

First Peoples of the Americas and Their Literature

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### Recommended Citation

Brotherston, Gordon; and de Sá, Lúcia. "First Peoples of the Americas and Their Literature." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 4.2 (2002): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1149>>

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**CLCWeb Volume 4 Issue 2 (June 2002) Article 3**  
**Gordon Brotherston and Lúcia de Sá,**  
**"First Peoples of the Americas and Their Literature"**  
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol4/iss2/3>>

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**Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 4.2 (2002)**  
**Thematic Issue *Comparative Cultural Studies and Latin America***  
**Edited by Sophia A. McClennen and Earl E. Fitz**  
<<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol4/iss2/>>>

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**Abstract:** In their paper, "First Peoples of the Americas and Their Literature," Gordon Brotherston and Lúcia de Sá turn their attention to the indigenous literature of the Americas. They point out that concerted attempts to edit, translate, and publish the main examples or "classics" of Native American literature began little more than a century ago. Since that time, more than a dozen major cosmogonies have appeared, some of them in editions, which seriously attempt to trace back to pre-Cortesian antecedents. Outlining key classics and the ways that these texts have been disseminated, Brotherston and Sá elaborate on how this rich tradition has shaped later literary projects in the Americas. Brotherston and Sá indicate that these central indigenous texts play a major role in the literary development of Latin America and abroad, but, because such literature has often been devalued, scholars are often not aware of these influences and connections. Focusing on the example of the *Popul vuh*, they trace the multiple ways that this foundational text has shaped American literature. They illustrate how the *Popul vuh*, "the Bible of Latin America," has found ever-greater resonance in modern Latin American literature. In their conclusion, they argue that comparative work on the literature of the Americas must include focus on the legacy of native texts. The comparative approach alerts scholars to beliefs and paradigms shared by cosmogonies and classics from all over the American continent, establishing thereby a formal and philosophical premise that sets all subsequent American literature in due perspective.

## Gordon BROTHERSTON and Lúcia de SÁ

### First Peoples of the Americas and Their Literature

With respect to the American continent, critics and historians of literature and culture have often proceeded along lines that, in practice, continue the great work of destruction, dispossession, and denial that began with the arrival of Europeans in 1492. Asserting or assuming (as many a celebrated academic has done) that the continent was devoid of literature before Columbus penned his log is like saying there was no philosophy either (see Maffie), which in fact was taken as the explicit premise of the 12th Inter-American Congress of Philosophers held in Buenos Aires in the monumental year of 1992. It also corroborates the ideologically charged term regularly applied to pre-contact America by a certain school of archaeologists: "prehistoric." In this view, despite having had demonstrably better calendrics than Europe, native America is allowed to join history proper only on the condition of being invaded and subjected. In the academic field of literature as such, the term "American" normally points back to the Old World in language and culture, just as "Latin American" invokes Rome. In these circumstances, simply to demonstrate the prior existence of literature in America and its continuities becomes a priority in itself. In what can be no more than a few indications here we make use of concepts and terms standard enough in literary criticism and history generally, yet which are not so often applied to American literature. To begin with there is the indispensable notion of "classic" texts, major in scale and function ("foundational fictions," to use Doris Sommer's term), which are comparable among themselves. From any point of view such a grouping would be incomplete without the *Popol vuh*, the sixteenth-century Maya text which has aptly enough been dubbed the Bible of America. Diachronically, these classics may then be seen respectively to define recognizable intellectual traditions, consciously sustained for periods readily comparable with those customarily back-projected into earlier phases of European literature. For its part, the *Popol vuh* categorizes itself specifically as a transcription and furthering of a prior Maya document of the same name, casting back to the origins of script and urbanism in Mesoamerica. A section below highlights key classic texts that indicate the extraordinary breadth of this literary heritage.

In turn, our project involves necessarily some consideration of medium and genre and an informed respect for pre-contact recording systems and scripts, especially in Middle or Mesoamerica where books or codices were in use for many centuries before Hernán Cortés (see Boone; Brotherston, *Painted*; Boone and Mignolo). In the lowland Maya tradition, there is a clearly demonstrable, exact, and unbroken continuity, over nearly two millennia, between texts written in the phonetic hieroglyphs of the Classic period (300-900 AD; see Coe; Schele and Freidel) and the Books of Chilam Balam, which were being written and kept up in alphabetic Maya more than a thousand years later (see Barrera Vásquez and Rendón). The example of the Nahua and Aztec historians is similar, insofar as they transcribed pre-Cortesian annals into the alphabet, within the genre known in their language as *xiuhtlapoualli* ("year count"), examples of which extend back to the first millennium BC (as in inscriptions at Monte Alban, Oaxaca). Doing so led these native historians to question details of Biblical chronology and to ask "Who entered whose history in 1492?" Such a perspective is certainly found in the chronicles of Chimalpahin, a citizen of Chalco in the Basin of Mexico, who wrote in Nahuatl around 1600. In the case of the *quipu* -- the knotted string script of the Inca -- the best approach to continuity has been that of ethnohistorians who apparently take such literary criteria more seriously than literary scholars themselves. Marcia Ascher and Robert Ascher revealed the astounding conceptual possibilities of the *quipu* medium (1981) and Catherine Julien (2000) appeals ingeniously to the notion of genre with respect to *quipu* texts in order to better understand the Quechua and early Spanish colonial narratives that derive from them.

Clearly, none of this inquiry would be possible or practicable without the prior existence of good editions of key texts. This dissemination is a story in itself, one in which the role of native scholars and "informants" has been, with few exceptions, disgracefully downplayed. Just as Felipe Guaman Poma in Peru spent 30 years gathering information and transcribing *quipus* with the help of experts trained by the Inca in Tahuantinsuyu, so his contemporary the Nahua historian Ixtlixlóchitl

dedicated himself to salvaging what he could from the libraries burned by the Spaniards, reassembling a collection of books or codices which became a main reference for his and all future scholarship. In the native tradition, such a concern with text has tended to go hand in hand with the furthering and invigorating of literature, so that most authors writing today in their own languages do so aware of those who have already written and thought in them (see Montemayor; León-Portilla, "Yancuic"; Lara, *La literatura*). This kind of continuity exists, of course, within that of a larger idea of culture (see Burns; Harrison; McDowell; Lara, *Poesía popular*; Rowe and Schelling; Abercrombie).

To all this must be added some account of the huge impact that this precedent has had on literature in the Americas generally. It is the factor that distinguishes American literature written in imported languages like Spanish, Portuguese, and English, carrying it beyond the Old World paradigms inherent in those languages and cultures. Here the notion of intertextuality is no less decisive than it is, for example, with the great tradition that conjoins Petrarch, Dante, and Virgil, or Milton and the Bible. We will briefly point to the impact this rich native tradition has had on later literature in the Americas. Finally, so as to indicate the multiple effects that a classic or foundational text may have, we consider the *Popol vuh* as an exemplary case. The primordial authority perceived in or attributed to this local bible has come through in a variety of languages, literary genres and media and has supported many particular readings of American genesis.

### **Classics**

Foremost among the Native American texts that may fairly be considered "classic" stand those that deal with origins and first beginnings. Eminently comparable with each other in terms of scope and argument, these texts show that before its violent encounter with Europe, America had its own philosophy and understandings of genesis, similar in some respects to origin stories of the Old World, yet very different in others. Legible already in the pre-European books of Mexico, this tradition survives among many peoples who continue to live on the continent today. Although much variation can of course be observed over time and region, core beliefs and paradigms may be identified with respect to the origins of the world and humankind -- beliefs which, as elsewhere in the world, may serve to define moral and social practice, and what may signify as knowledge. In this sense, American genesis can be seen to place different emphases on such notions as the feat of imagining and conceiving reality in the first place -- the "authorship" of creation, as it were: the plurality of creation and the catastrophic endings of previous world ages; the articulation of time, with astronomical precision and over vast spans; the evolution and metamorphosis of life forms; the relationship between humans and other species; and, cumulatively, the achievement of agriculture. Between them, these American classics set up principles that diverge categorically from what became genesis in the Western tradition, especially with regard to all that concerns the plurality, time spans and agencies of creation, the place of humans among the other species, and the significance of agriculture. In American genesis -- in many ways a blueprint for modern notions of ecology -- it is hard to find an Adam fashioned in the image of God, who precedes woman and who is explicitly given dominion over other life forms. It is just as hard to find a first planter who is also the first murderer. The earliest of these classics in alphabetic form emerged from the Spanish invasion of the urban cultures of Mesoamerica (see Monjarás Ruiz; Recinos) and Tahuantinsuyu (see Ossio), and include the *Popol vuh*, the Book of Chumayel of the lowland Maya, the Nahuatl *Legend of the Suns* (see Bierhorst, *History*), and *Runa yndio*, the Quechua manuscript of Huarochiri (see Trimborn; Arguedas, *Dioses*; Salomon and Urioste). Today these narratives are supplemented by others from surrounding and intervening areas, like the Navajo *Diné bahane* from Anasazi, now the Southwest of the United States (see Zolbrod), the *Tatkan Ikala* from the Cuna islands off Panama's Caribbean coast (see Nordenskiöld; Kramer), and the Huinkulche narrative of the Mapuche homeland that straddles the Andes between Argentina and Chile (see Kössler-Ilg). From the rain forest, that last great bastion now under genocidal assault, come the Guarani *Ayvu rapyta* (see Cadogan), the Carib *Watunna* (see Civrieux), the Taria/Tupi *Jurupari* (see Medeiros, *Macunaíma*) and extensive narratives by the Huitoto, Desana, Shuar and many others, all of them published for the first time in the twentieth century (see Preuss, *Die Religion*; Ribeiro; Pellizaro).

Comparing these American versions of genesis reveals important paradigms within and against which local differences may be the more finely gauged. Common to them, above all, is the scheme of world-ages, of plural creations that end in flood, eclipse and other catastrophes. The emergence of our human species is posited as a late though climactic event in the story of life forms and is threaded particularly through the long and hazardous line proper to vertebrates (fish, saurian, bird, monkey) and epitomized in the plumed serpent of the tropical forest. Humankind's distinctive genius is to have learned how to feed itself, to have developed genetically the most nourishing and beneficent plants, first gourds and root crops like manioc and then beans and cereals. In the Anasazi and Maya texts the cereal maize is even held to be the substance of human kind, according to the doctrine that you are what you eat. In the moral terms of this scheme, the encounter with Europe and the West is most often diagnosed as a regression to a less cultured age. While telling a story and naming their space in this way, these cosmogonies construct the world as they construct themselves. In other words they are complex literary artifacts, which reflect on their own beginnings, argument and even ontology. And contrary to the positivist assumptions of earlier anthropology, this order of sophistication may be the greater the more 'primitive' its origin. Such is the case for example with the remarkable Huitoto creation, *Die Religion und Mythologie der Uitoto*, published by Konrad Preuss in 1921. Consciously and finely articulated, these texts have often gone through various modes of transcription and mediation before becoming statements of the alphabetic page. Several of the classics that emerged from the first moments of contact were written out by native authors themselves in the alphabet and in their own languages. Such is case with the Nahuatl and the highland and lowland Maya texts of the sixteenth century, which typically involved transcription from prior texts in native script, like the Aztec Sunstone (*Piedra de los soles*) and the Maya hieroglyphic books.

In the medium of speech an optimum example is the *Watunna* narrative of the Makiritare or Soto Carib, since the text may be considered an elaboration of highly condensed chants (*ademi*), unintelligible to the outsider. An idea of how this "verbal script" relates conceptually to Carib design (*timehri*) is given in the superb film version of the text narrated by Stan Brakhage. *Watunna* was brought before Western eyes as a result of the Franco-Venezuelan expedition that went in search of the true sources of the Orinoco as late as 1950, in the area that proved to coincide largely with Soto territory (see Lichy). Indeed, this geography is integral to the argument of the text, as it recounts the world ages centering itself on the western end of Pacaraima, the ridge that stretches from Roraima (the "botanical Eldorado" of South America as it has been called) towards Marahuaka, and the improbable Casiquiare canal that links the Orinoco and Amazon drainage systems. Then, once encountered, *Watunna* proved extremely difficult to transcribe and, in fact, parts and episodes are put together differently in successive editions in Spanish and English (Civrieux's *Watunna: Mitología makiritare*, 1970; *Watunna: An Orinoco Creation Cycle* 1980; and *Watunna: Mitología makiritare*, 1992). The differences resulted from continuing discussion between the editor, Marc de Civrieux, and the Soto authors, about how to resolve the problem of reducing to a single linear sequence a text whose structure depends originally on dense poetic language and on cycles of performance. Similar issues have also surfaced in editions of Desana cosmogony, the main point of reference in Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff's *Amazonian Cosmos* (1971), as well as studies by other Colombian anthropologists. Working with Berta Ribeiro, Umusin Panlon and others Desana shamans prepared their Brazilian version *Antes o mundo não existia* (1980) with the explicit purpose of correcting previous mistakes and misreadings.

### **Dissemination**

In the 1880s, during the heyday of philology, the Philadelphian Daniel Garrison Brinton launched a scheme that he hoped would result in the publication of the chief texts or classics of Native American literature, from the continent as a whole, in their original languages and scripts and English translation. Brinton named his project the "Library of Aboriginal American Literature," and the ten or so volumes that appeared ranged from the Iroquois *Book of Rites* to such Nahuatl texts as the *Twenty Sacred Hymns* (entitled by him *Rig Veda Americanus*) and the *Cantares mexicanos (Ancient Nahuatl Poetry, 1887; see Garibay; Bierhorst, Cantares)*. Chronologically, the texts included in the Library ranged from the earliest moments of contact and transcription from indigenous

scripts to works of Brinton's own day, like the remarkable Central American dramatic dialogue known as the *Huehuenue* (*The Güegüence: A Comedy Ballet in the Nahuatl-Spanish dialect of Nicaragua*, 1883). In *The Lenape and their Legends* (1884), he strove to match Ojibwa and Algonkian texts with the pictographic system developed by the Midewiwin society, a script form that incidentally prompted some of the better stanzas of Longfellow's *Hiawatha*.

The first volume of the Library, *The Maya Chronicles* (1882), constitutes one of the earliest efforts by Western scholars to understand the workings of the lowland Maya Katun Count (*u kahlay katunob*), the cycle of 13 lots of 20 years (*katuns*), which in post-Classic times regulated not only society but histories of the past and predictions for the future. In the larger panorama of Native American literature, the Katun Count provides perhaps the clearest case of continuity through transcription, first from the inscriptions of the Classic period to the post-Classic books or codices, and then to the post-Cortesian books named for Chilam Balam, which are written in alphabetized Maya. The continued vitality of this tradition, not least with respect to the centuries of resistance that exploded in the nineteenth-century War of the Castes, shows that continuity is not always synonymous with stagnation.

In the seldom-noticed story of how native American texts came to be published and read outside their original context, Brinton's initiative remains a continental landmark. It is a first assembling of the classic texts of America, the terribly dispossessed "Fourth World" of Renaissance cartography, which culturally establish the continent's fundamental coherence. This much was certainly the understanding of that great Americanist, José Martí. Along with remarks on an early Central American translation of the *Popol vuh*, Martí's comments on Brinton's project in his essay "Autores americanos aborígenes" make up a key strand of the argument set out in his renowned *Nuestra América*. However, new styles of ethnography radiating from Berlin and typified in the US by Franz Boas soon had the effect of making Brinton's Library seem overly literary, too little concerned with the actual circumstances under which texts were produced or performed.

This new anthropology, nonetheless, went on to produce its own corpus of texts, one that again remains seriously under-acknowledged for what it is. The Berlin cohort to which Boas belonged also produced such key scholars as Eduard Selser, Theodor Koch-Grünberg, K.T. Preuss, Walter Krickeberg (famous for his anthologies of native American *Märchen*), along with associates and successors like Kurt Unkel, Leonard Schultze Jena, Hermann Trimborn, and Karl Anton Nowotny. Re-working texts published by Brinton, Selser delved deeper into the process of transcription from codex antecedents, and went further than anyone in demonstrating the *patrimonium commune*, as he called it, of Mesoamerica. This was a line of inquiry closely followed by Schultze Jena in his translation of the *Popol vuh* and in his brilliant analyses of the visual language and logic found both on the pages of the codices and in ritual practice in Mexico today. In turn, Nowotny drew critically on Schultze Jena when he produced the indispensable *Tlacuilolli* (1961), to date the only comprehensive description of the codices, which respects their own system of genre classification and principles of reading (it has yet to be published in a language other than its original German). For his part, in South America Koch-Grünberg gathered and published a major Carib cosmogony in *Vom Roroima [sic] zum Orinoco* (1924), a Pemon forerunner of *Watunna*; and in his work Preuss did the same for the Kogi and the Huitoto of Colombia. Preuss also collected narratives by the Huichol and modern survivors of the Aztecs in west Mexico. Just before World War II, Trimborn produced the first serious translation and edition of the major seventeenth-century Quechua narrative *Runa yndio* from Huarochirí (1939 -- later José María Arguedas's source) while, adopted by the Guarani under the name Nimuendaju, Unkel was entrusted with their creation narrative; this major text was later complemented by León Cadogan's edition of *Ayvu rapyta*, the "Origin of Human Speech." Later in the twentieth century, these German-language antecedents served as the richest resource for a number of US scholars, among them John Bierhorst (*Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature*, 1974), and Jerome Rothenberg, whose reworking of Preuss's versions of Huitoto occupy a key position in his *Technicians of the Sacred* (1968). Rothenberg's reworking typifies an important formative strand in the ethno-poetics movement which, broadly considered, has produced an array of classic native texts in English translation: the *Popol vuh* in versions by Munro Edmonson (1971) and Dennis Tedlock (1985), the Zuni *Finding the Center* (Tedlock 1972),

Paul Zolbrod's *Diné bahane: The Navajo Creation Story* (1984), and David Guss's English versions of *Watunna* (1980; 1992).

Historically speaking, Brinton's Library continued and much amplified a curiosity about Native American texts that begins more or less with the first European invasions of the continent. Hence the echoes of Iroquois stories in Rabelais, the Tupi songs quoted by Montaigne, and the codex pages printed as wood blocks in Samuel Purchas's *Pilgrims* (1625; *The Mendoza Codex*; see Berdan and Anawalt). In his *Essays*, Montaigne also reproduced, via Francisco López de Gómara and certain Nahuatl historians, a transcription of the story of the world ages or suns that is inscribed on the Aztec Sunstone. Like his English contemporary Christopher Marlowe, who via Heriot quoted Algonkian accounts of creation, Montaigne did this in a spirit that questioned the Biblical orthodoxy of the day, in which genesis happened thanks to one all-powerful (male) creator, and, following the seventeenth-century theologian James Ussher. In this and indeed in many other details -- for example, the story of the plumed serpent and human vertebrates told in the *Popol vuh* can be seen having an impact on the quaint ignorance and limited intellectuality of Europe at the time of the first invasions. It was not until the late eighteenth century that Europe, held back by the sedimentarian bias of the Bible, first recognized igneous rock for what it is, stumbling upon a geological understanding of world formation already explicit for many centuries in the American world age story. In each of the empires they invaded, Aztec and Inca, Europeans found not just theories of origins but also traditions of historiography, although unfortunately they also chose to burn almost all the texts in question. In Mexico, these were the codices; while in the Inca Tahuantinsuyu, they were the knotted strings or *quipus*: indeed, whole libraries (*bibliotecas*) of *quipu* texts were reported to have been consigned to the flames. Nevertheless, Guaman Poma, Blas Valera, and others managed to transcribe some *quipus* into alphabetic Quechua and Spanish. Although *criollo* history has little to say about it, these textual antecedents, cosmogonical and historical, were seminal along the road to political independence in America. As we learn from eyewitness accounts by Ignacio Borunda and his disciple Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, the unearthing in 1794, in the heart of Mexico City, of the Sunstone that told the story of Mesoamerican genesis, had an earth-shattering effect on the Spanish viceroyalty, literally undermining its Old World authority. In the Andes, Independence was the cause, in Spanish eyes, of the *tupamaros*, that is, those who followed Tupac Amaru II's heroic attempt to restore Tahuantinsuyu in the uprising of 1780, continuing the *quipu* chronicle of Inca rulers that had been cut short with the assassination of Tupac Amaru I in Cuzco in 1572.

#### **Impact on Later Literatures in the Americas**

In the American continent, recognition of the native palimpsest was there already before Independence and certainly was an ingredient in the Americanism that typified above all the literature of Brazil in the nineteenth century. Yet the intellectual consequences of this recognition have taken longer to make themselves felt, in a process which has intensified over the last half century or more, especially in Latin American narrative and poetry. Already by 1930, the Brazilian Mário de Andrade and the Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias had each published narratives which drew crucially on native originals, respectively, *Macunaíma* in 1928, and *Leyendas de Guatemala* in 1930. As Gerald Martin notes in *Journeys through the Labyrinth*, this pair of works marked a definite turning point in Latin American narrative, in Portuguese and Spanish, with respect both to its sources and its formal development (146). Asturias went on to publish the Nobel Prize winning novel *Hombres de maíz* (1949), which draws profoundly on the *Popol vuh*, along with other Maya and Nahuatl texts.

In the narrative genre, Andrade's and Asturias's works initiate a substantial corpus of novels which share indigenous textual roots. Rather than writing about or on behalf of the Indian, these texts provide a thorough intellectual immersion in native philosophy and ways of understanding the world. Other salient examples include *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1969), by the Peruvian José María Arguedas; *Yo el supremo* (1974) by the Paraguayan Augusto Roa Bastos; and *Maíra* (1976) by the Brazilian Darcy Ribeiro. In each case before and while writing their novels, the authors became deeply involved with the language and context of the native works they drew on: Asturias, Arguedas and Roa Bastos respectively translated and adapted the *Popol vuh*, *Runa yndio*,

and *Ayvu rapyta*, and in the process they also transformed their earlier views of their continent, along with their way of writing about it. Arguedas wrote in Quechua, Roa Bastos in Guarani (see Lienhard; Rowe, *Mito*). Many others have since followed their path, some going in ideological directions of their own, like Abel Posse and Mario Vargas Llosa. The Guatemalan Mario Monteforte Toledo has written his most recent novel in Quiche and Spanish, *Utukel ulew re ri ch'ichi' / La isla de las navajas* (2001); moreover, in so doing he initiates a "dialogue with the Inca" of continental proportions. In all, as Arguedas argued, this indigenous engagement deserves to be more fully recognized as a key factor in the larger story of Latin American narrative, in particular of the *new novel* which in turn has had such an impact worldwide. It is no accident that the one novel with this dimension to have emerged from English-speaking America, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), directly recalls the Latin American precedent. In Silko's novel, as we move out through the space of America we go back through its time, finding ever earlier examples of its "almanac," which regress from a colonial manuscript to a codex written in black and red characters.

As for poetry, the story is similar, though it starts earlier and has fewer main characters. A striking feature of the two nineteenth-century works which strove to become the epic of the continent is that they both highlighted its imagined heartland, in the domain of the Muisca or Chibcha in what is now Colombia; and both did so with the help of Alexander von Humboldt's panoramic *Vues de cordillères* (1803). In "Alocución a la poesía," one of the two fragments of the epic *América* (1828) that he actually completed, Andrés Bello retells the story of Bochica as a would-be foundational fiction, recalling how the cultural hero, Bochica, brought agriculture to Cundinamarca and highland Colombia (see Brotherston, *Latin American Poetry*). In the case of the copious twelve cantos of Joaquim de Sousa Andrade's *O Guesa* (1888-1902), the frame, principal cultural reference, and the title itself come from the same source. Chibcha legends, ritual and calendrics provide a constant reference for this early Brazilian work by Sousa Andrade (or Sousândrade), as it ranges over the whole continent in space and time, including the Inca empire, the rainforest, Patagonia, the Caribbean and Wall Street (see Campos).

Easily the best-known epic of the continent is Pablo Neruda's *Canto general* (1950), which achieves its coherence thanks principally to its Marxist model of history, in which native America has sadly little to say. Similarly, there is a perceptible tension between this mainstream argument and native testimony, one visually set out as such in the two illustrations included in the first edition of the poem, the first by Diego Rivera which depicts American genesis as a "Domingo pre-hispánico," and the second by Siqueiros, which celebrates human redemption through modern technology. In *Canto general*, the native voice can be heard in the continuing struggle typified by Cuauhtemoc in Mexico and Tupac Amaru in the Andes. Perhaps the most powerful moment in the whole poem comes during the chant that celebrates, in the first-person plural, Valdivia's defeat at the hands of the Mapuche and the communal eating of his heart. From this perspective, Ernesto Cardenal's *Homenaje a los indios americanos* (1969-1992) can be better appreciated as the response to Neruda that it is explicitly stated to be, all within the larger idea of the necessity of a truly American revolution. For here the native voice is allowed far more space. Indeed, it becomes the principal means of exposition in the poem. Using techniques of collage and juxtaposition learned from Ezra Pound, Cardenal uses native testimony as the basis for each of the poems that make up his continental epic. These include such classics as the *Cantares mexicanos*, the Books of Chilam Balam, the *Tatkan ikala*, Guaman Poma, *Ayvu rapyta* and so on, in all a powerful polyphony that demonstrates the much-neglected strength of native imagination. Even at the level of sheer poetics, the interaction between Cardenal's own text and their originals remains the richest subject for a critical analysis. Such analyses presumably have been so seldom attempted due to uninterest in those originals. At the same time it has to be said that, like Neruda before him, Cardenal has his own thesis to urge, in his case a Christian one. In several poems this leads to a certain interference, in the name of Liberation Theology, which makes proto-Christians of Maya and Guarani alike. In 1982, a genre of documentary history, at once poetic and highly politicized, was pioneered by the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano in his trilogy *Memoria del fuego* (1982), which has the whole continent as its scope and uses collage techniques reminiscent of the *Homage*. To



set his plan in motion, Galeano similarly turned to Native American texts. In this way, pages of the classics provide a foundation for his argument, becoming an indispensable first term of reference (see Palaversich).

No comprehensive account of the impact of native texts on later American literature has ever been published and it is clearly impossible to offer one here on the grounds of space alone. Rather, some main lines of connection may be noted which stem from and rely on the sort of cultural geography that native source texts themselves suggest, notably with respect to the Andes, Mesoamerica, and Amazonia. Of course this short list is very far from comprehensive. For example, the Chibcha who inspired Bello and Sousândrade reappear in Cardenal's *Homage* as the Cuna of Panama as well as the Talamanca in *Asalto al paraíso* (1992) by the Costa Rican Tatiana Lobo. In its continental purview, the *Homage* is also notable for its inclusion of what is now English-speaking America: indeed, it takes texts by Iroquois, Pawnee and Sioux in order to expand and strengthen the revolutionary thesis of the work as a whole.

Thanks chiefly to the *Comentarios reales* of El Inca Garcilaso, the Inca had an astounding impact -- still to be catalogued as such -- on Europe, from Montaigne's essays to the magnificent *fêtes galantes* staged at Versailles. With Independence, this line was carried back to America, through such poets as Bello, José Joaquín Olmedo, Sousândrade, and Joel Barlow, author of the US epic *The Columbiad* (1803), particularly with respect to the genre of Inca hymns and sagacious law making which are attributed to Manco Capac. Dismembered now between the Andean states of Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru, Tahuantinsuyu, the 'Four Districts' of the Inca Empire, is reconstituted through an anatomy still alive in Quechua, which places the brow in Quito, the uterus in Titicaca and the navel in Cuzco. Politically, a similar anatomical logic makes the Inca head grow back into its body, in the legend of Inkarrí, better known thanks to José María Arguedas's 1956 publication. The first edition of Cardenal's *Homage* (1969), "Economía de Tahuantinsuyu" centers on Cuzco, node of South America's "broken roads," and the yearly round of the calendar detailed by Guaman Poma, where the emperor himself digs the first furrow. Occluded through invasion like the sun eclipsed at midday, *chuapi punchapi tutayaca*, as the Quechua quotation puts it, this order or cosmos is held out in hope, like a *quipu* thread or maize-kernels clutched in the mummy's hand. Twenty years later, following the defeat of Velasco's Peruvian Revolution, *El secreto de Machu-Picchu* traces the voice of resistance more intimately, through the long-secret "prayer in stone" of that city (which features so prominently in Neruda's *Canto general*). A leitmotif of this poem is found in the Quechua songs that tell of love and which also encode the summons to defend it militarily, invoking 'the white mountains' of Antisuyu and the redoubts of Ollantaytambo, Vilcabamba and Paititi, and hence the resistance that extends from Tupac Amaru I (killed in Cuzco by the Spanish in 1572), via Tupac Amaru II (who rose up in 1780) to today's *tupamaros*. Among the Inca, similar songs had served to distinguish the leader and the sage, in the fashion of the riddles of the Maya katun. This discreet continuity also characterizes the living Quechua drama woven into the poem, like the tragedy of Atahualpa's death (see Lara, *Tragedia*).

Guaman Poma, the pilgrim scholar who wept over the outrages suffered by Tahuantinsuyu's former subjects, is the object of particular homage in Galeano's *Memoria del fuego* and in Abel Posse's novels, where he reappears as Huaman, a constant sage and guide. First published as late as 1936, Guaman Poma's testimony impinges directly on the centuries-old debate over the nature of Inca power and hence the appropriateness of Tahuantinsuyu as a modern political model. On this point, Cardenal explicitly differs from Neruda's Marxist doctrine, explicit in the Machu Picchu section of the *Canto general* that deems the Inca state despotic and slave-based ("El Inca era dios / era Stalin"). Like Galeano and Posse, Cardenal aligns himself more with the planetary anti-colonialism of César Vallejo, whose poem "Telúrica y magnética" makes the millennia of achievement in the Andes the base for social justice and Indian identity alike (see Brotherston and Gómez). Perceived and named as Guaman Poma's modern counterpart in the work of Cardenal, Galeano and Posse alike, the Peruvian José María Arguedas gathered and translated Quechua texts besides being a novelist and poet in his own right. Arguedas also wrote in Quechua himself, notably in correspondence with the *guerrillero* leader Hugo Blanco, and in his homage to Tupac Amaru (*Tupac Amaru Kamaq Taytanchisma: Haylli-Taki*; 1962), the recurrent hero of revolution in Peru.

Grappling with the violent dichotomies of modern Peru he turned to *Runa yndio* of Huarochiri, another text he translated, which supplies the framework of his last work *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* and its two principles of authority. This line in Arguedas's work was carried forward in Manuel Scorza's *Garabombo el invisible* (1972), part of the quintet devoted to honoring the Quechua massacred during the Pasco uprising of 1962, which likewise draws on *Runa yndio* and the Inkarrí legend (see Crumley).

Turning to Mesoamerica, Cardenal's *Homage* focuses on the codices, annals that tell of the plumed serpent Quetzalcoatl, Tula and the ancient migrations, and the opulent collection of *Cantares mexicanos*. The ground text of no less than three long pieces, whole lines and stanzas of the *Cantares* are taken from the Spanish translations by Garibay gathered in his *Poesía nahuatl* (1965-68). Profoundly influential on Mexican poetry from Paz to Pacheco, Garibay's versions much enhanced understanding of the Nahuatl "flower song," "in xochitl in cuicatl," and the heightened sense of life variously expressed in its "planting," "orphan," and other modes. In particular, they raised the question, also asked by fellow Christian Cardenal, of how far earlier interpreters, among them the nineteenth-century US historian Prescott, had given an ideological twist to the "laments" of the poet-king Nezahualcoyotl (1402-72), seeing in them a covert yearning for Cortés and his religion. Historically, like the archeology that discovered earthly paradise in the murals of Teotihuacan, these revised *Cantares* form part of the massive reappraisal of indigenous culture brought about by the Mexican Revolution.

Through another subgroup of Mesoamerican poems likewise interwoven with both the Maya calendar and current archeology -- "Oráculos de Tikal," "Mayapan," "Ardilla de los tunes de un katun," "Katun 11 Ahau," and "8 Ahau" -- the *Homage* traces continuity in lowland Maya consciousness, from the Classic inscriptions to the Chilam Balam Books, drawing moral lessons from calendar structure, and rescuing for the scribe-poet the honor of intuiting the true cause of eclipse. As a result, attentive to the katun revolutions of the lowland Maya, the poems implicitly argue their political cause, as does Abreu Gómez's novel *Canek* (1940), which similarly is couched in katun logic and the Zuyua language of the Chilam Balam Books. Moreover, transcribing the hieroglyphs of Quirigua and Copan, these poems make the decisive link between their millions of years and the beginnings of earthly time recounted in the highland Quiche-Maya *Popol vuh*, charting the vast scope of its evolutionary story. In Mesoamerica generally, native historiography has continued into modern narrative. For instance, Patricia Amlin has made the world-age story into a film that draws ingeniously on the Borgia Codex. By basing himself on native histories and above all the codices, Carlos Fuentes contrives to recreate imported and local time perspectives in Part 1 and II of his *Terra nostra* (1975). A version of how acute the distinction between them became at the dawn of Independence in Mexico can be seen in the cult of Guadalupe and the long local history attributed to her. An informed, if satirical account of this moment is given in Reinaldo Arenas's novel *El mundo alucinante* (1969), which draws on Fray Servando Teresa de Mier's autobiographical account of his association with the Mexican and pioneer Mexicanist Ignacio Borunda. This novel recounts how Borunda learned to interpret the world-changing message of the Sunstone and to read the codices as vindication for the idea of throwing out intrusive Spaniards. Updating just this heritage with respect to the modern megalopolis and its cosmic fate, Homero Aridjis likewise casts back to the Sunstone in his *Leyenda de los soles* (1993).

Still under siege today, Amazonia and the tropical rainforest of South America continue to supply culture in its highest forms, like air, vegetal food, and vision: the native texts which record that vision play a major part in the continental works of Galeano, Posse and Cardenal. Memory, in Galeano's trilogy, begins with the Carib creation recounted in *Watunna*, chief among the texts that stem from the Pacaraima ridge common to the Amazon and the Orinoco. This is the privileged literary territory sought by the hero of Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (1953), whose cosmogonical reference extends to the codices and to the *Popol vuh* and the Chilam Balam books, which provide epigraphs critical to the novel's overall argument. Sharing the same Carib source, the story of the Caroni river told in *Canaima* (1935), by the Venezuelan Rómulo Gallegos, likewise follows a native course. The Carib term of this novel's title, defined in *Watunna* as the madness that white invaders induce, also resonates with a short story by Guyanese Wilson Harris, whose

novel *Palace of the Peacock* (1960) in turn traces an ascent to Roraima through the stages of the Medatia vision recounted in *Watunna*. Said to be "without character," the hero of Mário de Andrade's novel *Macunaíma* (1928) is in fact born and named in the geographical domain of *Watunna* and is formed by just that Carib belief system: descending the Uraricoera and crossing the Amazon, he travels to São Paulo, traversing all the space and time of Brazil, only to return to a landscape of ghosts and stars, which he becomes. With agility and humor, the narrative makes clear that its life is that of its palimpsest or life source, in this case the account of the Carib hero Makunaima which Mayuluaipu, a Pemon Indian, gave to Koch-Grünberg; and in so doing it anticipates the argument of the other novels that have emerged from the same biosphere (see Sá, "Germans and Indians").

Along with the poems in Raul Bopp's *Cobra Norato* (1928), *Macunaíma* best exemplifies the "anthropophagist" tendency of the Brazilian *modernistas*, and their Manifesto, which expressed interest in the Tupi and Carib as well as the cannibal revolution (*a revolução caraiibe*). In being philosophically shaped by native sources, these works by Andrade and Bopp expose the fallacy of describing Brazilian "antropofagia" as a fanciful outgrowth from the line of purely Western thought begun by Jean de Lery's and Montaigne's reflections on cannibalism. In Brazil, the *modernistas* had remarkable predecessors in the nineteenth-century Americanists whose involvement was chiefly with the traditions of the Tupi-Guarani, at that stage still widely spoken as lowland South America's lingua franca (*língua geral*). A Tupi-Guarani theme taken up already then and present still in Posse's *Daimón* is that of the earthly paradise, the *Yvy mara ey*. These and similar beliefs are consistently opposed to Biblical cosmogony in Posse's novel, and in novels by Roa Bastos and Darcy Ribeiro. In Roa Bastos's case, growing familiarity with the Guarani classics enabled him to set the endurance of that people, and the reason behind it, into the dialogues and dialectic of *Yo el supremo* (1974). This work also explores such local concepts as dual autogenesis and the blue jaguars of solar eclipse, concepts that reappear in Darcy Ribeiro's *Maíra* (1976). At the same time, *Maíra* considers the fate of Brasilia, ominously sited as it is in the Tupi cosmic landscape. Tupi-Guarani traditions are incorporated in Cardenal's *Homage*, which in "Los hijos del bosque de las palabras almas" goes to the root concepts of *Ayvu rapyta*, the "origin of human speech." Another poem, "La Arcadia perdida," traces back the story of Paraguay's *República guaraní* not just to the Jesuit missions but to Tahuantinsuyu ideals previously brought down from the Andes and translated into Guarani legends. The same link with the Andes is acknowledged by Arawak groups like the Campa and the Machiguenga some distance to the northwest, on the uppermost Amazon, and consequently surfaces, though to very different effect, in *El hablador* (1987), a novel by the Peruvian, Mario Vargas Llosa. In his egregious engagement with Peru's Amazonia, Vargas Llosa follows Machiguenga accounts of creation very closely and suggests how the very survival of the Machiguenga depends on their speaking their own history and their own place in the universe. Yet at the same time he perversely introduces concepts of his own making in order to portray them as scattered nomads who are intellectually unable to defend themselves (see Sá, "Perverse tribute").

Author of the major study *A expressão amazonense* (1978; see also Pereira), Márcio Souza was the first writer to successfully bring rainforest literature to the stage. In *Dessana, Dessana* he shows how knowledge of the cosmogony published by Berta Ribeiro can transform perceptions of Indians seen on the streets of Manaus. In *Jurupuri*, he offered a feminist reading of that Tariana text. In staging both plays, he worked closely with members of the groups in question (see Sá, *Reading the Rainforest*). Cardenal, in his "Epístola a Monseñor Casaldaliga" (also in the *Homage*) and more recently in *Cántico cósmico* (1989), brings out the significance that rainforest cosmogony has for Liberation Theology, and for the revised notions of genesis that have been developed by theologians like Casaldaliga and Boff (who has published his own selection of victims' voices from 1492 to 1992). Cardenal's epistle-poem focuses particularly on the way that in Xingu beliefs shared between different languages and groups have helped to form the basis of wider resistance, a strategy that is echoed in Antonio Callado's remarkable novel *Quarup* (1966; now also a film). In this, thanks to his immersion in native thought, Cardenal anticipates what in the last few years has emerged as *teología india*, in which genesis for Christians is no longer the sole preserve of the Old

Testament.

### **Popol vuh: An Exemplary Case**

As the "Bible of America" the *Popol vuh* has been translated into most of the world's major languages and has increasingly become the focus of critical attention (see Carmack and Morales; Mary Preuss; Himmelblau; Chinchilla; López). It has found ever-greater resonance in the work of modern writers, artists and intellectuals and it has been the source of a long line of textual borrowings by Latin American authors. In its early stages, this story includes foundational figures of Spanish American Modernismo, like José Martí (see above), and Rubén Darío, who celebrated the Maya Quiche and their sky-heart deity "Hurakan" in "Momotombo" (*Cantos de vida y esperanza*, 1907). Going in another direction (perhaps to avoid the harsh Indian reality of his homeland of El Salvador), Salarrué used the Quiche text to support an Atlantis fantasy in *O-Yarkandal* (1929). In "Visión de América" (1948) and *Los pasos perdidos* (1953), Alejo Carpentier quoted from Asturias's translation of the *Popol vuh* when developing his ideas of a deeply rooted autochthonous American culture ("lo real maravilloso americano"), and the world-age scheme of creation (also inscribed on the Aztec Sunstone) that warns against mindless use of the machine. Even the Argentinean, Jorge Luis Borges, hardly indigenist by calling, turned to the same world-age account, quoting it in the climactic moments of the Jaguar Priest's vision in "La escritura del dios" (1948). The political force of the Quiche text comes through in the Guatemalan Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta's *Los dos brujitos mayas* (1956) and the Mexican Rosario Castellanos's *Balun Canan* (1957), and it inspires the consciousness-raising plays produced by the La Fragua group in Honduras in the 1970s (see Burke and Shapiro) and the Lo'il Maxil group in Chiapas in the 1990s.

In *Hombres de maíz*, Asturias depicts the reality of his hero, the *guerrillero* Gaspar Ilom, in *Popol vuh* terms as he leads an uprising in Cuchumatanes, the heartland and source of the first maize agriculture in highland Maya cosmogony. The whole episode is based on an actual Maya uprising of 1900. Politically, this use of the *Popol vuh* can also be read as a consequence of Asturias's experience translating the *Popol vuh* in addition to other Maya classics. The decisive encounter that Asturias had when translating the *Popol vuh* in 1927 (with Georges Raynaud's help) had an earlier effect on his *Leyendas de Guatemala* (1930), a highly innovative text that also draws on images from the codices, which he actually inserts into his prose. As a novel of specifically peasant resistance that is sustained by the cosmogony of the *Popol vuh*, Asturias's *Hombres de maíz* has been updated, this time with reference to twentieth-century El Salvador, in Manlio Argueta's *Cuzcatlan, donde bate la mar del sur* (1986). Argueta's powerful narrative succeeds in tapping the memory and deep imaginative root common to the Maya *Popol vuh* and the Nahuatl spoken by most of his country's people, at least before the unbelievably atrocious massacres ordered by ruling whites in 1932. In a comparable Central American narrative, the *Popol vuh* helped Mario Monteforte Toledo to recreate the world invaded by Columbus in *Llegaron del mar* (1966).

In poetry, the allusions to the *Popol vuh* seen in the Maya poems in Cardenal's *Homage* have been echoed in Pablo Antonio Cuadra's long poem "El jícaro" (1978), which uses the *Popol vuh* story of the Twins' mother Ixquic to foretell the overthrow of Somoza's bloody tyranny in Nicaragua. Over many decades, the *Popol vuh* likewise supported the fine revolutionary intelligence of Luis Cardoza y Aragón, a compatriot of Asturias who translated Quiche literature (*Rabinal Achi*) at more or less the same date, early in his career. From Central America and Mexico, this understanding of the text has spread to Chicano and Latino writing in the US, especially writing by women, for whom the figures of Blood Woman (Ixquic) and Xmucane have become archetypal. Recently Dolores Prida published her "Heart of the Earth: A *Popol vuh* Story" in the Latina anthology *Puro teatro* (see Sandoval-Sánchez). The *Popol vuh* also sustains Silko's argument in *Almanac of the Dead*, especially with regard to its concern to reconcile revolutionary Marxism with Native American philosophy. It has also spread south, as in the case of Borges's 'La escritura del dios.' Similarly, in Brazil, Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna produced a "modern *Popol vuh*" which cross-references the Quiche work with the Guarani texts of his country (*A grande fala do índio guarani perdido na história*, 1978).

Gradually, the text and the concept of the *Popol vuh* have come to impinge on an ever-wider array of media. This work is now invoked and recast not just in the traditional literary world of nar-

rative and poetry but in theatre, film, music, art, and even the electronic medium. In San Francisco, for example, it has become an interactive computer game (see González). It is the subject of the film by Patricia Amlin (1987), which is based on Edmonson's English translation and images taken from Classical Maya ceramics. Mediated by Asturias's *Men of maize* it also informs Gregory Nava's film *El norte*. Introducing the revolutionary spirit of La Fragua and Lo'il Maxil drama into the metropolis, Luisa Josefina Hernández's play *Popol vuh* has had several stage runs in Mexico City. In music, Edgard Varèse incorporated passages from the *Popol vuh* in his *Ecuatorial* (1961), following leads given by Asturias in his 1927 translation and in his *Leyendas de Guatemala* (see Medeiros). Meanwhile, as the seminal autobiography of Rigoberta Menchú shows, the knowledge embedded in the *Popol vuh* never left the Quiche people who authored it. Collaborating closely with Quiche elders and scholars has from the start been the constant privilege of translators of the text into other languages, from the time that Francisco Ximénez first produced a translation -- into Spanish -- in the early eighteenth century, and C.E. de Brasseur de Bourbourg followed him in French in 1856. Over the last half century this has continued to be the case with Dora Burgess who jointly with Domingo Xec published the Spanish translation of 1955 that then became a principal point of reference for Munro Edmonson's version, and he in turn is reported to have worked with Eleuterio Po'ot Yah (1971). In producing the second direct translation from Quiche into English (1985) (Edmonson's being the first), Dennis Tedlock relied heavily on Andrés Xiloj of Momostenango. For their part, Quiche scholars and writers like Sam Colop and Víctor Montejo (who admires Edmonson's version) have produced *Popol vuh* editions of their own. Thanks to this growing native scholarship, translations are now also being made from Quiche into other Maya languages, among them Kekchi (Rigoberto Ba'q Q'aal), Tzotzil and Tzeltal. These projects are part of the pan-Maya move towards recovering and re-inventing a fragmented and demeaned heritage.

### **Conclusion**

Precisely because it corrects a defect in most understandings of what is literature, the comparative method is indispensable for any approach to Native American texts. A comparative approach can also correct the widespread dismissal of interest in Indians as "romantic" -- in the sense of undocumented and fanciful. Such an approach alerts us instead to beliefs and paradigms shared by cosmogonies and classics from all over the continent, establishing thereby a formal and philosophical premise that sets all subsequent American literature in due perspective. Only by acknowledging this shared precedent can there be adequate appreciation of the huge and ever-growing debt owed to the native literatures of the Americas by the widest variety of authors writing in the languages that Europe brought to America. In his novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, Italo Calvino also appears to be in sympathy with this approach, for through the character of the ancient Indian storyteller he insinuates that native America, especially its tropical heartland, could be the 'primeval magma,' an ultimate source for all the world's great narratives, among which he names the *Popol vuh* (Martin 306). In this paper, little or nothing has been said about mediation and transcription; nor about those authors who continue to write in their own languages, like the Nahuatlato Joel Martínez Hernández, Elicura Chihuailaf -- who has also translated Neruda into the Mapuche language, and Kaká Wera Jecupé who wrote his autobiography in Guarani; nor about the native impact on English-speaking America typified in its most widely read poem, H.W. Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* (1855); nor again about the impact on Old World literature, not just Montaigne and Marlowe but also Schiller and the Romantics, Max Ernst and the Expressionists, Antonin Artaud and the Surrealists, and indeed philosophers like Jung (who took *Hiawatha* as a base for his *Psychology of the Unconscious*, 1916) and Ernst Cassirer, whose *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (volume 2) relies directly on Huichol thought (see Jáuregui and Neurat). It is thus to be hoped that, despite the myriad references and directions that we were unable to follow in this short space, what we have illuminated will be enough to indicate the complexity and richness of Native American literature and of the many transcultural processes associated with indigenous culture that remain seriously underexamined.

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