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Kim Ayu (Come Over Here)

Claudia D. Hernández

Rampas Inclinadas

En el Este
de Los Ángeles

pasa un niño
día entero
haciendo
marometas
con su patineta;

En su estómago
vacío solo se oyen
charcos de acidez:

sube y baja
rampas inclinadas.

Al atardecer,
los murales
que inhala
llenan sus
pulmones

de deseos
impalpables:

sube y baja
rampas inclinadas.

Casi siempre
cae bien
parado,

pero ciertas
magulladas
que se ha dado,

esas no
se curan
aunque deje
de bajar o de subir/

las rampas inclinadas
Del Este de
Los Ángeles.

Steep, Steep, Ramps

In East
Los Angeles,

a child
spends his day
skateboarding,
learning tricks
to kill another day.

An echo resonates
in his *empty* stomach
filled with acid pools:

There he goes—

up and down
the *steep, steep,*
ramps of East L.A.

At dusk,
the murals
he inhales
fill up his lungs

with empty
promises:

There he goes—
up and down
the *steep, steep,*
ramps of East L.A.

(agile child who
lands on his feet
most of the time)

Some of his
scrapes and bruises
will not heal—

Even if he
stops riding:
the *steep, steep,*
ramps of East L.A.

Rifles y Frijoles

Curtida, se me ha quitado
el miedo de que:

me desaparezcas,
me tortures,

de que me quemes
en silencio.

Fértil es mi tierra.

Le da fruto solo aquel
que sabe:

cultivarla,
cosecharla,
respetarla.

¡Vacíame las balas de tu rifle!

El frijol que tú me brindas hoy
no me sirve de sustento—

No apacigua esta cólera
que revienta
en mis entrañas.

Rifles and Beans¹

Calloused, I no longer
Fear that you will:

Torture me,
Extinguish me,

That you will burn me
in silence.

Fertile is my land.

It bears fruit only to
Those who:

tend it,
harvest it,
respect it.

Empty out your rifle bullets on me!

The beans that you offer me today
Are of no sustenance—

They will not pacify this anger
That explodes
in my entrails.

Note: By July 1982, Ríos Montt had begun a new scorched earth campaign called "rifles and beans." The slogan meant that pacified Indians would get "beans," while all others could expect to be the target of army rifles if they didn't comply with government officials. It was during this time that Ríos Montt banned public meetings, suspended the constitution, replaced elected officials, and censored the press.

Esta Soy Yo

*¡Libertad para los indios donde quieran que estén en América y en el mundo,
porque mientras vivan vivirá un brillo de esperanza y un pensar original de
la vida!*

— Rigoberta Menchú Tum

Rios Montt
No ha llegado
A conocer
La verdadera
Cólera
De Rigoberta
Menchú

Con mi tez
Pálida
Con mi alma
Vigorosa
Tengo
Rasgos de una
Maya
Invencible
Tengo sangre
De una
Maya
Incansable

— **My Mayan
Veins are
Invincible . . .**

My Aquiline
Nose
Has smelled
The dead
Pine needles
In my people's
Adobe bricked
Homes

— **He husmeado
Sangre en los hogares
De mi Gente . . .**

Mi mirada
Me delata
Mis ojos están
Cansados
Hinchados
Han visto
Demasiado

— **My swollen
Eyes have
Seen enough . . .**

Tengo una
Boca
Con labios
Forrados
De un cuero
Impermeable
Barnizado de
Sangre
Que me
Inspira a aullar
Que me
Impulsa a
Denunciar
Al transgresor
Que nos
Ha robado
Que nos
Ha matado

Rios Montt
No ha llegado
A conocer
La verdadera
Cólera
De Rigoberta
Menchú

— **I denounce
All transgressors
Who have stolen
From us**

**Who have raped
Our villages . . .**

My feet
Have traveled
Through
Thorny
Desolate
Towns
My feet
Have become
Calloused,
Exhausted
They have
Bled enough

**—Mis pies
Han sangrado
Pero no han
Trastrabado . . .**

Este cuerpecito
Con su alma
Empuñada
Y sus rasgos
Pronunciados
Se tragará,
Todo aquel
Que descaradamente
Se aproveche
De mi gente

Rios Montt
No ha llegado
A conocer
La verdadera
Cólera
De Rigoberta
Menchú

paign destroyed over 400 villages, more than 20,000 Indians were killed, and over 100,000 fled to Mexico. In December of 1999, a group of Guatemalans led by Mayan leader Rigoberta Menchú filed suit in the Spanish National Court against eight high ranking Guatemalan officials, including Ríos Montt.²

Note: General Efraín Ríos Montt, was a graduate of the School of the Americas and came to power in a 1982 coup. During his 17 month reign, Ríos Montt's cam-

Kim ayu
(come over here)³

My insides contract
 It is my breath
 That escapes
 It goes in search
 Of my people

I hear an echo
 That resonates
 Sweet voices
 Tender tongue:

Kim ayu
—Come over here

A wind of incense
 Grazes my core
 The marimba's keys
 Chime in the distance

It is the moors
 They have come
 With their ancient
 Deer dances

The clamor
 Of the bells
 From the temple
 Always resound

That melody
 Can never fade

I hear an echo
 That resonates
 Sweet voices
 Tender tongue:

Kim ayu
—Come over here

On my flesh

I feel a wax
 That burns

It leaves scars
 That teach me
 To appreciate my
 New existence

My fierce soul
 No longer trembles

I have found
 My new *Edén*.

Invisible Hands⁴

In the borderlands,

Paso del Norte,
(Ciudad Juárez)

Invisible hands
can be heard
assembling
products

To send across
the border.

The women sweat,
They waste away

For nickels
and dimes;

*The maquiladoras grow,
they rage, everyday,
more and more.*

In the darkness
of the desert
a young virgin

Has disappeared/
She has stumbled

Upon the beast

Who stalked her down
and caused her to vanish.

Tomorrow,
another worker
will take her place;

*The maquiladoras grow,
they rage, everyday,
more and more.*

In the borderlands,

Paso del Norte,
(Ciudad Juárez)

The desert
swallows cries
that censure us—

Meanwhile,

The maquiladoras
resound with a
somnia echo.

The Mill (Prose)⁵

That afternoon, like every afternoon at the mill, we formed a line to recount the latest rumors and scandals of the entire town. Everyone went to the mill with their bowls filled with grains of tender, freshly cooked *maiz*. The stinging *cal* did not drain from the grains of the *maiz*, but even so, that was how I enjoyed eating them in order to savor their salt.

The noise from the motor of the mill was piercing and deafening. It forced us to yell at the top of our lungs (as if we did not have any other place to join and relate our sorrows or condemn the latest *Fulanita* who gave birth to a lovechild).

At exactly five o'clock, the mill magically converted the *maiz* into a smooth, fresh, and freckled dough. Later in the evening, my aunt would prepare the *tortillas* by hand so that my sisters and I could eat them with salt and a little bit of lime—

Eating *tortillas* with salt and lime was truly a privilege for us when the beans and sour cream ran out.

Every day some novelty or another occurred in the infamous mill. A possessive mother dragged her daughter by the hair for taking more than the allotted time in running an errand. A lesbian slyly grazed her unsuspecting love interest's forearm while waiting in line. And poor *Doña Dolores*, after yet another deportation from *El Norte*, once again took her place at the end of the line.

I was very much aware of my surroundings and the trifles of the townspeople, but what most worried me in those moments were the five seconds that the conductor of the mill allowed us in order to scrape the trapped dough from the mouth of the grinder.

That was my worst nightmare.

My legs trembled every time my turn approached.

Full of anxiety, we placed our fingers inside the grinder with a pressing need to scrape the dough from the blades of the motor—

Although the concealed dough was often not even ours, we would discretely gather it and force it into our broken bowls.

The girl in front of me thought she was quick and agile in scraping her dough from the mouth of the motor. But, in my eyes, she did not fully utilize the five seconds that the conductor allowed.

"Better for me," I thought.

The last thing I wanted to do was steal someone else's blood-stained dough. I did not think I had the heart to combine the dough and pretend that nothing had occurred that afternoon just to withstand the force of hunger later that evening.

But, unfortunately, I did not have the option to waste those precious seconds. I had to take advantage of my time and even scavenge what the girl in front of me had left behind. That night, I had to bite my tongue in order to not reveal to those at the dinner table the reason why the *tortillas*—fresh from the *comal*—gave off a light, rosy complexion. We all ate in silence.

Notes

1. Translated from Spanish to English by José Hernández Díaz.
2. Emily Willard, "Genocide Trial of Rios Montt," <http://indypendent.org/2012/02/09/genocide-trial-r%C3%ADos-montt> (accessed February 9, 2012).
3. Translated from Spanish to English by José Hernández Díaz. "Kim Ayu (Vení pa'ca)" was first published in Spanish in *Kuikatl ~ A XicanIndio Literary & Arts Journal*. See Claudia D. Hernández, "Kim Ayu (Vení pa'ca)," *Kuitatl ~ A XicanIndio Literary & Art Journal*, April 21, 2012, <http://www.kuikatl.com/claudia-d-hernandez/>.
4. Translated from Spanish to English by José Hernández Díaz. "Manos Invisibles" was first published in Spanish in *Kuikatl ~ A XicanIndio Literary & Arts Journal*. See Claudia D. Hernández, "Manos Invisibles," *Kuitatl ~ A XicanIndio Literary & Art Journal*, , April 21, 2012, <http://www.kuikatl.com/claudia-d-hernandez/>.
5. Translated from Spanish to English by José Hernández Díaz. "El Molino" was first published in Spanish in *Kuikatl ~ A XicanIndio Literary & Arts Journal*. See Claudia D. Hernández, "El Molino," *Kuitatl ~ A XicanIndio Literary & Art Journal*, April 21, 2012, <http://www.kuikatl.com/claudia-d-hernandez/>.