

---

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo: The Sun Was Cruel Like That

Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo · Thursday, July 25th, 2013

Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo is the creator and curator of Beyond Baroque's monthly reading series HITCHED, a founding editor of *The Splinter Generation*, and was nominated for a 2010 Pushcart Prize. Her work has been published in *The Los Angeles Review*, *PALABRA*, *CALYX* and *The Acentos Review*, and she is the winner of the 2013 Poets & Writers California Writers Exchange.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **The Ascension of Josseline**

Two small, blistered  
and bleeding feet dipped  
into one of the stone pools  
pocking the ravine  
like the face of the moon.  
That same orange moon eaten  
by the sun, eclipsed.  
The sun was cruel like that, gulping  
anything flamed tongues touched,  
and since they licked nearly everything,  
nearly everything was licked,  
including Josseline.  
She removed one jacket,  
before removing the second,  
removed the right green shoe  
before the left,  
removed one sock  
before the next,  
rolled up each leg of her  
now-impossible-Hollywood-dream pants  
and washed her feet  
in sacred stone pools.  
This is how she prepared  
with ritual and prayer  
and waited for her ascension.

---

### **Our Lady of the Water Gallons**

*Un mensaje a mis compañeros*

Arivaca, Arizona

I etch black line Sharpie Virgenes  
 on plastic water gallons: one arc,  
 Ichthys in the sand at travelers' feet;  
 one post carving, hobo's mark  
 on the road. The Virgen speaks to faceless  
 shadows traveling when the land is dark.  
 I etch black line Sharpie Virgenes  
 on plastic water gallons. One arc  
 is the bridge between L.A. and Arivaca,  
 liquor store murals and water drawings,  
 dogs on lawns and dogs trained to attack a  
 man and woman darting up Hippy Mountain.  
 They've hiked this far from Guatemala  
 on one plastic water gallon, one arc.  
 Ichthys in the sand at traveler's feet  
 is the tale of a man left shirtless and shoeless  
 beside thorny mesquite. Como un pez sin agua,  
 he is fished off the road limp and nearly witless.  
 In the arms of compañeros he asks,  
 "¿Es esto sentir la muerte?" Barely conscious  
 he is Ichthys in the sand at traveler's feet.  
 One post carving, hobo's mark,  
 would mark our "angel food" with a cross,  
 but cross signs feel wrong to fingers  
 wanting a symbol with less power, more loss,  
 like desert flower blooms, or a growing belly  
 beneath blue robes of water and gloss.  
 I need one post carving, hobo's mark.  
 On the road, the Virgen speaks to faceless  
 suffering. A woman seven months pregnant  
 hikes with garlic-lashed calves (snake safe-guard).  
 Bleeding and cramping, body bent  
 to ground, she makes mud salves and prayers  
 to Our Mother: keep my unborn daughter radiant.  
 On the road, the Virgen speaks. To faceless  
 shadows traveling when the land is dark,  
 I say, I see the fresh footprint in the riverbed,  
 the torn blanket ditched on the hillside.  
 At a rest stop shaded by oak, I tread  
 slow, count empty gallons, read what remains.  
 I promise you are not invisible, nor discarded,  
 people traveling when the land is dark.  
 I etch black line Sharpie Virgenes  
 to cloak rocky paths in stars  
 and hope one will guide you home.  
 When muscles spasm and farm lights appear too far,

know that I built this poem with safe spaces.  
But because no words can erase your scars,  
I etch black line Sharpie Virgenes.

*Note from the Poet: Josseline Jamileth Hernandez (“The Ascension Of Josseline,”) was a 14 year-old girl who traveled through the Arizona desert in January 2008 with her younger brother in order to reunite with their mother in Los Angeles, CA. Along her journey, she was abandoned by her coyote and group after complaining of sickness and died alone in the desert. While on a daily patrol, a No More Deaths volunteer found Josseline’s body lying at the bottom of a canyon with her naked feet dipped into a pool of water. Her remains were identified by the green shoes she had beside her and the emblazoned “Hollywood” sweatpants she wore.*

*Cultural Weekly is proud to premiere these poems.*

This entry was posted on Thursday, July 25th, 2013 at 2:20 am and is filed under [Poetry](#), [Discourse](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can leave a response, or [trackback](#) from your own site.