Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest

Volume 1
Issue 1 Identity, Culture, and Art in New Mexico

2021

Of Motherhood, Caldo y Atole

Amanda R. Garcia
University of New Mexico, agarcia86@unm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/chamisa

Part of the Poetry Commons

Recommended Citation

This Literary and other Creative Work is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.
Heat stroked pastures lie scorned and sun-scorched Skies
a deep auburn near eight pm
Reminds me my heart fears all but running
But tonight,
We are home
Tonight, *caldo* on the stove.
Muted moans lurk, pent up creeks of Hardwood floors
The leaking faucet contests

How heavy the burden of a water bill On
the mind of a woman eighty feet tall,
No, rather eighty-four years old
Grey and weary, beads of turquoise dress her neck
Back bent, she creeps to tighten the faucet best she can
Her calloused hands pour me a thick serving of *atole*
Hot from the stove, worn but steady pot, rusting
Has seen many a cure cooked and boiled
For bruises and heartaches alike

*Atole*, now sliding past the lump in my throat,
Warms my chest for a moment
Heat rushes through my arms and
To the pit of my stomach
Lingering like heat does when the heater works
Last Christmas remembers me this warm but
A quick draft sneaks past cracked adobe
Whispers the hairs on the back of my neck to a rigid attention
Her voice raspy but certain as words wobble out slowly

“*Todavía eres madre*”

Words pierce my ears so sharp I believe they start to Bleed, or otherwise, heat now drips out of me
Down the side of my face
My eyes drooping, shift toward the stuttering hand on the clock My pulse lapping the tick, neck now pounding
“No importa lo que digan”
She prepares a bowl of caldo
Caldo, her favorite
Pushes us from summer to winter
From fields yellow and rich
To fields lifeless, unforgiving
Caldo, a labor, reward for hard work
What is it then when all your hard work has been
Mourning a loss the size of 38 weeks in your ribcage?
Perhaps insufferable.

Skies of auburn, now dimming, reflect from the window seal
Dusty and dreadful from dragging in draft
Atole, now but residue residing in an empty glass,
Thickens the lump in my throat,
She is not wrong…
They talk.
“How can the bloodline of a healer not keep life,
not foster a womb warm and giving enough?”

The clock reads seven minutes until eight
Seven minutes is an eternity when all you have is
The coursing time through you,
Time which has evaded you
But seven minutes,
Seven minutes old is nearly
Four-hundred piercing breaths,
If they could only reach past the
Lump in my throat,
Seven minutes old is
Not even the blink of an eye,
Welling with tears, with fury

Furiously, blood red skies burning through me
I wonder, is it my blood spilling over
Or has the dust choked the sun?
All that was left of me,
A hole now too throbbing to nurse
With even a bowl of caldo
Cold from catching draft on the counter
I rest my head on the shoulder of a woman eighty feet tall
A woman who has carried life into this world
More times than I could.
More times than I could count now with tears rushing forward
She holds my heart back from running

“Suéltalo” she says,

The pastures could use the rain.

Amanda Rose García is a third-year student studying Spanish and Chicana/o Studies at the University of New Mexico. Throughout her experience in higher education, Amanda has prioritized reconnecting with her own roots and building community, as a third-generation Mexican American. Growing up in New Mexico provides her with a unique cultural perspective unlike any other in the country, which drives much of her academic, personal, and community work. “Of Motherhood, Caldo y Atole” is a piece that, both, encapsulates her academic and personal goals, while also painting a vivid image of her cherished home state in the beautiful Southwest. This poem, based on the experience of a friend, considers the cultural realities of rural New Mexican life, including hardships of living off the land, curanderismo practices, New Mexican food traditions, and the importance of family and querencia (a love of home or place).