Where I Am From- Keith Sánchez

I am from the worn creaking wood tablones under my feet and La Santa Guadalupe in her adobe perch, pura madera pino shimmering in the warm amber flicker of a vela de homenaje.

I am from the vine-woven lattice, poco pando y torcido, crafted by Sánchez, Chávez, Romero, García, Gallegos hands to sustain a vintage cut from generational grape vines, a cosecha for “vino de pata” at our matanzas, and a trove of tart and sweet delight nimble on our hitos’ tongues on a hot summer day.

I am from the calabazas, chile, tomates, romero, manzanilla, basil, hierba buena, and lavender, aromatically twirling on the breeze with the divine agility of nymphs.  From the wise old mora tree whose long-gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I am from the yoke of “la penitencia” and “el ayuno” of Viernes Santo, the torta de huevo, quelites, and salmón empanada after cutting wood in the Jarales bosque, from the irony of incense and “señor ten piedad…ten piedad de nosotros” filled misas, followed by nips at my Tio Antonio’s flask behind the capilla.

From Sánchez farmers in the Rio Abajo and Chávez sheepherders on the Torrreón land grant.  I am from drunken, boisterous gritos of my Tios telling tall-tales around the family reunion fire, and the reticent rosario recitation of my Nana Concha as we travelled the winding lomita roads to el Santuario. From “dime con quien andas, y te digo quien eres” to “always return something you’ve borrowed in better condition than when you got it mijo”.  From those gnarled dirt roads and clay paths, whose long gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I am from Belen, Nuevo Mexico, Spanish for Bethlehem, Rio Abajo, from Janelle Gonzalez’ first kiss in the old Oñate Theater, and in keeping with the infamy of that building’s name, my first bloody nose delt by David Martinez’ fast right hand behind its painted brick walls.

I am from mi terreno sagrado Nuevo Mexico, and when my Father’s work took us to bello y sufrido El Salvador, Central America, I learned about the world, la porbreza verdadera, oppression, y mas que todo, the treasure of reflection on my querencia and gente back home.

I Am from my Mama’s frijoles and fresh tortillas, My Aunt Dolores’ famous carne adobada, my Nana’s empanditas, biscochitos, sweet rice, and chile, eggs, and papitas every Saturday morning before the work on the campo or house began.  From the smell of red chile, posole and tamales for Christmas.  From my Tio Antonio’s story of the “trucha” that transfigured into a beautiful woman with shimmering silver skin and hissed at him and my Tío Eziquel.

I am from the city manager speeches typed fiercely, ribbon to pulp by mi Grampa Juan Rafael Sánchez fighting for el pobre Indo-Hispano, Isleta-Tewa, and Genizaro people of Valencia County during the Great Depression. Levantando brazo y puño, strong and recio as the cottonwood in his field, whose long-gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

 I am from streams, arroyos, ponderosas, piñon, and Junipero on hunts for venado en el cañon del trigo to the East, and from horseback treks up the Rio Puerco to La Sierra del Ladron to the West.

Yo soy de mis dos hijitos lindos, mi esposa, reina de mi corazón.

From the mágico del terreno mío.  Nuevo Mexico, la sagrada curandera de de mis penas,

Nuevo Mexico, el mero mero chingón !!!!!

