

## Cosmic Narratology and Human Exceptionalism in Maya Poetry: Villegas' *Yáax K'áak'* [Primordial Fire]<sup>1</sup>

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, a pioneering literary movement has taken root and flourished in the Yucatan Peninsula of southeast Mexico. The Maya Literary Renaissance (MLR) is part of a wider Latin American endeavour to revitalise indigenous languages still spoken today. The MLR is also an ecologically inspired movement given its significant focus on the nonhuman environment. This article examines the ecological significance of Wildernain Villegas' bilingual poem (Maya and Spanish), *Yáax K'áak' / Fuego Primigenio* [Primordial Fire]. By engaging the poem in dialogue with the philosophies of Michel Serres, Charles Sanders Peirce and Paul Ricoeur, the article makes two interconnected arguments: that *Primordial Fire* presents literature as a phenomenon that emerges from an underlying narratological potential in the universe, and that, while the poem presents a vision of human exceptionalism, it grounds this vision on our ability to de-centre ourselves by engaging with our more-than-human origins.

### Keywords

Biosemiotics, culture, ecocriticism, human, myth, place

**Word count:** 7,066 (excluding abstract and keywords)

### Introduction

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, a pioneering literary movement has taken root and flourished in the Yucatan Peninsula of south-east Mexico<sup>2</sup>. The Maya Literary Renaissance (MLR) is part of a wider Latin American endeavour to revitalise indigenous languages still spoken today, following a long history of marginalisation and discrimination since the European invasion<sup>3</sup>. Yucatec Maya is one of 31 living

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from my forthcoming monograph Pigott (2020), *Writing the Land, Writing Humanity: The Maya Literary Renaissance* (Routledge)

<sup>2</sup> For discussions of this movement in the Yucatan and beyond, see Worley (2013), Worley & Palacios (2019), Chacón (2018), Arias (2017–2018) etc.

<sup>3</sup> Craveri has argued that 'the recent multiplication of publications in indigenous languages...does not reflect a true renaissance of (pan-)American literary creation, which was never dead, but rather its discovery by the Western gaze' (2011, 393, my translation). However, the term, 'renaissance' is itself used by Mayan authors (see Montejo 2005, and Cocom Pech 2012, 197-198). Moreover, it is not so much a question of the 'West' discovering this literature as of Maya authors *themselves* discovering new possibilities for its creation and dissemination.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53

Mayan languages and has a population of approximately 762,520 (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig 2019). Today, there are over one hundred writers producing poetry, novels, plays, songs, short stories and other genres in Yucatec Maya (Leirana Alcocer 2010). In almost all cases, the literature is bilingual in Maya<sup>4</sup> and Spanish, reflecting the co-existence of these two languages for half a millennium. Several scholars have drawn on Mignolo's notion of *bilanguaging* as 'living-between-languages' (Mignolo 2012 [2000], 264) to describe how the MLR is characterized by inhabiting the 'space between' (Worley & Palacios 2019, 149) both languages<sup>5</sup>. Given that Maya authors are equally comfortable in Maya and Spanish, it would be misleading to attribute greater 'authenticity' to one rather than the other. Rather, the true locus of the text exists in the dialogue between both versions.

The MLR is also an ecologically inspired movement given its significant focus on the nonhuman environment. Wildernain Villegas' poem, *Yáax K'áak' / Fuego Primigenio* [Primordial Fire], exemplifies this intertwining of linguistic, cultural and ecological themes<sup>6</sup>. It was published as part of the anthology, *U k'aay ch'i'ibal / El canto de la estirpe* [The Song of the Lineage] that won Villegas the prestigious Nezahualcóyotl Prize for Literature in Indigenous Mexican Languages in 2008. Villegas, born in 1981, is a lecturer at the Intercultural Maya University of Quintana Roo. Among his extensive poetic production, *Primordial Fire* is particularly fascinating for two main reasons: first, it is based on the most famous literary work from the Mayan world, the *Popol*

<sup>4</sup> Henceforth, I will refer to the language simply as 'Maya', since native speakers never use the qualifier, 'Yucatec'. When I use the term, 'Mayan', I refer to the whole language-family. This is not intended to imply that Yucatec is more 'Maya' than other languages in the same family, but is simply a reflection of the fact that Yucatec is, to my knowledge, the only Mayan language whose speakers refer to it just as 'Maya', as opposed to K'iche', Ch'orti', Q'eqchi', etc.

<sup>5</sup> See also Lepe Lira (2012, 65), Burdette (2019, 96), Worley (2017), Enjuto Rangel (2013) and Chacón (2018, ix-xiii).

<sup>6</sup> Craveri (2013) has also noted the profound importance of the natural world in Villegas' writing.

1  
2  
3 | *Vuh*, as Villegas explained to me during an interview ([August 14, 2016](#))<sup>7</sup>; second, both  
4  
5  
6 texts chart the birth and evolution of the universe itself, right up to the advent of  
7  
8 humanity.  
9

10  
11  
12 The phrase, ‘Popol Vuh’ usually refers to a book-length poem written in the middle of  
13  
14 the sixteenth century in the K’iche’ language of highland Guatemala. Its authors were  
15  
16 anonymous but may have been members of the three K’iche’ lineages who had ruled  
17  
18 before the Spanish invasion (Christenson 2007 [2003], 36-37). The K’iche’ text,  
19  
20 however, is not the original *Popol Vuh*, for its authors claim to have based the story on  
21  
22 an ancient codex ‘from across the sea’ (2007 [2003], 64).  
23  
24  
25

26  
27  
28 Even this manuscript cannot be considered the ‘original’, because the characters and  
29  
30 stories that inhabit the *Popol Vuh* also dwell in monuments, sculptures, ceramics and  
31  
32 oral traditions across the Mayan world, covering a ‘gestation period [of] 2,000 years’  
33  
34 (Ward 2014, 624). Rather than constituting a single text, the *Popol Vuh* is best  
35  
36 understood as an evolving literary event formed through multiple acts of translation  
37  
38 across diverse languages, materialities, regions and dimensions (oral and literate,  
39  
40 hieroglyphic and alphabetic, linguistic and non-linguistic)<sup>8</sup>. Villegas’ poem can be  
41  
42 considered part of this dynamic process, as Worley has similarly argued for Victor  
43  
44 Montejo and Leslie Marmon Silko’s recasting of the *Chilam Balam* books (Worley  
45  
46 2016, 2).  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57

58  
59 | <sup>7</sup> [Villegas, interview on August 14, 2016.](#)

60 | <sup>8</sup> See Henne (2012, 109) who makes a similar point.

1  
2  
3 In this article, I make two interconnected arguments. The first is that *Primordial Fire*  
4 presents literature as a phenomenon that emerges from an underlying narratological  
5 potential in the universe itself. As such, the standpoint of the poem is not so much as a  
6 *representation* of nature from the outside as nature *writing itself* through the medium  
7 of literature. This argument in no way minimises the poetic genius of Villegas; instead,  
8 it invites us to reconsider the process through which creative inspiration can operate at  
9 all. The second argument is that, while *Primordial Fire* presents a vision of human  
10 exceptionalism, it grounds this vision on our ability to de-centre ourselves by engaging  
11 with our more-than-human origins. The poem's version of human exceptionalism rests  
12 on the opposite of human essentialism, namely on our unparalleled semiotic openness  
13 thanks to the symbolic properties of culture.  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30

### 31 **Theoretical Dialogue**

32  
33  
34  
35 To pursue my argument, I engage *Primordial Fire* in dialogue with three philosophers:  
36 Michel Serres, Charles Sanders Peirce and Paul Ricoeur. The originality of Serres'  
37 thinking lies in his attribution of narrative not only to humans but to the universe at  
38 large. For Serres, the universe is not a passive, inert domain of cause and effect onto  
39 which a story has to be projected by human interpretation. Instead, the universe tells its  
40 own story. The nature of being – whether living or non-living – is fundamentally  
41 narrative. In Serres' interpretation, 'nature' should be understood according to its  
42 etymological root (*—nascor*, 'to be born')— in such a way that 'nature' is 'a story of  
43 new-born events, contingent and unpredictable' (Serres 2004, 115; translation from  
44 Watkin 2015, 173). Serres expresses this idea through his notion of the *Grand Récit*, or  
45 Great Story, which is nothing less than the narrative of the universe itself. Rather than  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 attempting to frame natural processes within human models of narrative, Serres invites  
4  
5 us to consider ~~the possibility~~ that human narratives are possible only because they  
6  
7 derive from the rhythms of the universe as a whole. Christopher Watkin, a leading  
8  
9 scholar of Serres' work, describes this as 'one of his characteristic moves, which is to  
10  
11 invert the order of our thinking so that elements we previously considered to be in a  
12  
13 horizontal, metaphorical relation are in fact seen to be nested as a metonymy' (Watkin  
14  
15 2015, 175).  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

21 At the same time, Watkin signals a worrying apology for cultural homogeneity in  
22  
23 Serres' thinking, and cites the following as a particularly salient example: 'Why deplore  
24  
25 the loss of a local culture when the new culture stretches to the community of all people  
26  
27 and when we hook the old and singular humanities onto a humanism that is finally close  
28  
29 to its universal meaning?' (Serres 2003, 36-37, translation from Watkin 2015, 179). If  
30  
31 we are to engage Serres' philosophy with the MLR – which, in its celebration of both  
32  
33 the local *and* the universal, is the direct antithesis of the above quote – Serres'  
34  
35 philosophy must be integrated with an approach that leaves room for the particular.  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41

42 Charles Sanders Peirce's philosophy provides just such a perspective. Peirce considered  
43  
44 that everything in the universe could be explained by three fundamental categories:  
45  
46 *Firstness* (pure potential), *Secondness* (the concrete realisation of this potential) and  
47  
48 *Thirdness* (the mediating process that enables the potentiality of Firstness to be  
49  
50 actualised as the concrete specificity of Secondness) (Peirce 1955 [1940], 322-323).  
51  
52 Peirce's great innovation was to characterise this interplay as semiotic in nature. He  
53  
54 defined the 'sign' as 'something which stands to somebody for something in some  
55  
56 respect or capacity' (1955 [1940], 99). A sign also has three elements: *signifying*  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 *element*<sup>9</sup> (that which has the potential to mean something, i.e. Firstness); *object* (the  
4 element to which the meaning applies, i.e. Secondness); *interpretant* (the mediator  
5 which connects object with signifying element, i.e. Thirdness). Crucially, by  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

*element*<sup>9</sup> (that which has the potential to mean something, i.e. Firstness); *object* (the element to which the meaning applies, i.e. Secondness); *interpretant* (the mediator which connects object with signifying element, i.e. Thirdness). Crucially, by ‘somebody’, Peirce is not referring only to physical people, but to any category relative to which a potentiality can acquire significance and thus be realised as an actuality, such as natural laws.

While Serres’ *Grand Récit* enables us to view literature as just one mode through which the universe narrates itself, the dialogism of Peircian semiosis makes it clear that there is no single narrative but rather a whole multiplicity of stories all interacting and continuously transforming each other. In short, a combined Serresian-Peircean account is not so much *narrative* as *narratological* and invites us to view literature in a new way. Far from existing *apart* from the world, literature is embedded within wider physical processes. Literary narratives are nested within the universal narratology and are therefore particular contexts through which the world (re)constitutes itself.

Human narratives are, however, particularly complex manifestations of thise universal narratological capacityy. Here, Ricoeur’s notion of *emplotment* [mise en intrigue] is indispensable. For Ricoeur, human life consists of the tension between the *forwards* flow of chronological time and the *backwards* flow of phenomenological time (Ricoeur 1985, 318). Chronological time is the linear ‘arrow of time’ (Ricoeur 1983, 105, my translation) ~~–that only moves forwards and that cannot be turned back~~ ~~It is the ‘story already told’ that cannot be undone~~ (Ricoeur 1985, 105). Phenomenological time, on

---

<sup>9</sup> Peirce himself uses several terms to denote the “signifying element”, a term that I have borrowed from Atkin (2013) given its comparative transparency for the reader.

1  
2  
3 the other hand, *is* retrospective; it is the act of reconstructing a series of events (telling  
4 a story) in such a way that they are made sense of within a narrative structure. The  
5 coherence of this narrative renders it a totality whose various stages move towards a  
6 defined conclusion. In order to reconstruct a story, one must trace events backwards,  
7 and that is why Ricoeur describes conclusions as both beginnings and endings (1983~~5~~,  
8 105).

9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24 While chronological time is universal, phenomenological time is unique to human  
25 becoming. The interaction between these two temporal modes constitutes a semiotic  
26 feedback loop that accounts for the continued dynamism of human becoming: actual  
27 narratives, in the sphere of phenomenological time, emerge from the underlying  
28 narratology, or narrativising potential, of the universe in the sphere of chronological  
29 time, yet the future manifestation of chronological time is itself informed by the way  
30 we make sense of ourselves, retrospectively, in phenomenological time<sup>10</sup>.

31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42 Humanity is therefore characterised by a profusion of potential narratives, but such  
43 narratives are not purely human. What makes humanity unique is our ability to *exceed*  
44 ourselves thanks to the symbolic mode of phenomenological time operating through  
45 culture. To engage retrospectively with human emergence is necessarily to go beyond  
46 the boundaries of humanity itself; otherwise, no emergence could be perceived.

---

47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
<sup>10</sup> Craveri has also discussed how the *Popol Vuh* derives much of its symbolic power from the  
~~intertwining of different temporal modes. The mythical discourse of the *Popol Vuh*, she states, is~~  
~~characterised by the~~ ‘concurrency of different temporal, spatial and communicative levels’, which  
enables the individual and the universe to: ~~The interaction between these levels connects the individual~~  
~~with the universal, in such a way that the particular and the general~~ co-create each other through a ‘lived  
history-story [historia]’ (Craveri 2012, 14, my translation).

1  
2  
3 Essentialistic discourses that attempt to account for humanity by closing it in on itself  
4  
5 are, then, self-contradictory, for that very attempt entails a transcendence of the very  
6  
7 boundary that they aim to seal. Culture, then, should be understood not as a property  
8  
9 that humanity *has* but as a mode through which humanity *becomes*<sup>11</sup>. While culture  
10  
11 may be unique to human contexts of becoming, the ubiquity of nonhuman elements in  
12  
13 cultural manifestations proves that culture is not entirely *human*. Instead, it is an  
14  
15 interface through which the categories of the ‘human’ and the ‘nonhuman’ are  
16  
17 continuously re-defined through their mutual constitution. The dualism between  
18  
19 ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ can therefore be re-formulated as a co-constitutive dualism  
20  
21 between the ‘human’ and the ‘nonhuman’ that is in large part mediated through the  
22  
23 more-than-human mid-point of culture. As a particularly creative manifestation of  
24  
25 culture, literature (whether poetry, stories, dramatizations or a combination of genres<sup>12</sup>)  
26  
27 is a means through which the world (nature) continuously reconfigures the parameters  
28  
29 between humanity and nonhumanity and thereby brings itself forth in multiple ways in  
30  
31 diverse contexts.  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40 The above framework has emerged directly from my engagement with *Primordial Fire*,  
41  
42 whose narrator is none other than humanity itself depicting its own emergence in terms  
43  
44 of increased semiotic complexity. In other words, in *Primordial Fire* humanity *reflects*  
45  
46 on the emergence of its *reflective* capacity and understands its humanity in terms of that  
47  
48 very emergence. In this way, humanity both *describes* its capacity for emplotment and,  
49  
50 in so doing, also *realises* this capacity as narrator of the text in question. The story  
51  
52 thereby proves its own point, being an instance of the very process that it  
53  
54  
55

---

56  
57  
58 <sup>11</sup> This idea is indebted to Ingold and Pálsson et al.’s suggestion that ‘human *being*’ is more accurately  
59 conceptualised as human *becoming*’ (2013).

60 <sup>12</sup> *Primordial Fire*, for example, can be understood as a combination of the Maya genres, *iik’il t’aan* (poetry) and *tsikbaal* (story and dialogue).



describesdepicts. To illustrate this, I will examine two key sections of the poem: 1) the emergence of order in the universe and of nonhuman animals; 2) the creation of humanity out of maize. Given that translingual dialogue is so central to the poem, I cite both the Maya and Spanish versions, together with my English translation. I have based my interpretations on the fluency I acquired in Maya after studying this language for a year under the expert tuition of Hilaria Máas Collí at the Autonomous University of the Yucatan (2013-2014) and on the cultural knowledge gained through fieldwork and scholarly publicationsresearch.

### The Emergence of the Universe

In the opening lines, we witness the dawn of the universe unfold before us<sup>13</sup>:

Sáasile' wenja'an paax,

te'elo' Yáax K'áak' ku wayak'tik k'ujo'ob,

wíiniko'ob ku k'u'kuba'ob ich báaxal pook' yéetel ku chíin

pooltiko'ob ja';

ku wayak'tik u k'u'uk'u'umel junp'éel kaan,

u k'áak'il lakeet k'iin yéetel áak'ab tun jakchajal ti' u yóóot'el

junp'éel k'uj.

Ku yaajal, u yicho'obe' ku popokxiik'o'ob yóok'ol

éek'joch'e'enil,

ti' áak'ab túunich ku ts'íibtik u k'áak'il u k'aay,

<sup>13</sup> Like Villegas himself, I use the standard orthography for Yucatec Maya, where accents indicate high tone, apostrophes glottalization, and double vowels indicate vowel-lengthening. For Yucatec (unlike other Mayan languages), /b/ is not written as a glottal consonant.

1  
2  
3 yéetel ku xíitil sáasil:  
4

5 moson ja'.  
6

7  
8 (Villegas 2009, 35)  
9

10  
11  
12 La Luz es música que duerme,  
13  
14 en ella El Fuego Primigenio sueña pirámides,  
15  
16 hombres que se ofrendan en juego de pelota y adoran agua;  
17  
18 sueña ser serpiente vestida de plumas,  
19  
20 flamígero equinoccio deslizándose a la piel de un templo.  
21  
22 Despierta, sus ojos sobrevuelan el abismo,  
23  
24 traza el fuego de su canto en la roca nocturna  
25  
26 y la Luz germina:  
27  
28 es torbellino de agua.  
29  
30

31  
32  
33 (111)  
34  
35

36  
37  
38 Light is music that sleeps,  
39  
40 therein, Primordial Fire dreams of temples,  
41  
42 of people ~~who~~-offering themselves in ballgames and ~~by~~  
43  
44 \_\_\_\_\_-venerating -water;  
45  
46  
47 it dreams of being a serpent clothed in feathers,  
48  
49 equinoctial flames sliding over the skin  
50  
51 of a temple.  
52  
53  
54 It awakes, its eyes flutter above the  
55  
56  
57  
58 darkness,  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 on the nocturnal stone it inscribes the fire of its song,  
4  
5 and the light germinates:  
6  
7  
8 a whirlpool of water.  
9

10  
11  
12 Like the K'iche' version of the *Popol Vuh*, the poem begins by depicting the universe  
13  
14 as 'not the maelstrom of Old World mythology, but a chaos of vibrations and  
15  
16 pulsations' (Tedlock 1996 [1985], 204). The use of the habitual and largely atemporal  
17  
18 prefix, *ku* in Maya, the present tense in the Spanish version and the continuous suffix,  
19  
20 *-a'an* that follows the Maya verb root, *wen-* [to sleep] all evoke the abiding, unfolding  
21  
22 nature of this creative potential, not reducible to a single point of origin. The vision is  
23  
24 remarkably close to Peirce's hypothesis about the early days of the universe: 'a chaos  
25  
26 of unpersonalised feeling...sporting here and there in pure arbitrariness' (Peirce 1955  
27  
28 [1940], 323). By using the term, *paax* [music] rather than *juum* [noise], Villegas  
29  
30 foregrounds the creative energy of the universe, out of which human creativity can  
31  
32 subsequently emerge.  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40  
41 In the second line, complexity beings to emerge in the form of the eponymous  
42  
43 Primordial Fire [Yáax K'áak' / Fuego Primigenio]. It is unclear whether the Primordial  
44  
45 Fire precedes its dreaming or whether the dreaming precedes the dreamer. This  
46  
47 vagueness serves to convey the sense of emergent becoming, a cyclical process that has  
48  
49 no defined beginning but results instead from the concrescence of latent potentialities.  
50  
51 This idea is also brought out in the title of the subject itself: *yáax* in Maya is often  
52  
53 translated as 'first' but not always in the sense of a single event with a defined endpoint;  
54  
55 the Spanish *primigenio* [primeval, primordial] orients the interpretation towards the  
56  
57 sense of an abiding origin that continues to manifest in its future evolutionary forms.  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The 'firstness' of this 'first fire' is, then, much closer to Peirce's conception of Firstness  
4 as a potentiality that is constantly re-actualizing itself. Indeed, fire is a symbol of the  
5 cycle of destruction and regeneration not only among Mayan-speaking people but in  
6 many cultural contexts around the world. The annual burning of the *milpa* (small field)  
7 is still an important part of the agricultural cycle on the Peninsula, while the hearth is  
8 the traditional centre of people's homes.  
9

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19 The depiction of the universe's creativity as a form of dreaming [wayak' / soñar] bears  
20 a striking resemblance to Peirce's conception of a universal mind:  
21  
22

23  
24  
25  
26 With pure freedom and spontaneity Peirce tended to associate mind, and with  
27 firmly entrenched habits he tended to associate matter... Thus he tended to see  
28 the universe as the end-product-so-far of a process in which mind has acquired  
29 habits and has 'congealed' (this is the very word Peirce used) into matter (Burch  
30 2017).  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40 This sense of dreaming as a creative, generative process is manifest throughout the first  
41 half of the *versestanza*. There, the Primordial Fire conceives of (i.e. imagines and  
42 thereby also engenders) humanity. The description of humans as 'offering themselves'  
43 [que se ofrendan] shows, already, how humanity is characterised by its awareness of its  
44 origins, its completion of the hermeneutic cycle through its ability to dialogue with the  
45 forces out of which it originally emerged. That this possibility can be conceived right  
46 from the start of the universe illustrates how emplotment, the creation of  
47 phenomenological time (Ricoeur), is already latent in the emergence of chronological  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

time<sup>14</sup>. The Maya version has *k'u'kuba'ob*, which could be read as *k'ubikuba'ob*: *k'ubik* [to offer]; *-kuba* [third person reflexive suffix]; *-(o)'ob* [plural suffix], hence 'to offer oneself', as per-in the Spanish version. Another interpretation would involve the word, *k'u'uk'* [feather, plant shoot], in the sense of humanity 'spreading its wings' or 'sprouting forth'. The form in which the verb is written is equally redolent of *k'uj* [god, deity] and suggests that, by offering themselves, humans make themselves god-like. Through their practice of the ritual ballgame<sup>15</sup> and the veneration of water, humans enact a new level of semiotic complexity by communing with wider patterns in the cosmos<sup>16</sup>.

The Primordial Fire then dreams itself into the feathered serpent, K'u'uk'ulkaan, whose image appears on the pyramid at the Postclassic site of Chichén Itzá at each equinox. Villegas describes this phenomenon in intensely semiotic terms: the serpent 'inscribes the fire of its song' [ku ts'íibtik u k'áak'il u k'aay / traza el fuego de su canto]. This process results, in turn, in a new phenomenon: the onset of the rainy season as the serpent rises from the underground lakes and releases its stored water. The light germinates<sup>17</sup> as lightening and the land rejuvenates.

<sup>14</sup> Henne has noted how the K'iche' text describes the early emergence of the universe as *winaq<sub>i</sub>arik*, which he convincingly translates as 'becoming embodied' (Henne, 2012, 137); ~~however,~~ ~~†~~This is not just *any* body but a specifically *human* body, for ~~(the root, *winaq* means 'human')~~, as Christenson also notes (2007 [2003], 70 ft.61)(149).

<sup>15</sup> The 'ballgame' was an ancient Mesoamerican sport in which teams from opposing sides hit a rubber ball from their hips. The ball symbolised the sun's journey through the Otherworld and its subsequent re-emergence at dawn. The phrase, 'venerating water' refers to the *iits'ja'* (or water-sorcerer) dynasty of Chichén Itzá.

<sup>16</sup> This can (at least partly) explain why, in Mesoamerican cosmology, nature is often presented as 'dependent on humanity for its existence' (Christenson 2016, 93). From a scientific perspective, it is a particular *manifestation* of nature – i.e. the symbolic world of culture – that is impossible without humanity's existence in symbiosis with the nonhuman.

<sup>17</sup> The Maya version (*xíttil*) in fact means 'to bloom', but the sense of realizing a latent potentiality remains the same.

1  
2  
3 The K'iche' version provides a similar account at the start of creation, when the gods  
4 affirm, 'Then may it be sown: then may dawn the sky and the earth' (Christenson 2007  
5 [2003], 71). Tedlock interprets this passage as 'the sowing of seeds in the earth, whose  
6 sprouting will be their dawning, and...the sowing of the sun, moon, and stars, whose  
7 difficult passage beneath the earth will be followed by their own dawning' (Tedlock  
8 1996 [1985], 31-32). Christenson (2016, 95) notes how to 'sow and to dawn are not  
9 considered independent actions, but analogous expressions for the same generative  
10 event, linked with child-birth'. Here, the *Popol Vuh* again recalls Serres' understanding  
11 of the emergence of life as contiguous with wider generative patterns in the universe,  
12 where more complex stages are nested within their precursors (Watkin 2015, 173).

13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29 The first verse stanza of *Primordial Fire* likewise conveys the emergence of complexity  
30 in the universe, as a context of undifferentiated potentiality (light) gives rise to a  
31 swirling array of forms which, in turn, spiral into ever-new modes of being. That the  
32 equinox is an annual event suggests, moreover, that the universe is constantly creating  
33 and recreating itself. The spiralling nature of this process is, in the Maya version,  
34 visually enacted by the indentation of the fourth, seventh and ninth lines. While the  
35 MLR is largely inspired by the oral tradition, we see how writing affords new  
36 expressive capacities.

37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49 With the second verse stanza, we witness the evolution of yet greater complexity:

50  
51  
52  
53 Ku popokxiik' t'aano'ob,  
54  
55 Yáax K'áak' ku beetik u múuch'ulo'ob,  
56  
57 ku tsoliko'ob,  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 u sayab t'aan ku jáaxtik u sujuyil lu'um,  
4  
5 u ma' nook'il iik':  
6  
7 ku yáalkab u juum ba'alche'ob ti' t'o'olilo'ob,  
8  
9 u k'aay ch'íich'o'ob ku ki'ibokkúunsik k'áax,  
10  
11 t'aane' ku suut éets'nak' ti' amal ba'al,  
12  
13  
14 ba'axe' mix máak t'anik.

15  
16 K'a'ana'an u t'a'abal ti' tuláakal wíinklal,  
17  
18 ku ya'alik Yáax K'aak',  
19

20  
21 \_\_\_\_\_áalkabnak,  
22  
23 \_\_\_\_\_ka' u bul ya'abkach katuno'ob,  
24  
25 ka' u káakabkúuns k'iin yéetel ka' u je'else'.  
26  
27

28 (Villegas 2009, 35-36)  
29  
30

31  
32  
33 Revolotean las palabras,  
34  
35 El Fuego Primigenio las reúne,  
36  
37 las ordena,  
38  
39 su verbo inmortal acaricia la castidad del polvo,  
40  
41 la desnudez del viento:  
42  
43 barullo de animales corre en los desfiladeros,  
44  
45 arpegio de aves aromatiza la selva,  
46  
47 el lenguaje se vuelve eco en cada cosa,  
48  
49 mas nadie lo pronuncia.  
50  
51 Hay que encenderlo en todo cuerpo,  
52  
53 dice el Fuego Primigenio,  
54  
55 que fluya,  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 anegue siglos de siglos,  
4  
5 fertilice el tiempo y lo detenga.  
6

7  
8 (2009, 111-112)  
9

10  
11  
12 Words flutter around,  
13  
14 Primordial Fire causes them to gather together,  
15  
16 arranges them,  
17  
18 the gushing verb caresses the virginity of the earth,  
19  
20 the nudity of the wind:  
21  
22 the clamour of animals courses along pathways,  
23  
24 birdsong perfumes the bush,  
25  
26 language is rendered echo in all things,  
27  
28 but no-one speaks.  
29  
30  
31 It must be ignited in every body,  
32  
33 says Primordial Fire,  
34  
35 let it flow,  
36  
37 let it submerge centuries upon centuries  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42 let it fertilise and pause time.  
43  
44  
45

46  
47 With the first line, we witness an explosion of signs: words [t'aano'ob / \_palabras]  
48  
49 'flutter around'. The subsequent two lines portray the same self-organizing capacity of  
50  
51 the universe that we saw in the first versestanza. This sense is rendered somewhat more  
52  
53 strongly in the Maya version, where *múuch'ulo'ob* is the mediopassive form of the verb  
54  
55 *much'*- [to gather]. The mediopassive indicates action that is performed independently  
56  
57 by the agent ~~(i.e. without external influence)~~. Thus, the *t'aano'ob* [words] gather  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 *themselves* together, as a result of the Primordial Fire which causes [ku beetik] them to  
4  
5 do so. In the Spanish version, by contrast, Primordial Fire actively gathers them  
6  
7 together (*las reúne*). However, if the subject of the poem is a self-ordering *principle* of  
8  
9 the universe, an interpretation that would seem to be suggested by the opening ~~verse~~  
10  
11 ~~stanza cited-discussed~~ above, then even the grammatically transitive form of the  
12  
13  
14 Spanish version does not contradict the idea of self-generating order.  
15  
16

17  
18  
19 The allusion to the *verbo inmortal* [immortal verb] has clear biblical connotations, a  
20  
21 reminder that contemporary Maya literature is a synthesis of pre-Hispanic and  
22  
23 European philosophies. In the Maya version, the word, *sayab* literally means  
24  
25 ‘wellspring’ or ‘fountain’ and is commonly used as a synonym for ‘sacred’ in Christian  
26  
27 religious contexts (Barrera Vásquez 1980, 723). It is worth remembering ~~here~~-that  
28  
29 Peirce was himself a believer in what he called a ‘supreme being’ (Peirce 1955 [1940],  
30  
31 375). Indeed, if God is taken as a self-ordering principle of the universe rather than  
32  
33 monological, univocal dogma, there need be no contradiction with the polyphonic  
34  
35 vision presented by Peirce, Villegas or the K’iche’ version of the *Popol Vuh*. The sense  
36  
37 of a wellspring suggests, after all, a constant process of becoming, an outpouring of  
38  
39 creativity and bubbling energy that is equally conveyed by the biblical notion of the  
40  
41 ‘verb’.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

49 Christian influences are also evidenced in the allusion to the ‘nakedness’ [ma’ nook’il  
50  
51 / desnudez] of the wind and the ‘chastity’ [castidad/\_sujuyil] of the earth. While today  
52  
53 the Maya, *sujuy* (whence *sujuyil*) often denotes ‘virgin’ in a Christian sense, it  
54  
55 originally indicated ‘things unsullied by the human presence, often because of spatial  
56  
57 remoteness’ (Stone 1995, 17). Thus, Villegas’ reference to the land as *sujuy* is more  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 than a rhetorical flourish. The poet thereby foregrounds the fact that the semiotic  
4 precursors of humanity existed long before the advent of humanity itself. As Hoffmeyer  
5 similarly states, ‘Human mind is not...an alien element in the universe – but rather, an  
6 instantiation of evolutionary trends that penetrate the life sphere and that (I suspect) are  
7 deeply rooted in the general dynamics of the universe’ (Hoffmeyer 2008, 320).  
8  
9

10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17 In *Primordial Fire*, the subsequent evolution of the universe results in a new level of  
18 semiotic complexity as words not only order themselves but also echo *each other*,  
19 thereby creating a profusion of voices: an ‘arpeggio’ [k’aay/\_arpegio] of birds that  
20 ‘perfumes’ [ki’ibokkúunsik/\_aromatiza] the forest. However, this animal  
21 communication is only a *barullo* [racket] or *juum* [noise], while ‘nobody speaks’ [mix  
22 máak t’anik / nadie lo pronuncia]. The latter phrase can be read in two ways: ‘nobody  
23 speaks’, or ‘no person speaks’ (the Maya word, *máak* [person] is almost always used  
24 in the context of human beings). If both meanings are read together, the sense is that  
25 the universe can only realise its full potential with the advent of humanity. This same  
26 idea is presented in the K’iche’ version of the *Popol Vuh* where the gods implore the  
27 animals to worship them through language, yet the animals ‘did not speak like people.  
28 They only squawked and chattered and roared’ (Christenson 2007 [2003], 76).  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46

47 In *Primordial Fire*, the ambiguity that is conveyed by references to language and a  
48 simultaneous denial of ‘full’ language suggests both human exceptionalism and a sense  
49 that such exceptionalism does not constitute an ontological gulf with regards pre-  
50 existing forms of semiosis. As Hoffmeyer explains in his paraphrase of Deacon (1997),  
51 ‘language is not a unique invention on the planet, but should be seen instead as a  
52 sophisticated new *semiotic resource* that grew from the web of semiotic activities  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 already well established in the animal kingdom, long before human beings appeared'  
4  
5 (Hoffmeyer 2008, 299). Indeed, the sense that (human) language shall both 'fertilise'  
6  
7 [káakabkúuns / fertilizar > fertilice] and 'suspend' [je'else' / detener > detenga] time  
8  
9 suggests semiotic plenitude, even saturation, an idea that is also conveyed by the  
10  
11 metaphor of 'flooding' [bul / anegar > anegue]. In the last three lines of both the Maya  
12  
13 and Spanish versions, moreover, the visual indentation together with the traditional  
14  
15 parallelism of Mayan verse creates a tension between change and continuity. This  
16  
17 combination of 'Western' and Maya poetic devices perfectly conveys the emergence of  
18  
19 novelty from pre-existing patterns in the universe.  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

### 26 **The Emergence of Humanity**

27  
28  
29  
30 After passing through various subsequent stages – the emergence of a man of clay, and  
31  
32 human prototypes made of wood and reeds – the universe finally attains semiotic  
33  
34 plenitude in the form of the maize-man:  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40 Yáax K'áak' ku póolik tu ka'atéen sujuy t'aan.

41  
42 Ku yu'ubik sak pakal yéetel kéej

43  
44 ku yo'onkiinsik ixi'im paax,

45  
46 ku puk'ik paaxo'ob tu ja'il cháak ts'u'uts'a'an meen samalsam:

47  
48 in ba'axile' ku xiitil.

49  
50 Sak ixi'imén, k'ank'an yéetel éek'jub ixi'imén,

51  
52 tso'otseel jo'ol, icho'ob, juum kaal,

53  
54 o'éot'el mak'anta'an yéetel juuch' ix yéetel ja',

55  
56 yéetel paax meenta'an kukulaankil.  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
 2  
 3 Kin xokik u ma' talamil in kuxtal,  
 4  
 5 kin t'úubul ti' le bejla'a',  
 6  
 7 k'áak'naab ku xímbaltik in wíinklal,  
 8  
 9 kúukul tu paach kúukul  
 10  
 11  
 12 yáax téen  
 13  
 14 utia'al maantats' .  
 15

16  
 17 (Villegas 2009, 39)  
 18

19  
 20  
 21 El Fuego Primigenio pule otra metáfora.  
 22  
 23 Escucha a la paloma torcaz y al venado  
 24  
 25 que fecundan música de maíz,  
 26  
 27 disuelve notas en la lluvia besada por la aurora:  
 28  
 29 Germina mi sustancia.  
 30  
 31 Soy cereal blanco, violeta y amarillo,  
 32  
 33 cabello, ojos, voz, dermis de masa y lluvia,  
 34  
 35 de melodía hecha pulso.  
 36  
 37 Descifro la sencillez de mi existencia,  
 38  
 39 me hundo en el hoy,  
 40  
 41 mar que transita mi cuerpo  
 42  
 43 ola tras ola,  
 44  
 45 por primera vez,  
 46  
 47 para siempre.  
 48  
 49  
 50  
 51  
 52  
 53

54 (2009, 114-115)  
 55  
 56  
 57

58 Primordial Fire sculpts, once more, an invocation.  
 59  
 60

1  
2  
3 It listens to the white-winged dove and the deer  
4  
5 who fertilise the music of maize,  
6  
7 it dissolves notes in the rainwater kissed by the dawn:  
8  
9  
10 My substance germinates.  
11  
12 I am white maize, golden maize, purple maize,  
13  
14 hair, eyes, voice,  
15  
16 skin, moulded with flour and water,  
17  
18 melody made pulse,  
19  
20  
21 I decipher the simplicity of my life,  
22  
23 I submerge myself in the present,  
24  
25 the sea transits through my body,  
26  
27 wave after wave,  
28  
29  
30 for the first time,  
31  
32  
33 forever.

34  
35  
36  
37  
38 With *sujuy t'aan* [invocation] in Maya and *metáfora* [metaphor] in Spanish, the opening  
39  
40 line again alludes to the semiotic nature of the universe. The deer is widely associated  
41  
42 with living breath in the Peninsula ([Pigott 2000, 96–97](#)), while doves evoke similar  
43  
44 connotations given their soft voice and whirring flight. Thus, it is entirely appropriate  
45  
46 that they should be the species to ‘fertilise the music of maize’ [ku yo'onkiinsik xixim  
47  
48 paax / fecundan música de maíz]. This phrase ~~evokes recalls oral folktales that describe~~  
49  
50 ~~farmers listening to the fields of corn which seem to ‘speak’ ‘voices’ of maize plants as~~  
51  
52 the leavesy rustle in the wind. Humanity emerges from this semiotic saturation, as  
53  
54 described in an intensely beautiful combination of clauses: ‘it dissolves notes in the  
55  
56 rainwater kissed by the dawn: My substance germinates’ [ku puk'ik paaxo'ob tu ja'il  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 cháak ts'u'uts'a'an meen samalsam: in ba'axile' ku xíitil / disuelve notas en la lluvia  
4  
5 besada por la aurora: Germina mi sustancia].  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 The following two lines convey an iconic relationship between humanity and maize  
11 (*Zea mays mays*): the different kinds of corn (white, purple, yellow) allude to the widely  
12 diverse human physiognomies, while corn, like humanity, has hair, eyes, voice and  
13 skin. The line, 'melody made pulse' [yéetel paax meenta'an kukulaankil / de melodía  
14 hecha pulso] recalls the opening verse-stanza, where music was evoked as a primeval  
15 form of creativity; here, music matures into a series of ordered pulsations (kukulaankil  
16 / pulso).  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27

28 The key moment in this verse-stanza – and, indeed, in the entire poem – occurs with the  
29 affirmation, 'I decipher the simplicity of my life' [Kin xokik u ma' talamil in kuxtal /  
30 Descifro la sencillez de mi existencia]. This line evidences an attribute that was absent  
31 in all earlier stages of evolution: what Hoffmeyer describes as 'a dawning self-  
32 recognition of the human being *as* a historical being' (Hoffmeyer 2008, 309), namely  
33 the ability to reflect on one's own existence, and the recognition of this very ability. By  
34 'deciphering' [xook > xokik / descifrar > descifro] its origins, humanity provides the  
35 first context in which the universe can narrate itself backwards, through Ricoeur's  
36 phenomenological time. While an advance in complexity, this new manifestation is also  
37 a profound form of 'simplicity' [ma' talamil / sencillez] because it represents the  
38 completion of a semiotic (hermeneutic) cycle. By coming 'full circle' through the  
39 interaction between chronological and phenomenological time, the universe enters into  
40 a radically new mode of semiotic expression – culture – through which humanity  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 continuously re-actualises itself by reflecting on, and thereby enacting, its emergence  
4  
5 from the more-than-human world.  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 The metaphor of the ocean in the remainder of the verse-stanza continues the notion of  
11 semiotic saturation with the line, 'I submerge myself in the present' [kin t'úbul ti' le  
12 bejla'a' / me hundo en el hoy]. The Maya deictic suffix, *-a'* in *bejla'a'* [now, today]  
13  
14 heightens the sense of immediacy; normally, this word is rendered *bejla'e'*, where the  
15  
16 suffix, *-e'* serves as a topicalizer that focuses attention on the word in question. The  
17  
18 suffix, *-a'*, by contrast, indicates things that are temporally or spatially immediate,  
19  
20 much like the English demonstrative adjective, 'this'. By changing a single letter,  
21  
22 Villegas makes a fundamental point: that the event of human creation is not only of the  
23  
24 distant past but is taking place right here and now. Given the transformative nature of  
25  
26 literary inhabitation, humanity unfolds not only *in front of* the reader but also *within*  
27  
28 them.  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37

38 The sense that this moment of creation is constantly repeating itself is reinforced  
39 through the allusion to waves, which are both cyclical and unique events that eternally  
40 create and recreate novel forms: 'wave after wave, for the first time, forever' [kúukul  
41 tu paach kúukul, yáax téen, utia'al maantats' / ola tras ola, por primera vez, para  
42 siempre]. As with the ancient double-sided codices and the circular messages on  
43 polychromatic vases, the visual form of these lines exists in a symbiotic relationship  
44 with their meaning. The interaction between cyclicity and uniqueness is similarly  
45 present in the K'iche' version:  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Mayans are always alert to the reassertion of the patterns of the past in present  
4  
5 events, but they do not expect the past to repeat itself exactly. Each time the  
6  
7 gods of the Popol Vuh attempt to make human beings they get a different result,  
8  
9 and except for the solitary person made of mud, each attempt has a lasting result  
10  
11 rather than completely disappearing into the folds of cyclical time...The effect  
12  
13 of these events, like others, is cumulative, and it is a specifically human capacity  
14  
15 to take each of them into account separately while at the same time recognizing  
16  
17 that they double back on one another (Tedlock 1996 [1985], 59-60).  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23

24 Tedlock's description strongly recalls Serres' interpretation of posterior stages of the  
25  
26 universe as nested within previous stages. With the advent of phenomenological time  
27  
28 (Ricoeur), the relationship between cyclicity and uniqueness takes on ~~an~~ even greater  
29  
30 significance: through humanity, the universe is able to interpret its own ontogenesis  
31  
32 (specific *narratives* emerge from a universal *narratology*, or narrativizing potential),  
33  
34 leading to an infinite proliferation of semiotic cycles.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39

40 In *Primordial Fire*, the story of humanity begins at the coast, which is also where the  
41  
42 land commences. In this way, time and space, habitat and inhabitant, all emerge  
43  
44 together. As Zapf notes,  
45  
46  
47  
48

49 The special significance of the seashore for a cultural ecology of literature is  
50  
51 linked with its conspicuous in-between status...The beach has a certain  
52  
53 stability, yet is constantly changing; it is a site of regularly recurring rhythms  
54  
55 and irregular morphodynamic shifts and transformations. It was central to the  
56  
57 emergence of life, and, as a place of transition between sea and land, has been  
58  
59  
60



crucial to the evolution and continuing survival of human cultures (Zapf 2016, 189).

In the context of the MLR, the sea has even greater significance, being the origin of the land's limestone geology and also of its peninsular form. Indeed, while the K'iche' version of the *Popol Vuh* also describes various stages of emergence and submersion of the land, they are true in a much more literal (as well as littoral) sense in the context of the Peninsula whose history has been determined by rising and falling sea levels.

The remainder of the fourth verse-stanza describes how the man of maize becomes lonely, but soon a bud sprouts from his chest and grows into the first woman. As in the K'iche' text, men precede women, and it is hard not to read a degree of biblical influence here. While, in the *Popol Vuh*, women are created as a consolation for men's loss of omniscience, in Villegas' poem the motivation is completeness: man can only realise his potential as part of an equal pair, and the limitless future possibilities of humanity are the product of both sexes in unison:

Boox yi'ij, ch'úup yi'ij,  
 yáakam síis iik',  
 jáal k'áak'naab tu'ux in pe'echak' ku káajal u na'atik  
 ch'i'ibalo'ob,  
 sujuy jóom ku yajsiken.

(Villegas 2009, 40)

Espiga morena, mujerespiga,

1  
2  
3 brisa gimiente,  
4  
5 playa donde mi paso comienza a presentir generaciones,  
6  
7 marea virginal que me despierta.  
8  
9  
10 (2009, 115)  
11  
12  
13

14 Dark corn-ear, woman corn-ear,  
15  
16 voice of the cool breeze,  
17  
18 coast where my footsteps start to foretell  
19  
20 generations,  
21  
22 virgin waves which awaken me.  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27

28 It is only with the advent of the first woman that the maize-man becomes truly awake:  
29  
30 she is the ‘virgin waves which awaken me’ [sujuy j~~ouu~~m ku yajsiken / marea virginal  
31  
32 que me despierta]. Without her, he still cannot ‘comprehend’ [na’atik] or ‘~~perceive~~<sup>2</sup>  
33  
34 foretell’ [~~perceibir~~ > ~~perceibopresentir~~] future generations [ch’i’ibal / \_generaciones], for  
35  
36 they remain impossible without the existence of both sexes. Now truly complete,  
37  
38 humanity stands at the frontiers of space and time and begins its unending cycle of birth  
39  
40 and re-birth as, wave after wave, it constantly re-creates itself through dialogue with its  
41  
42 more-than-human emergence.  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

49 *Primordial Fire* is *itself* an instance of this very process of re-creation, and thereby not  
50  
51 only *describes* human emergence but is also instrumental in *enacting* it. While  
52  
53 *Primordial Fire*, like the K’iche’ version of the *Popol Vuh*, appears at times to suggest  
54  
55 a purposeful evolution of the universe, the perception of purpose is nothing more (or  
56  
57 less) than the reflection of a subject that seeks to explain its existence in a meaningful  
58  
59  
60

way. Thus, while such accounts are generally ~~derided~~dismissed by the scientific community, if they are read not as literal truths but as examples of semiotic emergence, they tell us a great deal about humanity's role in the evolution of complexity. Villegas' magnificent poem combines Serres' cosmic narratology, Peirce's semiosis and Ricoeur's emplotment to reveal human emergence as the dawn of an era where, for the first time, the universe can cast its gaze backwards across the aeons and, in so doing, transform the ghosts of the past into the visions of the future.

## References

Arias, Arturo: ~~(2017–2018)~~. *Recovering Lost Footprints: Contemporary Maya Narratives*. (Vols. 1–2). Albany: SUNY Press.

Atkin, Albert (2013) "Peirce's Theory of Signs". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2013 Edition, edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/peirce-semiotics/>, accessed 22 April 2020.

Barrera Vásquez, Alfredo (editor): ~~(1980)~~. *Diccionario maya Cordemex: maya-español; español-maya*. Mérida: Ediciones Cordemex.

Burch, Robert: ~~(2017)~~. 'Charles Sanders Peirce'. ~~In~~ *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Fall 2017 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta ~~(ed.)~~. ~~URL~~

1  
2  
3 <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/peirce/>>, accessed ~~10<sup>th</sup> August~~  
4 ~~2018~~ 22 April 2020.  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9

10  
11  
12 Burdette, Hannah. (2019). *Revealing Rebellion in Abiyala: The Insurgent Poetics of*  
13 *Contemporary Indigenous Literature*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.  
14

15  
16  
17  
18  
19 Chacón, Gloria. (2018). *Indigenous Cosmolectics: Kab'awil and the Making of Maya*  
20 *and Zapotec Literatures*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press.  
21  
22

23  
24  
25  
26 Christenson, Allen. (2007 [2003]). *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya*. Norman:  
27 University of Oklahoma Press.  
28  
29

30  
31  
32  
33 Christenson, Allen. (2016). “‘Who Shall be a Sustainer?’: Maize and Human Mediation  
34 in the Maya Popol Vuh.”. *A Global History of Literature and the Environment*, edited  
35 by Louise Westling, and John Parham. Cambridge: CUP, pp.93-106.  
36  
37  
38  
39

40  
41  
42 Cocom Pech, Jorge Miguel. (2012). *J-nool Gregorio', juntúul miats'il maya, El*  
43 *abuelo Gregorio, un sabio maya*. Mexico City: CONACULTA.  
44  
45  
46  
47

48  
49 Craveri, Michela. (2011). “La literatura maya hoy y la construcción de las identidades:  
50 Procesos constantes de afirmación y de revitalización.”. *Revista de literaturas*  
51 *populares* 2 (11), pp.392–409.  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Craveri, Michela. (2012). *Contadores de historias, arquitectos del cosmos: el*  
4 *simbolismo del Popol Vuh como estructuración de un mundo*. Mexico City: UNAM.  
5  
6  
7

8  
9  
10 Craveri, Michela. (2013). “El canto de la estirpe de Wildernain Villegas: tradición y  
11 modernidad en la poesía maya”. In *Cuando quiero hallar las voces: encuentro con los*  
12 *afectos*, edited by Patrizia Spinato Bruschi and Jaime José Martínez. Rome: CNR  
13 Edizioni, pp.207-216.  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18

19  
20  
21 Deacon, Terrence (1997) *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the*  
22 *Brain*. New York: WW Norton & Company.  
23  
24  
25

26  
27  
28 Eberhard, David, Gary Simons, and Charles Fennig (editors) (2019) *Ethnologue:*  
29 *Languages of the World*, Twenty-second Edition. SIL  
30 International, <http://www.ethnologue.com>, accessed 22 April 2020.  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35

36  
37 Enjuto Rangel, Cecilia. (2013). “La poética de la traducción: Briceida Cuevas Cob”.  
38 *Cuadernos de ALDEEU* 25, pp.279-289.  
39  
40  
41

42  
43  
44 Henne, Nathan. (2012). “Untranslation: The *Popol Wuj* and Comparative  
45 Methodology”. *CR: The New Centennial Review* 12 (2), pp.107-149.  
46  
47  
48  
49

50  
51 Hoffmeyer, Jesper. (2008). *Biosemiotics: An Examination into the *Life of Signs of Life**  
52 *and the *Signs of Life of Signs**. Chicago: University of Scranton Press.  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Ingold, Tim and Gisli Pálsson (~~eds~~editors): (2013): *Biosocial Becomings: Integrating Social and Biological Anthropology*. Cambridge: CUP.

Leirana Alcocer, Silvia Cristina: (2010): *Catálogo de textos mayas publicados entre 1990 y 2009: Bibliografía comentada*. Mérida, Mexico: Instituto de Cultura de Yucatán.

Lepe Lira, Luz María: (2012): “Giro decolonial y pensamiento fronterizo en la literatura indígena contemporánea de México.”. *AlterTexto* 1, pp.54-69.

Mignolo, Walter: (2012 [2000]): *Local Histories / Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Montejo, Victor: (2005): *Maya Intellectual Renaissance: Identity, Representation, and Leadership*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Peirce, Charles Sanders: (1955 [1940]): *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, edited by : Justus Buchler (~~editor~~). New York: Dover.

Pigott, Charles (2020) *Writing the Land, Writing Humanity: The Maya Literary Renaissance*. New York: Routledge.

Ricoeur, Paul (1983) *Temps et récit. Tome I: L'intrigue et le récit historique*. Paris: Le Seuil.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5 Ricoeur, Paul: (1985). *Temps et récit. Tome III: Le temps raconté*. Paris: Le Seuil.  
6  
7  
8  
9

10 Serres, Michel: (2003). *L'incandescent*. Paris: Le Pommier.  
11  
12  
13

14 Serres, Michel: (2004). *Rameaux*. Paris: Le Pommier.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21

22 ~~Simons, Gary and Charles Fennig, editors. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World,*~~  
23 ~~*Twenty-first Edition*. SIL International, 2018, <http://www.ethnologue.com>, accessed 10~~  
24 ~~August 2018.~~  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

30  
31 Stone, Andrea J.: (1995). *Images from the Underworld: Naj Tunich and the Tradition*  
32 *of Maya Cave Painting*. Austin: University of Texas Press.  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37

38 Tedlock, Dennis: (1996 [1985]). *Popol Vuh: The Definitive Edition of The Mayan Book*  
39 *of The Dawn of Life and The Glories of Gods and Kings*. New York: Simon and  
40 Schuster.  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46

47 Villegas, Wildernain: (2009). *U K'aay Ch'i'ibal / El canto de la estirpe*. Mexico City:  
48 CONACULTA.  
49  
50  
51  
52

53  
54 Ward, Thomas (-2014). "The *Popol Wuj* and the Birth of Mayan Literature". In *The*  
55 *Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature*, edited by James Cox and Daniel  
56 Heath Justice, 617-637. Oxford: OUP, pp. 617-637.  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Watkin, Christopher. (2015). "Michel Serres' Great Story: From Biosemiotics to Econarratology". *SubStance* 44 (3), pp. 171-187.

Worley, Paul. (2013). *Telling and Being Told: Storytelling and Cultural Control in Contemporary Yucatec Maya Literatures*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Worley, Paul. (2016). "Pan-Maya and 'Trans-Indigenous': The Living Voice of the Chilam Balam in Victor Montejo and Leslie Marmon Silko". *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. 28 (1), pp. 1-20.

Worley, Paul. (2017). "Máseual excluido/indio permitido: Neoliberal Translation in Waldemar Noh Tzec". *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*. 12 (3), pp. 290-314.

Worley, Paul and Palacios, Rita. (2019). *Unwriting Maya Literature: Ts'iib as Recorded Knowledge*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Zapf, Hubert. (2016). *Literature as Cultural Ecology: Sustainable Texts*. London: Bloomsbury.