers of the holy spirit.

Arma virosque cano Troiae qui ...
I sing of arms and the men of
Austin⁷
Killeen
Sutherland Springs,
in towers and restaurants and churches,
who terrorize the present,
hijack the past, and

steal the future.

But Jim Brady had said⁸

Enough.

Gabrielle Giffords has said⁹

Enough.

Emma Gonzalez and the students are saying¹⁰

Enough.

Arma virumque non canemus in nostrum
civitatem.

In our community,
we shall not sing this song of arms and the
man, anymore-
#Never again.

Endnotes

1. This is the opening line of Virgil's Aeneid, the Roman epic poem about Aeneas' journey from Troy to his foundation of Rome.
2. Omar Sadiqui Mateen shot and killed 49 dancers and injured 50 more at the Pulse Night Club in Orlando, Florida. June 12, 2016.
3. Stephen Paddock shot and killed 58 concert-goers and injured more than 500 more at the Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas, Nevada. October 1, 2017.
4. Seung-Hui Cho shot and killed 32 students and an unknown number of injured at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. April 16, 2007.
5. Adam Lanza shot and killed his mother, 20 children, and 6 adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. December 14, 2012.
6. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot and killed 13 fellow students at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado. April 20, 1999. Columbine is a flower associated with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and as a protector against evil.
7. Charles Joseph Whitman shot and killed 16 Longhorn

community members from the bell tower, at the University of Texas in Austin, on August 1, 1966. George Hennard shot and killed 23 patrons at a Luby's restaurant in Killeen, Texas, on October 16, 1991. Devin Patrick Kelley shot and killed 26 members of the First Baptist Church during services in Sutherland Springs, Texas, on November 5, 2017.

8. John Hinckley, Jr. shot James Brady, President Ronald Reagan's press secretary, during the March 30, 1981 assassination attempt on the president. The president, Brady, and two others were wounded. <http://www.bradycampaign.org/>.

9. Jared Lee Loughne shot Gabrielle Giffords in the head outside a Safeway grocery store in Casas Adobes, Arizona, on January 8, 2011. Six other people were killed in the attack.

10. Nikolas Cruz shot and killed 17 students and teachers and wounded 17 more at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018. Student survivors of that shooting have initiated a movement, for gun control in the United States, which sponsored the March for Our Lives on March 24, 2018, in Washington, D.C. Part of that movement is #NeverAgain on Twitter and elsewhere.

SHORT FICTION

Voicemail Ghost
by Victoria Saldaña

Welcome to AT&T voicemail. Please enter your pin to access your messages. [Beeping]. You have ten new voice messages.

New voice message received on Monday September 17, 2018 at 12:11 PM.

“Hi Norman, it’s Norma. I was just calling to say I had a lot of fun Saturday and I was wondering if you would like to grab a coffee sometime soon...Anyway, call me when you can. I look forward to hearing from you.”
End of message. To delete—message deleted.

New voice message received on Wednesday September 19, 2018 at 9:57 PM.

“Hi Norman, it’s Norma...again. I’m not sure if my last voicemail made it to you, I’m not too great with the phone...and if it didn’t...well, I sent one. Anyways, call me back when you can. I know it’s a little late, and now that I think about it you mentioned you like to go to bed early. Well, talk to you later.”
End of message. To delete—message deleted.

New voice message received on Thursday September 21, 2018 at 9:05 AM.

“Hey Norman, it’s Norma-...”
End of message. To delete this message, press one.
Message deleted.

New voice message received on Sunday September 22, 2018 at 2:16 AM.

“Hey Norman, it’s Norma. I hoped this would be one

of those third [hiccup] third time's the charm things. But now it's a week from our date and I should get the hint, I know, but I really hope you'll re- [hiccup] consider after this.

"I was scared to go out with you. I'm a 56-year-old woman and I haven't been on a date in 30 years, but spending last Saturday with you was the most fun I've had in so long. And maybe you don't call me back because you didn't feel the same thing. But maybe you don't call me back because...oh crap...oops [hiccup]... maybe you don't call me back because you're scared, too. And..."

End of message. To delete this message, press one.
Message saved.

New voice message received on Sunday September 22, 2018 at 1:23 PM.

"Hi Norman, this is Norma. I just wanted to apologize about last night. I was very intoxicated and in no condition to be making calls. Sorry, again. Bye."

End of message. To delete this message, press one.
Message deleted.

New voice message received on Wednesday September 26, 2018 at 11:58 PM.

"You know what, Nor-MAN. You suck. My granddaughter came over today and explained this behavior to me. You're ghosting me! You're a ghoster! I must say this type of behavior is atrocious, sir. Everyone deserves some explanation, and you know what? I don't want to be with someone like that. Good-bye, ghost."

End of message. To delete this message, press one. To save this message, press two. To call back this number, press three. Message deleted.

De Aquellos Días Donde Te Extrañé Más Que Nunca por José Chaman

Allí nos encontrábamos los dos. Allí. Un lugar sin nombre, sin embargo, único. Todo era de nosotros solos, y tan solo el viento y la tarde estaban permitidos de husmear. Las hojas de los ficus bailaban, las manzanas crecían sonrosadas en las alturas. Los dos nos habíamos tendido bajo el manzano, ella apoyaba cálidamente su cabeza en mi cuello, y su glacial mano contaba mis latidos. Yo miraba seriamente al cielo, como si mi conversación con Dios hubiera llegado a los límites de la paradoja. Mi semblante impartía serenidad, eso me decía ella cada vez que yo me hundía en el silencio de mis meditaciones, mientras ella pintaba sus pulcros lienzos, aquel paisaje prohibido, para el resto de los mortales.

Acostados bajo la sombra del manzano, el cielo azul comenzaba a incendiar allá donde besaba a la tierra. Bajé la mirada para encontrarme con esos preciosos ojos café cristal, y pude apreciar cómo el milagro de su sonrisa se dibujaba en sus labios. Que en qué pensaba, me preguntó. En ti, respondí con mi delatante sonrisa. El vestido amarillo pastel que portaba era como el manto que el sol utilizaría si algún día se le ocurriera visitar otra galaxia. Ella era mi sol, mi única estrella.

Ella cerró sus ojos, aún con el rezago de su sonrisa elevando sus pómulos. El vestigio de su suspiro me hizo temblar, aunque la tarde fuera tibia, y el abrazo de ella fuera cuna madre. El viento acarició los matorrales del ficus que se hallaba cerca del manzano, el árbol se estremeció por coquetería. ¡Cuán tranquila era esa tarde, cuán perfecta!, en ese mundo aquel. Querido recuerdo, querido ayer.

El viento continuó soplando. Y con esa suavidad con la que sus labios tocaron los míos, mis ojos se fueron abriendo. Allí estaba el escritorio. Allí estaban todas nuestras fotos. Y allí estaba la cajita de madera, donde reposaba mi amor.

From Those Days When I Longed for Your Memory
by José Chaman

We were both lost in its vagueness. Right there. In a place without a name. Unique. Perfect. It was all ours, and nothing but the subtle wind and the evening itself were allowed to invade. The ficus leaves were dancing, and the apples grew rosy and gleamy in the distant heights. We were both lying gently below the tree, hiding within the shade of its leaves; her head rested lightly upon my neck, and her glacial hands caressed my heartbeats. I stared upon the sky in awe, as if my dialogue with God himself had surpassed the limits of paradox. My body radiated serenity. That's what she used to say every time that I adventured in the silence of my meditations, as she drew that forbidden landscape over her immaculate canvases for the rest of the humanity that lied beyond the horizons of her perfection.

Lying beneath the shade of the dancing leaves, reddened by the gloss of the apples amongst them, the blue sky began to set fire to where its lips met the earth. I turned down my gaze reveal those charming eyes of a crystalized brown tint, and I could witness the miracle of her smile was drawn upon her lips. What's in your mind, she asked. You, I replied with an indiscreet smile. The pastel yellow dress she wore was like the mantle that the sun would use, would he ever wish to visit a distant galaxy. She was my sun, my only star.

She gently closed her eyes, whilst a trail of her smile, still alive in her, raised with its shape the weight of her cheekbones. The vestiges of her sigh made me shiver, in spite of the tenderness of the afternoon and the motherly portrait of her embrace. How tranquil was the aura of that afternoon! How perfect.... That world of ours! My dearest memory, dearest time bygone.

The wind continued its path, and with that same subtleness with which her lips caressed mine, my eyes began to awaken to the truth of the light surrounding them. There was the desk. Upon it, our pictures. And there was that little box, where my love rested.

***CREATIVE
NON-FICTION***

Stop Crying
by Thiffany Yeupell

Stop crying.

A devastating loss fell upon your team. Intense efforts failed to secure that win. This was probably your last meet, your last chance to play with them. Those younger than you had begun to tear up, taking the loss to heart. You were once in their shoes, back in the past, but your heart only dully aches as you try to revel in the last moments of your glory days. Days that you will soon forget until you stumble across their memories. But that is for the future and you must deal with the present. Although it may have been a bit blunt, you try to comfort the others with these simple words:

Stop crying.

Your younger brother is on the floor with tears streaming down his chubby cheeks. You got into a fight and won. But at what cost? You try to hush him, bribe him, hide him. Anything and everything you did, he still cried for mom, for dad, for anybody and everybody else, nonetheless. In your panic, as the thought of the oncoming punishment mixed in with your attempts to spin the situation into a better light, all you could repeat was:

Stop crying.

Farewells were beginning to escape from the mouths of your high school friends. Years of countless memories had built this close bond, yet time trudged on. Everyone at the gathering was preparing to make for their separate ways, as life was pushing for the next phase. Nevertheless, the emotions were welling up. Your friends started to tear up, their make-up a

quick casualty. You try to get them to stop, comfort them, because you know your tear ducts would follow suit. Even with all this bittersweet happiness, you plead:

Stop crying.

You are alone in your room. Having heard the devastating news, time and reason no longer exist. You wish you can help, but your wishes are nothing to the whims of life. As time may prove to take one of your friends, all you can do is wait and think. But your mind and body are not on the same page. You dry-heave, but it lingers on like the burning trail of tears that continuously slide down your face. No one can see you but even then, you still tell yourself:

Stop crying.

Like a prayer, even though you are not a person of faith, you chant:

Stop crying.

Those words are keeping you from spiraling into a panic attack. Those words that you often used as a command for others had no effect on you. Your feelings refused to obey, to reason, to logic. But still, they continued their path of emotional turmoil, leaving destruction behind them in your mind. Until you cannot cry anymore, you repeat and repeat, until your voice becomes hoarse and your head begins to repeat, those two simple words:

Stop crying.

Grandma's House
by Margaret Cantú-Sánchez, Ph.D.

One garage door, always open, welcoming, beckoning. Visitors, neighbors, grandchildren, like the open arms of an abrazo. Grandma's house always open to visitors, and the garage, a fitting entrance, leading to the kitchen where the smell of frijoles, fresh homemade tortillas, and rice always lingered and scented the air.

Grandma in her apron, one hand on her hip, the other flipping a tortilla, fingers adept at avoiding a burn. No fancy dining table for lunch, strictly reserved for Sundays and special occasions. Lunch served at the countertop bar, first come, first served, finding a seat among the hodgepodge of chairs in the house the greatest dilemma. Only two seats reserved: Grandpa's, at the head of the counter, and Grandma's, her stool/ chair, ready to flip a tortilla between bites and refill a platter before it empties.

She graciously accepts compliments, "the rice is so fluffy," "tortillas salió muy bien."

On the rare moments when food isn't cooking, coffee is always brewing, and a crystal-clear pie pedestal holds an array of pan dulce, empanadas de camote, pan de huevo: amarillo, color de rosa, y blanco, pan de semilla and galletas con sprinkles for the kids.

Visitors always welcomed by food and a seat at the place of honor—the corner cushion of the latest couch. Prime seating, next to Grandma's chair—para la chisme and good viewing of the TV and kids playing. The corner seat occupied by so many over the years—Mrs. Leona—the widow neighbor, always in black. Mrs. Consuela—la comadre-madrina, Mrs. Morelos—la co-

madre-amiga, seated next to Grandma, sharing chisme, recipes, advice, prayers. Grandma, never at a loss for words, always kept the conversation flowing without a stutter of awkward pause—in another life, may have been a poet, lawyer, orator—profesora. Grandma and her words.

From her seat, she could watch her grandchildren behind the glass sliding doors, as they ran, yelled, gleefully hopped, played, and sang. Her grandchildren—her joy and her children—her pride, as she used to say.

The formal living room, off-limits to grandchildren, except during recital time. Visitors and family clapped and praised as each grandchild showed off their piano skills, playing Beethoven, Mozart and then Grandpa's requests, "Green Eyes" and "Bésame Mucho."

Grandma and Grandpa's room, a place of awe and wonder, and off limits to grandchildren. The bed, center stage, draped in the finest silk comforters, Grandma's dresser held a gleaming gold brush and mirror with amber bottles of perfume, above it pictures of smiling children, grandchildren and images of La Virgen to watch over them. The bed reserved for the newborns and babies to rest their heads, surrounded by pillows as the older grandchildren struggle to remember their time there in the place of honor.

Grandma's house, always full of noise, music, laughter, except late at night, when all were asleep. Grandma perched on her pedestal-chair, finally out of her apron, feet up, enjoys the view off to the left, a massive wall, a collage of her life and accomplishments. Children's baby pictures, graduation pictures with caps and gowns, wedding and family pictures as they moved away from home, pictures of grandchildren, great-grandparents, pictures of the past, present,

and future.

Now...Grandma is gone, Grandpa is gone. Their house is no more without them. No more noise, laughter, music. No more grandchildren and great-grandchildren running through the halls. No more treehouse, no more Easter egg hunts, no more visitors walking through the once always open garage door...

Now where will we go?

Delicate Shells
by Diane Gonzales Bertrand, Ph.D.

**EN 1311 Writing Notebook Reflection on the word
“Mentor” September 27, 2018**

Writing prompt: End (your reflection) with a mystery or puzzle you hope to solve in the future

Even if I send a copy of this essay to Sister Ann tomorrow, her dementia wouldn't let her appreciate my words—or would it? She probably doesn't remember my first children's novel or working together as colleagues. But why not send it anyway? What if the nun who receives Sister Ann's mail, reads this essay and learns something new about a nun in her community? Would my essay be valuable to other readers?

Perhaps I write this reflection for both of us and for some unnamed readers who still have time to tell their mentor, “Thank you.”

I had been writing in my notebook for two weeks about Sister Ann Semel. It started as a writing prompt in Creative Writing to describe someone who helped us as a writer. Then our relationship became an example for my first year composition students assigned to write a Reflection. After I explained that a Reflection often needs a topic to hold together anecdotes, examples and speculation, I had used the word “mentor” and wrote more about Sister Ann during our timed writings.

Writing about Sister Ann helped me remember where my journey to write for children began. In thinking of her as a mentor, I realized mentoring others like a control freak never works. A true mentor

provides a challenge, something different and unexpected, and then gently nudges with questions or open-ended comments to give students a chance to discover their own answers. Smart mentors know many lessons are learned outside a classroom and beyond a college lecture. New ideas come from a book, a guest speaker, or a new set of friends collaborating on a project. A mentor knows when to open a window and let a cool breeze change the temperature of a stuffy room.

I enrolled in graduate school in the fall of 1989. I was a former high school English teacher, a stay-at-home mom with two toddlers, and a success at earning scholarship funds. My goal: learn about composition strategies for my return to work when my children left for elementary school. I enrolled in a Fiction Writing course in the steamy summer of 1990 with Doctor Ann Semel, a religious nun whom I had previously met through mutual friends at several Catholic school conferences.

By the time I took her class, my first novel, *Touchdown for Love*, a romance set in San Antonio, had been published. It was my brag to my classmates during introductions on the first day of class. Two days after I wrote my first short scene of a romantic encounter between two tourists, Sister Ann sat down in an empty desk beside me and said, “Diane, if you want an ‘A’ in the class, you will need to write something totally different.”

She had caught me! So deep into writing another romance novel, I had taken an easy way out; I turned in a dramatic scene I needed in the next chapter. Like many nuns who taught me over the years, Sister Ann

had sonar for lazy students.

“Different?” My hands twisted in my lap where she could not see them. “Okay, I can write something different.”

Honestly? I felt uninspired. Not that romance was all I wrote. What *exactly* was Sister Ann’s definition of “different”?

A few days later, Sister Ann overheard me discussing my children and what books they liked to read. Again, she sat in the empty seat beside me and said, “Diane, why aren’t you writing for children?”

I laughed and said, “I don’t like small children. That’s why I teach high school.”

“Don’t you have two young children at home, Diane? Write for them.”

For the first time since Sister Ann gave me her challenge, I had something “different” to explore. She must have been thinking about the same thing, because before the next class meeting, she sat in the empty desk and suggested I write literature for Mexican-American children like my own two kids.

“Have you noticed there is not much *authentic* literature for Hispanic kids? Translating *Little Red Riding Hood* into Spanish doesn’t help Hispanic kids feel pride in themselves. Write about what you know to be true about your culture. Put pride into stories for children, Diane.”

Her idea added a colorful layer of difference to writing for children. I liked it far more than modeling Dr. Seuss or Walt Disney.

For the next class assignment, I outlined ideas for a story of a ten-year-old girl named Alicia Ramos taking her first trip to Port Aransas, Texas, my favorite beach town. Loosely based on an experience I wit-

nessed with the little sister of an ex-boyfriend, I built a story around sibling rivalry.

In her perfect penmanship on both sides of my story outline, Sister Ann left positive comments. In her end comment, she challenged me to add a stronger central conflict than the one I proposed. She wrote, “Shake loose the people from real life, and build a plot based on *fictional* characters. Use your imagination to create a story for *readers*. Don’t just write for yourself.”

Eventually I wrote a ten-page short story, *Alicia’s Treasure*, and I earned my “A” in her course.

When I received my graduate degree in 1992, my daughter was not old enough for school. I wrote to Sister Ann asking for a part-time job at St. Mary’s University. The English department needed an experienced high school teacher for a new course, *Introduction to the Creative Process*. She hired me. When a full-time English position opened up, she offered me the job. By then I had also published two more romance novels, and was deeply involved in writing a fourth.

A year later, when our department moved to a new building, our office doors opened across the hall from one another. One afternoon she handed me William Zinsser’s *The Art and Craft of Writing for Children*. “Here, Diane. I saw this book and thought of you.”

Not long after, a litany of inquiries played a significant role of our relationship.

“Diane, did you read the book I gave you?”

“Diane, did you ever publish that short story for children you wrote in my course?”

“Diane, have you looked for *other* publishers for

that short story you wrote in my course?”

“Diane, have you researched how to expand your short story into a novel for children?”

“Diane, did you go to that meeting for children’s writers at the library?”

“Diane, how many novels for children did you read over the summer?”

“Diane, may I read the draft of the novel you wrote?”

“Diane, have you contacted a publisher about this novel for children?”

“Diane, are you learning from rejection letters? Are you revising the novel to improve it?”

“Diane, have you sent in your manuscript for children to that company in Houston?”

“Diane, did you read that book contract carefully before you signed it?”

“Diane, when will your novel for children be published?”

I dedicated the novel *Alicia’s Treasure* to Sister Ann Semel. Not only did she receive the first autographed copy, but also I gave her five “complementary” copies to send to her nieces and to several elementary schools served by her community of nuns.

September 27, 2018

I wrote several paragraphs about Sister Ann as a mentor during my class on Thursday, September 27, 2018. I also drafted a closing paragraph, filled with distress about writing down our story, knowing she had been suffering from dementia the past two years. Why write an essay she would never read?

Every child’s book I published after *Alicia’s Treasure*, I could not wait to share with Sister Ann, eager to

see her smile and wink. She would take each picture book or novel, walk into her office and read it. Usually I signed her copy to a family member or school librarian she knew. I felt happy she gave away each book to the reader she thought would enjoy it most.

At University Orientation when Sister Ann and I worked together, she would often tell the new students, "I'm the one who gave Diane the idea to write for children. I like to take the credit for *that*." Then she would laugh, and give me a hug I felt deep inside my bones.

When she retired in 2010, we wrote letters to each other several times a year. Two years ago, her letters stopped and not long after, her friend Mildred told us she had dementia.

In graduate school Sister Ann had said I had to learn to write for readers, not just for myself. A mysterious muse inspired my words on September 27. My heart did not want to accept Sister Ann would never read what I wrote about her. My head confirmed the importance of writing my own essay for new readers, others who might still have time to say "Thank you" to their mentor.

The next day our English department received word from Sister Ann Semel's religious community in Mississippi that she had passed away on September 27, 2018.

I sat and reread the email a dozen times. My hands trembled in my lap. I opened and closed my eyes, losing the struggle against my sad tears. With each deep inhale and exhale, I tried to process my loss. I reached inside my book bag, searching for my writing notebook where yesterday's notes about Sister Ann's role as my writing mentor scribbled across two pages.

The coincidence of writing about this beloved mentor on the day she died felt like a treasured gift. I held each feeling of disbelief, grief, love, and gratitude like delicate shells I had found on the beach.

As I compose this essay, I feel Sister Ann's presence as my muse, my collaborator and my friend. She lives through every word I place on a page and she lives inside all of my readers, who now hold our story in their hands.

Mary Shelley's Cherries
by Jamira Richardson

To the little girl who has mastered the art of plucking Maraschino cherries from their lofty perches on beds of whipped cream with nimble fingers, I understand. Even if your mama doesn't, her sugary sweet Southern drawl gone rancid as you lay to rest "the best part of the whole damn sundae" in a tombstone of crumpled napkins, I understand.

Keep your head up, darling. Those fast food tycoons ain't got nothing on you.

Mama didn't raise you to be a fool, and only a damn fool would paint a perfectly good cherry the color of Rudolph's nose and pass it off as fruit. No matter how many they hide in your banana splits, vanilla milkshakes, and fruit cocktails, you see right through the ruse.

Today, Maraschino cherries are merely a sophisticated form of cultural appropriation. And if there's one thing you should never stand for, it's the intentional whitewashing of such a rich and diverse culture of fruit.

Regardless of your stance on such a sensitive issue, I'm sure we can both agree that soaking anything in sulfur dioxide and calcium chloride to extract the beauty of its melanin is nothing short of dehumanizing. Even more offensive is the subsequent redface, a result of dipping the whitewashed cherries in a cocktail of food coloring, sugar syrup, and other unnamed chemicals.

From the moment I watched you pinch the spindly stem between your fingertips—stained red with the saccharine embalming fluid bleeding from the

bloated cherry corpse—I welcomed you into my secret society.

Our motto is simple: Down with the Maraschino cherry industry!

To the little girl whose nose often crinkles with disgust at the mere sight of a Maraschino cherry in her milkshakes and ice cream sundaes, I understand. Even if no one else does, choking down hollow imitations of the fruit you and I have both learned to appreciate, I understand.

It is because I understand that I write to you, reassuring you that you are not alone in your fight against the corrupt cherry industry.

For decades, these impostors have warped our perception of what constitutes a “regular” cherry, surpassing the popularity of bona fide varieties like Royal Ann, Rainier, Gold, and even—gasp—black cherries.

Therefore, if we ever want to make this world a better place, the first thing that has to go is this Frankenfruit.

ESSAYS

Lost and Found in America
by Shafqat F. Ehsan

I landed at San Antonio airport after a thirty-two-hour long flight from Bangladesh; I was exhausted, and more importantly in a lively yet hostile environment. Everyone around me was speaking in Spanish, and I had no clue of what they were talking about. It was my first time in Texas, and the first time I ever travelled out of my country. Even though I acted like I've experienced this before, deep inside I was confused. I felt completely lost.

I collected my luggage and walked towards the gentleman in the information booth.

"Hello, sir, how may I help you?" the young man said in a warm, welcoming tone.

Finally, some English! I gladly showed him a phone number and replied, "I needed to make a call on arrival."

He looked puzzled and asked me, "Sir, are you sure you wanted to come to San Antonio? Because this number is from Houston."

I was rooted to the ground!

Obviously, I wanted to be in Houston when my college lies within San Antonio! I said to myself.

Suddenly a lady behind me called my name. I turned around and realized it was Dr. Kwon, the person assigned to pick me up from the airport. We exchanged greetings and she helped me with my luggage as we moved out. As soon as I was out of the airport, I could feel the difference between here and my home country. The air was less humid, the sun was more intense, and the cars were passing by at an unusually high speed from the "wrong side" of

the road. I was surprised and asked Dr. Kwon for the reason. She looked puzzled, and then started laughing.

“Welcome to America, Shafqat! This is how it is here, we drive on the right-hand side.”

We went to McDonald’s, a restaurant that I have heard about many times. Entering, Dr. Kwon asked me to place my order, and I stared at her blankly. I did not see any waiters around. Where do I place my order? Catching my confusion, she smiled and showed me the ordering machine.

Ah! So, the menu is there? I thought and went near it.

My friends back home always called me a “foodie” because of the diverse food and restaurant knowledge I possessed. But there I remained silent, not knowing what to order, or, more importantly, how to order. It was an embarrassing situation. Dr. Kwon understood that it was new for me. With the same smile on her face, she helped me out by placing my first order of an “American” chicken meal, and it was delicious! I was amazed to see the use of technology.

No matter how well prepared I felt and the million things I learned before coming into America, whatever I anticipated, I was struggling! I was struggling in doing the simplest things. Whenever I went out, I didn’t know what to do. Do I go to Gate 5 or 6? What is a taco? And a million more questions circled inside my head every time I did something. Everything around me was different, what I came to know as cultural shock—the food, the people, and even the way they greeted! The first two weeks were probably the most difficult. The feeling of homesickness stressed me out.

On the second day of my classes, I was sitting

in the library commons when one of my professors suddenly came up to my table. I immediately stood up as a form of respect and offered him my seat while my peers continued on their snacks as they said, “Hey, Professor!”

When the professor was leaving, he fist-bumped me while he did a high five with one of my friends, and deep inside, I was speaking to myself. Welcome to America, Shafqat! This is how it is here.

I used to sit for hours in the cafeteria and library, not eating or reading, rather observing the American culture. I saw how easily the people around me talked with strangers and they always waited in line for their turn. They were unnaturally punctual, too, as in finishing the assignment on the day assigned, unlike me who was just procrastinating on them as deadlines were a week away. I continued my observation of the life around me on St. Mary’s campus and picked up that some called the professors by their first name. It was very common to be informal in class, to stop the professor with questions in between his lecture and weirdly enough, to eat during class!

After the first few weeks, the assignments were piling up. My quizzes were graded, and none of them had the usual scores that I was used to. Surprisingly, my biology professor noticed it and called me over to her office. This was something unusual as I was never called in for doing badly on a test. After all, I passed my whole high school with a perfect 4.0 GPA. I felt tense. We talked for an hour where she did not say a single word about the upcoming test or my grades at all! Instead, we just talked about the transition to a different place and my future goals. The conversation worked like magic. It resulted in an

instant improvement of my performance in her class.

A few weeks later, when my professor returned the test paper, she announced that the class average was a surprising 67% and that fourteen people out of thirty-two had failed. She also continued that there were only three 'A grades' in the class. Then she looked at me and smiled, "But I am glad that the class highest was 105%."

I went out of the class, feeling more confident than ever and went to my calculus class. My professor was giving our test copies back. He pulled out the statistics of the test result on the screen which showed that the class average was 82% whereas the highest was 100%. I could not have asked for more. He called me to his office and said that I should consider taking a minor in mathematics. He was surprised to see my exceptional accuracy in mathematics and was glad that my understanding of math concepts was clear along with my accuracy. It was a big day, a big step, and from then on, I regained my confidence. Daily life was becoming gradually smoother.

Finally, a month after moving to Texas, when I thought I had adapted to my surroundings, I received an email regarding Flu Vaccinations. Ooh! So, we take vaccines for the "flu" as well? Back to square one. Maybe a million more things to learn...

Would the struggles be the same when I move to a different place in the future? Will I be comfortable if I get back to my country after many years? Will I ever get used to the Texas culture? I'll find out...

*The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the
Defects and Vices of Men: A Review*
by Leigh Ann Cowan

The feminist reader would enjoy Lucrezia Marinella's *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men*, written in 1600. In her work, Marinella ridicules men's arguments for the defects and vices of women by making equally preposterous arguments for the fact that women are actually superior to men, and that it is men who are defective and vindictive—more so than women.¹ She effectively and continually turns men's own words against them, using the same sources and authorities. More importantly, this work is a direct attempt to enlighten the misogynist reader and empower the female one; in short, Marinella wrote this piece in the hopes of realizing social change.

To highlight the intensity of Marinella's effort, one might compare this work to Christine de Pizan's *The Book of the City of Ladies*, written two centuries previously. De Pizan concerns herself less with men's behavior than she does with depicting female virtue as a universal phenomenon.² Although she does allude to several vices and hypocrisies of men, de Pizan focuses on listing as many virtuous women as possible. Marinella, at some portions, makes similar lists, often using the same examples as Boccaccio and de Pizan. But these are brief sections, as her objective is to thoroughly refute

1 Marinella, Lucrezia. *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and the Defects and Vices of Men*. Translated by Anne Dunhill. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 38.

2 *ibid.*, p. xvii

arguments against women's goodness rather than present what might seem to be exceptions to a general rule. Further, Marinella is writing in response to a particular work: *Dei deonnschi difetti* (1599) by Giuseppe Passi.³ His work is one of many in the philosophical and literary tradition of misogyny. Although this work moves Marinella to compose *The Nobility and Excellence of Women*, she also addresses many other authorities, including Aristotle. Marinella's treatise surpasses all others of its kind; no woman before Marinella had been able to create such layered arguments using so many sources, as well as manage to attack men for the same accusations they make against women.⁴ Furthermore, Marinella determines how exactly men form their arguments, and uses exactly the same method to form hers, with delectable results.

It is in this way that Marinella attempts to affect change. By using the ludicrous argument form, men cannot claim fallacy without making hypocrites of themselves. So they must either concede or they must find another means of basing their claims. Through her arguments and proofs, Marinella shows that the attack on women's vices is unfounded and hypocritical; thus, she "wins" the debate if no one can refute her treatise as wholly as she refutes Passi's. Furthermore, like the men against whom she argues, Marinella adjusts references to suit her own ends, apparently deliberately misunderstanding some sources.⁵ Essentially, Marinella

3 *ibid.*, p. 2

4 *ibid.*

5 *ibid.*, p. 89, footnote 65: "Marinella appears to be adjusting a reference to suit her own ends;" p. 90, footnote 74: "...as so often, Marinella appears deliberately to misun-

cherry-picks her sources for only good women and their deeds, as well as “understands” metaphors and allegories using feminine figures to be real women (e.g., Plato’s Hydra).

Marinella divides her work into two parts, the first to refute allegations against womanhood, and the second to attack men. It is a thoroughly long work. She writes that “[the first part] will be divided into six principal chapters, of which the fifth alone will contain enough for eleven separate sections...[The second part] I shall divide into thirty-five chapters.”⁶ Although this book review covers a selected translation, the passages are salient and reveal much about Marinella’s style of attack. Her primary method is to invert arguments. Typically, male writers in this time did not praise men, taking for granted that any vituperation of woman in effect highlighted male excellence without so saying.⁷ Marinella disproves the binary, or rather flips it on its head, as she makes no distinction between good and wicked men—the same neglect men have shown. In fact, Marinella writes that “it is most reprehensible of [men] to jump from the particular to the universal,” and that an appropriate title would be “the defects of wicked women.”⁸ And yet the title of the second part of her work is *The Defects and Vices of Men*, not of wicked men.

All this is at the crux of Marinella’s methodical proofs. She goes on, throughout the book, to make three main arguments: the first is etymolog-

derstand [a reference].”

6 *ibid.*, p. 41.

7 *ibid.*, p. 19 - 20.

8 *ibid.*, p. 127.

ical; the second pertains to poetic beauty; and the third is an extensive list of wicked and defective men.

Marinella makes a case for the superiority of women by calling to attention several respectable and noble titles: *Donna*, *Femina*, *Eva*, *Isciah*, and *Mulier*.⁹ For each, she discusses the etymology and meanings, and even brings up how some men appropriate and masculinize the terms (i.e., *donna* to *don*). One of her more salient etymological arguments has to do with *femina*, which Marinella claims “denotes reproduction or generation... [which] of all human acts, is one of the most worthy, and it can only be performed by perfect beings such as women.”¹⁰ To summarize her argument, she equates each term, respectively, to “Life, Fertility, Fire, Mercy, and Dominion.”¹¹ Related to this appeal to title is that men pay honor to women who hold such titles as “lady,” “madam,” and so on. Marinella writes that “the object of such honor is always more nobler than the person who honors them.”¹² Although she conveniently leaves out the fact that there are women who honor men, I am hard-pressed to find an example which does not stem from expected and enforced obedience.

The Petrarchan tradition inspires Marinella’s second argument. She points out that God created everything, all of which have differing degrees of perfection.¹³ Interestingly, Marinella takes this idea further and argues that souls are not equal—that

9 *ibid.*, p. 46.

10 *ibid.*, p. 49.

11 *ibid.*, p. 51.

12 *ibid.*, p. 69.

13 *ibid.*, p. 52 - 53.

is, some souls are superior to others.¹⁴ In another inversion of the binary, Marinella places women's souls above men's, stating that outward beauty directly reflects inner beauty (i.e., the soul).¹⁵ As proof of this, Marinella uses poets as authoritative sources, writing that "the greatest poets teach us... the more beautiful the woman, the more they affirm that it is her soul that renders grace and loveliness to her body."¹⁶ She asks: "if women are more beautiful than men, who...are generally coarse and ill-formed, who can deny that they are remarkable?" Marinella answers her own question thusly: "compared to women all men are ugly;"¹⁷ ergo, women are nobler than men. But Marinella does not stop here. In order to be sure that her argument is solid and irrefutable, she reminds her audience that beauty, which comes from the soul, is divine, and divine attributes cannot lend themselves to evil.¹⁸ Although logically Marinella's argument is unsound, it follows the same pattern men use, and is no more ludicrous than theirs.

Marinella dedicates the second half of her work to criticizing men for the same faults they find in women. But before she begins her litany, Marinella makes sure the reader understands why men slander women as they do: the reasons include "anger, self-love, envy, and insufficient in-

14 *ibid.*, p. 55.

15 *ibid.*, p. 57, "...the nobility of the soul can be judged from the excellence of the body—which is ornamented with the same character and beauty as the soul..."

16 *ibid.*

17 *ibid.*, p. 62 - 63.

18 *ibid.*, p. 66.

telligence.”¹⁹ Any given slanderer, then, could be afflicted with any one or a combination of these vices which drive them to condemn the fairer sex. Marinella goes so far as to compare men to a weath-ercock that changes each time the wind blows.²⁰ Es-sentially, she makes many arguments from all kinds of disciplines, including history, medicine, and philosophy. As Christine de Pizan lists good women throughout *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Marinella lists bad men throughout *The Defects and Vices of Men*. She has many examples of men who represent a variety of sins. These men are wrathful, brutal, ob-stinate, ungrateful, discourteous, fickle, inconstant, evil, hateful, ornate, polished, painted, bleached, en-vious, and murderous;²¹ better, Marinella universal-izes these traits in men. Proving that men are just as likely to be wicked and vain as women upsets the binary once again. If all men are not virtuous, then it must be that all women are not wicked. Marinella makes a compelling case, historical inaccuracies and unsoundness aside.

Marinella skillfully refutes many arguments from many different misogynists throughout her book. She not only defends her own sex, but also attacks the other, calling attention to men’s hypoc-ri-sy. Marinella uses men’s argument forms against them; she wields the same sources and authorities, leaving no stone unturned—and creating stones to overturn as needed; and she leaves traces of biting sarcasm and deep contempt that greatly appeals to

19 *ibid.*, p. 119.

20 *ibid.*, p. 162.

21 *ibid.*, Taken from the titles of the chapters in Part II, which sum up her arguments nicely.

a modern reader. Misogynists who seriously try to refute her claims would have a very difficult time of it—which is perhaps why no one has attempted it.

A New Pentecost Today: Engaging Young Hispanic Catholics in Higher Education

by Jose J Matos Auffant

A new Pentecost¹ is aflame today: Hispanics younger than 35, with all their gifts and talents, constitute more than half of Catholics in the USA.² Through the *V Encuentro* process³ in over 2,000 parishes across the country, between 2015 and 2018, we learned that nearly a third of these young Catholic Hispanics are 2nd or 3rd generation, born in the USA. A third directly arrived from another country, and all can trace their backgrounds from Central America, South America, the Caribbean or Mexico. Their upbringings, as well as the traditions practiced by their immediate families, extended relatives and other influencers, shape their identities in many ways. While these young adults are encouraged by parents to attain higher education degrees to lead a more comfortable life in the future, the reality is that a majority of young Hispanics are engaged in professional endeavors like education, healthcare, mental health and other occupations that allow them to “give back to the community.”⁴

1 Acts 2, 1-11 (New American Bible, Revised Edition), <http://www.usccb.org/bible/acts/2>

2 Hosffman Ospino, “In Focus: Hispanic Ministry ‘The Church’s changing face,’” *Our Sunday Visitor*, May 18, 2014. https://www.osv.com/Portals/4/PDF/OnlineInFocus_140518_HispanicMinistry_WEB.pdf

3 *V Encuentro of Hispanic / Latino Ministry* “Youth and Young Adults Consultation – Early Results,” 2018, <https://vencuentro.org/results/>

4 Patricia Arredondo, Maritza Gallardo-Cooper, Edward Delgado Romero, Angela L. Zapata, *Culturally Responsive Counseling with Latinas/os*, (Virginia: American Counseling

Most are not looking to get rich fast but to make sure to take care of the less fortunate, and that everyone has an opportunity for a wholesome life, two important markers of a Christian life.

At the V *Encuentro* 2018 meeting, delegates at the Higher Education and Campus Ministry discussion roundtables called for a more comprehensive approach to engage Hispanic students at colleges and universities.⁵ In particular, to develop specific initiatives for outreach and support of young Hispanics shaping their identities: to reinforce the sense of belonging to a universal Catholic community that embraces all. It is not a dynamic of ministering ‘to’ but rather ministering ‘with’ young Hispanic Catholics in higher education. At those institutions where Catholic campus ministers are active, inviting bilingual Hispanic students to assist with outreach, evangelization, educating for justice, music, liturgy and religious practices is in line with the invitation in Pope Francis’ *Christus Vivit* apostolic exhortation that “young people are able to guide other young people and to exercise a genuine apostolate among their friends.”⁶

Two simultaneous movements in faith formation help our young Hispanic Catholics to develop a healthy identity and enrich their spiritual life

Association, 2014), 79-85.

5 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *V Encuentro of Hispanic / Latino Ministry, Working Document*, 2018, https://vencuentro.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Working-Document-EN-8_30_18.pdf

6 Pope Francis, *Christ is Alive (Christus Vivit)*, March 25, 2019 §219, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html

throughout college: to embrace being Hispanic and to embrace being Catholic with a rich heritage. This way we heed Pope Francis' warning and advice:

“Today, in fact, we see a tendency to “homogenize” young people, blurring what is distinctive about their origins and backgrounds, and turning them into a new line of malleable goods... Helping the young to discover the living richness of the past, to treasure its memory and to make use of it for their choices and opportunities, is a genuine act of love towards them, for the sake of their growth and the decisions they are called to make”.⁷

According to the Pew Research Institute, nearly 15% of Hispanics have completed a bachelors' degree, compared to the 41% national average.⁸ As of 2018, nearly 3.2 million Hispanics in the USA are enrolled in higher education, with over 110,000 Hispanics studying in Catholic universities.⁹ The total number of Hispanics in contact with campus ministers at public institutions is not certain, yet the 2017 survey on campus ministry sponsored by the USCCB shows that nearly 1 million Hispanic students in higher education are not in contact with Catholic campus ministers at all.¹⁰ A closer look re-

7 *Christus Vivit*, §§186-187

8 Jens Manuel Krogstad, “5 facts about Latinos and education,” *Pew Research Center*, July 28, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/28/5-facts-about-latinos-and-education/>

9 “5 Facts about Hispanics and Latinos at Catholic Colleges and Universities,” *Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities*, 2018, <https://www.accunet.org/Portals/70/Images/Publications-Graphics-Other Images/FiveFactsAboutHispanicsin CatholicHigherEducation.jpg>

10 Starks, Brian and Maureen Day, A National Study

veals that while all Catholic universities have a campus ministry department with professional staff, only 1 in 4 non-Catholic four year universities can claim at least one campus minister or post-graduate volunteer in ministry, whether that person carries certification by the Catholic Campus Ministry Association or not. The tragedy for the Church is that there is only 1 campus minister available for every 60 community colleges, the very institutions where over 50% of Hispanics attend higher education!

We can do a lot to engage Hispanic students already in our midst, starting with our Catholic colleges and universities.¹¹ Pope Francis, in *Christus Vivit*, reminds us that:

“the Church’s educational institutions are undoubtedly a communal setting for accompaniment; they can offer guidance to many young people, especially when they seek to welcome all young people, regardless of their religious choices, cultural origins and personal, family or social situations. In this way, the Church makes a fundamental contribution to the integral education of the young in various parts of the world”.¹²

As a case in point, each one of the three Catholic universities in San Antonio has over 60%

on Catholic Campus Ministry, A Report Prepared for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Secretariat of Catholic Education, 2017, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catholic-education/campus-ministry/index.cfm>

11 Hosffman Ospino, “Ten reality checks about young Hispanics in Catholic Schools and Colleges” in *Our Catholic Children: Ministry with Hispanic Youth and Young Adults*, (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2018), 33.

12 *Christus Vivit*, §247.

of Hispanic undergraduate enrollment and nearly 30% Hispanic graduate enrollment: both facts place them among the top 10 Catholic universities in the country with the highest Hispanic enrollment. The insights gained in dialogue with our own students, faculty and staff have guided a number of efforts made by University Ministry to re-design faith-based programs leading to meaningful conversations, impactful student-led retreat experiences and beautiful bilingual religious celebrations that inspire our students to keep growing in their faith while in college: their voices led to a new vision! In line with the 2017 survey on campus ministry, community service events and solidarity initiatives attract a majority of Hispanic students, creating fertile opportunities to connect and follow up with their spiritual development.

St. Mary's University also hosts an annual summer four-day residential program designed and implemented as a collaboration of campus ministers and theologians in the San Antonio area, for leadership development and formation of young adults together with their campus ministers.¹³ Our main goal is to build that "Culture of Encounter" preached by Pope Francis through prayer, reflection, dialogue and celebrations in light of the USCCB document on Hispanic Ministry titled "*Encuentro and Mission*."¹⁴ Each topic of the document is used

13 *Messengers of Faith and Hope*, St. Mary's University Ministry, San Antonio TX, 2013, <https://www.stmarytx.edu/campuslife/spiritual/>

14 *Encuentro & Mission : A Renewed Pastoral Framework for Hispanic Ministry = Encuentro y Misión : Un Marco Pastoral Renovado Para El Ministerio Hispano*. Publication / USCCB Publishing: No. 5-496, (Washington, D.C.: United

as part of the framework for the different sessions and activities each day, building up from a common Catholic identity all the way to best practices and new horizons in ministry. This annual summer training contributes to the integral holistic formation of our Hispanic young adults, so they continue to grow in their faith, express individual religiousness, share distinctive traits of our cultures, cooperate through community services, join social action organizations, and promote a high level of academic excellence. Our constant reflection as a pastoral team has led us to foster spaces for exploring individual vocational callings, with the opportunity for personalized spiritual accompaniment.

More important is the realization that all we do in campus ministry impacts retention and graduation rates among Hispanic students. The same strategies of mentorship and peer to peer support recommended by retention staff are operational in campus ministry through retreats, socio-cultural activities, small communities, and spiritual friendships that develop through the evangelization process. An important outcome is that students involved in campus ministry connect with local parishes to continue building lives of service to God and others long after graduation. Inviting, engaging and accompanying our Catholic Hispanics in higher education will yield new and varied workers for the vineyard to bring about a new Pentecost. Pope Francis reminds us of the immense opportunity that lies ahead: “As a university, as educational institutions, as teachers and students, life itself challenges us to

States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2002).

answer these two questions: What does this world need us for? Where is your brother?”¹⁵

15 Address of the Holy Father to Educators and Students in Ecuador, July 7, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/july/documents/pa-pa-francesco_20150707_ecuador-scuola-universita.html

The Pecan Grove Review welcomes submissions from St. Mary's University students, faculty, staff, and alumni. If you would like to submit a piece, please contact us at PGRsubmission@stmarytx.edu.