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Sprouting Words: The Ontopoetic Weave of Time and the Cosmogenetic Bloom of Being in
 Contemporary Maya Poetry

“You cannot destroy me, I move under the empire of words, of sacred words...The word nurtures my
 soul, it gives me vigor and strength.”
 —Josías López K’ana, Maya writer, 1999¹

In his translation of the *Popol Vuh*, Allen J. Christenson observes that the opening chapters of the K’iche’ Maya sacred text “describe the creation of all things as if it were occurring in the immediate present,” as though, at the very moment land first emerges, time was already “folding back upon itself to transport the reader into the primordial waters of chaos.”² The generative act unfolds within the “womb of the sky,” where the thoughts and words of the deities Heart of Sky (Huracán) and Sovereign and Quetzal Serpent bring forth “the germination and creation of the trees and the bushes, the germination of all life and creation.”³ This first dawn—this cosmic birth and sacred beginning—is catalyzed by and mediated through the question: “How shall it be *sown*?”⁴ The world is born as seed and word: a germination that is at once sown and sprinkled, flowering and withering, sprouting and decaying—a temporal simultaneity in which regeneration and impermanence coalesce.

Yet this sowing is not merely agricultural; it is also textile and textual—an act of *sewing*, and an act of *speaking*. Creation unfurls as a *weaving*: a cosmic quilt whose thread is the word, spun on the spindle of utterance: “Merely their word brought about the creation of it. In order to create the earth, they said, ‘Earth,’ and immediately it was created.”⁵ From these opening lines, it becomes evident why Argentine philosopher Rodolfo Kusch describes being, in an Indigenous cosmo-ontological framework, as

¹ Josías López K’ana, quoted in Gloria Elizabeth Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics: Kab’awil and the Making of Maya and Zapotec Literatures* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 45.

² Allen J. Christenson, trans. and comm., *Popol Vuh: Sacred Book of the Quiché Maya People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 11.

³ Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 58.

⁴ Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 59, *italics mine*.

⁵ Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 59.

a “mere *estar*... linked to the concept of shelter and germination.”⁶ In this vision, being not a fixed essence (*ser*), but a living, rhythmic, rooted *becoming*—sustained through continuous weaving and speaking. Speech is not simply expressive but constitutive: the unfolding, pulse, and generative force of being itself. It is not only metaphysical and cosmological, but ontologically and temporally productive: a sprouting of continuity. For the Maya, whose cosmology renders the very notion of linear erasure meaningless, what more powerful counter to colonial silencing than the temporal-ontological act of continuation? What stronger resistance to disappearance than to re-sow the cosmos and reweave the Mayan cosmovision through the fecundity of the word? Thus, when contemporary Mayan poets are described as “weaver-poets... at the forefront of present sociopolitical and cultural expressions of resistance,” it is not merely because they are “guardians of memory and tradition,” but because they are agents of cosmogenesis.⁷ Their poetry is not representation but resurgent becoming: a cosmo-ontological poiesis of being. As Kusch writes of Indigenous knowledge that “multiplies like the sown land through ritual,” so too does their verse germinate past and future into a continuum that blossoms in the present—a continuity in which the Maya universe does not wither, but perpetually blooms.⁸

In articulating how Indigenous knowledge is mediated and actualized through ritual, Rodolfo Kusch invokes the term *yachacun*, defined as “related to growing, multiplying, bringing into existence.”⁹ This generative process culminates in ritual, which “manipulates the invisible limits of a transcendent and sacred world” and thereby transcends epistemological representation.¹⁰ Ritual, as Kusch emphasizes, is not merely symbolic performance but a modality of ontological integration: “not only the medium to *fill* the *emptiness* of a subject, but [that which] also transcends it and balances the ill-fated and the auspicious...acting as components of the cosmos.”¹¹ Within this framework, poetic language—deeply interwoven with ritual practice—becomes inseparable from ritual’s onto-cosmological function. Herein

⁶ Rodolfo Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, ed. and trans. María Lugones and Joshua M. Price (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

⁷ Paul M. Worley and Rita M. Palacios, *Unwriting Maya Literature: Ts’iib as Recorded Knowledge* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019), 51.

⁸ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 35.

⁹ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 35.

¹⁰ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 39.

¹¹ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 39.

lies the “*continuity* of knowledge”: in a metaphysical ecology where revelation is not disclosure but flowering.¹² To “discover what is secret,” Kusch writes, is not merely “to let a *word* escape,” but “to explode; to bloom (a tree); to open (a flower).”¹³ Revelation, in this sense, is florality. In Quechua and Aymara, this flowering is both etymologically and cosmologically rooted in the bud: the Aymara term *amu*—meaning “bud of the flower”—lies at the core of *amtaña*, “the idea of remembering.”¹⁴ The act of “filling...to complete, to fulfill,” thus implies a return to the *amu*: a reintegration of “the original rending...or tearing of the cosmos,” the ontological rupture from which “indigenous wisdom is conceived” and through which it continues to germinate.¹⁵ To remember is to “achieve the bud of the flower,” while to speak is to gestate the cosmos anew.¹⁶

This conception of poetry as ontological and cosmological flowering—knowledge as sacred word in bloom—resonates with the Nahuatl *difrasismo in cuīcatl in xōchitl*, “flower and song,” a metonymic pairing that fuses duality into a singular utterance: “the song, the ‘weavings’ of the poet.”¹⁷ In this worldview, poetry is not merely a lyrical artifact but a ritual act—a rebalancing of cosmic forces. It is the labor of the weaver: stitching visible and invisible, past and present, into a fabric of continuity. In both ancient and contemporary Maya poetics, this woven knowledge—cosmological, linguistic, ancestral—is a sprouting into being, a floral unfolding of time that braids ancestral past with emergent future into a living flow. As Kusch writes of Quechua and Aymara ritual, the “cosmic flower” is that which “reconciles opposites” and “balances the duality”—a synthesis achieved only through what he calls “a ‘bursting or sprouting’ ... a violent eruption of the sacred.”¹⁸ Maya poetry, rooted in this ontological architecture of ritual, thus enacts a cosmological labor: the renewal of equilibrium through the blossoming of the word.

¹² Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 39, *italics mine*.

¹³ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 39, *italics mine*; quoting González Holguín, *Vocabulario de la lengua general de todo el Perú llamada lengua Quichua o del Inca*.

¹⁴ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 34-35.

¹⁵ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 34-35.

¹⁶ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 34-35.

¹⁷ Jane H. Hill, “The Flower World of Old Uto-Aztecan,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 48, no. 2 (1992): 123. While often interpreted as metaphorical, I describe *difrasismo* as metonymic, in keeping with the Nahua conception of language as contiguous with reality. Unlike metaphor, which substitutes vertically, metonymy operates through horizontal, experiential association—more accurately reflecting how *difrasismos* functioned in pre-Columbian Mesoamerican thought.

¹⁸ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 40.

This foundational duality—the rhythmic oscillation and interdependence of antagonistic yet co-constitutive forces such as order and disorder, day and night, life and death—pulses as the metaphysical heartbeat of the Mesoamerican world. This cosmological principle, which is not a binary opposition but a generative tension, emerges in the opening lines of the *Popol Vuh*, where “in the darkness and in the night... they conceived light and life,” and where primordial obscurity and fecund illumination are not opposed but inextricably entwined.¹⁹ The three Thunderbolts—Youngest, Sudden, and Huracán—form “Heart of Sky” and catalyze the “creation and formation” that arises “like a cloud, like a mist.”²⁰ Within this intermediary, ever-unfolding state, the poetic word takes root. In K’iche’ Maya poet Humberto Ak’abal’s (1952-2019) poem “Tejedor” (“Weaver”), this generative dualism unfolds through elemental imagery: thunder and water collide in a “prolonged and sonorous echo” as “the downpours collapse.”²¹ Yet within the storm, laughter erupts: “laughter / is in the thunder— / the end of winter.”²² As in the *Popol Vuh*, creation is inseparable from destruction; germination arises through dissolution. Ak’abal’s image of a rainbow that “confirms / the voice of the storm” positions speech as a conduit of cosmic equilibrium—voice not as resolution but resonance, a seismic vibration that holds opposites together.²³ This enactment recurs in Ak’abal’s “Oración” (“Prayer”), where the speaker invokes: “Let the door of the sun open / let the door of the moon open.”²⁴ These celestial forces, animate and relational, are summoned in conjunction, not contrast, so that “the light does not allow / the darkness to pass over.”²⁵ In both poems, dualities function as openings—portals through which being flows. Light and darkness, storm and rainbow, laughter and collapse are not distinct opposites, but interwoven forces suspended in a conflux of commingling tension. The verb “pass over,” rather than “conquer” or “subsume,” situates the

¹⁹ Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 58.

²⁰ Christenson, *Popol Vuh*, 58.

²¹ Humberto Ak’abal, “Tejedor” (“Weaver”), lines 1–4, in *Hablo para taparle la boca al silencio*, 1st ed. (León, Guanajuato: Tsunun, 2020), 68. English translation mine. Original Spanish: “Prolongado y sonoro eco... Se desploman los aguaceros... la carcajada... es en el trueno: el fin del invierno.”

²² Ak’abal, “Tejedor” (“Weaver”), lines 4–8. Original Spanish: “la carcajada... es en el trueno: el fin del invierno.”

²³ Ak’abal, “Tejedor” (“Weaver”), lines 8–10. Original Spanish: “Un arcoíris confirma / la voz de la tempestad.” The full poem appears in the appendix to this paper.

²⁴ Humberto Ak’abal, “Ch’ab’al – Oración – Prayer,” lines 1–2, in *Poemas seleccionados*, Tsunun, accessed May 14, 2025. English translation mine. Original Spanish: “Que se abra la puerta del sol, / que se abra la puerta de la luna.”

²⁵ Ak’abal, “Ch’ab’al – Oración – Prayer,” lines 6–7. Original Spanish: “que la luz no le dé paso / a la oscuridad.”

speaker on the same balancing path, walking toward a cosmological equilibrium “so not to lose / the marks of our path.”²⁶ These marks are simultaneously spatial, temporal, ontological, and territorial—not remnants of the past, but signs of an ongoing journey, a continuity sustained through ritual utterance.

As Nancy M. Farriss explains in her nuanced analysis, the Mayan conception of time is inseparable from the dualism that arranges the Mesoamerican cosmovision and cannot be reduced to a merely cyclical model. In Maya thought, “linear time is incorporated into an all-encompassing cyclical pattern,” in which cosmic time “returns endlessly to the beginning,” and “human time intersects with the turn of the...cycles in ‘a succession of eternities.’”²⁷ Time must therefore be conceived as taking on “two different shapes,” functioning itself as a structuring metaphysical force in perpetual dualistic tension: “time is cosmic order, its cyclical patterning the counterforce to the randomness of evil.”²⁸ This complex temporality underlies Yucatec Maya poet Briceida Cuevas Cob’s (1969–) poem “Irás a la escuela” (“You Will Go to School”), which repeatedly employs the future tense to tell the addressee, “you will decipher hieroglyphics, / written by dust, wind, and sun,” and that “you” will “return to your home... to read ...the crackle of the fire...[which] holds a mirror in its heart... upon which your soul is imprinted.”²⁹ The mirror is not a metaphor for self-reflection but an ontological conduit—one that returns the subject to a cosmological origin. This movement is not regression but rebalancing: a dualistic return to the moment of cosmogenesis, where creation and remembrance converge in an oscillatory equilibrium. It is precisely this dualistic orientation that Gloria Elizabeth Chacón theorizes as *kab’awil*, a K’iche’ term meaning “double vision,” or what she calls a *dobles mirada*—a dual gaze that enables contemporary Maya poets to “see in the darkness and in the lightness, to see close and far” simultaneously.³⁰ *Kab’awil* functions as a strategy

²⁶ Ak’abal, “Ch’ab’al – Oración – Prayer,” lines 7–8. Original Spanish: “para no perder la seña / de nuestro camino.”

²⁷ Nancy M. Farriss, “Remembering the Future, Anticipating the Past: History, Time, and Cosmology among the Maya of Yucatan,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 3 (July 1987): 574.

²⁸ Farriss, “Remembering the Future,” 574.

²⁹ Briceida Cuevas Cob, “Ya’an a bin xook / You Will Go to School / Irás a la escuela,” lines 14–32, in *Ti’ u billil in nook’ = Del dobladillo de mi ropa* (México: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2008), 83–85. My translation. Original Spanish: “descifrarás los jeroglíficos / escritos por el polvo, el sol y la humedad. / volverás a tu casa... a leer el crepitar del fuego... guarda en sus entrañas un espejo... en el que estampada se halla tu alma.”

³⁰ Gloria Elizabeth Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics: Kab’awil and the Making of Maya and Zapotec Literatures* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 15.

within what Chacón terms “Indigenous cosmolectics,” the aesthetic practices of contemporary writers rooted in Mesoamerican worldviews. Like Kusch’s *estar* as rooted germination, Chacón’s cosmolectics “refutures the tendency to differentiate cosmogony from epistemology,” resisting epistemic violence and countering the “sociological imagination” that seeks to “produce a mestizo synthesis” in which “Indians...eventually disappear.”³¹ Kab’awil is therefore not synthesis but simultaneity: it inhabits rather than resolves duality by making visible both the ancestral and the contemporary at once. It affirms multiplicity through duplication—much like Kusch’s image of the “sown land,” where knowledge proliferates through ritual repetition.³²

When Cuevas Cob’s speaker deciphers hieroglyphics written by dust, she enacts the cyclical regeneration of ancestral being, echoing Chacón’s claim that Maya poets “defy temporality” through the kab’awil “reclaiming...hieroglyphs and the oral tradition.”³³ Oriented toward both ancestral epistemologies and the global literary sphere, kab’awil enables Mayan writers to perceive ancestral and contemporary realities simultaneously—reflecting the Mesoamerican understanding of duality as inextricably intertwined and inherently coexisting. Within this poetic and philosophical structure—the articulation of Mayan cosmological continuity within a medium often governed by Western temporal linearity—the imagery of the womb and hearth reflects Kusch’s conceptualization of *estar* as dwelling, “being-in-the-house,” or the “womb where woman conceives”—a notion drawn from the Aymara *utcata*, which connotes shelter, germination, and rootedness.³⁴ The fire’s mirror becomes a site of cosmological reentry, where the poem’s “you” glimpses their soul not as a static essence but as a process: flowering, becoming, continuous. In this cosmo-ontological poetics, the soul is not fixed but seeded—not merely remembered but re-enacted—and thus continues to bloom through language, ritual, and return.

Chacón emphasizes that the *kab’awil* gaze enables contemporary Mayan writers to merge “a modern book/textile” with “alphabetic/ideographic writing,” generating what she calls “ancestral

³¹ Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics*, 13.

³² Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 35.

³³ Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics*, 44.

³⁴ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 5.

continuity through the reproduction of textiles.”³⁵ In this view, writing is weaving, and the poem becomes a textile—an interlacing of memory, materiality, and continuous, dualistic time. Chacón also underscores that kab’awil weaving is “deeply connected to gender and genre,” since in Mesoamerican thought, corporeality is inseparable from cosmology: the human body is “conceived of as intertwined with circumscribing the universe.”³⁶ The complementary embodiment of feminine and masculine qualities—what she terms a “kab’awil ontology”—is a “vital component” of both the “Mesoamerican social fabric and...the cosmos.”³⁷ This cosmological dualism shapes Cuevas Cob’s poetic critiques, particularly her challenge to double standards around femininity and sexuality. Drawing on the moon/sun duality, the womb as a site of cosmic rebirth, and the continuity between land and bond, she enacts “a kab’awil cosmolectics that allows her to play with pre-Columbian and modern temporalities” and to “continually reproduce...Mayan culture and history.”³⁸ In “You Will Go to School,” knowledge resides not in institutional or abstract domains but in domestic, corporeal, and cosmological space: the cosmic womb becomes the kitchen hearth, and sacred glyphs are inscribed directly on the feminine body—“in their heels”—while their breasts “poured out life upon the earth,” transfiguring domestic labor and bodily nourishment into cosmogenetic ritual acts.³⁹

In “Night of Eclipse,” Cuevas Cobs writes of a woman who, “in the darkness... lit the village / with the light that spilled / from her womb,” reframing the womb as biological function but as cosmological conduit—joining eclipse and radiance, absence and generation, past and present.⁴⁰ The unborn child and the illuminated village are folded into a single moment of dual illumination: human and cosmic, feminine and divine. A similar metaphysical weaving appears in Maya Tzotzil poet Ruperta

³⁵ Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics*, 17.

³⁶ Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics*, 71, quoting Sylvia Marcos, *Taken from the Lips: Gender and Eros in Mesoamerican Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 64.

³⁷ Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics*, 71.

³⁸ Chacón, *Indigenous Cosmolectics*, 93.

³⁹ Briceida Cuevas Cob, “Yaan a bin xook / You Will Go to School,” lines 14–19. My translation. Original Spanish: “De su calcañal / descifrarás los jeroglíficos... contemplarán sus senos desfallecientes después de haber derramado vida sobre la tierra.”

⁴⁰ Briceida Cuevas Cob, “U áak’abil tu chibil uj / Night of Eclipse / Noche de eclipse,” in *Ti’ u billil in nook’ = Del dobladillo de mi ropa* (México: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2008), 77, lines 17–18. Original Spanish: “la mujer alumbraba al pueblo con la luz / que desparramaba su vientre.”

Bautista Vázquez's (1975—) poem "Embroiderers," where a "young girl's hands / embroiders her grandparent's knowledge / on the traje [dress/suit] of her town."⁴¹ Once again, knowledge is transmitted texturally—stitched into cloth as ancestral presence—and structured by dualism: "In her mind an old woman embroiders a heart in red threads, / her descendents in blue threads."⁴² A "young woman's heartbeats" and an "old woman's pulse," past and present, continuity and renewal, are threaded into a shared embodied weave.⁴³ Time is not superimposed upon the present, but "peacefully enters / the bodies of the two women" and "bear[s] them / towards the thirteen heavens," suffusing the present with an ancestral past and enacting a Mayan temporality in which past and future do not displace each other but move, flow, and fluctuate in tandem—germinating the same cosmogenetic continuity also invoked by Ak'abal and Cuevas Cob.⁴⁴

From Ak'abal to Cuevas Cob to Bautista Vázquez, knowledge emerges as what Kusch terms "a knowledge of modalities"—a knowledge inseparable from temporality and embodiment, "not a knowledge...that can be closed or...alienated from a subject," but one "closely related to ritual," and to the subject who "handles or manipulates it."⁴⁵ This epistemology, as enacted through their poetics, is not merely a remembrance of the Mayan past, but a dynamic modality of flowering, unfolding through the kab'awil gaze that structures their work. Through this double vision—simultaneously contemporary, alphabetical, and written, and ancestral, sacred, and cosmological—these poets braid myth and history, past and present, creation and destruction into the very continuum that sustains the cosmos. This ritual poetics of cosmic continuity is structured by the same dualistic temporality central to the *Popol Vuh*—a temporality that moves neither in a circle, nor in a line, but through a cyclical-linear rhythm that always returns to the moment of creation. The poetic word becomes a reentry into the cosmogenetic utterance that first birthed the universe, enacting not only restoration but rebirth: a sprouting already shadowed by

⁴¹ Ruperta Bautista Vázquez, "Embroiders (Jluchomajeletik)," lines 1–3, trans. Paul M. Worley, *Latin American Literature Today*, October 2018.

⁴² Bautista Vázquez, "Embroiders (Jluchomajeletik)," lines 7–10.

⁴³ Bautista Vázquez, "Embroiders (Jluchomajeletik)," lines 7–10.

⁴⁴ Bautista Vázquez, "Embroiders (Jluchomajeletik)," lines 11–15.

⁴⁵ Kusch, *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in América*, 32.

withering, a germination already laced with decay, a death from which renewal threads forth. Far from only being an act of cultural resistance or historical remembrance, the poetics of Ak'abal, Cuevas Cob, and Bautista Vázquez is ontological. It is *being* as *becoming*—a ritual flowering of knowledge, an inhabitation of the in-between, a dwelling within the pulse of continuity. Their words sprout forth not only the ancestral Mayan cosmovision into present and future, but also reach backward—toward the first speech, the first sowing, the first cosmic germination—to sustain the cyclical permeance of the universe. It is the generative becoming of both Maya being and cosmos in the form of a cosmic flower—one that continually blooms, withers, and reblooms into eternity. For in the Mayan vision, eternity is not stillness, but is itself a continuous, cyclical, poetic flowering.

POEMS: HUMBERTO AK'ABAL

CH'AB'AL / ORACIÓN

Que se abra la puerta del sol,
que se abra la puerta de la luna.

Que haya claridad en el cielo,
que haya claridad en la tierra,
que haya claridad en el alma;

que la luz no le dé paso
a la oscuridad,
para no perder la seña
de nuestro camino.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Humberto Ak'abal, "Ch'ab'al – Oración – Prayer," in *Poemas seleccionados*, Tsunun, accessed May 14, 2025, <https://www.akabal.com/poems/prayer.html>.

TEJEDOR

Prolongado y sonoro eco

como si un cerro de leña
se desbarrancara.

Se desploman los aguaceros
en Cho Ojer Kab'al.

La carcajada de Kaqulja
es en el trueno:
el fin del invierno.

Un arcoíris confirma
la voz de la tempestad.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Humberto Ak'abal, "Tejedor" ("Weaver"), in *Hablo para taparle la boca al silencio*, 1st ed. (León, Guanajuato: Tsunun, 2020), 68.

MEMORIES

Now and then
I walk backwards.
It is my way of remembering.

If I only walked forward,
I could tell you
about forgetting.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Humberto Ak'abal, *Twelve Poems by Humberto Ak'abal*, trans. Earl Shorris and Sylvia Sasson Shorris, *Jaguar Tongues*, October 1, 2005, originally published in *Guchachi 'Reza' (Iguana Rajada)*, *Revista de la Casa de la Cultura de Jugitin*, Oaxaca, Quinta Época, Primavera 1995, 49–50, <https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2005-10/twelve-poems-by-humberto-akabal/>.

POEMS: BRICEIDA CUEVAS COB

YAAN A BIN XOOK / IRÁS A LA ESCUELA

*Y aquellas hormigas que reían,
cantaban, bailaban y jugaban a la ronda,
comenzaron a llorar. Había
nacido una hembra, quien les echaría agua hirviendo
cuando aparecieran en la cocina.*

Tú irás a la escuela.
No serás cabeza hueca.
Traspasarás el umbral de tu memoria
hasta adentrarte en tu propia casa
sin tener que tocar la puerta.
Y contemplándote en el rostro de tu semejante
descubrirás que desde tus pestañas,
flechas nocturnas prendidas en el corazón de la tierra,
desciende tu sencillez
y asciende la grandeza de tu abolengo.
Tú irás a la escuela
y en el cuenco de las manos de tu entendimiento
contendrás el escurrir del vientre de la mujer de tu raza.
De su calcañal
descifrarás los jeroglíficos
escritos por el polvo, el sol y la humedad.
Grandes los ojos de tu admiración
contemplan sus senos desfallecientes
después de haber derramado vida sobre la tierra.
Irás a la escuela
pero volverás a tu casa,
a tu cocina, a pintar con achiote el vientre del metate,
a que lama la lengua del tizne tu albo fustán,
a inflar con tus pulmones el globo-flama,
a que jurguen tus ojos los delgados dedos del humo,
a leer el chisporroteo en el revés del comal,
a leer el crepitar del fuego.
Volverás a tu cocina
porque tu banqueta te espera.
Porque el fogón guarda en sus entrañas un espejo.
Un espejo en el que estampada se halla tu alma.
Un espejo que te invoca
con la voz de su resplandor.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Briceida Cuevas Cob, “Yaan a bin xook / You Will Go to School / Irás a la escuela,” in *Ti’ u billil in nook’ = Del dobladillo de mi ropa* (México: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2008), 83–85.

U ÁAK'ABIL TU CHIBIL UJ / NOCHE DE ECLIPSE

*Hija mía,
préndete los alfileres en la ropa,
ponte la pantaleta roja,
bebe del agua con que se lavó el metate
para que mamá luna no deje su mancha
en el cuerpo de tu retoño
cuando te rasques.*

Noche de eclipse.

Noche en que los perros tataron con sus ladridos
el silencio.

Noche de gemidos de caracoles.

Cuando la gente corría porque se habían comido a
mamá luna.

En la oscuridad
una mujer,
la más embarazada entre las embarazadas;
aquella que no se prendió alfileres,
aquella que no se puso la pantaleta roja
ni bebió del agua con que se lavó el metate;
aquella que se rascó las pupilas para que su retoño las tuviera
más negras,

engulló a la luna,
y mientras todos buscaban a la luna con la mirada en el cielo,
la mujer alumbraba al pueblo con la luz que
desparramaba su vientre.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Briceida Cuevas Cob, "U áak'abil tu chibil uj / Night of Eclipse / Noche de eclipse," in *Ti' u billil in nook' = Del dobladillo de mi ropa* (México: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2008), 77.

POEMS: RUPERTA BAUTISTA VÁZQUEZ

JLUCHOMAJELETIK / EMBROIDERERS

A young girl's hands
embroider her grandparents' knowledge
on the traje of her town.

In her mind an old woman
embroiders a heart in red threads,
her descendants in blue threads,
this silence in sepia.

With signed threads
she embroiders a young woman's heartbeats,
grey threads an old woman's pulse.

Time peacefully enters
the bodies of two women
bearing them
towards the thirteen heavens.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ruperta Bautista Vázquez, "Embroiders (Jluchomajeletik)," trans. Paul M. Worley, *Latin American Literature Today*, October 2018, <https://latinamericanliteraturetoday.org/2018/10/four-poems-ruperta-bautista-vazquez/>.

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