

## Tacos De Barbacoa

Me sonrío  
when I recall the early days,  
those meatless fasts of beans  
and rice,  
frijoles en bola.

Down a gravelly road,  
a slaughterhouse sells,  
the remains of cattle to my  
father.

A severed head of steer,  
una cabeza de vaca,  
a fifty-cent feast for a family  
of twelve.

Under the shade of a big tree,  
a stack of wood, and the  
long-awaited sound  
of breaking ground,  
a pit.

The poso, three-foot-long,  
three-foot-wide, three-foot-  
deep.  
God's earthen oven—

A kindled fire in its belly  
and hungry flames that reach  
to heaven,  
y saludan a Dios,  
as the woodpile dwindles.

The blaze,  
a pyre of timber  
that turns to ember.

The hot brasas  
con su calor ardiente warm  
the air.

On mothers table,  
a skinned head,  
the muscles weaved  
through stately jaws and  
lengthy snout,  
severed from what graces the  
table of kings,  
USDA prime, rich man's  
fare, medium rare.

But here, on Mother's table,  
lay the regal head with  
glaring eyes  
to be handled with sacred  
care,  
un regalo a sus hijos.  
Her hands with loving care,  
rub and anoint it  
with ancient secrets  
in preparation,  
for its ascension  
to the feast.

The hot pit calls its sacrifice,  
"Come, rest in my womb, my  
altar of hot coals,  
my warmth awaits."

The offering, neatly wrapped  
in wet gunnysacks,  
bolsas de costal,  
in my father's, father's day,  
was adorned with cactus  
leaves,  
pencas de maguey.

Then into the pit,  
to be cradled by amber and  
gold,  
a sepulchral bed,  
sealed like an earthen tomb  
by tin and sand.

The anointed host,  
awaits resurrection.

De noche a día,  
half a day, to rest in the  
grave.

The time tempered  
by another fire on the heap,  
and like a song from the past,  
the crackle of flame  
gives tempo to boyhood  
tales—  
my father's history to me.

La luna llena,  
el cielo con sus estrellas,  
the crickets play their fiddles,  
and the chicharras sing,  
they claim the night.

The fire turns to ash,  
I lumber to bed  
to dream of come what may..

I wake to Sunday morning  
music!  
Los Alegres de Terán,  
A-hoo-a!

Soon, the scrape of sand on  
tin,  
earth's oven opens wide  
to tempt the air with flavor:  
barbacoa!  
From smolder and smoke  
the blessed beef has risen!

The charred shroud removed,  
sustenance revealed, the jaws  
hoisted in the air,  
a sudden jerk from Fathers  
wrist,  
and meat melts from tooth  
and bone into the platter,  
lined with tortillas de maíz.

Our fingers do the rest,  
folding fibers of flavor  
into tacos de barbacoa, to end  
the fast, of beans and rice.  
A-hoo-a!.