

POETRY MONTH

LATINA POETS WITH NEW BOOKS

Between Wings

1.
Your arms stretch under the blue garment,
not feathered, not under Guadalupe's drapery of sky,

nor below the hot blanket of holy breath.
Your stiff garment

forms a pair of wings
from the apex of your neck.

Only your clothing reveals
it is you, thin, a spine,

a column under that dress.
The carver left your eyes open,

floated Earth's effigy inside your crown
to remind us of this weight on your head.

2.
It was a retired schoolteacher
who flew the body of an airplane

into your shrine that morning.
Announced he wanted to kill

Catholics, Methodists, and Mexicans.
Crashed between the shrine and school,

between children having lunch
and supplicants at prayer.

The exploding fuselage lodged
in the beam, in the silent spine

of your winged building.
Did not kill

a single person on the ground.

* published in *VirginX*,
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2018

* In October 1970, San Juan,
Texas made international
headlines when a retired
schoolteacher smashed a
rented single-engine plane
into a schoolhouse and shrine.
—The Texas State
Historical Association

Chincherias For El Chandelier

After Pepón Osorio's *El Chandelier*

He had left it all behind, la esposa, his daughter, el carro, la chamba, all behind so he could marry this little americana he met on WhatsApp. He thought it would be his last chance after casi toda la vida jalando, unas pocas viejas, and his best friend Benny dead in the last cat fight. When he arrived to her house and saw it was in a nearly soundless barrio, he wanted an object to remember every brave thing he had done. A magnet from la tiendita downtown for the first time they held hands walking under the Tower of Americas. He wondered how far he could see if he had the nerve to go up. New chamba, new chamaca, new casa where he hung his old license plate over his new wife's bed because they had had sex for four hours straight on more than one occasion, and he wanted to remember it was just like driving his car. He kept all the brochures the hotel clerks and street hawkers gave him from their early days of abrazando en la calle, and he kept all of the colorful junk mail they eventually sent him at her house because it has his name on it; he stuffed pages in his dresser drawer because they held things he had never seen before. Battery powered song

birds. Upside down tomato planters. Genius. He filled her house, every corner eventually with his curiosidades

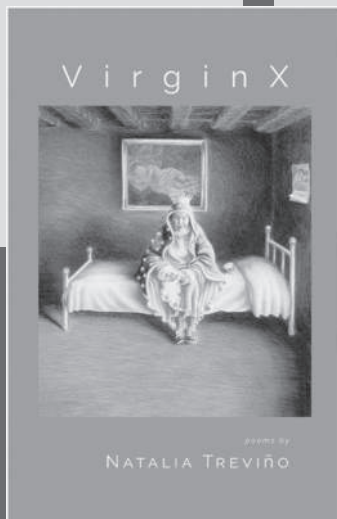
because he had to see what he had done since he could not believe it. Until there was nowhere else to hang the plastic babies that were on sale at the Dollar Store in the After-Christmas Bonus Dollar Sale Bin that he had to have because they reminded him of his own new babies, and la new wife, hair up in a donut bun, with a good belly muffin popping out of her jeans now, had already been yelling that there was not one cuadrito, ni un lugarcito of space left in any drawer in this pinche wreck of a house and he better not bring home one more mugre mas te vale cabron— until he saw it at la pulga for twenty five dollars and said, Ah, el chandelier. And he packed it in the

backseat of his carcacha, hung it immediately from the ceiling when they got home. He wanted to see it dazzle like the Christmas lights by the river. Era un chandelier that held todo—todo lo que le dio la pinche gana. Jugetes, adornos, tiny muñecas wearing blue eyeshadow. Every crystal scallop became a shining echo for every new gem he collected, every strand of crystal beads became a hook for his assortment of plastic palmas and pearl-rimmed bird's nests. *Recuerditos, hermosa. Mira!* He wondered if his daughter en el otro lado could see this magical upside down Christmas tree, if he climbed the Tower and hung it up from there like an earring, if she could see it shine.

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NATALIA TREVIÑO



LATINA POETS WITH NEW

you love a river

for twenty years you love a river and every time you
 cross it or sit to stare at it you imagine your suddenly
 immense hands brushing over its calm ripples as if it
 was fur as if it was skin as if it could touch
 you back as if it also loved you as if it had
 waited for you always this peaceful uncontested
 river always serene so different from that other river
 the river that has defined your entire life

the river you love is far but not that far from that other
 river that other river sometimes muddy sometimes
 dry sometimes green sometimes lovely but you can
 never think of it without seeing almost two centuries of
 blood shed over it can never see it without
 thinking of the lives the pain the hurt the
 losses crossing that river has cost you have always
 loved rivers but is it still a river if it has walls



IRE'NE LARA SILVA

ire'ne lara silva



CUICACALLI
HOUSE OF SONG

the earth of us for Rosemary Catacalos

into the flesh of us
 lavender and jasmine
 and the stuff of stars

almas mias
 this is the work of our lives
 the black earth of us
 wet with tears and sweat
 and the sex of us
 composted with our dreams
 and our tragedies

sunlight and moonlight
 limning the bone
 marrow blood flesh skin of us
 all our words the knives
 for peeling away at
 the disordered delicate
 dangerous disturbed of us
 until light falls unfettered

out of our eyes
 the spoken the prayed
 the love in the hands of us

seeds breaking open
 in the revolving regenerating
 rising intensity of us
 and the sought for healing
 stronger and stronger
 streaming out of our chests
 in the expanding suns of us

at our end there will be
 only one essential story

what we made of the earth of us

* Reprinted with permission from
 Saddle Road Press

The house holds its breath

It has been four days since she left.
 The hallway glow with daylight.
 The sun insists.

Michael tiptoes a sleepwalk.
 She has given up speaking calls go
 unanswered.

The loss of her lover a needle
 weaving its way
 through her lips.

Michael falls into the sofa
 her back a curve brittle wings.

BOOKS

Josephine collects the dishes

Not exquisite china but sturdy ceramic, dark blue in the face, grainy bitter white on the broken cusps.

Josephine picks up the largest pieces from the floor. She considers options for what can be done with the pointed edges, the curled lip of bowls.

All that comes to mind are the tender gold corrections of Japanese pottery.

The art of broken pieces.

Sometimes we are art, sometimes we are pieces, she says to Michael, who has flown away,

who always flies away after a fight. But Josephine knows her angel heard.

She leaves the broken stack on the kitchen counter. Already the cat is rubbing his face on a soft edge.

There is work to do and so all of this will have to wait.

When she returns, the house is dark and cool, purple blue and dim chandelier.

The dishes together again soft gold marks running across each face.



JO REYES-BOITEL

Unending

From Dallas, where two are lost, to St. Paul, where women cannot throw out their trash, and Baton Rouge, where two are killed.

From Medina to Germany to Orlando. From St. Louis to Mexico City to Oakland. Paris. Turkey.

Sanford. New York City. Ferguson. Haiti. West Texas. Venezuela. Iguala. Nigeria. Syria.

Puerto Rico.

There is always a fight, each compelled by its own narrative. This alone should focus St. Michael's attention.

A shield can protect the body. But who attends to the pierced and unprotected behind it? That hot coal roosting under the breast.

An angel needs a lover, their softness cradling the kiln-fired edge of her sword.

Otherwise arteries harden into fissures, skin a topography of places where care has no home, where borders firm up until the land is inhospitable and generosity is the one thing we are asked to carry in our arms

to give what can be managed, a sliver of what has been given to keep the body warm, to keep arms open.

Every place carries the truth of its own birth.

— jo reyes-boitel



th

She spends hours placing her palms together - fingers spread out close again like billowing gills -

then returns to the bedroom once shared. The hottest room in the house.

how often their fingers hooked into the other's as they led to comfort.

Winter has come early this year. Seasons will do what they want.

Michael summons her lover:

a clay vessel veined with heart break permanent fissures

a labyrinth built within her lover's ribs desire's stretch into life

an incomplete fire cool rain the potential for clouds

a cloak of balm and breath

But she does not return.

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In Lak'ech

Mi'ja, you are more than shared flesh. You are warrior at evening time.

You are powerful voice at morning prayer. You are ancestral lucha burning sage under your bare feet.

Descalza, the earth ignites, you into the day como Águila, eagle spirit. Mi'ja, you are of madre tierra. You are

trenzas por la madrugada. Holy spirit ribbons through each braid of charcoal. You are curious fingers through carrot

strips. Orange fire in your mouth—a dragon of giggles where I find God on a chipped tooth.



CAROLINA
HINOJOSA-CISNEROS

Holy Is a Bird's Cry

Holy Spirit, can you hear?
Ashes of my (be)fore-mothers
vacillate over my limp body.

Temptation coils my throat.
Vexed desert sands, canyonous
t(r)reason is deft possibility.

Mirage of doubt pesters
like a fly buzzing at death.
I hear Mary

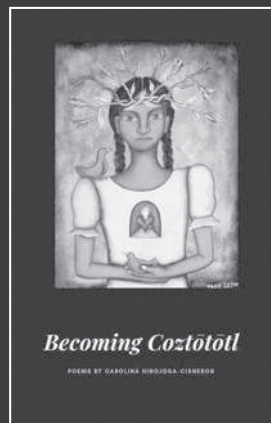
call my faith.
Mother, I do not pray anymore.

I feel the Jesus of my mother
cup the crane of my neck,

close his eyes over the kettle,

and blow medicine into the fold.
He brings his mouth to speak

but I have already fluttered away.



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Books. Mil Gracias.

CENOTE

At 13, the lightness of her limbs as she lets herself fall bodiless

onto the trampoline, the counter slap of leap into the air. The open palm of her own strength, the back-handed

swing of a girl against the ball of the closed world.

Her childhood in that effort to perfect the underwater headstand, legs like a V pointing at the sky as her eyes

blink wide open, taking in that hushed and sacred bottom.

Now brown girl at a bus stop, all she owns in a broken-zipper backpack—one t-shirt, a pair of jeans, two socks, a size A bra and a notebook—her question

hitched on one hip. Lamplight dimmed by the spreading oaks' limbs, as he asks her to go with him. When she says yes

yes, he rests his hand on her small shoulder, his fingers folding over like a cup. Later, the next man,

and the next, and the next.
Hundreds of men beaten

into one. One by one and her slow smile, one that hoards

its swimming girl

becoming thousands of Maya virgins

being flung into a cenote. Underwater, consorting with the gods

to desecrate their own village
Meanwhile, the nightstand by the mattress,

its discarded picture of a pair of children with dark night in their hair and eyes,

on a mother's lap. Their twinned joy as they stare next to

a pile of condoms, needles, and mace, a man's wallet.

To the bottom she goes, sea in a little jewelry box of hell.



LESLIE CONTRERAS
SCHWARTZ

