CONTENTS

List of Illustrations | ix

Introduction | 1
Michael D. Carrasco and Kerry M. Hull

Part I Finding Continuities in Maya Poetics and Literature

CHAPTER 1 The Narrative Structure of Chol Folktales: One Thousand Years of Literary Tradition | 21
Nicholas A. Hopkins and J. Kathryn Josserand

Part II Establishing Traditions: Hieroglyphic Literature and Poetics

CHAPTER 2 Syntactic Inversion (Hyperbaton) as a Literary Device in Maya Hieroglyphic Texts | 45
Alfonso Lacadena

CHAPTER 3 Poetic Tenacity: A Diachronic Study of Kennings in Mayan Languages | 73
Kerry M. Hull

CHAPTER 4 The History, Rhetoric, and Poetics of Three Palenque Narratives | 123
Michael D. Carrasco

CHAPTER 5 Understanding Discourse: Beyond Couplets and Calendrics First | 161
Lloyd B. Anderson

CHAPTER 6 Drawing and Designing with Words | 181
Dennis Tedlock

CHAPTER 7 Narrative Structure and the Drum Major Headdress | 195
Karen Bassie-Sweet, Nicholas A. Hopkins, and J. Kathryn Josserand

Part III From Glyphs to Letters: Colonial Maya Poetics and Literature

CHAPTER 8 Creation Narratives in the Postclassic Maya Codices | 223
Gabrielle Vail

CHAPTER 9 Some Historical Continuities in Lowland Maya Magical Speech Genres: Keying Shamanic Performance | 253
Timothy W. Knowlton

CHAPTER 10 Appropriating Sacred Speech: Aesthetics and Authority in Colonial Ch'olti' | 271
Danny Law

CHAPTER 11 Poetics in the *Popol Wuj* | 283
Luis Enrique Sam Colop

CHAPTER 12 The Use of Chiasmus by the Ancient K'iche' Maya | 311
Allen J. Christenson

Part IV Keepers of Tradition: Modern Maya Poetics and Literature

CHAPTER 13 Before Poetry, the Words: A Metalinguistic Digression | 339
Aurore Monod Becquelin and Alain Breton

CHAPTER 14 Humor through Yucatec Mayan Stories | 375
Allan F. Burns

CHAPTER 15 A Comparison of Narrative Style in Mopan and Itzaj Mayan | 401
Charles Andrew Hofling

CHAPTER 16 The Lights Dim but Don't Go Out on the Stars of Yucatec Maya Oral Literature | 449
Mary H. Preuss

CHAPTER 17 To Speak the Words of Colonial Tzotzil | 471
Robert M. Laughlin

Glossary | 477

List of Contributors | 479

Index | 481

INTRODUCTION

MICHAEL D. CARRASCO AND KERRY M. HULL

Since the mid-1980s, incredible strides have been made in the linguistic decipherment of the Maya hieroglyphic script. Historical figures have emerged from the linguistically mute archaeological record, illuminated by narratives about ancient political machinations and dynastic intrigue. The rich iconographic world of Maya mythology has also been set within the context of specific textual narratives that have provided a clearer picture of the religious aspects of Maya thought and society than was ever possible through images alone. Research since 1990 has shed light on verbal morphology and other grammatical structures (Houston 2000; Wald 2007; Wichmann 2004) that in turn have allowed for the close reading of complex texts to the extent that we are now in the position to read America's earliest known literary tradition with relative ease.

With growing textual transparency and comparisons with known Mayan languages, researchers have identified discourse structures that suggest remarkable continuities between ancient narratives, fragmentary though they are, and ethnohistoric and contemporary ones (see Bricker 1986a; Hull 2003; Josserand 1991, 1995, 1997, 2007; Josserand and Hopkins 1996; Schele 1982). These advances in decipherment have occurred primarily through greater attention to Colonial documents and contemporary Mayan languages, as well as the ever-growing corpus of Maya hieroglyphic texts and the collection of contemporary Mayan narratives (Burns 1983; Fought 1972; Hofling 1991; Karasik 1988; Laughlin 1980; Pitarch Ramón 1996).

Concurrent with these advances in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphs, new studies of and approaches to Colonial and contemporary Mayan and other Mesoamerican literatures have been produced over the last half-century (Edmonson and Bricker 1985). Building on Angel María Garibay K.'s (1953) work on Nahuatl literature, Miguel León-Portilla (1969) was the first to present Maya documents as verse, thereby signaling the literary importance of Maya and other indigenous language texts. Munro Edmonson's translation of the *Popol Vuh* (1971) as a series of couplets highlighted the intensely poetic character of the narrative, as well as the importance of the couplet in Mayan literature more broadly, as did his translation and analysis of two of the *Books of the Chilam Balam* (1982, 1986). The recognition of the couplet as one of the major poetic features of Maya verbal art has been a critical point of departure for many of the literary studies that have followed, including those presented in this volume. Dennis Tedlock (1983: 216–230) justifiably questioned Edmonson's strict adherence to the couplet as the paramount structuring device in Maya narrative, and his work on K'iche' verbal art exposed the important role of other forms of parallelism—such as the triplet—in Maya verse structure and raised questions of performance and deep context.

Much of this research engaged or was part of the growing fields of the ethnography of speaking or communication and ethnopoetics (Bauman and Sherzer 1986; Hymes 1962, 1981; Tedlock 1983), in which performance, context, translation, and textual representation—as well as issues of genre and metalinguistics—came to the fore as critical areas of investigation. These studies generally focused on contemporary verbal art and the analysis of indigenous narratives collected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This period also witnessed a growing popular interest in world literatures and ethnopoetics and coincided with the development of kindred fields such as ethnomusicology, with which the ethnography of speaking shares considerable common ground.

A watershed event in Maya literary studies that brought Mayan Colonial literature to a lay public was Tedlock's translation of the *Popol Vuh* in 1985. Along with works such as *Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art* (Schele and Miller 1986), *Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya* (Schele and Freidel 1990), and *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path*

(Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993), Tedlock's translation ushered in a popular discourse on the Maya that few areas of ancient art or indigenous culture have enjoyed. Subsequent translations and analyses of the *Popol Vuh* (Christenson 2003; Sam Colop 1994, 1999), as well as many other Colonial documents (Breton 1994, 2007; Carmack and Mondloch 1983; Maxwell and Hill 2006; Quezada and Harada 2001; Tedlock 2005), have revealed additional poetic richness in the Colonial corpus and demonstrated that the process of translation itself is an important heuristic tool in the study of Mesoamerican literature and philology.

At this moment we feel Maya hieroglyphic studies are again at a crossroads. That is, despite these developments in epigraphy, ethnopoetics, and the literary investigation of Colonial and modern materials, few dedicated studies have explicitly placed historic Maya literatures in conversation with glyphic texts to underscore the striking continuities that attest to the resilience and profound importance of traditional lifeways in Maya societies. This volume is one among a growing number of publications (Tedlock 2010) that examines Maya literary and verbal arts from a historical perspective, with the aim of highlighting the important continuities and discontinuities that exist among literatures ranging from the Classic period to the present. It moves beyond the situation exemplified in much of Maya art historical and epigraphic research, where more emphasis has been placed on the extraction of meaning from art and literature than on their formal characteristics and what these forms can tell us about ancient and contemporary worldviews. We feel it is no longer possible to regard the language in which history and myth are told as a transparent medium. Like the style of the art that glyphs not only accompany but with which they are at times contiguous, language form is also marked in historically and regionally specific ways, even if the study of this kind of variation is still in its infancy.

The meaning of form and style is an important point to emphasize here. Gaining an appreciation of the poetic features of discourse goes beyond the mere description and cataloging of particular forms. Meaning is nurtured in poetic forms, just as poetic forms are inextricably linked to their resulting semantic realizations. Reading or hearing Maya texts without understanding the particular rhetorical and narrative features native to those texts is akin to listening to music from a tradition alien to one's own or reading every other page of a book; while some enjoyment and understanding are experienced, the intended meaning of the text is diminished significantly.

Poetic discourse often bears the burden of conveying subtle changes in mood and attitude or marking emphasis and devaluing in the narrative. Thus, for example, a failure to recognize a chiasmic structure retards the comprehension of its emphasized axis, thereby hindering full intelligibility. Or, if a subject is extracted from its phrase and moved into an agent focus position, this deviation from standard syntax meaningfully marks this narrative moment.

Similarly, a lone couplet in a prose section petitions the reader or listener to question its presence, to pause and reflect on the significance of that verse, and encourages a more intense engagement with the text. A lack of sensitivity to the narrative features built into Maya poetic discourse results in a loss of meaning. Thus the authors in this volume invite readers to view Maya narrative poetics as relevant, intentionally creative features that are themselves laden with meaning. Accordingly, the recognition of poetic devices embedded in Maya narratives is a crucial first step in gaining a more complete understanding of a given text.

The contributors to this volume apply ethnopoetic approaches to Maya discourse from Classic period hieroglyphic inscriptions to contemporary spoken narratives. Thus this volume remedies the lacunae in Maya studies described earlier by addressing the diachronic relationships among ancient, Colonial, and modern Maya verbal arts and narrative genres. The chapters in this volume examine Maya literature and verbal art over a period of nearly two millennia to demonstrate a remarkable continuity in Maya literary traditions from ancient to modern times. For the first time, a single book provides a thorough account of the origins of many of the major discourse features of modern Maya groups by tracing their origins to similar occurrences in the ancient hieroglyphic script. Through seventeen chapters written by many of the leading scholars in Maya literary studies, this volume provides ways of approaching Classic Maya literature that are informed by the methods developed through the study of Colonial and contemporary Maya literature. The knowledge that Colonial and contemporary literatures are only the most recent iteration of a tradition spanning several thousand years also illuminates other areas of cultural continuity that should be of interest to researchers investigating kindred topics in Maya and other Mesoamerican societies. The chapters in this volume advance a new, comprehensive view that a bridge between glyphic and historic Maya literatures will profoundly enrich our understanding of them both.

MAYA LITERATURE

In defining Maya literature, perhaps one of the first issues to address is exactly what constitutes literature(s) in the Maya world and whether formal similarities between different periods in and of themselves suggest real continuities. David Foster (1994: 5) has wisely cautioned that "our modern generic assumptions about literature must be reexamined when we turn our attention to the texts, signs, and images that transmit the knowledge and heritage of Mesoamerican peoples," since the very "idea of literature as a certain class of written texts already depends on culturally specific assumptions."

Thus, is the presence of such features as couplets simply a structural element so ubiquitous that it provides little evidence of meaningful continuities within Maya literary traditions, or are couplets one of the diagnostic formal traits of this tradition? To answer this question, a logical point of departure is to first ascertain the formal structural characteristics found in modern Mayan languages as an initial step in understanding diachronic similarities. Fortunately, our corpus of published Mayan texts has increased dramatically since the beginning of the twentieth century, providing a suitable means for comparative analyses. In addition, since the 1960s, in-depth studies identifying specific speech, genre, and poetic types have been instrumental in isolating which features are prominent in formal and informal discourse (Bricker 1973, 1974, 1986b; Burns 1980, 1983, 1993; Christenson 2003; Edmonson 1971, 1982, 1986; Gossen 1974, 2002; Hofling 1987; Hull 2003; Hunt 1977; León-Portilla 1969; León-Portilla and Shorris 2001; Roys 1967; Sam Colop 1999; Stross 1974, 2000; B. Tedlock 1982a, 1982b; D. Tedlock 1983, 1985, 1987). Through these studies and numerous others not mentioned, we can indeed conclude that parallelism lies at the heart of Maya verbal art. Couplets, triplets, quatrains, and larger parallelistic structures dominate formal Maya discourse and can be found in quotidian speech also, though couplets account for a large portion. Such pairing is highly revealing not only at a linguistic level but also at a conceptual one, since selected items for pairing provide a glimpse into the thought processes of the Maya.

Any definition of Maya literature or poetics must be based in large part on the observable characteristics that distinguish formal from informal discourse because we cannot always rely on existing explicit categories for genre types in all Mayan languages. Also, when such categories appear, they often do not correspond to those of other Maya groups since poetics is in part both organic and dynamic—free to undergo alternations based on local attitudes and cultural norms. Moreover, different genres do not share the same discourse features. As a result, an analysis of a humorous story (see Burns, this volume) will necessarily have different narrative characteristics from that of the sacred text of the *Popol Vuh* (see Christenson and Sam Colop, this volume). Thus genre-specific forms and styles are not always shared across genre types. Furthermore, we must be acutely aware that no one definition of literature will suffice as we are dealing with texts that span nearly 2,000 years, during which time considerable cultural and societal upheaval took place. The chapters in this volume, therefore, do not attempt to answer such an overarching question as "what is Maya literature or poetics"; rather, they work to describe the inherent characteristics that comprise Maya discourse, be it formal or informal, engaging a wide range of discourse genres without being beholden to any singular definition of what it means to be "literary." The result is a selection of studies whose approaches and topics are broad yet intertwined, addressing various discursive aspects of seven modern Mayan languages and the hieroglyphic script but not always in complete agreement—just as it should be.

VOLUME DESCRIPTION

This volume divides into four interrelated parts. The first section contains a single chapter that presents the anatomy, as it were, of Maya narrative spanning the broad swash of time and literary features many of the remaining chapters examine in greater detail. The three sections that follow are arranged chronologically, moving from the ancient period to the present. In addition to the identification of Maya poetic devices and approaches to Maya literature, this volume also presents an extensive array of complete narratives or long excerpts in seven Colonial or modern Maya languages (Ch'ol, Ch'olti', Yukatek, Itzaj, Mopan, Tzotzil, and K'iche') and the language of the inscriptions. The editors' goals are to present a wide range of methodological approaches to Maya literature, emphasize the significant continuities that exist in this tradition, and provide a large collection of example texts that may serve as a basis for the study of Maya poetics, genre, verbal art, and literature.

Part I: Finding Continuities in Maya Poetics and Literature

Part I, made up of the single chapter by Nicholas Hopkins and Kathryn Josserand, accomplishes two important objectives that have implication for the entire volume. First, it provides a complete account of the various types of narrative and rhetorical features found in Ch'ol storytelling, such as openings and closings, framing devices, backgrounding and foregrounding, marking the narrative event line and episode boundaries, highlighting peak events, and denouement. Their analysis draws from an extensive collection of oral histories they collected during their three decades of work on the Ch'ol language, as well as those of other researchers. The result is a fascinating look into the core aspects of Maya discourse. Second, having described the major features of Ch'ol storytelling, Hopkins and Josserand then apply the same narrative analytical approach to the hieroglyphic inscriptions. Building on their groundbreaking work in this area, they identify similar narrative elements such as the foregrounding of focused events, establishment of timelines, segmentation of texts, and others in the language of the hieroglyphic script. Thus they argue for a group of literary standards in place during the Classic period that has largely continued into modern times.

Part II: Establishing Traditions: Hieroglyphic Literature and Poetics

In Part II, Alfonso Lacadena, Kerry Hull, Michael Carrasco, Lloyd Anderson, Dennis Tedlock, and Karen Bassie-Sweet, Nicholas Hopkins, and Kathryn Josserand lay the foundation for the study of Mesoamerican poetics and literature in one of their earliest manifestations: Maya hieroglyphic texts. These contributors focus largely on poetic devices and discourse structures found in hieroglyphic texts, with the exception of Tedlock, who examines the nexus of performance, semantics, and glyphs detached from normal syntactic relationships.

Lacadena identifies syntactic inversion (or hyperbaton) as a new literary device in hieroglyphic texts. Lacadena's innovative study fully defines the nature of hyperbaton as a syntactic device in Maya hieroglyphic literature and discusses numerous specific cases from the Maya hieroglyphic corpus that outline the evolution of this poetic feature and its usage by ancient Maya scribes, especially those at Palenque. He discerns three specific types of syntactic inversion—anaphora, hyperbaton proper, and synchysis—and suggests that highlighting and emphasis were likely the motivation in some cases. However, in others he suggests that inversion possibly represents the Maya scribes' desire to add a literary effect to their texts. Lacadena's work is a valuable addition to the growing body of known poetic figures in Maya hieroglyphic texts.

Hull looks at systematic pairings in the hieroglyphic script, primarily in the forms of diphrastic kennings. He selects fourteen paired terms found in hieroglyphic texts and traces their evolution through Postclassic and Colonial times to their use in modern Mayan languages today. This diachronic approach to conceptual and lexical pairings allows us to see the historical time depth of many of these expressions and pairings. Furthermore, by using data from Colonial and modern Mayan languages, where such kennings are preserved, Hull offers insights into the meanings of these dyads in the Classic period. He introduces the concept of *complementary extremes*, by which paired lexical items connote not just metaphorical meanings but also specifically encompassing meanings, where the presence of two extremes signifies everything in between.

After presenting a revised interpretation of Palenque history and political rhetoric based on a detailed reading of the Temple of the Inscriptions, Carrasco focuses on narratives from three structures at the site of Palenque to show the continuity and complexity of literary forms found at this site. Building on Josserand's discourse analysis (1991) and Dell Hymes's verse analysis (2003), Carrasco identifies elaborate structures of parallelism not only in the couplets and triplets composing individual verses but also in the structure of the entire stanza as well as between stanzas. This chapter expands on those of Lacadena and Hull to make a case for the existence of larger poetic structures that must be considered in the study of Classic period poetics, as well as how these structures are deployed in the literary tradition of a specific city.

Anderson argues for a strong link between the discourse structure and purpose of a hieroglyphic text through an analysis of texts written in Maya and "Isthmian" scripts (such as the Tuxtla Statuette and La Mojarra Stela), as well as the oldest Precolumbian writing known today: the undeciphered Cascajal Block. Anderson proposes three axioms that seem to hold true for many early hieroglyphic texts in Mesoamerica: (1) Mayan neutral sentence order is verb-object-subject (calendrics or place), (2) historical annals segment paragraphs using calendrics, and (3) king lists segment paragraphs using successions. Anderson then explains how understanding the role of discourse structures can substantially change our understanding of the meaning of texts that contain them. The insistence that too many structures are in couplet formation can also lead to their misunderstanding.

Tedlock explores the iconicity and performativity of ancient Maya hieroglyphic texts. He avers that the terseness of texts in the Maya script, combined with the role of expandable parallel verse in the performances of contemporary Maya orators, suggests that verse provided ancient orators with the means to interpret texts in a poetically and rhetorically appropriate manner. Tedlock advances the notion that understanding the performative aspect of Maya hieroglyphic writing is crucial for interpreting its use and function in ancient Maya society. He introduces the concept of *graphic poetry*—the "liberation" of hieroglyphic signs from their syntax, thereby providing the reader with opportunities to reflect on the iconography of the signs before seeking grammatical understanding. This approach leads Tedlock to conclude that in graphic poetry, the spatial organization of the text carried greater importance than did the temporal organization.

Bassie-Sweet, Hopkins, and Josserand's chapter approaches Maya hieroglyphic texts as narratives with a story to tell and describes their integral relationship with iconography. After presenting individual episodes of related narratives on four monuments at Palenque, the authors trace the history of the *sak huun* (white barkpaper) and drum major headdresses worn by the site's Maya elite. The authors' careful examination of narrative structuring and content allows them to create a narrative of their own, detailing the function of these two royal emblems and their cultural significance.

Part III: From Glyphs to Letters: Colonial Maya Poetics and Literature

The authors of the chapters composing Part III investigate the narrative and literary features of three Mayan languages: Yukatek (Vail and Knowlton), Ch'olti' (Law), and K'iche' (Christenson and Sam Colop). They cover the period immediately before the arrival of Europeans as well as the Colonial period and highlight the important moment when the Latin script came to replace the traditional, logosyllabic, and semasiographic scripts of Maya peoples. The fact that Maya scribes quickly adopted this new script to express their own intentions is an important measure of native agency (Restall, Sousa, and Terraciano 2005). Likewise, the fact that Europeans adopted indigenous poetic and rhetorical strategies is equally telling of the complex cultural negotiations that began in this period and continue to the present.

Gabrielle Vail's study investigates the means by which episodes referring to primordial time and creation are presented in narrative format. Vail shows that astronomic tables invariably reference eras of world destruction and creation that were caused by periodic cosmic upheavals inherent in events such as eclipses, Venus's heliacal rise, and a number of other celestial phenomena. She also contrasts the detailed narratives recorded at Classic period sites such as Copan, Quirigua, and Palenque with those of codical texts, which are extremely abbreviated, making fleeting allusions to stories that were undoubtedly well-known to the ritual specialists responsible for interpreting (and likely performing) these stories for a wider audience. Vail concludes that the structure and content of codical texts indicate that they are best understood as belonging to a Yukatekan narrative tradition shared with the later *Books of Chilam Balam* from the Colonial period, which can be identified as distinct from the southern Maya tradition reflected in Classic period antecedents of the K'iche'an *Popol Vuh*.

Timothy Knowlton makes an in-depth study of the Yukatekan Maya genre *u thanil*, which he interprets as "incantation." Through an analysis of sections of the Colonial Yukatekan source known as the *Ritual of the Bacabs*, Knowlton finds important linguistic and poetic connections between that document and Classic period hieroglyphic texts. Knowlton also details his discovery of certain framing devices—such as the ubiquitous diphrastic kenning *ch'ab ak'ab*—that also appear in Classic period hieroglyphic texts, which can predate the Colonial examples by more than a millennium. He argues that while Colonial incantation texts are not to be considered the direct ancestors of Classic Maya hieroglyphic texts, they nevertheless provide strong evidence for linking *u thanil* texts to the shamanic performance of the ancient Maya elite based on their shared use of the diphrastic kenning *ch'ab ak'ab*.

Danny Law examines the literary features found in the sole surviving Colonial document of the Ch'olti' Mayan language, the *Morán Manuscript,* assumedly written by Friar Francisco Morán. Law contextualizes the highly poetic forms found in this text within the social and religious background of the time. He argues that some Catholic missionaries employed forms of sacred language to effectively communicate the foreign and complex theological concepts of Christianity to those adhering to traditional Maya religious beliefs (also see Browne 2000: 87 for examples of this practice in Central Mexico). Law identifies specific rhetorical devices common to formal discourse in other Mayan languages that are also present in Morán's Ch'orti' religious texts. He argues that Morán and other missionaries purposely drew upon the known poetic features of Ch'orti' discourse in an effort to both legitimize their own roles as teachers and religious leaders and imbue the Christian texts with a familiar and aesthetic appeal. In the process, Law details certain poetic pairings that have direct Classic period equivalents, such as the *k'anal-yaxal* kenning.

These continuities clarify our understanding of the meanings of similar parings in Classic period texts and iconography.

The final two chapters of Part III examine the literary qualities of K'iche' narratives such as the *Popol Vuh*. Both Luis Enrique Sam Colop and Allen Christenson are specialists in the K'iche' language and have produced translations of the *Popol Vuh*. Thus, having their individual insights into this important text, which at times are both different and in agreement, is a unique opportunity for the reader. Using the *Popol Vuh* and other early K'iche' documents, both authors address the importance of parallelism—Sam Colop concentrating on couplets and Christenson focusing on the use of a multilayered form of parallelism known as *chiasmus*.

Sam Colop first explores the nature of parallel discourse at a theoretical level and then extends his discussion to the various types of attested parallelism in K'iche'—such as grammatical, morphological, semantic, syntagmatic, and others—with examples from early K'iche' texts such as the *Popol Vuh*. Sam Colop's chapter is especially insightful in identifying the internal characteristics and behavior of poetic forms in the case of K'iche'. He convincingly shows that parallel word formations are subordinate to poetic functions in the language. Sam Colop also describes the use of poetic devices such as paronomasia, metonymy, and metaphor in the context of the *Popol Vuh* and attempts to explain their textual function in terms of ornate poetic-ness.

Christenson defines the nature of chiastic structures in early K'iche' Maya manuscripts. He begins with a fascinating discussion of hieroglyphic literacy and the written word in pre- and post-Conquest times and in relation to the *Popol Vuh*. Christenson then ties this discussion to the *Popol Vuh* and its literary features, most importantly chiasmus. He asserts that chiasmus serves a number of functions, such as facilitating memorization of texts and highlighting key moments or episodes in narratives. Christenson goes further, however, in showing how understanding the chiastic structure of a text is crucial for properly interpreting its meaning. Through an examination in the original K'iche' language of twenty-three early K'iche' documents, Christenson finds revealing patterns in the use of chiasmus—some surprising, such as the high frequency of chiasmus in dialogues in nine of them. He also discovers an increase in chiasmus in texts that discuss Precolumbian religion or traditions. Finally, Christenson points out that in almost all cases where chiasmus appears, the author(s) of the text belonged to ruling dynastic lineages, suggesting a formal training was involved in the production of chiastic structures.

Part IV: Keepers of Tradition: Modern Maya Poetics and Literature

The contemporary vitality of Maya literature and verbal art is highlighted in the chapters composing the fourth section of the volume. They collectively demonstrate the enormous strides made in the collection and publication of Mayan language materials in recent years, but in doing so they stress the great need for continued work in this area.

The chapter by Aurore Monod Becquelin and Alain Breton questions the definition of genre by challenging researchers' methods of classifying genre types. The authors do not attempt to define what a genre is per se; rather, they interrogate the nature of genre boundaries, their exclusivity or inclusivity, and the ways "canonical" forms operate in languages. The authors then investigate the qualitative and quantitative use of poetic devices in the creation and performance of poetic discourse. To better understand the performative function of poetic usage, Monod Becquelin and Breton analyze a K'iche' recording by Don X that contains his own metanarrative commentary about poeticity in traditional K'iche' society. The inclusion of the text allows the reader to appreciate the interplay between its internal and metadiscursive poetics. The authors' discussion of the texts illuminates key aspects relating to ancient versus modern speech, poetic alternation, prosody, sensorial aesthetics, and efficacy in performance while simultaneously providing a fuller definition of poeticity proper.

From the highlands of Guatemala, the focus of the next chapters turns to the Yucatan, Mexico. Allan Burns examines humorous narratives in Yukatekan Maya literature, especially those with "bold and bawdy" humor. He first contextualizes this genre in terms of social settings and age, noting also that it transcends gender, being enjoyed by males and females alike. Burns focuses on narratives containing a brand of humor that openly challenges religious authority figures. Through an analysis of the bilingual text of "The Story of San Antonio," Burns unpacks the levels of humor built into this narrative. He also illuminates the use of poetic and prosodic features found in pauses, linguistic exaggeration, and humor. Importantly, Burns stresses the distinct essence of humor itself between Spanish and Yukatek Mayan speakers—pointing out that while speaking Spanish, the Maya are thought to be quiet and respectful, but when they speak in Yukatek, humor abounds in their discourse.

Two sister languages of the Yukatekan branch, Mopan and Itzaj, are the subject of chapter 15. Charles Andrew Hofling compares a narrative from each of these two languages, which appear to have separated at least 1,000 years ago, to show both commonality and difference in the ethnopoetic devices each tradition employs. Both stories are given in full, with interlinear translations as appendixes to his chapter, providing an intimate look at their structure and other narrative aspects. Hofling finds that, on the one hand, Yukatekan languages, like other Mayan languages, have a common tradition of ethnopoetic devices—including standardized openings and closings, scene and episode boundaries, special attention to quoted speech, evidential marking, parallelism, and line structure. On the other hand, he argues that the particular ways these devices are realized in modern verbal performances have notable differences in other Mayan languages, even between Mopan and Itzaj Mayan. This ethnopoetic aspect of Mopan and Itzaj is part of a broader linguistic comparison of Yukatekan languages undertaken by Hofling on how they have evolved over the last millennium.

Mary Preuss's chapter presents a thorough analysis of the various symbols, motifs, and protagonists common to Yukatek Maya oral literature. Based on a corpus of 106 texts she has recorded, Preuss explores the types of protagonists that appear in Yukatekan narratives—from deer to dogs, wise grandmothers to jealous sisters, political figures to supernatural beings, and numerous others. In addition, the types of roles these actors and actresses play are carefully analyzed and compared throughout her large narrative corpus. Preuss further argues that most Yukatekan narratives have a moral, a life-orienting model, which is meant to influence listeners to be fair, appreciative, and receptive to advice from spiritual leaders and to adopt other similar positive character attributes. A remarkably detailed discussion of the symbols and motifs most common to Yukatekan oral traditions provides a wealth of interesting data and key insights into the continuing evolution of such narrative features over time.

Finally, Robert Laughlin, one of the world's leading authorities on the Tzotzil language, illustrates many of the issues discussed in this volume through a creative presentation of language. After a brief introduction, Laughlin gives a literal translation of the kinds of speech and words that focus on the Tzotzil word *k'op* ("language," "word," or "speech") and its verbal forms. He begins with the word for word definitions found in the Colonial materials and then moves to culturally contextualized materials from his *The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of San Lorenzo Zinacantán* while at the same time traveling from the positive to the negative end of the verbal spectrum. Laughlin hopes to bring the reader into the mental universe of Tzotzil speakers through the process of reading and reflecting on what the words and translation mean. His refreshingly demonstrative approach is itself a piece of verbal performance that demonstrates the critical place the practice of translation holds in our attempts to understand Maya literature and verbal art.

CONCLUSION

In this volume we have brought together some of the leading specialists on Maya verbal art not only to reflect on the current state of the subject and, by doing so, to advance it to a new level of importance within the wider field of Maya studies but also to provide a work we hope will be of interest to the nonspecialist who wishes to gain a better understanding of one of America's first literatures. We have attempted to be as comprehensive as possible while maintaining a clear focus on the verbal arts. Nevertheless, it is a testament to the vastness of this project that this volume represents only seven Mayan languages and the language of the inscriptions out of the thirty-two known Mayan languages spoken at the time of the Conquest. Thus much work needs to be done before the great diversity of narrative genres, poetic forms, and rhetorical and discourse structures is discerned, not to mention the interpretation of these forms in the context of performance and how it relates to their narrative content. As this volume demonstrates, an understanding of contemporary and Colonial discourse and poetics is a powerful tool for attaining a culturally informed understanding of the narrative forms preserved in hieroglyphic texts. The study of all Mayan languages potentially has important things to tell us about the cultures of the past; more important, it reveals the current vitality of Maya and Mesoamerican literature.

REFERENCES CITED

Bauman, Richard, and Joel Sherzer (eds.)
1986 *Explorations in Ethnography of Speaking,* 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Breton, Alain
1994 *Rabinal Achi: Un drame dynastique maya du quinzième siècle.* Société d'ethnologie et Société des américanistes, Nanterre, France.
2007 *Rabinal Achi: A Fifteenth-Century Maya Dynastic Drama.* University Press of Colorado, Boulder.

Bricker, Victoria R.
1973 *Ritual Humor in Highland Chiapas.* University of Texas Press, Austin.
1974 The Ethnographic Context of Some Traditional Mayan Speech Genres. In *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking,* ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, pp. 368–388. Cambridge University Press, London.
1986a *A Grammar of Mayan Hieroglyphs.* Middle American Research Institute, New Orleans.
1986b The Ethnographic Context of Some Traditional Mayan Speech Genres. In *Explorations in Ethnography of Speaking,* 2nd ed., ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, pp. 368–388. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Browne, Walden
2000 *Sahagún and the Transition to Modernity.* University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Burns, Allen F.
1980 Yucatec Mayan Ethnopoetics: The Translation of a Narrative. *Journal of Mayan Linguistics* 2(1): 3–12.638.
1983 *An Epoch of Miracles: Oral Literature of the Yucatec Maya.* University of Texas Press, Austin.
1993 Modern Yucatec Maya Oral Literature. In *On the Translation of Native American Literatures,* ed. Brian Swann, pp. 387–405. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.

Carmack, Robert M., and James L. Mondloch

1983 *El Título de Totonicapán: Texto, traducción y comentario*. Edición facsimilar, transcripción y traducción. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, DF.

Christenson, Allen J.

2003 *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya*: *The Great Classic of Central American Spirituality*, translated from the original Maya text. O Books, New York.

Edmonson, Munro S.

1971 *Book of Counsel: The Popol Vuh of the Quiché Maya of Guatemala*. Publication 35. Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, New Orleans.

1982 *The Ancient Future of the Itza: The Book of Chilam Balam of Tizimin*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

1986 *Heaven Born Merida and Its Destiny: The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Edmonson, Munro S. (volume editor) and Victoria R. Bricker (general editor)

1985 *Supplement to the Handbook of Middle American Indians*, vol. 3. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Foster, David W.

1994 *Mexican Literature: A History*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Fought, John G.

1972 *Chortí (Mayan) Texts*, ed. Sarah S. Fought. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Freidel, David, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker

1993 *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path*. William Morrow, New York.

Garibay K., Angel María

1953 *Historia de la literatura nahuatl*. 2 vol. Porrua, Mexico City.

Gossen, Gary H.

1974 To Speak with a Heated Heart: Chamula Canons of Style and Good Performance. In *Explorations in Ethnography of Speaking,* 2nd ed., ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, pp. 398–416. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

2002 *Four Creations: An Epic Story of the Chiapas Mayas,* ed. and trans. Gary H. Gossen. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Hofling, Charles A.

1987 Discourse Framing in Itzá Maya Narrative. *Anthropological Linguistics* 29(4): 478–488.

1991 *Itzá Maya Texts with a Grammatical Overview*. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City. Bloomington, IN.

Houston, Stephen

2000 Into the Minds of Ancients: Advances in Maya Glyph Studies. *Journal of World Prehistory* 14(2): 121–201.

Hull, Kerry M.

2003 Verbal Art and Performance in Ch'orti' and Maya Hieroglyphic Writing. PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Texas, Austin.

Hunt, Eva

1977 *The Transformation of the Hummingbird: Cultural Roots of a Zincantan Mythical Poem*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

Hymes, Dell

1962 The Ethnography of Speaking. In *Anthropology and Human Behavior*, ed. Thomas Gladwin and William C. Sturtevant, pp. 13–53. Anthropological Society of Washington, Washington, DC.

1981 *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

2003 *Now I Know Only So Far: Essays in Ethnopoetics*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Josserand, J. Kathryn

1991 The Narrative Structure of Hieroglyphic Texts at Palenque. In *Sixth Palenque Round Table*, ed. Merle Green Robertson, pp. 12–31. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

1995 Participant Tracking in Maya Hieroglyphic Texts: Who Was That Masked Man? *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 5(1): 65–89. Washington, DC.

1997 La estructura narrativa en los textos jeroglíficos de Palenque. In *Mesas Redondas de Palenque*, ed. Silvia Trejo, pp. 445–481. Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, México, DF.

2007 The Missing Heir at Yaxchilán: Literary Analysis of a Maya Historical Puzzle. *Latin American Antiquity* 18(3): 295–312.

Josserand, J. Kathryn, and Nicholas A. Hopkins

1996 *Ch'ol Ritual Language*. Research report submitted to the Foundation for the Advancement of Ancient Mesoamerica, Inc. (FAMSI). Available at http://www.famsi.org.

Karasik, Carol (ed.)

1988 *The People of the Bat: Mayan Tales and Dreams from Zinacantán*, collected and trans. Robert M. Laughlin. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.

Laughlin, Robert M.

1980 *Of Shoes and Ships and Sealing Wax: Sundries from Zinacantán*. Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology 25. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.

León-Portilla, Miguel

1969 *Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

León-Portilla, Miguel, and Earl Shorris (eds.)
2001 *In the Language of Kings: An Anthology of Mesoamerican Literature, Pre-Columbian to the Present.* Norton, New York.

Maxwell, Judith M., and Robert M. Hill
2006 *Kaqchikel Chronicles.* University of Texas Press, Austin.

Pitarch Ramón, Pedro
1996 *Ch'ulel: Una etnografía de las almas tzeltales.* Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, DF.

Quezada, Sergio, and Tsubasa Okoshi Harada
2001 *Papeles de los Xiu de Yaxá, Yucatán.* Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, DF.

Restall, Matthew, Lisa Sousa, and Kevin Terraciano (eds.)
2005 *Mesoamerican Voices: Native-Language Writings from Colonial Mexico, Oaxaca, Yucatan, and Guatemala.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Roys, Ralph L.
1967 *Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel.* Civilizations of the American Indian Series 87. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.

Sam Colop, Luis Enrique
1999 *Popol Wuj: Versión Poética K'iche'.* Cholsamaj, Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Schele, Linda
1982 *Maya Glyphs: The Verbs.* University of Texas Press, Austin.

Schele, Linda, and David Freidel
1990 *A Forest of Kings: The Untold Story of the Ancient Maya.* William Morrow, New York.

Schele, Linda, and Mary Ellen Miller
1986 *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya Art.* George Braziller, New York, in association with the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX.

Stross, Brian
1974 Speaking of Speaking: Tenejapa Tzeltal Metalinguistics. In *Explorations in Ethnography of Speaking,* 2nd ed., ed. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, pp. 213–239. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
2000 The Story of Grandfather Puma and Grandfather Possum: A Tzeltal Narrative. In *Translating Native Latin American Verbal Art: Ethnopoetics and Ethnography of Speaking,* ed. Kay Sammons and Joel Sherzer, pp. 69–85. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC.

Tedlock, Barbara
1982a *Time and the Highland Maya.* University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque.
1982b Sound, Texture and Metaphor in Quiché Maya Ritual Language. *Current Anthropology* 23(3): 269–272. Chicago.

Tedlock, Dennis
1983 *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation.* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

1985 *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*. Simon and Schuster, New York.

1987 Hearing a Voice in an Ancient Text: Quiché Maya Poetics in Performance. In *Native American Discourse: Poetics and Rhetoric*, ed. Joel Sherzer and Anthony C. Woodbury, pp. 140–175. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

2005 *Rabinal Achi: A Mayan Drama of War and Sacrifice*. Oxford University Press, New York.

2010 *2000 Years of Mayan Literature*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Wald, Robert F.

2007 The Verbal Complex in Classic-Period Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions: Its Implications for Language Identification and Change. PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Texas, Austin.

Wichmann, Søren

2004 *The Linguistics of Maya Writing*. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City.