to him at the time. This information seems to be to represent the lines in
ier that:

> Whoever drinks this drug, when mixed with wine,
> Would not let tears hurl down his cheeks during that day,
> Not even if his mother and his father died,
> Nor even if men would annihilate his brother or beloved son
> With the sword while he sees it with his own eyes.
>
> *Od.* 4.222–26

imilarly, the Elizabethan poets who wrote about Helen's drug do not
hasize potentially disastrous effects of such a *pharmakon*. Homer, how-
;, wrote of such drugs that "many indeed [are] healing when mixed, but
ly destructive as well" (*Od.* 4.230).
)thello is a work of genius, transforming its main source, Cinthio's *Un*
itano Moro, and alluding to Odysseus and Homer's *Odyssey*. This recep-
of Odysseus/Ulysses is multidimensional, through:

- transmission of a narrative via the Latin of Vergil's *Aeneid* concerning Odysseus and the Cyclops, using a phrase with almost identical words;
- parallels between the dying words of Othello (in reference to a kiss and deceit) and the Ulysses as portrayed in Shakespeare's earlier play, *Troilus and Cressida*;
- allusions to Helen of Troy's drug through Othello's handkerchief, including the fact that it was dyed with "mummy," a medical substance, and through Othello's lack of reaction to the death of his brother in battle. Shakespeare's *Othello* is enriched by subtle allusions to Helen of Troy's drug, Odysseus, Polyphemus, and the machinations and deceit of Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*.

Reviews

Michael Bazzett, trans. *The Popol Vuh: A New English Version*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2018.

Popol Vuh (Popol Wuj), a K'iche' Maya epic, is widely judged as the finest piece of native American literature. Written between 1554 and 1558 in the Spanish-introduced alphabet, it recounts in vivid detail the origins of the cosmos and the history of the K'iche' people of highland Guatemala. The story opens with the lifting of the earth out of the sea, followed by several attempts by primordial gods to generate creatures to venerate them. The first three tries are failures, including making humans out of mud and wood. Then monstrous beings introduce chaos and are destroyed at the hands of two young tricksters named Hunahpu and Xbalanque. Their exploits comprise much of the narrative, including a trip to the Underworld (Xibalba) to play ball with the Lords of Death. The boys' defeat of Xibalba allows for the creation of true humans out of maize, after which they ascend into the sky as sun and moon. Popularly referred to as Hero Twins, they are comparable to similar characters in North and South American folklore.

The sixteenth-century manuscript is lost, but it was transcribed and simultaneously translated into Spanish in dual columns by a Dominican friar, Francisco Ximénez, in ca. 1701-3. Brought to scholarly attention in the nineteenth century, Popol Wuj is ranked with other great ancient literary works—the Bible, the Mahabharata, Homer's Iliad. Designated the National Book of Guatemala in 1972, Popol Wuj has been translated into many languages and is available in diverse editions. What does this new version by poet Michael Bazzett contribute?

There are already several English translations of Ximénez's K'iche' text, as Bazzett himself notes: Recinos et al. (1950), Edmonson (1971), Tedlock (1985, 1996), and Christenson (2003, 2004). What most notably distinguishes Bazzett's Popol Vuh, according to the back cover, is its translation into verse for the first time in English. Bazzett has produced an epic poem intended especially for students and the public. A *New York Times* Best Poetry Book of 2018, it is praised by reviewers as more accessible and pleasing to read than turgid scholarly translations. Full disclosure: I am not a poet, literature professor,

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or linguist; I am an anthropologist. Though not one of Bazzett's intended audience, I applaud efforts to increase public readership of this remarkable literary work.

The uncorrected proof I reviewed has a short introduction with a few endnote citations. A generous Reader's Companion at the end provides brief summaries of the different episodes, along with Bazzett's interpretations of some symbolic meanings and comments on the narrative structure. Typical of literary analysts, he focuses on universal themes, with comparisons to the Bible and other familiar works. Unlike other recent translations, there is no bibliography, no footnotes for the story itself, no guide to pronunciation or colonial orthography (e.g., "v" for "w"), no map, and no illustrations. There is also no information on the K'iche' people, the historical context and authorship of their manuscript, Fr. Ximénez's motivation for transcribing and translating it 150 years later, or even where the Ximénez papers reside.[1]

The rationales for these omissions can be gleaned from the introduction to this new version. Bazzett wished to satisfy his own literature students' craving for "the authentic," but the only translations of this epic work he could find were "scholarly prose, dense with footnotes" (pp. ix-x). That characterization certainly rings true in many cases, but it does not apply to Tedlock's (1995) translation, which I've assigned to my students. Tedlock's scholarly notes are placed at the end, with nary a superscript to disturb the reader.

More importantly, however, Bazzett wanted "a verse version that truly sang," a poem with "minimal framing" for a modern audience. He endeavored "to unearth a poetic structure from Ximénez's solid columns of prose" (pp. ix-xi). Bazzett's verse is presented in groupings of single, double, triple, and quadruple lines, with subsidiary indentations and the occasional ellipsis to pause the flow. Here is an example from the opening scene of cosmic creation (p. 7):

> All alone are the Framer and the Shaper,
> the Sovereign and the feathered serpent,
>   the ones who have borne children
>   and the ones who have planted them.

1 Catalogued as Ayers Ms. 1515 in the Newberry Library, Chicago, his transcription is available at https://www.newberry.org/popol-vuh-wuj-online.

> They are luminous in the waters,
> wrapped in feathers of quetzal and cotinga.
> Brilliance glimmers through the gaps.
>
> And so they are called Quetzal Serpent,
> and hold deep wisdom in their bones.
>
> And so they are called Heart of Sky.
> And this is said as the name of the god.

Although his poem is considered more lucid and pleasing than the usual prose, Bazzett's is not the first versified translation into English. Others have recognized that Popol Wuj is a work of poetry (e.g., Ridder 1989). In fact, Edmonson (1971:xii) remarked that its embedded parallelism "makes it relatively easy to produce the poetic effect in translation." His K'iche' transcription is organized entirely by semantic or phonological couplets, which in the parallel English translation march along in short, stilted lines that try the reader's patience. Compare the same passage from Edmonson (1971:10):

> All alone the Former
>   And Shaper,
> Majesty,
>   And Quetzal Serpent,
> The Mothers
>   And Fathers
> Were in the water.
>   Brilliant were they then,
> And wrapped in quetzal
>   And dove feathers.
> Thence came the name
>   Of Quetzal Serpent.
> Great sages they were
>   And great thinkers in their essence.
> For indeed there is Heaven
>   And there is also the Heart of Heaven.
> That is the name
>   Of the deity, it is said.

Christenson (2004) further analyzed the inherent versification, but his word-by-word translation results in Yoda-like syntax. Sam Colop's (1999, 2008) poetic revision of the K'iche' text emphasizes semantic parallels more complex than Edmonson's. Thus, rather than the first in verse, Bazzett's is the first to use a verse form untethered from the rigid parallelism of K'iche' ritual language, without abandoning that original framework.

Bazzett is less clear as to how he translated sixteenth-century K'iche'. He considers this to be "a literary endeavor as much as a scholarly one," while hewing "with as much fidelity to the text, and its spirit, as possible." He goes on to say that the Ximénez manuscript "served as the original source, and every line of the poem has its antecedent in the K'iche'" (p. x). This last statement is ambiguous given that his new version is intentionally simplified, and both words and entire sentences appear in the poem that are not present in Ximénez's manuscript, although they may have been motivated by "its spirit." More evident is Bazzett's acknowledged reliance on Christenson (2003, 2004), especially the second volume's literal translation which served as his "scaffold" (p. xi). His debt to Christenson is most obvious in the naming of episodes.

Bazzett's ostensible neglect of the production of the original K'iche' manuscript is obliquely rationalized by his assertion that the story was thousands of years old and widely known among various Maya-speaking peoples, which obviates the very idea of authorship. This presumption is not uncommon and is based on the discovery of pre-Hispanic artworks that seemingly depict the Hero Twins. Bazzett imagines that the scribes who wrote it down alphabetically were simply repeating a well-memorized tale (p. vii).

However, this presumption overlooks one of the most remarkable features of this extraordinary work: the careful selection from a repertory of old stories to compose a new narrative, one in which the establishment of cosmic order serves as the logical foundation for continued political privileges of K'iche' aristocrats in New Spain, specifically, the Kaweq royal house. It is better understood as *a* popol wuj, one of many "primordial titles" produced in highland Guatemala from 1550-80. A cognate document, the Title of Totonicapán (Carmack and Mondloch 1983), also names Hunahpu and Xbalanke, although in that version they are boy and girl. The skill exhibited by the composer of this Popol Wuj is evident in small signposts that link the episodes and integrate the narrative structure.

And ultimately, Bazzett's principal interest is the narrative itself: "first and foremost, the Popol Vuh is a rattling good story" (p. xiii). But only up to a point, apparently, because missing in this new version is a huge chunk of *The* Popol Vuh. Of the 4924 lines of Ximénez's manuscript, Bazzett omits lines 2966-3394, 3440 to 3461, and ends his translation at line 3480. Bazzett explains that his poem ends "when the arc of the mythic narrative, as I see it, completes," namely, after earth is created and peopled, and the sun and moon ascend. After this final act of cosmic ordering, the story veers away from "universal myth," recounting instead the history of the K'iche' people. Bazzett believes his readers would find this K'iche'-specific part "inaccessible and perhaps confounding" without additional contextual references, so he stops when the "mythic section" is over (p. xii). Actually, he skips over quite a bit of the "myth" part even before the sun rises. Much of the missing K'iche' protohistory is as non-literal as forming the first men out of maize. There is no clean break between the "myth" and "history" portions here, a distinction not recognizable by the K'iche'.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the story that has made Popol Wuj so popular is retained. It has also been subtly changed. In the Reader's Companion Bazzett is clear on his interpretation of the narrative structure, but he doesn't let on how that influenced his translation. In the excerpt above, Bazzett characterized the creator deities by their titles: "And so *they are called* Quetzal Serpent / . . . / And so *they are called* Heart of Sky" (emphasis added). This parallel plural structure equates the sea deities (including Quetzal Serpent) with the sky. In the Companion, Bazzett compared this setting to the Biblical Genesis. But Maya ontology is different: in the beginning the sea was already separated from the sky. As Edmonson (above) and other translators put it, there is "also" the sky. That distinction is lost here and with it, a thematic motif that holds the mythic arc together.

Heart of Sky is the principal deity, who conceives what is to be created and directs others to do his bidding (Christenson 2003:69). Importantly, three times in the story Heart of Sky moves down to sea/earth, creating a cosmic union, a chaos that generates new forms. Coincident with his second descent in the form of rain to destroy the wood people, disorderly beings—Seven Macaw and his two sons—come into existence simultaneously with the trickster boys who are directed by Heart of Sky to defeat them. This simultaneity is lost in Bazzett's version, however, because he writes: "Seven Macaw set himself up / . . . / *before* the flood" (p. 31). Other translations follow the original signpost that Seven Macaw appears as the wood people were being inundated.

This brings up the larger issue of linear structure. Many commentators have observed that the sequence of episodes does not follow Western conventions. Bazzett bluntly concludes, "The *Popol Vuh* makes no attempt to order all of these events into a linear progression" (p. 262). The boys' defeat of Seven Macaw precedes the story of their father's fatal trip to Xibalba, when they were

conceived and born as twins. The Popol Wuj narrator again provided a helpful signpost: "Now we shall tell of the birth of Hunahpu and Xbalanque, having first given the account of the defeat of Seven Macaw" (Christenson 2003:111). But Bazzett adds his own words to reinforce his interpretation of a mythic spiral: "Now, *we will trace the thread back,* / Now, we will tell of their birth, / since we've already told / how Seven Macaw was defeated" (p. 65, added words italicized).

These are not pedantic quibbles. As a cosmogonic account, the story's syntagmatic dimension *depends* on progression. Each successive episode resolves flaws of a prior cosmic status, introducing characters that are improved "substitutions" (the Maya notion of *k'ex*) of previous ones. Bazzett's amendments to the text might seem sensible to the modern reader, but they confound the original structure, function, and meaning of the narrative, making it less than "authentic." Ironically, Bazzett's stated intention was to give the Americas "their own myth" in a "new idiom" (p. xii). The idiom may be pleasing, but what makes this narrative particularly "American" has been diminished.

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Stanley Corngold. *Walter Kaufmann: Philosopher, Humanist, Heretic.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019.

While teaching Goethe's *Faust* in translation on the university level in th
1980s and 90s, I had come across the name Walter Kaufmann as a translato
and an accessible commentator in, for example, the fifty-page introduction i
the Doubleday bilingual paperback, signed by him "W. K., Easter Sunda
1960"—a witty allusion to Faust's decision, on Easter morning, not to com
mit suicide but to be "resurrected." But in my own professional preparation
back in 1969–70, as a graduate student in what was then called *Germanisti*
including seminars taught by Ernst Behler, a Nietzsche scholar (and my *Do*
torvater), at the University of Washington, the name of Walter Kaufmann di
not appear on our "secondary literature" reading lists—ostensibly because th
seminars were conducted in German, while Kaufmann published in Englis
The paradigm change from *Germanistik* to German Studies in this countr
which, among other things, removed interdisciplinary separation between li
erary studies and philosophy, had not yet occurred. One of the achievemen
of Corngold's *Walter Kaufmann*, is his recognition and celebration of th
paradigm change. Walter Kaufmann's own daring and courageous boo
Nietzsche (1950) and, subsequently, his equally important interdisciplina
contribution, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism* (1959);[1] even anticipated th
paradigm change.

Supplementing Corngold's *Kaufmann*, here is Kaufmann speaking for hi
self, summarizing the three roles of "Philosopher, Humanist and Hereti
with an emphasis on the latter:

> We have been told that Shakespeare was a Christian. Some say he was a Protestant; others he was a Catholic . . . that he extolled the Christian virtues. Faith? Hardly. Hope? Certainly not. But love, of course. In the end, the whole suggestion is reducible to the absurd assumption that a man who celebrates love must have been a Christian. Goethe's *Iphigenie*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, [the prophet]

1 Walter Kaufmann, *From Shakespeare to Existentialism: Studies in Poetry, Religi and Philosophy* (Boston: Beacon Press. 1959).

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