

PULLING ME IN

In the desert surrounded by mountains,
the hands of the women motion to me from the roadside.
Pulling me in, tugging me deeper, into her, the mother,
into Coatlicue the ancient one,
who is Guadalupe the second coming.

A woman huddles in the doorway, a midnight blue serape surrounds her.
I press a coin into the warm brown palm she holds out to me and she looks at me with
clear direct eyes as she makes the sign of the cross and blesses me.

I wonder who gained more from this deal.
I long to grasp her hand and for her to lead me back in to her hogar
with it's single candle and blanket for a doorway,
a picture of the virgin cut from a magazine tacked to the cracked cement wall.
And there we will eat frijoles wrapped in tortillas bought with that single coin.

A woman selling vegetables and flowers in the market amidst
the smell of guava, orange, tuber rose and rotting greens.
Piles of red tomatoes, shiny red hot peppers and elegant calalilys
surround her and her brown baby. He who pulls away from her breast
to smile at me, his cheeks as round as his face,
lips wet with the milk that drips down his chin.
He quickly turns back to her nipple,
and they recede into their world of earth and plants, milk and cheese.

In the cobblestone street I hear sweet voices in the evening.
They're singing so sweet to comfort those above whose doorway hangs a black ribbon.
The women in pink and turquoise checkered aprons,
hair tied back in a single braid, rebosos held close in the chill night air
carry baskets filled with gifts of sweet breads covered with serviettas
embroidered in hot pink with edges of wide crocheted lace in turquoise and yellow.
If I were to join them in their song and to be overcome with sorrow
I can feel a strong calloused hand take mine in silent understanding.

In the blowing dust of a cactus forest
she leans her tough weathered body on the crude pole of her display.
Snakeskins, a coyote hide and three live hawks tethered to a pole are her wares.
Take me into the desert, to the land of the Curanderos and Shamans
and men who hunt birds in the wilderness.

The hands of the women motion me in,
pulling me, willing me, tugging me deeper
into Coatlicue, into Guadalupe
into the mother
who is Mexico.

Charlotte Bell
www.charlottebell.com