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Selection of Poems

Feliciano Sánchez Chan¹

Translated by José F. Bañuelos-Montes² & Sally Perret³

1 Yucatec Maya poet, Feliciano Sánchez Chan, is part of a group of writers such as Briceida Cuevas Cob and José Joaquín Balam Che', who continue to write in their native Mayan language. Feliciano's poetry is rich in imagery and symbolism derived from local folklore and myths of the Maya people in the Peninsula of Yucatan. Sánchez Chan has won the Itzamná Prize for literature twice and the Domingo Dzul Poot Prize for works he published in the Mayan language. Recently, he visited Roanoke College in 2017, where he was well received, to present a selection of his poetry to commemorate 175 years of history of the college.

2 José F. Bañuelos-Montes is an Associate Professor of Spanish at Roanoke College where he has been a faculty member since 2006. His research interest lie in the area of historical and cultural construction of identities in Afro-Hispanic literature. He published the Spanish to English translation of *Los viajes venturosos/Venturous Journeys* (2015), from the Cuban poet Jesús J. Barquet.

3 Sally Perret is an Assistant Professor at Salisbury University in Maryland, where she also serves as the Program Director of Spanish and French Education Specialties. Her research interests include the literatures and cultures of Spain, issues related to nationalism and translation as well as alternative publication techniques of transatlantic poetry

Ka'a túun p'áato'on x-ma' t'aanil Y nos quedamos sin habla

And we were left speechless

Jo'op' tun u bin
k-p'aatal x-ma' t'aanil
ma' t-na'ataj
ba'ax ku yuuchuli'.

Entonces
nos fuimos quedando sin habla
sin comprender
lo que sucedía.

Then
we were left without speaking
without understanding
what was happening.

Ka'ach uuche'
k-ojel t'aan le beyka'aj k'a'abete',
k-ojel xan k-mukult k-t'aan
wa tumeen k'ambe'en.

Antiguamente
Sabíamos hablar en la justa medida,
Y sabíamos callar
Cuando era preciso.

In the past
we knew how to speak just enough,
and we knew to keep silent
when necessary.

Jump'eel k'iin tuune'
taal u laak' maake'
ka'a tu mako'ob k-chi'
ka'a tu ya'alaj
"háblame en cristiano"
Jujump'iitil tuune'
ka'aj bin k-p'aatal
x-ma' t'aanil.

Mas cierto día
Llegaron otros
Y nos mandaron callar
"Háblame en cristiano"
-dijeron-
Y poco a poco
Nos fuimos quedando
Sin palabras.

But one day
others came
and ordered us to be silent
"Speak Christian to me"
– they said –
and little by little
we were left without
our words.

Mix tooto'oni'
ba'ale' mina'an k-t'aan
chen "kyéeyik jala'acho'ob",
ma'atech u táanaltiko'onob

No somos mudos
Pero no tenemos voz
Sólo voto para elegir autoridades
Que no nos gobiernan.

We are not mute
but we do not have a voice
I only vote to elect authorities
that do not govern us.

Tu paach t'aano'ob

Tu paach le t'aano'ob
Ma'atech in wa'aliko'
Tu paach le t'aano'ob
Kin mukliko'
Yáambanak u t'aan
In úuchben ch'i'ibalo'obi'
Chen táan in páa'tik
U súutukil najmal
U ka'a je'echi'ita'al.
Tu paach le t'aano'ob
Ma'atech in wa'aliko'
Ich t'úub mukultsilile'
Ku páa'taj u tsolxikin in nool
Tu yóoklal ba'ax najmal
Wáa ba'ax ma' najmal
In je'echi'itik sáansamal
Le ken wa'alaken
Tu táan kuxtalili'.

Detrás de las palabras

Detrás de las palabras
Que no pronuncio,
Detrás de las palabras
Que callo
Palpitan las palabras
De los de mi antiguo linaje,
Aguardo el preciso instante
Que sea conveniente
Pronunciarlas de nuevo.
Detrás de las palabras
Que no pronuncio
En el silencio más profundo
Aguardan los consejos del abuelo
Sobre lo que debo
Pero más de lo que no debo
Pronunciar todas las mañanas
Al ponerme de pie
Frente a la vida.

Behind the Words

Behind the words
that I do not pronounce,
behind the words
I keep silent
the words pulse
from my ancient lineage,
awaiting the precise moment
when it is convenient
to utter them again.
Behind the words
that I do not pronounce
in the deepest silence
my grandfather's words await me
telling me what I should
but more what I should not
pronounce every morning
as I rise
before life.

K'ajlay

Mina'an k'ajlayil ku líik'sa'al ich
jujuykilil
Tak a pe'echak'e' ku pu'usul tumeen
iik'
A tuukule'
u ja'il áalkab ja'
Láalaj súutuk túmben.
Ma' najmal a cha'ak u tu'ubulteche'
A chiiche' yaan ka'ach u joma'
Tu'ux ku líik'sik no'oja'an ba'alo'ob.

Memoria

No hay historia que se guarde en el
polvo.
Aun tus huellas las borra el viento.
Tu memoria,
Agua de río caudaloso,
Se renueva constantemente.
Nunca debes olvidar
Que tu abuela tenía un leek-alacena
Para guardar las cosas
imprescindibles.

Memory

No history is preserved in dust,
even your footprints are erased by
wind.
Your memory,
water from a fast-flowing river
is renewed continuously.
You should never forget
that your grandmother had a alacena
to save indispensable things.

Ma' jaaji'

Ma'
Ma' jaaj
Wáa úuchak in kuxtal ka'alikil in
k'a'ajsikechi',
Tene' ku bin in púuputkíimil
Je'e jaytéen ka' púut iik'nakene'
Yéetel tuláakal u ja'il in wich,
Yéetel tuláakal in múumuts' ich
Yéetel tuláakal u kukulaankil in tseem
Likil in k'a'ajsikech.

No es verdad

No
No es verdad
Que se puede sobrevivir
recordándote
Yo muero intermitentemente
Con cada suspiro,
Cada lágrima,
Cada parpadeo,
Cada latido,
Por recordarte.

It is not true

No
it is not true
that it is possible to survive
remembering you
I die intermittently
with each sigh,
with each tear,
with each blink,
each heartbeat
remembering you.

Kin k'áatimbáa

Yaan áak'ab
In paalil,
Le ken aajken
Chúumuk áak'ab
In ts'áa a k'íiche'
Kin xmukul ts'u'uts'kech
Utia'al ma' a wojéeltik
Tak bajun in yaamech,
Kin k'áatiktúune'
In paalil
Wáa k'ambe'en
In yaabilkech
Tak bajun,
Kex yaank'iin
Mina'anten in ts'áatech
Tuláakal ba'ax
Ka tukultik
Najmal lo'obal
In ts'áaktech.

Me pregunto

En ciertas noches
Hijo mío,
Cuando me levanto
a media noche
a ponerte brazas
debajo de tu hamaca,
en silencio te beso
para que no te enteres
cuánto te amo,
entonces me pregunto
hijo mío,
si es bendecido
amarte tanto,
aunque a veces
no tenga para darte
todo cuanto crees
que debo darte

I ask myself

On certain nights
my son,
when I wake up
at midnight
to kindle the fire
under your hammock,
I kiss you in silence
so that you do not know
how much I love you,
then I ask myself
my son,
if it is a blessing
to love you so much,
even though at times
I cannot give you
everything you think
I should.

To'on

To'one'
Beyo'on mejen saaye'
Yaan u bin k much'ik
U ma'ay k ch'i'ibal.
Jump'éeel k'iin
Mixmáak páa'tike'
Yaan k ka'a wa'ak'a'atikbáa
Te'elo', tu'ux tu tu'ubso'on le
k'ajlayilo'.

Nosotros

Nosotros iremos,
Cual hormigas arrieras
Fragmento a fragmento
Recuperando nuestro pasado
Y cuando nadie se lo espera
Estaremos de nuevo
Ahi, donde la historia nos olvidó.

We

We will go,
like mule driving ants
fragment by fragment
recovering our past
and when nobody expects it
we will be again
there, where history forgot us.

Ch'iijbal yéetel u Uj

Tene'
Tumeen bey tu ka'ansajten
In úuchben ch'i'ibalo'obe'
in k'ubeentmaj
Tu yej Uj
Tu yíich'ak Uj
Tu túumbenil Uj
In paak'al
In waalak'
In paalal
Ka' ch'iijko'ob
Keet yéetel u ch'iijbal Uj.

Crecer con la luna

Yo,
Tal como lo aprendí
De mis antepsados,
Le he encomendado
A la luna nueva,
A la luna tierna,
A la luna creciente,
Mis cultivos,
Mis animales,
Mis hijos,
De modo que crezcan
A la par con la luna.

Growing with the Moon

I,
just as I learned
from my ancestors,
have entrusted
to the new moon,
to the gentle moon,
to the growing moon,
my crops,
my animals,
my children,
so that they may grow
alongside the moon.