

Marga B. Aguilar Montejo:
U JUUM U T'AAAN KOOLNÁAL /
THE VOICE OF THE CAMPESINO



Marga Beatriz Aguilar Montejo is a Maya Yucatec writer from Sotuta, Yucatán (Mexico), and author of the play *U wáayilo'ob xLetra / Las brujas de xLetra*, published in the anthology *Nuevos cantos de la ceiba*. She studied at the Itzamná Municipal Academy of the Mayan Language in Mérida, and the Center of Fine Arts in the Yucatan Peninsula, where she was part of the first class of graduates in Creative Writing in the Mayan language. *The Voice of the Campesino* is her first book of poems. Aguilar first wrote the collection in 2017 in the Maya Yucatec language, and self-translated the

poems to Spanish. I thank the poet for allowing me to translate and publish the first poem of her book here. (Melanie Walsh).

In the prologue of *U juum u t'aan kolnáal / La voz del campesino*, Martha Aracelly Ucán Piña writes:

"Words have the power to break the boundaries of time and space; a poem can transport us to the entrails of the mountain, to the middle of the milpa, along paths and roads, between the waves of the sea or to the depths of underground waters. This is what happens in *U juum u t'aan kolnáal / La voz del campesino*, where Marga Aguilar puts together a series of eight poems in Maya; a rhythmic and metaphoric language, rich in epithets, images and synesthetic contexts, that stimulates sensations we cannot stop exploring. In these texts, the original poet of Sotuta is composing an atmosphere through images, flavors, smells and sounds of the countryside, based on the knowledge inherited from her parents and grandparents. Beyond an intention of reminiscence and nostalgia for ancestral knowledge about peasant work, the poet reaches a voice that vivifies the elements. In revitalizing her tradition, she is anxious to learn as well as to reflect about the cyclical sense of the country life."

U JUUM U T'AAN KOLNÁAL

Iik' ku yáalkab tu jobnel k'áax,
ku báab ich k'áak'náab,
ku xik'nal tu ka'anlil pu'uko'ob,
ku yéemel,
ku xímbal,
ku síit' tu ba'paach baatsilo'ob ku k'ayko'ob payalchi'ob ti' u yuumtsilo'ob,
letí' u juum u t'aan.

THE VOICE OF THE CAMPESINO

Wind that blows through the entrails of the mountains
that swims in the sea,
that flies above the hills,
that descends,
that walks,
that leaps around families who sing prayers to their gods
that, is the sound of his voice.

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II

Ich k'óoben naj tu suutubaj t'aan,
junjump'ítil yóok'ol xamache'
tu tséentubáa yéetel u tuuch chaanbalo'ob,
kuxkinta'abij,
súut u wíinklal bey waaje'
ka janta'ab tumeen ixí'im wíinik,
tu núupuba'ob juntúulil utia'al u múul tséentuba'ob,
je bix le x-much'koko' mix bik'in kun kíimik,
u chichmachmubáa tí' lu'um,
u balmubáa yéetel jay tuunich,
táan u paa'tik yáax nukuch cháako'ob
utia'al u ka'a síijil tu ya'axil le'ob,
tu k'ank'anil nikte'ob, tu chakjole'enil chúuk yéetel tu booxil éek'joch'e'en.

II

In the kitchen it became word
little by little upon the comal
it fed from the bellybutton of babies,
they gave it life;
it took the form of a tortilla
that was eaten by the man of corn,
they became one to survive,
like the x-muuch' kook plant that will never die,
refuged in the earth,
protected by the stone,
waiting for the first rain,
to be reborn in the green of leaves,
in the yellow of flowers,
in the red the ember and in the black of night.

*
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III

U juum u t'aane', u k'aay xk'ook' jejeláas u juumo'ob,
ku tooop'ol ich kaajo'ob mixbik'in u kímlo'ob,
tu'ux ku tsikbalta'al k'aajlayo'ob ti' jko'oko' xikino'ob
ku cháachko'ob tsikbalo'ob ku xik'nalo'ob ka'an.

III

His voice, song of the nightingale in many tones,
that sprouts in eternal towns,
where stories are told to restless ears
that catch stories flying to the heavens.

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IV

Xímbal t'aan ku k'uchul tak k'áak'náab,
jit'bil t'aano'ob chi'ichnako'ob u puluba'ob báab,
nu'ukulil chu'ukul kay pu'ul ich ja';
ts'áanchakbil chakchi',
tsajbil bu'ul kay, tsaja'an ich ta'ab,
t'aano'ob ku chu'ukul ich k'áaknáab.

IV

Traveling voice that arrives at the sea,
woven words anxious to swim;
fishnet thrown in the water;
chakchi' stew,
fish fried beans, fried in salt,
those words fished from the sea.

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V

Yooxol ja' ku payalchi' chúumuk k'iin,
kali'ikil u xímbal yéetel u xúul,
tun julbe'entik loobita'an t'aano'ob.

V

Evaporated water that prays at midday,
while it walks with its sower
resowing wounded words.

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VI

Lu'um ku ka'a ts'iik u yaal ku ka'apúut kuxtal,
ku nojochtal u juum u t'aan,
t'aan-cháak,
táan u ch'áajal yóok'ol le lu'uma',
ku ka'apúut kuxtala'.

VI

Fertile land that germinates once more,
voice that grows,
word-showers,
it's dripping,
over this land,
that germinates once more.

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VII

U juum u t'aane', loobita'an báalam,
kabalchaja'an báalam,
tusa'an báalam,
kíimsa'an báalam,
ka'a síijnal báalam,
kalaanta'an báalam,
payalchi'ta'an báalam,
kili'ich báalam.

VII

His voice, jaguar wounded,
jaguar depleted,
jaguar deceived,
jaguar murdered,
jaguar who is reborn,
jaguar taken care of,
jaguar worshipped,
jaguar sacred.

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VIII

U juum u t'aan koolnáal
iik' ku yalkab tu jobnel k'áax,
ku báab ich k'áak'náab,
ku xik'nal tu ka'anlil pu'uko'ob,
ku yéemel,
ku xímbal,
ku síit' tu ba'paach baatsilo'ob
ku k'ayko'ob payalchi'ob ti' u yuumtsilo'ob.

VIII

The voice of the campesino
is the wind that runs in the entrails of the mountain
that swims in the sea,
that flies above the hills,
that descends,
that walks,
that leaps around families that sing prayers to their gods

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THE TRANSLATOR



Melanie Walsh received her B.A. from the University of North Carolina at Asheville in Spanish and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She translated *The Voice of the Campesino* as part of her Senior Capstone in Spanish, a project which sparked an interest in pursuing translating and interpreting in the future. She is currently working on producing an album and a creating a zine of her own poetry.