Siyóname skies

There are so many words for this kind of blue
—azure, cerulean, lazuli—
homespun clouds in turn go fuchsia
above afternoon-yellow washed cliffs
—it’s green-blue here: siyónami,
what linguists with little charm call ‘grue’—

Two boys come to get their crookneck squashes
and run away again through dew-soaked grasses

Mosquitoes find my fingers as I write.

In the sky, twilit bat calligraphy
and on the ground, almost too much lightning bug beauty.

Rain-dusk clouds creep like creatures of the sea
through crevices in the southern cliffs,
crawl down the hillside where I wait,
where girls with babies tied on their backs roll truck tires
through puddles
on the basketball court.

The Rarámuri word siyóname [see-yoe-na-may] has appeared in linguistic notes for decades as an example of lexical lumping of what English speakers distinguish as green and blue.¹ This piece was written during ethnoecological fieldwork in a Rarámuri community in the Sierra Tarahumara of Northern Mexico.