

proval of conformity and encourage resistance to harmful social practices. Perhaps she should have allowed the story to speak for itself because it really does.

### *Mayan Myth/History for Today's Children*

*Popol Vuh: a Sacred Book of the Maya.* Victor Montejo. Trans. David Unger. Illus. Luis Garay. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre, 1999. 85 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0-88899-334-X.

It is no small feat to adapt a text as complex in structure and language as the *Popol Vuh* for a young readership. The *Popol Vuh* may be likened to the Judeo-Christian book of the creation, "Genesis." Unlike the Bible, however, this Mayan mythological account of the creation does not have a long tradition of translations and adaptations for children. Thus Victor Montejo, it must be appreciated, treads virgin territory in his endeavour to make this great and intriguing pre-Columbian story accessible to children aged nine and above.

Montejo's young readers will not find here the linear narrative of many Western tales and perhaps this might prove challenging to them. This is because although Montejo's is an abridged version he does not compromise the narrative structure of the original work. The stories that constitute part one in his book are devoted to the myth of creation. However, after two futile attempts by the gods to create humans, that line of the narrative is dropped, to be taken up again in what is part three of the book: "The Creation of the Men of Corn." Meanwhile, between these two sections, part two, "The Amazing Twins," is devoted solely to the heroic activities of the gods in the sky, on earth and in the underworld. In part four, the



*Illustration from Popol Vuh*

focus reverts back onto humans, where the Quiché are aided by the gods to defeat their enemies from other tribes. This final part ends with the genealogy of the Quiché rulers from the first four men who were created out of corn to the thirteenth generation. The non-linear narration as well as the interpenetration of myth and history, superhuman and human activity, is essential to Mayan cosmology. For his young readers, Montejo reduces the complexity by dividing the four main titled parts again into titled subsections. Some of these, such as "The Founding of the Tribes," constitute autonomous tales which seek to explain some natural or historical phenomenon. The original manuscript is not divided into parts at all. It runs without divisions from beginning to end.

The classified glossary of Quiché words that Montejo provides helps to unravel the interlocking worlds of men and gods. However, it must be noted that this is perhaps more useful to the informed reader. To the novice it will not be immediately clear whether "Junajpu," for example, should be looked up under the category of gods, demi-gods or human world. Furthermore, it would have been helpful to children or to the adults who read the stories to them to have a pronunciation guide as well.

Montejo's young readers will no doubt adore the illustrations of Luis Garay for their boldness and their colour. Every one of his paintings in this book covers a whole page and sometimes two, as is the case of his delightful illustration of the first creation. His masterful artwork is reminiscent of the murals of the Mexican painter Diego Rivera (1886-1957) in its boldness of colour and the massiveness of figures, flora and fauna. The similarity is perhaps not surprising as Garay, like Rivera, appears to find his inspiration in pre-Columbian murals. It is probably from this source that Garay gets his prominent figures, made even more so in the way in which he downplays perspective, a technique well suited to the portrayal of the greatness of the gods of whom the stories speak.

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*Dorothy Odartey-Wellington is a professor of Spanish literature and language at the University of Guelph. She has published articles on the reworking of children's narrative in contemporary Spanish fiction.*

### **The Myths of Crete in Modern Garb**

*Daedalus and the Minotaur.* Priscilla Galloway. Illus. Normand Cousineau. Annick Press, 1997 (Tales of Ancient Lands Series). 112 pp. \$27.95, \$14.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-459-1, 1-55037-458-3.

Some of the most fascinating Greek myths are set on the island of Crete — stories of King Minos, the labyrinth, the Minotaur, Theseus and Ariadne, Daedalus and Icarus, and Queen Pasiphae. Retelling these stories for the modern reader, and especially for children, is a challenge for both authors and teachers. While the basic outlines cannot or should not be changed, the filling in of the narrative line can be variously managed.