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POETRY | FALL 2018

## The Delivery

By Scott Ruescher

In the introductory video at the museum to Maya medicine,  
*Museo de Medicina Maya*, in San Cristóbal de las Casas, the capital  
Of the southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas, dedicated  
To the natural healing arts that are still actively practiced  
Along the steamy border with equally Maya Guatemala  
In the tropical-rainforest villages of Laconda, before seeing any  
Of the actual exhibitions in the museum's small galleries,  
In the company of three older tourists whose impassive looks  
And books on archaeology belied the warm demeanors  
They'd cultivated for years at Midwestern universities,  
We watched, from folding chairs in the foyer, with our daypacks  
And our bottles of *agua purificado*, on an old Motorola  
Television monitor they'd planted on a foot stool, some grainy,  
Anthropological, sixteen-millimeter, documentary footage  
Of a midwife in *huipil* and braids working to bring a baby forth  
In the traditional way, kneeling, to our surprise, *behind*  
The upright, expectant mother, with a pail of water and a knife  
That had probably been sterilized over the same open fire  
They cooked their stews and tortillas on, preparing to cut  
The umbilical cord, as the laboring woman, leaning forward  
At the waist from her standing position, by golden candlelight  
On the dirt floor of the thatched hut in the middle of the night,  
Pushed and grunted and parted her thighs a little more,  
Holding onto her stone-faced husband for support and dear life.

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Scott Ruescher has won annual poetry prizes in recent years from Able Muse journal (2016), Poetry Quarterly (2015), and the New England Poetry Club (in both 2013 and 2014)— always with poems that are as geographically particular and sociologically focused as “The Delivery.” More such work can be found in his book, *Waiting for the Light to Change*, published by Prolific Press in 2017. Other recent poems have appeared in About Place, Pangyrus, Tower Journal, Solstice, and Origins Journal. He administers the Arts in Education program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and teaches English in the Boston University Prison Education Program.