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Seated on the Bank of the Yichk'u River

Daniel Caño

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Chotan hin ay ti' ha Yichk'u

Sentado en la orilla del río Yichk'u

Seated on the Bank of the Yichk'u River



Daniel Caño

Abstract: The six poems included here are presented in Q'anjob'al Maya and in English, side by side for language comparison. Collectively, the poems convey reflections on the poet's renderings of beauty, wisdom, romance, and the natural world; in a style of eloquence amplified by directness and brevity. Glimpses of village, family, childhood and old age, life and death, are interwoven with cosmological wisdoms. Palpable resentment toward the Church and ladinos are graciously tempered with lightness and humor. Reprinted from "***Sentado en la orilla del río Yichk'u***" POE Talleras, (2018) Huehuetenango, Guatemala, with permission from the author and publishers.

HA MIMEQ A'EJ
B'AY HINK'ULTAQ

Ha mimeq a'ej
b'ay hink'ultaq
chi ayol ha'xolaqte'
kax chi ek'xoyoyog ha'
nanlaq ak'al
axka no'lab'aj.

Yet nab'il q'inal
chi tit yowal ha'
kax chi yigon b'ey ha'
masanil tzetyetal
chi ek'tog q'atan
yul sb'e.

Palta yet k'atxan
numumi ch'an
yok sb'it ha'
axka sb'it no'xil.

THE RIVERS
OF MY VILLAGE

The rivers of my village
descend from the mountains
and trail along the valleys
in the shape of a serpent.

In the winter
they become furious
and they carry away
everything they find
in their path.

But in the summer
their song is gentle
like the crickets.

LAJAN HACH
KAQ AN Q'O'

A ayach ti
k'am chi oktoq
k'uyb'anilej
yullaq hajolom
masanil
chi el nelnaj hen
lajan hach wal
kaq an q'o'
yet chi seklay ok
a'ej yin.

Xhi cham
kuywajom
ayin
b'ay hink'ulraq.

YOU'RE LIKE A PUMPKIN

You don't get
the Christian doctrine
even by kicking it into you
everything runs off you
you're like a pumpkin
when you pour water on it.

The community catechist
would tell me.

JUN K'UHAL XEWILAL NAN AK'AL

Jun k' uhal xewilal nan ak' al
junb' ulan heb' wetkuywomal lwes yoki
max pojil b' a heb' yetog xal mexhtol
ka max lohon heb' yuk' on heb'
“sardina” yetog “coca cola”.

Axa ayin yetog junxa b' ulan heb'
wetkuywomal
xon b' uchlay el yuj heb'.

Max jihon ajteg hon
kopat yetog atz' am k' al uk' eja'
yul kopa.

Taxa' mi k' amto chi tz' aqnaj jay hinnab' al
palta kawal xkus hink' ul wayji ek' yin
meh' ahil
yul jun yib' anq' inal kexan yel ti'.

A FIELD TRIP

During a field trip
a group of snobby classmates
went off with the teacher
and ate sardines and Coca Cola.

They excluded
the other classmates and me.

We took out of our little bags:
tortillas with salt and drinks
made of corn.

Even amidst our innocence,
how miserable I felt
in this absurd world!

TE' YAX SI'

Chotan ay ix ti' q'a' q'a'ej,
chi tit t'ujlab'og yal sat ix
axka kab'og ha pajaj
yuj mub'al te' yax si'
k'am chi ok' sq'a'al.

iPok'ol!

yayk'ay tzanxa te' yax si'
max b'et yiteq naq xolte'.

Yaq'b'an chi yihajteq naq stx'amb'al
yul swex yet chi johon el naq syal,
chi elteq tukan ix yul te' wentena',
chi johon el ix yal sat
yetog yiqb'al mub'taq yili.

GREEN FIREWOOD

Seated by the fire,
there falls from her hopeless gaze
two cascades of tears
caused by the green firewood
that won't burn.

Boom!

He sets down more green firewood
that he went to the mountainside
to gather.

While he takes a handkerchief
out of his pocket to dry his sweat,
she looks out the window,
drying her tears
with a smoky cloth.

CH'EL B'I

Yet chi jalon "bautismo"
chi jal b'ay hinkonob':
"Ch'el b'i",
chi yal elapnoq:
"Chi jolay kay sb'i".

¿Tzetyuj xan ch'el b'i?
¿Tzetyuj xan manaq: chi ok b'i?

Aaahhh... yujtol yetoq jun txaj ti
chi k'aykan el kob'i yul koq'anjob'al
kax chi ko tx'oxon el kob'a sataq cham
Tyoxh
k'al heb'kuywom
yetoq junog sb'i heb' moso.

BAPTISM

To say "baptism"
in my town we say:
"Ch'elb'i"
which means:
"Remove the name."

And why remove?
Why not: "Give the name?"

Well... with this rite
one loses their Q'anjob'al
name
and is identified by the Boss
and the Christians
by a Spanish name.

AXA MAX YALON AJAW

Axa max yalon Ajaw:
Hoq hin k'ayajog
yet masanil anima

hoq hin yila',
hoq hin yab'ej
hoq hin suq'tej
hoq yab'hinchihalil
hoq hin mitx'a'

yin masanil hinjatb'ej.

AND AJAW SAID

And Ajaw said:
I will make myself invisible
so that human beings

see me
hear me
smell me
taste me
and feel me

through my creation.

XA JIL YEKAL

Chin tzaløj yet chi wilon
jun yayk' uhalil ti
b'ay chi ayb' atxan syesalil
Cham Pixan masanil yib' anç' inal.

Yet jun yayk' uhalil kaç putxinag yili
axka yili kochik' il,
junb' ulan yaçan Cham K' u
chi ek' toç jut' an satkan.

Yaç' b' an chi watx' nej ay telan b' a
Cham K' u yintaç witz
chi yahon aj Cham jun stxow ç' eq yili.

Kax chi yalon Cham ayin:
"Xa jil yekal".

SEE YOU TOMORROW

I feel happy contemplating
this evening where
the heart of the cosmos rests.

In this sunset red
as blood,
a flock of rays
disperses through the sky.

And meanwhile the sun lies down
behind the mountains,
covers up with a black poncho,

and tells me:
"See you tomorrow".

A Q'INALEJ K'AL KAMICH

A q'inalej k'al kamich
lajan kaq junog ix ix yetog
junog naq winaq yetb'i b'a,
nan xol heb', nik'nom waq'on
yetog kab'il hinq'ab'
kaq junog nene' unin
k'amto chi kuy b'eyi.

LIFE AND DEATH

Life and death
are an enchanting couple,
and I walk in between them
holding their hands
like a child
who hasn't yet learned to walk.