

***Tobacco Blood.* Javier Jayali**



Sangre de tabaco © Javier Jayali. Común presencia, 2023
Tobacco Blood © Lorrie Lowenfield Jayne

Javier Jayali is originally from Cota (Kundurmarka, Colombia). He is a writer and an educator of literature and orality. He studied Literature at the National University of Colombia. For years, he directed the creative writing workshop *Tejedores de historias* (*Story Weavers*) at the Public Library of Cota, from which he published the poetic anthologies *Cota se cuenta en copla* (2020), *Cuerpos y palabras* (2021) and *Senderos, resiliencias y otros espejos* (2022.) Since 2018, he coordinates *Fiba we*, a research and pedagogy traditional lodge for community practices. He is the founder of the *Cota Literature Network* (2020-2023), as well as the Andean music collective *Sikuris del Majuy* (2018-2023.) He is a farmer, cultural organizer, and community leader. The following poems were selected from his book *Sangre de Tabaco*, a unique volume in the recent literature produced in Bakatá/Bogotá, the fertile valley of the condors, the ancestral Muisca territory.

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Kusmuy (House of Thought)

Storm
rain
animal
everything has its place and desire
its movement and word
in the house of thought.
Mourning
healing
sickness
all has its story, its pattern
-echo-
its purge for life and a right to silence.
Everything has its limit too
invincible aloneness, confusion
impossible understanding.
Somewhere someone seeks
reparation
reconciliation and a place,
common lineage in the countryside
a lane on the path and the nearness of the hillside.
Someone seeks to exist
seeks their spiritual name
their fish or worm clan
and a sense of their abyss.
Someone seeks a home for their visions
a divining rod for their intuition.
Everything seeks the secret forge
to display their courtship
and their shroud,
the feverish balm
to dance their first dance,
the fertile corner
to share isolation.

There is an open door
the wood spreads out its arms
and the homefire beats like the tongue of a drum:

Welcome, welcome,
to this chink in the finite
though standing so alone
a straw peaked roof on stilts
has been for many dreams
a compendium of the cosmos
a breviary of the dawn
and a library of fires.
The house of thought is open.



Hoska (Rapé)

Be calm
tobacco carries the hummingbird spirit
comes close with its sifted song and pow-
dery feather.
Crosses your nostrils like a gust and aurora
brings present
–echo, buzz–
the beat of its wings pollinates the mind.
Runs through the brain
tames the voices
who lie in wait like angels
and the past eases
and the future awaits.
From its emptiness a crevice greens.
The body feels its own time,
clean.

Walking Seated

The tree trunk
my ancestor
whose dream is a place
to go forward sitting.

With my body seated
and my mind walking
I am a vein of the tree
an appendix of the earth.
And I am
with poporo
with mochila and sash
and spindle in my hand
–and without these things–
with a brilliant breast
collecting stars and silences.

I am also
with my splintered glance
legs bound with veins
tongue forged
with a wrinkled sadness
and fury;
I am upon a ceremonial stool
(an extension of flesh)
heart seated deeply
blood flowing
in front of a fire.

Whole or in pieces
everything and all am I
if I have space to speak
to confide or be silent
strike a chord or call out
because I have body and place
my soul, a seat.

I am, perhaps,
–upon a cosmic stool for musing
drawing on tobacco
telling a tale
or suffering–
vestige of the tree
action springing from thought.

Gorge

For a long time he tended
a rotten fire
stoked
at his walls
a flaming tuber
death sun
that devours amygdalas
and aborts the wind.

There
within the bloodstained veins
the word
the pyrite word
the obsidian word
the magma word.

The word?
-timid, teimid, tamid-
a fossil preserved
in volcanic urns.
He waited a long time
like a star
that burns as it dies
and as it dies, it names.
In this way the forest birthed the word,
unconscious, crestfallen.

The gorge
was once crater,
laid out and defeated
to whom the hummingbird
offered tobacco seed, tobacco dust
medicine from air
balm from the word.

Flames of fire
now blanket the volcano.

Canopy of Birds

I have in my vertebrae
a canopy filled with birds
who nest and forage
whose songs are presences,
lucid or terrible.

They later throng to my breast
sometimes all of them
sometimes none
and these ones,
these who don't emerge
who do not migrate through the veins,
or are more like fruits of the tree,
or abstracts,
they also sicken.

Suspended in air
many have died
tremulous with hope;
some others persisted
their feathers turn to air
their latency, idea.

Always, they hope
that from my mouth will stretch forth
the ancient heavenly vine
that binds time to the world;
perhaps a question, a response,
a page and a pen,
a couplet,
a whistle from the wooden flute.
Always...
The juices from the coca and tobacco
show the way and free them..

The Rock of Confession

On the mountain, first and foremost, permission
with a barefoot soul, without notions imposed.
I offer yarn and corn husks, I remember the path.
I seek the rock of confession.
I speak with her:
like the primate who only recently descended from the tree
but also like the spores on the fern.
And I come again, as I have come before
I come to surrender, to feed the mountains
and return to the world weightless.
I want to descend lighter,
walking seated, with an empty mochila,
I return.

The andean chameleon glides between the cracks.
The highland eagle passes before the rock.

Fire Dream

Dreaming displays
remains
of those things that have not yet happened
of that which has not yet been
named
and yet exists.

Smoke seems like
the fire's dream,
the fire dreams.
He dreams of an open house
of hands spread with sandy clay
of ears of corn
and owls
and Andean colored flags at dusk.

If there are words, the fire rests.
If silence, he dances.

The questions seem to be
the dream of thought,
Thought dreams:
"Which dream do I need?
The tall flame that kindles or frees?
The medium flame that observes and contains
or that slow one that gives out?
The ember that subdues yearning to lethargy
or that one there that calms the suns at the dying of night?

Awaken
smoke embraces the rays of light.
The fire dreams
the dream of the ancient one:
"another existence exists."



Equinox

The sowing season arrives
and the seed falls from the water.
The fist of the universe opens
the rain returns with its outstretched palm.
We put on the plumage of birds
and wait to be born anew.
The sun will wait for us
as it highlights its eternal analemma.
We will be there
and we will know that we've said what we never wanted
to say
that we have been unjust with the living
that we have postponed the postponed

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that we have seen the river paved over
that our eyes are worn out-diminished.

We have waited for the new sun.
The day lasts as long as the night
and the awakening as long as our fears.
We will make a cosmic contract
and a sowing of purpose:
we'll ask the voices in our minds to rest
give ourselves time and discipline
consume what is necessary.
We will sink our hands in the ground.
We'll make an offering.
The equinox sun will watch us be born.
Thank-you.

Mochila

The cord and the placenta
that some sowed and buried
that were robbed from us or that we lost
becomes visible with the thread in our hands
a thread that creates its history of itself
like the ring of a tree
like the myth
like the story of country folk.

The threads and color
knot together
to make a mochila
weave the visible
the memories and the tangible.
Moving inward they weave emptiness
space and form
the invisible:
a grave in the earth
memory to remember
and a query:
What do you want to carry and how much can you bear?
to go through the world
without origin?
The mochila is a placenta
united to its umbilical cord.

For more about Javier Jayali



Poetry of his poems in La Raíz Invertida (Spanish)

Sikuris del Majuy Collective:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVKnMq3gzi4>

About the translator



Lorrie Jayne, a collaborator in *Siwar Mayu*, teaches Spanish, Portuguese, and Personal Narrative in the Languages and Literatures Department at University of North Carolina Asheville (USA). She lives with her husband and daughters in the Appalachian Mountains where she enjoys plants, people, and poetry.