

## Chasing After The Salt Woman

In this land

where the dirt is holy, and a staircase was built by Jesus himself  
depending on the day,  
Route 66 bingo may be bustling.

in this land

land where my white privilege doesn't stop me from speaking Spanish  
and where Madrid becomes a city of crystals, goats and wine festivals  
the Rio Grande slowly slithers  
all the way  
down.

and oh, the sandias! daily

glow like watermelon, for which they were named  
and the coyotes continue to eat neighborhood cats  
to the beats of sambas, under a low indigenous murmur  
in this land.

(I once loved a Greek boy who lived in the south valley

we pretended to run away, even making a stick and cloth satchel  
filled with apples, to feed to the horse tied up at the end of the dirt road)

the wailing of la llorona

and the frightful rhythm of simply saying  
'chupacabra!'

(permeated my campfires and sleepovers.

I was 'little poky cactus' in the politically askew group  
made for kids like me,

whose mothers overworked and fathers loved to play guitar)

huevos rancheros, Indian tacos, horchata and ah...

the food and sweat MELT under an everyday "Christmas"

when the homemade red can playfully wrestle the Hatch green

in this land,

everyone's a lobo. woof. woof. woof.

and everyone's crept into the big Frontier barn for smothered hash browns  
wondering about the owner's John Wayne obsession.

(I cannot distinguish the grandmothers of my boyfriends

but there was one...

the tiniest abuelita,

who held a bowl much larger than herself of menudo  
and said my irish name in the most beautiful way)

i miss the walls. Long and gritty adobe walls  
Piles and miles of gypsum,  
And the two powerful yuccas in the yard of my youth,  
the first ladies i placed behind the frame of an old 35mm camera.

tonight the 66 bingo hall buzzes with aged New Mexicans,  
coffee and cigarettes. bolos and cowboy boots.  
and bless me, ultima!  
the devout lottery scratchers, who now in fact pay for all high-school graduates  
to attend college.

i miss the bluest sky sky and that delirious desert smell.  
the longest tram line  
the largest balloon fiesta  
in the world  
the hardest place to pin  
in the property of a poem  
in this land, the land of enchantment, though we all joke of its 'entrapment'...

New Mexico. home. "the 505." the valley, the barrio, the foothills.  
when i die, let me find you again.  
the stucco will devour my palms, and i will crawl on my belly  
like that same lizard i chased for the first ten years  
and i will sleep at the bottom of your sand filled bag,  
burning burning

in this land.