COLORADO REVIEW

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STATE
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# BOXITA

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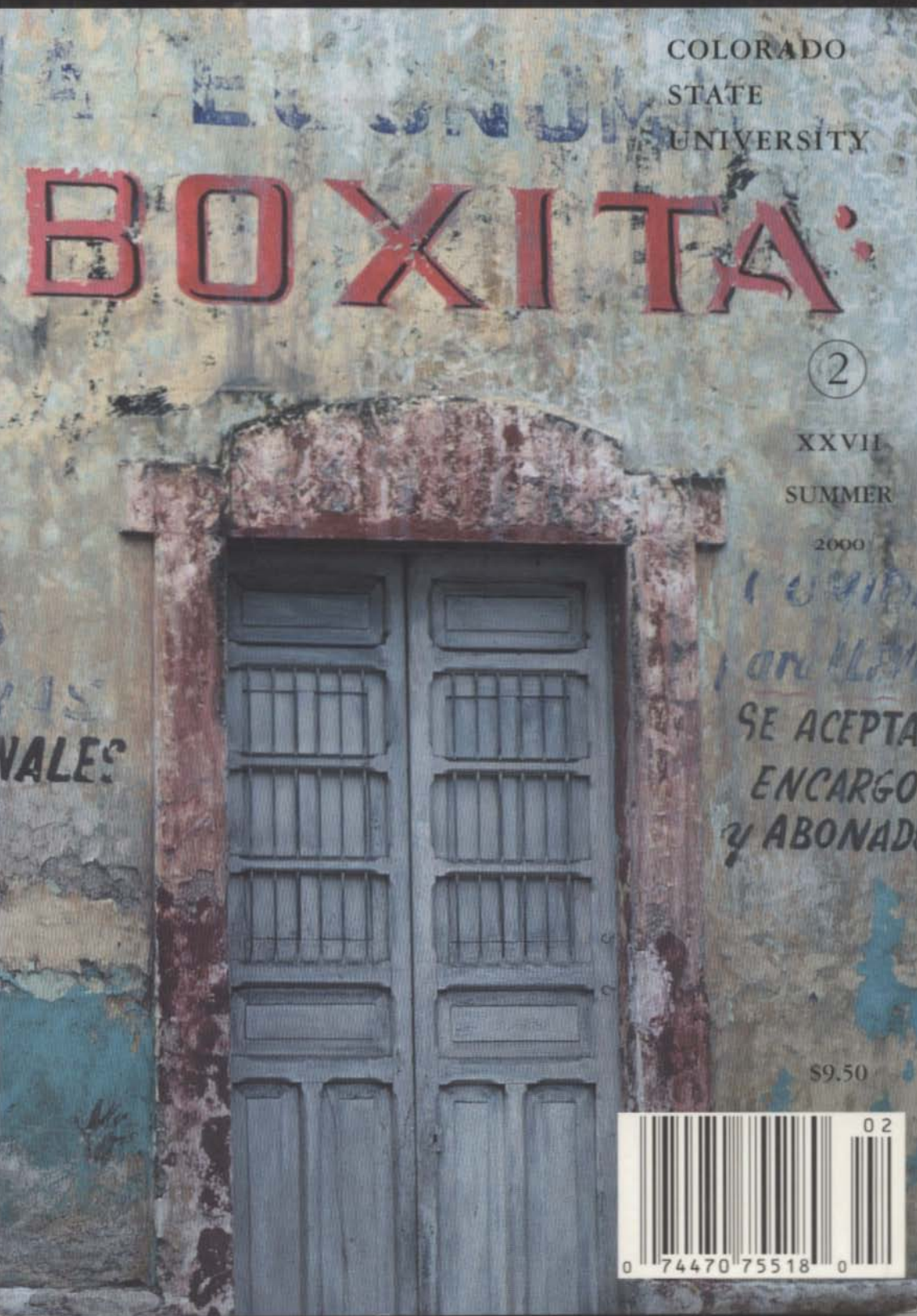
XXVII

SUMMER

2000

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## DAY OF THE DEAD

When I was two months old, my dead mother held me in her arms. My brother Vern showed me the black and white photo. In front of golden drapes that reached the ground, she held me with one arm, and, with the other hand free, she touched my nose. The lamp in the room made me bright, a little bundle wrapped in white, glowing on her hand and face. "Wow. That's Mom?" I said.

I was fourteen and had never seen her before because she died two months after the photo was taken. She looked nothing like I had pictured. She was sexy and tall, wearing tight nylon pants and a snug blouse.

"She's pretty beautiful, isn't she?" Vern said, sitting shirtless on his bed. He was nineteen, but even with the room lights dim, he looked to be in his thirties—splotchy beard, bony arms and chest. In less than a year he would die of AIDS.

"I want you to have it," he said.

"Thanks," I said. I took it back to the house, and when I went to bed I held it on my chest. After I was sure Mr. and Mrs. Martin were asleep, I flicked on the light and looked at it again. Under the brightness, I could see her much clearer. She had light brown hair and a face shaped like a heart. Then I noticed she wasn't wearing a bra, her breasts shaped like . . . simply like the sloping breasts of a beautiful woman. I ran my finger up and down her image. "Hi, Mom," I said. "I'm your son."

At school, I showed the photo to my best friend, Raul Galivan. "I'd do her any day," he said.