

# ESPAÑOLA

## *The Heart Rolls Away the Stone* *El corazón deshecha la piedra*

*De un nopal y sus verdoros  
Nacen flores peregrinas,  
Que las más hermosas flores  
Suelen andar entre espinas.*

—Décima popular de Nuevo México

The devout: poor, working class northern New Mexicans for the most part, still keep making *promesas*, still keep coming to Chimayó just as they always have. Only now they have company. Beside them walk tourists toting cameras, pilgrims in their own right, who have trekked enormous distances to step foot in the dusty plaza at Chimayó, to see for themselves, one supposes, if brown hands sanctifying themselves with brown earth is as moving a spectacle as funeral rites in Nepal.

The devout: brown, young, old, *mancos*, *tullidos*, *cojos*, move among the visitors in bermuda shorts and dig into the earth and pray that the tumors swelling in the cavities of their bodies will shrink and shrivel up; that the pain knotted in arthritic knuckles may be loosened; that their broken bones may be mended; that their wrenched backs may be made straight.

Those with faces cupped in their hands, those who weep incessantly, the tormented in mind and spirit also come each year. Like bent coins spit out of a machine, they leave the cities and journey to Chimayó. They are easy to spot: there is a gaping hole in their chest where their soul once resided. Their eyes raw with pain bleed blue teardrops down their cheekbones. They have come to leave their misfortune scrawled in handwritten notes to the Santo Niño. "*I come to Chimayó today because my spirit is broken. I ask you to heal my heart so I can move on and live again. Teach me to love again. Help me Santo Niño de Atocha. Release me of the pain of my past. Thank you, Angie.*"

The private pain of many is exorcised at Chimayó. The emblems of human affliction—crutches, braces, leg casts, petitions—are left behind on the walls of the *capilla* for others to consider. The power of Chimayó is a great metaphor for life itself, like the *descansos* on the road up from Santa Cruz, visible reminders of the place where a soul departed the earth. At Chimayó, those who believe leave reminders of private victories, of broken shackles, loosened straps, empty plaster casts, and ropes untied, reminders to others of the place where the body was unbound, the mind healed, the spirit freed, the stone rolled aside. . . .

In Chimayó try not to show your surprise with those things that seem foreign and unreal; with the angel-faced *chavalo*, for example, kicking back in a lowered pearl-white Olds Cutlass parked under the cottonwoods next to the plaza or when he lifts back his mad-dog shades, smiles and says,—Peace be with you, *carnal*.

# ESPAÑOLA

## *The Heart Moves to the Monarca's rattle El corazón se mueve al son del guaje del Monarca*

*Primer paso: Wait for the rattle of the Monarca's gourd and step out.*

You must follow the river north from Española, the heart urged, follow the river that you knew as a child. El río grande del norte, upon whose banks and in whose *bosque* you played. You must feel its humors again, the healing balm of its mud beneath the soles of your feet. Bare your skin to its warm volcanic stones tinged red by November afternoons. Sleep in the shade of its cottonwoods below the highway to Taos. Listen, the heart instructs, put out the noise of the city and the passing cars, listen until the murmur of the river's gentle flow is indistinguishable from the beating of your *corazón*.

You must follow this river and no other, the heart said, because it is the river that has bathed the souls of many before you; its cool waters have given life to the valley's orchards. Its waters are powerful, but at summer solstice, *en el día de San Juan*, they are miraculous, a few drops upon your forehead and you shall be healed and whole again.

*Paso segundo: Listen for the violin and tambor.*

When you have found the strength to renew your commitment to all that is sacred, the heart counsels, return to that spot beneath el Pedernal and the black mesas at Medenales. There, at the confluence of the río chama and the río grande, the birthplace of all *manitos*, watch and listen as the rivers entwine like lovers, the gentle eddies pulling the red earth from the Abiquiú hills into the swirl of the muddy current from the north. When your heart and your mind are one again, past, present and future time unfolds in the waters of the río chama and río grande mixing, mixing, like the blood of your people.

*Ultimo paso: Step in behind the matachines.*

# ESPAÑOLA

*The Heart Dances with Malinche*  
*El corazón baila con La Malinche*  
(Alcalde)

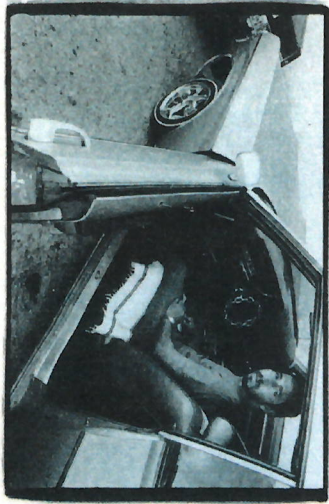
La Malinche knows the sounds of my bones,  
*el crujir de mis coyunturas*  
when shifting my weight from right to left  
and the way I hide my smile  
way past midnight.  
She knows of the dimple *cicatriz*  
that presses a memory deep  
into the left side of my face.

She has seen me, ghostlike  
on the Abiquiú hills  
bent over *jorobado*  
in a blinding *borrasca*  
of early winter or late spring  
barefoot *entre los chamisales y los sabinos*,  
in the damp *arroyos de arena*,  
dancing with the humming wind  
or calling down the distant moon  
through the crimson cracks of earth cliffs,  
brushing away my tracks  
with pine wreaths  
beneath the blue velvet mountains  
*de la Sangre de Cristo*.

She often caught the scent  
of green wood and fire near the river

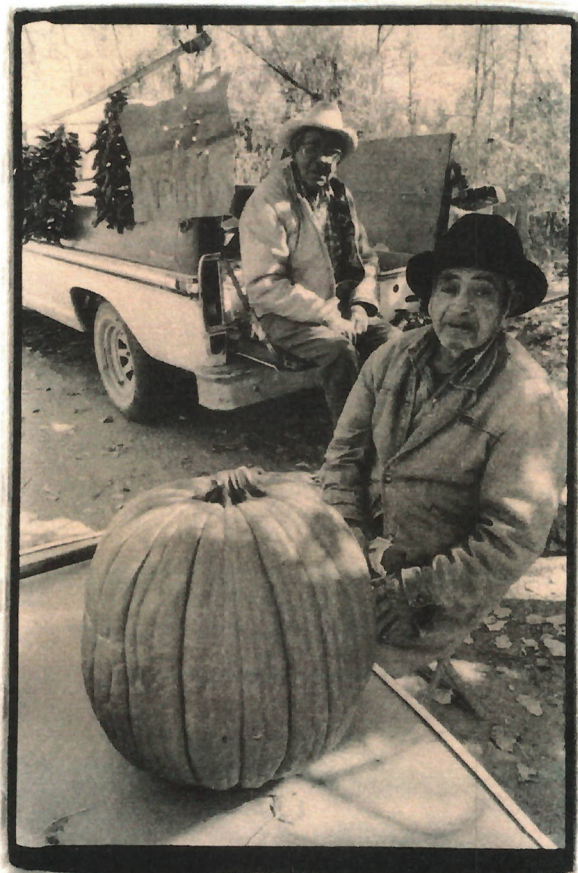
and would listen for the voices  
*de los djuntos que solian*  
*acercarse a nuestro fuego*  
and she knows of those carbon  
humors that wear my clothes  
and filled our winter rooms  
*con sombras*  
*bajo la tenue luz lámpara de aceite*.  
She knows that my feet grow into  
horse's hooves  
that paw at icy sidewalks by mid-December  
*buscando los ritos*  
*debajo de la escarcha de las estrellas*.

La Malinche dances with  
the souls that come to take their leave  
*tocando puertas y ventanas*  
she knows of the toothless laughs  
and the sweat-rimmed brows *de mis hermanos*  
of the tobacco stamp foreheads  
of my *india abuelas*  
and the wise silence  
*de mis abuelos taciturnos*  
she turns and waits listening for the rattle of the gourd  
and places the knotted cord  
around *mis hombros de genizaro*.



11/50

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*[Handwritten signature]*



TM 1993. 17. 7



TM 1993.17.8



# BARELAS

*The Heart Puts on Some Threads and Steps Out*  
*El corazón se entachucha y sale a dar la vuelta*

Barelas *dijuntos* are cool, hip, classy. Sunday after Mass snapshots taken in front of Sacred Heart Church are portraits of loving, strong *familias*: young girls and guys lean back against the fenders of sleek '55 Chevy BelAirs, while mothers, fathers, *compadres* stand off to one side stern and watchful. The girls in tight fitting black dresses patterned with white *alcatraces* are as sleek as the cars, their smiles wide and brilliant like sunlight across the río grande: smiles that could melt the chrome plate right off the fenderskirts.

These photos chronicle Barelas in the summer of its youth; in them you see *bareleños* taking their good sweet time at living; laying in their dreams in the sultry waves of their ravenwinged hair and showing their pride in creased khaki pants and spit-shined shoes. It was important to look good then, sharp, together. Somewhere in Barelas the keen silver voice of "Pal Al" Tafoya is still remembered and held in memory like a milky opal against the black velvet cloth of time. "Pal Al" was cool, smooth and classy, spinning Louis Prima hits and giving Tommy G. and the Charms and other local groups from Barelas a chance at getting on the radio in the sixties. These were the days of *bareleños* riding down Central, cruising to the blaring saxophone progressions of James Brown and the Flames, Bill Dogett; *Come on and do the Honky Tonk!* Those were days of open roads paradoxically leading Chicano youth away from and back to the barrio.

Back then, in the late fifties and early sixties, no one ever thought that the sweet, agile myth of youth would crust over and slowly drip, drop-by-drop, into pools of blood at the corner of Barelas and Cromwell, 4th and Hazeldine, 2nd and Pacific, and a dozen other street corners where a generation of pock-marked *pachucos* punctured the veins of their forearms and let *el oro del barrio*—their very youth—ooze out and spill onto the ground. Barelas has paid a heavy price for looking good.

# BARELAS

*Nothing but Heart*

*Puro corazón*

A visit to Barelas is a short course in philosophy, sociology, theology. It is a way to see what is and what is not . . .

Every year, just before Christmas, people from all across the city come back to the barrio. Some of them grew up in Barelas and come back to visit friends, *familia*, their old haunts; others come looking for just the right *hojas*, just the right *chile piqué* for the Christmas tamales. Things you can now find at any supermarket in town, even up in the Heights. But as far as these shoppers are concerned the right makings can only be found over the viaducts and across the tracks in Barelas.

The old magic of Barelas comes alive in the movement of old and new faces crowding up against the counters at El Modelo and the Sanitary Tortilla Factory. Some things have changed and some things remain the same. El Cambio Supermarket at Bridge and 4th has been replaced. The rows and rows of bright yellow and red cans of *jalapeños*, *mole*, *chocolate* at La Mexicana with its *panadería* reflects the preferences of new families moving into the barrio from Mexico. *Bareleños* aren't the only ones taking note of the changes: a sight never before seen in Barelas is that of Anglo bakers and cashiers ringing up the purchases of Barelas residents. The M & J Café has added a new dining area in what used to be a southwest furniture showroom. The Barelas Coffee House, its steamed windows painted with candy canes and jolly santas is becoming a trendy Barelas eatery. It was first discovered by office workers downtown and now is the place for artists and pseudo-intellectuals to mix with Barelas regulars and get a weekly fix of *posole* and *menudo*. *¡Cómo han cambia'o las cosas!*

Only El Modelo, halfway to San José, seems impervious to time and change. Each customer's arrival is greeted with the ringing of the bell above the door. The rich warm smell of corn *masa* and chile warms the heart. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty pounds of *masa* for tamales, every order is filled no matter how large or how small. The girl at the counter thumps down a plastic bag of *masa* that resembles wet clay ready for molding. She tugs at the roll of brown butcher paper and wraps each purchase individually offering it to the customer like a gift, tied neatly with white string. And with every purchase the customer can take home a free calendar of La Virgen de Guadalupe, an Aztec *princesa*, or San Martin, the patron saint of shopkeepers. Some things should remain the same.

# BARELAS

*The Heart is Enshrined in Barelas*  
*Al corazón le tienen su templo en Barelas*

The magic of Barelas is feeling warm and full on the inside, no matter how cold the wind blows in the streets. *Panza llena corazón contento*. In Barelas the heart remains serene, even as it is pierced by thorns. Most of the old neighborhood is hurting, rundown and neglected. The railroad houses down on Hazeldine tilt and sag. Fourth Street, with its closed and boarded storefronts, looks like the toothless grin of an old *bruja*. The round windows of what was once the Red Ball Cafe are cracked and Wimpy on the wall, carrying platters of hamburgers, has faded so badly that its hard to imagine how busy the place once was. Legions of homeless mill around the corner of 2nd and Iron Street. At a recent city council meeting longtime Barelas residents came together to voice their opposition to opening up yet another homeless shelter in the area. Barelas residents are concerned, caring, giving, but their compassion is often abused. No other neighborhood in the city shares in the burden of caring for the scores of homeless and transients who walk Barelas' streets.

The heart of Barelas is framed in tin and glass and enshrined in a *nicho* of *cariño*, *amor*, family, home, love. Sometimes it's found sitting on threadbare sofas in living rooms and assumes the form of an *abuelita* reliving *cuentos* of the better days in the neighborhood; sometimes it's a child—brown eyes full of hope—a little girl poking her head through the front room curtains, a face ringed by red and blue bulbs and shiny tinsel banners proclaiming peace on earth.

The magic of Barelas, I repeat, is feeling warm and full and human on the inside, a place where the heart lit by votive candles is placed against the cold gray sky of winter, invoked against the cars screeching and weaving wildly down Second Street; against the insults and the curses of drunken men brawling in the A&P parking lot; against the sharp edge of the city; against the cold uterine blue of winter when the night drops in behind the barrio at its western edge and flocks of crows darken the red sunset as the *río grande* flows in solitary splendor to the south.