SPIRITUALITY AND MIXED-BLOOD IDENTITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY of MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS AND LESLIE MARMON SILKO by Colleen Irwin B.A. (Comb. Hon.) McMaster University, 1997

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I propose that the texts of Guatemalan author Miguel Angel Asturias and the North American Native author Leslie Marmon Silko can be compared and interpreted from the perspective of spirituality. I approach both mixed-blood authors as mediating a spiritually-centred contemporary identity. They revalue and update the spiritual teachings in the myths of their Meso-American-Anasazi ancestral heritages. A cross-cultural reading of mythical quests, indigenous sacred texts, Western mysticism, and the universal heroic paradigm discloses a universal recognition of the need to maintain order and balance between spirituality and materiality. An examination of contemporary Native and Latin American literary studies demonstrates that the dominant Western perspective creates a static view of indigenous people and a materialistic lifestyle which alienates individuals from the spirituality of their ancestors. I conclude that Asturias' and Silko's mediation of their multiple heritages provides a necessary re-valuing of Western and indigenous epistemologies. The mythical and sacred sources restore balance and unity in the individual and create a viable basis for contemporary mixed-blood and mixed-heritage identity.
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DEDICATION

To Don and Sean who accompany me and back my quest with loving support, thank you. To Tony and Derek and my whole family who are always with me in my heart, my thanks to all of you for your continued love and understanding.
INTRODUCTION

When Gerald Martin states that "One is tempted to think that if Asturias had somehow been able to wait to write [Men of Maize] in the 1970's . . . . " (Men of Maize xv), he suggests that Guatemalan author Miguel Angel Asturias' (1899-1974) unique brand of indigenista, or 'indigenist' literature, is visionary its anticipation of the movement toward feminist, environmental, and global consciousness. It is more accurate to say, however, that Asturias anticipates by more than a generation the indigenous novels created by contemporary Native North American authors since the late 1960's, where the views of the feminine, the environment, global inter-connectedness, and psychological well-being are integral to the ancestral values that they present in their novels. Like Asturias, authors such as N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich, and James Welch use an imaginative and intuitive literary interpretation of indigenous spiritual values to imagine a contemporary identity. Their literary visions of spiritual connectedness reveal that there are tensions between spiritual ideals and material existence which are an ongoing part of the human condition, yet modern alienation has its most recent manifestation in the conquest and colonization of the Americas since 1492.¹

This comparative study will examine three novels by Miguel

I focus on spirituality in this study and demonstrate the similar ways in which Asturias and Silko explore identity. I use the term spirituality to signify a unifying concept of "the perception of oneness behind the plurality of things, people and other forms" (Moffet, qtd. in Blaeser 23). Identity, I will show, has a spiritual rather than material basis. Spirituality and identity are highly complex and ambiguous realms; indigenous peoples have been subjected to many influences and many pressures to become Westernized. Indigenous identities, therefore, change and adapt, yet there is continuity with ancestral pasts. Asturias' and Silko' Meso-American indigenous spirituality enables them to present such indigenous issues such assimilation, land loss, resource exploitation, genocide, and racism as key issues in a longstanding and persistent oppression of Native peoples.

Gord Brotherston notes that there are "remarkable parallels" in the stories which unify the Meso-American-Anasazi epic tradition to which these authors belong (*Book of the Fourth World* 278). Beyond the political boundaries of the nation-states which divide the Western Hemisphere are shared spiritual values and colonial issues that unify all the descendants of indigenous peoples. In the novels of Asturias and Silko, updated myths and culture-hero quests re-value the spiritually-centred ancestral
worldview and subvert the destructive self-centredness of Western values. Their updated versions of ancient tales reinforce the importance of remembering the stories that teach human beings how to relate to Creators, community, family, and land; the remembered stories re-establish a spiritual foundation upon which ethical personal choices and actions are made.

At present, critical comparisons of their Central and North American mixed-heritage literatures are hampered by the critical sources that separate one from another. Asturias and Silko share elements that are easily identified as spiritual, mythical, mystical, indigenous or ancestral, but whereas Silko is situated within a body of critical sources which supports her role as a mediator of contemporary mixed-blood identity, Asturias is situated within a body of Western critical sources which identify him (along with Brazilian Mário de Andrade, Cuban Alejo Carpentier, and Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges) as one of the key figures who "explore and define Latin American identity whilst at the same time helping to integrate the continent’s culture into the mainstream of Western history" (Martin, "Asturias" 54).

The mediational role suggested by Martin is quite dissimilar from the mediation I am describing here. I use mediation according to James Ruppert’s definition of "an artistic and conceptual standpoint, constantly flexible, which uses the epistemological frameworks of Native American and Western cultural traditions to illuminate and enrich each other" (3). According to Ruppert’s definition, both perspectives are equally
important; each perspective penetrates the other and neither is
subsumed by the other (Ruppert 17). The dynamic equilibrium
between the two viewpoints can critique the many wrongs of the
colonial past, and can also encourage cross-cultural
understanding and change, even as the author maintains a Native-
centred focus on "nurturing, survival, continuance and continual
reemergence of cultural identity" (17, 4). Ruppert notes that
authors such as Asturias and Silko create "substantially Native
and substantially Western" novels because they can mediate
between Native and non-Native audiences, and between Western and
indigenous epistemologies and discourses (6, 15).

Asturias never openly declared himself a 'Native author' as
do some contemporary 'mixed-blood' American authors.' A
different time, a different place, and very different conditions
prevailed during his lifetime. However, Asturias' dedication to
creating an American literary form that accommodated a complex
fusion of Western and indigenous sources perhaps made such
declarations unnecessary. His works proclaim his attempts to
bridge the gap between the Indian and mestizo worlds in an
intuitive effort to acknowledge and integrate an often denigrated
Indian heritage with the modern conditions in which he lived as a
university-educated mixed-blood.

However, a large and daunting body of criticism fixes
Asturias within the Western canon where he is defined as a Latin
American author and interpreted from a Western perspective.‘
Twenty-five years after his death, a re-evaluation of his work is
long overdue. The narratives of Silko and the other Native-American writers already mentioned have generated a body of criticism that provides a conceptual framework within which to view Asturias. A number of scholars who write within the field of Native literary studies can greatly enhance our appreciation of his novels because they contextualize mixed-blood or mixed-heritage authors as mediators, or interpreters of the multiple influences that comprise contemporary identity. This framework was simply not available in Asturias' lifetime, nor is it currently being used by scholars who continue to critique his work according to a Western literary perspective. Unfortunately, a limited perspective obscures the meaningfulness of his texts. While he pre-dates this current generation of Native writers, his work fits within the orbit of indigenous literary criticism.

I contend that Asturias' and Silko's mediation of a contemporary identity rests primarily on their perceptions that individuals who have an indigenous inheritance need to re-value ancestral history, and most specifically the spiritual teachings that perpetuated communal and cultural survival. Two additional further comments support my contention that Asturias may be re-evaluated as an author who mediates a contemporary identity using spirituality as his primary focus. William Myron Davis, the author of "Maya Quiché Sacred Myth in Asturias' Novel El Señor Presidente" observes that apart from Margaret McClear's study on the literary structure of the Mayan creation text, the Popol Vuh, "no one has insisted concretely on Maya spirituality as the
philosophic basis and almost constant leitmotif of Asturias" (95), while Gord Brotherston notes that Asturias has received little recognition as a mediator of the ancient texts ("Mayan Literature" 68).

In re-evaluating Asturias within a comparative context with Silko, I acknowledge that their respective Latin American and American cultural backgrounds and life experiences establish unique differences between them, yet they are very well-suited for a cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary comparison because they share a cultural and narrative link to a Meso-American inheritance and synthesize a variety of indigenous and European or American influences. Silko’s Laguna heritage blends many Pueblo peoples’ "myths, legends, and cultural beliefs" (Todd 166) and identifies her with the Hopi people who claim an ancient historical association with the Mayan and Nahuatl peoples who are central to Asturias’ narratives. Asturias’ and Silko’s texts inform and enlarge understanding of mixed-blood experiences, and they also enrich the interpretative possibilities within each other’s works.

Born a half-century apart and in different nations, the life-conditions of the North American mixed-blood and the Guatemalan-born mestizo reflect diverse experiences. Leslie Marmon Silko is a Laguna Pueblo, Mexican, and white mixed-blood author who openly celebrates mixed-heritage (Coltelli 135). Born in Albuquerque in 1948, Silko and her novels are situated generally in and around the area of New Mexico and Arizona where
family stories and experiences reinforce knowledge of Laguna landscape and ancestry. Her long familiarity with Laguna land claims and a brief stint in law school reinforce her negative impressions of the mainstream judicial system and strengthen her commitment to "seek justice" through "the power of stories" (Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 20).

Native prophecies, Hopi and Laguna-Pueblo history, and Mayan myths blend with current events in her storytelling. The "inherent conflicts between Indian and white, old-time beliefs and Christianity" (Silko, *YWBS* 17) are central to her novels, and are especially apparent in her focus on Native veterans, and the consequences of uranium mining and nuclear testing in *Ceremony*. Comments made in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* (1996) with regard to a 1980’s U.S. Civil Rights Commission report support Silko’s negative depiction of the individualist as central to decadent mainstream society in *Almanac of the Dead*; she summarizes the report by saying that anti-Indian sentiments and backlash against treaty settlements arise not from racism, but from the greed of profiteers who know how to manipulate public ignorance (*YWBS* 75).

Also pertinent are her auto-biographical references to mixed-bloodedness as a sense of being different from her peers, yet not looking "quite white either" (*YWBS* 60). Her Aunts Susie and Alice were "vigorous women who valued books and writing" and who instilled in her a love for the written story as well as a love for the "hummah-hah stories," or the old oral tales of
animals and people in communication (YWBS 63). Silko relates to 'old-time beliefs' which see all manifestations of creation as enspirited and related, and thus values uniqueness without emphasizing differences (64). These 'old-time beliefs' extend to her perception that an inner spiritual reality suffuses the external or material reality; "faces and bodies," she says, "cannot be separated from hearts and souls" (65).

Leslie Silko's first novel Ceremony was positively received. Peter G. Beidler states that Ceremony "will surely take its place as one of a distinguished triumvirate of first novels by contemporary American Indians" (with James Welch's Winter in the Blood and Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn). Beidler's observations represent a mixed reaction—his wholehearted praise is modified by comments that reveal his inability to see the indigenous epistemology upon which the novel is structured. On the negative side, he observes that Tayo is a weak and unconvincing character, and some readers will think that Silko is "still writing short stories--loosely connected episodes--rather than a fully realized novel" (Contemporary Literary Criticism 407-8).

Almanac of the Dead, on the other hand, is the subject of very contradictory viewpoints. M. Annette Jaimes finds that Almanac is not marred by any of the "tedious pretension, rambling prose, or other forms of flabby self-congratulatory indulgence" but is "tightly plotted," though its subject matter is "not for the squeamish or faint-hearted" (5). Yet, Elizabeth Tallent
finds Almanac "wild jarring, graphic, mordant, [and] prodigious" and "could have used deft editorial excision" to eliminate some of its repetitiousness (Tallent 6). Alan Cheuse calls it "flawed, massive, scarred and visionary... a book that must be dealt with" (3). One cannot help but agree with Tallent and Cheuse, yet Silko’s Meso-American focus on blood, sacrifice, and the destructiveness of modern materialism only presents a more extreme view of the conditions that necessitate Tayo’s quest for healing in Ceremony.

Unlike Silko, Asturias spent much of his adult life in exile, returning only periodically to his homeland. He led a full and active life as a lawyer, ethnologist, journalist, storyteller, and diplomat; he was the recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize in 1966, and in 1967 he was the first Latin American novelist to receive the Nobel Prize (Martin, "Asturias" 50-53). Born in Guatemala City in 1899, Asturias is a mestizo from a predominantly Indian country; his early family experiences shift between the terrorism of urban dictatorship and the rural Indian countryside. While Silko only pursued law long enough to reject it, Asturias became a lawyer, as was his father, but practised only briefly before going into exile.

Biographical references duly note that as an idealistic young student, Asturias wrote his thesis on "the 'Indian problem'" (1923) which advocated a social policy of assimilation; Gerald Martin alludes to it as "rudimentary and even racist in practice, though progressive in intention" (Martin, MoM xii).
Against the texts examined here, however, Asturias’ resolution of the ‘Indian Problem’ through further policies supporting cultural assimilation can surely be forgiven as belonging to a youthful and unenlightened phase of his life that ended in Paris. Parisian exile (1924-33) provided a political, spiritual, intellectual, and artistic refuge from the darkly oppressive climate of Guatemala, as it has done for many Latin American intellectuals before and since Asturias. He studied Mayan ethnology and assisted in translating the Mayan creation text, the Popol Vuh, from French into Spanish (Martin, MCM xii). Exile enabled the young Asturias to travel and to explore a whole new world of political and artistic ideas that influenced and altered him forever.

Paris transformed Asturias, and his literary production reflected that transformation. In El Señor Presidente, Men of Maize, and Mulata, Asturias completely reversed his earlier stance in which he had posited the idea that the indigenous populations would benefit from assimilating Western cultural values. Rather, his defense of Native peoples is very much mirrored in Silko’s more recent assertion that justice can be sought through story-telling. The underlying theme in all three of these texts is that assimilation is a process of forgetting or denying one’s Indian heritage; such forgetfulness or denial is enmeshed with the political, economic, and social instability in contemporary Guatemala. His works demonstrate the need for mestizos to remember their Indian heritage, and in remembering,
to re-value and re-integrate the spiritual teachings of their heritage which foster individual and communal stability.

Asturias' was a prolific writer--poet, journalist, novelist, and playwright--and the three novels chosen for this study, El Señor Presidente (1946), Men of Maize (1949), and Mulata (1963), represent a small but important fraction of his total output. I have selected these three novels because I believe that they represent not only his best efforts to explore and understand the fluid nature of indigenous identity in relation to ongoing pressures to westernize, but also his best efforts to reconcile urban mestizos with their Native heritage. Judging by the varied, often contradictory responses to his work, Asturias created much ambiguity for the critics, yet he was totally unambiguous in his insistence that the Guatemalan people, despite linguistic and cultural differences, are all "kernels of corn, parts of an ear" (Mulata 173).

Asturias garnered a variety of criticisms, as the following examples show, and the many contradictions only underscore the absence of and the need for a suitable conceptual framework in which to view his work:

Asturias's novels are often interesting, provided one does not take for granted the claim that they are authentic expressions of the contemporary descendants of the Maya. They are interesting because they are authentic expressions of the confused and anomalous mind of a Europeanized Guatemalan desperately endeavouring to assess his local
roots. . . . A real Indian novel would have to be written by a real Indian, preferably not in Spanish but in an Indian language. Could such a real Indian write anyway? And if he could write well enough to produce a novel (let alone in Asturias's allegedly 'Joycean' Spanish) would he any longer be a real Indian, in the sense in which Asturias would probably understand the term? ("Guatemala's Magician," 1441-42)

I cite this lengthy and vehement criticism of Asturias as a straightforward example of the deeply entrenched stereotype of the "real Indian" that confronts Asturias, Silko, and indeed all who share Native ancestry. What is a "real Indian"? The rigidity of such stereotyping precludes the adaptation, change, and resistance that is integral to identity. In their roles as authors, Asturias and Silko subvert stereotypes and show that identity is entirely fluid. They fail to conform to the colonial assumption that there is such a creature as a "real Indian" who, if he or she could write, would be confined to expression only in a Native language. As heirs to multiple influences, they make the colonizers' education and language work to their own advantage and they adapt the novelistic form to continue to resist the very limitations of stereotyping.

Begun in the early 1920's, El Señor Presidente is Asturias' in-depth treatment of dictatorship. Though now considered somewhat 'dated' in certain respects, El Señor Presidente is more accessible than either Men of Maize or Mulata due to the fact
that these later novels demand a greater level of intertextual knowledge from readers (Prieto, *Archaeology* 3; Martin, *MoM* xxi). The dictator’s world is a darkly gothic, surreal, mythical, and horrifying social experience of political dictatorship—the human ‘will to power’ at its most irrational. Asturias draws freely from Western literary sources, especially surrealism’s occult, mystical, and alchemical lore even as he rejects the European literary model as inappropriate to the Central American experience. He is so often interpreted from a Western perspective, notes Dorita Nouhaud, that it is as if critics "ignore the text and Asturias’ unchanging position as a fierce partisan, one could even say pioneer of an American culture freed from European models" (166).

Michael Wood describes Asturias as a "proficient, prolific, rather dull novelist who seems to have got the Nobel Prize for having a kind heart and for sympathizing, at least in his books, with the downtrodden" (35). Victor Perrera, on the other hand, praises *El Señor Presidente* as a "truly magical work, despite its stylistic extravagances" (7-8). Asturias is credited for wielding with "consummate artistry the techniques he had learned in Paris from Surrealists like André Breton, Tristan Tzara and Robert Desnos" but this critic goes on to add that Asturias’ political novels "are full of conceptual lapses" because he is more of a moral allegorist than a political thinker (Perrera 7-8). Patrick Breslin asserts that "politics is the great literary theme of Latin America" and Asturias "one of the foremost
explorers of the theme" (Breslin 3).

Men of Maize entered the literary field in 1949 and immediately created controversy." Gerald Martin states that Men of Maize generated "admiration and bemusement in equal portions," and adds that Asturias did nothing to clarify its meaning during the balance of his own lifetime (MoM xiii). Commenting on Men of Maize in "Twenty-five Years Later," Ariel Dorfman calls this novel "the source and backbone of all that is being written in our continent today" (385) and adds that the text remains as fresh and contemporary as when first published in 1949, despite the fact that it has enjoyed neither public nor critical success (385). As El Señor Presidente is an in-depth mythical and surreal exploration of Native urbanization through representations of darkness, Men of Maize develops the dictator's politically chaotic present as continuous with the events of the past. While some critics treat this novel as the tragic end of the Indian and the tribal world, I believe that Asturias suggests that Indians, and subsequently their identity, have become divided. His emphasis on the remembrance or the forgetting of ancestral stories underscores this sense of division within the people.

Mulata, the most symbolically complex novel of the three, continues to explore the consequences of envy, assimilation, opportunism and the need to be true to oneself that begins in the earlier novels." Asturias shows how a seemingly harmless wish leads to self-betrayal and then to a quest that brings
transformation. Surrounded always by the spiritual energies of the Mayan landscape, Celestino Yumi learns that to be true to himself means that he needs to acknowledge his birthright as a 'man of maize.' However much his wish leads him astray of his Indian identity, it also returns him to that identity in the end. Martin notes that "no respectable critical approach to [Mulata] has yet been found, which is partly why so little has been written about it" ("Novel as Animated Cartoon" 397).

The above criticisms and observations illustrate precisely the type of misunderstandings which this study strives to address. The critics comprehend a Western novelistic tradition as their 'norm,' but as William Bevis observes in "Native American Novels: Homing In," stories of the "American Adam" who leaves home and advances "with little or no regard for family, society, past, or place" are entirely antithetical to narratives built on an indigenous epistemology (582). Despite examples of praise, the critics who bring colonial assumptions to the analysis of these literatures interpret meaning from within a dominant epistemology which negates the meaningfulness being conveyed by mythical and mystical imagery within the novels.

The consequences of Spanish and American domination lead both Asturias and Silko to a mutual focus on "heart" as a primary metaphor linking the quest for spiritual connectedness and integration with ancestral heritage. Christian mysticism posits a concept of "heart" similar to that which is posited by Mayan, Nahuatl, and Hopi sacred sources. Western mystics define "heart"
as the site of an individual’s innermost sense of being—the "very source of its energy and life"; "heart" encompasses the emotions, but transcends them too, to surrender its individuality as an ultimate recognition of union with the Divine (Underhill 71-72). Dennis Tedlock’s study of the Zuñi view of death reveals a similar acceptance of a link between the Divine and the heart: a human’s pinanne, or 'spirit,' is "lodged in the breath and ultimately in the heart" (262). Asturias’ and Silko’s texts fuse and intermingle the Western and indigenous symbolism of spirituality to critique Western colonization, and as Kimberly Blaeser suggests, they challenge "the exclusiveness of religious myths" as well as the "exclusive nature of religious ideas themselves" (28).

Their respective literary visions of a unified identity are derived from spiritual sources as well as from communal and familial stories. The myths, creation stories, and indigenous prophecies thoroughly integrate the concept of heart with the importance of blood and sacrifice; Asturias’ and Silko’s mediation of a contemporary identity is so completely bound up with whether the stories of heart, sacrifice, and blood are remembered or forgotten that a literary perspective which either downplays or negates spirituality will undoubtedly lose the meaningfulness within their novels. The Mayan and Hopi creation stories from the Popol Vuh and the Book of the Hopi define an integrated, spiritually-centred identity that is based on a sense of heart. The ancient Nahuatl poets also contribute a unified
aesthetic ideal which aligns the inner spiritual reality of the heart with its material manifestation, the face.

The heart is celebrated at the moment of creation, bemoaned as something lost in the prophetic-histories of Books of the Chilam Balam, and most important to Asturias’ and Silko’s works, re-gained through the emulation of the culture-hero quest. All of this focus on heart does not, however, allude to a pre-Conquest fantasy of idyllic perfection. Their re-visioning of spiritual connectedness encompasses both indigenous sources and aspects of the Western mystical tradition, and in Asturias’ case, fuses with the spiritualist (occult) images used by the surrealists. The loss and need for heart as a means of spiritual connection serves to magnify its contrary, the heartlessness of spiritual alienation. Asturias and Silko are modernist writers, but they are modernists for whom the twentieth-century theme of alienation is fused with colonization; they mediate the sacred indigenous view of spirituality as the key to an ongoing maintenance of cosmic order and balance and their contemporary perception that colonizing powers have disordered and unbalanced the cosmos in pursuit of glory and material acquisition.

Against the sacrificial reality depicted in Markman and Markman’s The Flayed God, Asturias’ and Silko’s narratives explore both heart and blood-sacrifice and transform them. Whereas the ancient Meso-Americans identified heart with a responsibility to contribute to divine order through both self- and victim-sacrifices, the lack of heart was the self-centred
failure to sacrifice for the Creators. Asturias and Silko retain the sacred connotations of heart and heartlessness as the ongoing opposition between spiritual and material existence, but modify the concept so that heart is equated with self-sacrifice and heartlessness with the blood-sacrifice of others. The destructiveness of spiritual alienation is mythically confirmed in beings such as Tezcatlipoca, Tohil, Seven-Macaw, and the Xibalban Lords who use blood-sacrifice to dominate and dehumanize others and to achieve self-glorification. Culture-heroes like Quetzalcoatl who achieve glory through self-sacrifice exhibit heart. Self-sacrifice is not viewed as a death, but rather as apotheosis because the life force of the individual merges with the greater life force (Markman and Markman 281).

Octavio Paz’s "Sons of La Malinche," from The Labyrinth of Solitude (1985), historically substantiates Asturias' and Silko's representations of the colonized as alienated. He discusses the development of Latin-American machismo, or 'manliness' as a post-Conquest ideal. His presentation of the Cortés-Malinche myth describes masculinity as an ideal that develops within the context of both an historical conqueror and a process of colonization. A debilitating solitude stems from a legacy of shame in one's origins in violation and betrayal. Asturias and Silko, like Paz, identify Europeans such as Cortés as violent yet victorious figures of alienation and masculine-feminine imbalance, but they also identify the alienated individual with self-magnifying mythical antagonists such as Tezcatlipoca and
Tohil who generate conflict as well as with Seven-Macaw and the Lords of Xibalba who are destined to be defeated by heroic action.

As a source of identity, spirituality is integral to political consciousness as it empowers the colonized to reject destructive political systems. Asturias and Silko use the culture-hero paradigm—the mythical-mystical-spiritual quest—as a holistic vision in which spiritual connection, personal healing, and de-colonization become virtually synonymous processes. The quest enables the authors and their characters to critique domination, reject the idealization of individualism, and liberate identity from static stereotypes. The quest is a liberation from an old and destructive way of life, but as Asturias' and Silko's narratives examine liberation, they reveal that it is not synonymous with unbridled freedom; a spiritually-centred identity situates human beings within a complex web of relationships, and liberation commits the individual to act within this extensive network of obligations and responsibilities.

Although heroic quests have elements that are universal, as Joseph Campbell outlines in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Asturias and Silko reinforce the idea that the quest is connected to de-colonization when they evoke culture-specific indigenous heroes whose journeys can re-align their alienated characters with their ancestral landscapes. The mythical heroes, like Asturias' and Silko's colonized protagonists, journey in a
heartless Underworld environment of evil and blood-sacrifice that is synonymous in these novels with the colonized city. The colonizer’s city can be an Underworld, according to Angel Rama’s depiction of the city as an isolated and materialistic anomaly on the landscape in The Lettered City (1996). Rama posits that the colonized city is a unique development because Spanish colonizers, and to a lesser extent North American colonizers, deviated from previous European norms of urban-rural unity. Its White literate elite fostered an urban ideal which marginalized the Native inhabitants and created a sharp dichotomy between the White urban and Indian rural landscape.

In The Myth of Eternal Return (1954), Mircea Eliade’s discussion of sacred landscape substantiates Rama’s thesis that the city is an inversion or an anomaly; a sacred landscape is a unified urban-rural landscape, and it is vital to a people’s identity. Robert Nelson’s Place and Vision (1993) confirms both Rama’s and Eliade’s perceptions, but goes further to consider the role of landscape as a primary character in contemporary North American Native literatures and may be extended here to include the Central American texts of Asturias. Landscape, according to Nelson, is the catalyst for identity. Asturias and Silko fuse the colonizer’s anomalous city with the ancient Underworld to create a landscape that is unified according to indigenous myth. No longer is the alienated individual consigned to the margins of the colonizer’s foreign city. He or she may, like the questing culture-hero, either journey through the city as an urban
Underworld and overcome its trials before returning home, or slay the evil ruler and free the people. In either scenario, the heroic paradigm anticipates a renewal. The liberator negotiates the Underworld and ushers in a new era.

The mythic quests portrayed in Asturias’ and Silko’s works generally accord with Campbell’s presentation of a universal monomythic hero, but the Meso-American-Anasazi tradition offers both the single hero and heroic twins. Julie Cruikshank also points out in *Life Lived Like a Story* (1990), that the indigenous heroic paradigm also has a female quest. Though I confine this study to male quests, I briefly mention it here because Silko uses this female quest in her story called *Yellow Woman*. Louis Owens, in *Other Destinies* (1992), expands on the culture-hero paradigm to show that the indigenous model is an inversion of the classical epic paradigm; the Greek hero, Odysseus, is elevated to a position of transcendency over other men. Odysseus’ journey serves to reinforce the primacy of the individualist and therefore, stands in direct opposition to the indigenous mythic quester whose heroic action merges individual identity and purpose with ancestors and community.

Campbell’s monomythic hero returns from the quest with a boon to share with his people: the successful indigenous quest, however, goes further to suggest that the community anticipates the quester’s return in order to integrate his or her newfound knowledge or wisdom into the community. The most important boon given by the Meso-American hero and the twins in their quests
which end in self-sacrifice is the promise of cyclical renewal that makes them particularly valuable to Asturias’ and Silko’s representations of renewal (Markman and Markman 316).

Gord Brotherston’s presentation of heroic journeys in the Book of the Fourth World (1992) confers an additional meaning on the literary presentation of the quest; the culture-heroes Quetzalcoatl, Hunahpu, and Xolotl move through both the Surface World and the Underworld conforming to the movement of such planetary bodies as Venus, the Sun, and the Moon with whom they are aligned, and as Markman and Markman suggest, unite all oppositions and all levels of being through the quest (282). Brotherston’s observation that the indigenous mythical culture hero has a capacity for self-annihilation fits with Asturias’ and Silko’s focus on self-sacrifice as the basis for renewal. Mythically, the sacrificial death is a pre-condition for rebirth; cosmic and spiritual order are maintained through continual cycles of birth, growth, death, and change. Within the context of Asturias’ and Silko’s novels, self-sacrifice expresses the protagonists’ willingness to participate in the cycles of creation. Both the mythic quests which bring a change of consciousness and military resistance emphasize the link between death and continuity through self-sacrifice. The mythical beings are figures whose ethical behaviour and spiritual connection are the models for transition from oppression to freedom. Thus, the culture heroes are the vital link between the ancient past, the colonized present, and a liberated future.
The narratives explored here fuse indigenous quests with Western mystical quests, though Asturias alone equates Native quests with the alchemical quest and uses the surrealist-occult androgyne-hermaphrodite to achieve his literary goals. Mysticism (1990), Evelyn Underhill’s history of the Western mystical tradition supports my contention that the mythical quests represent positive spiritual teachings as much as they explain the cultural origins of a people. Like the mythical quests, the mystical quests similarly invert the classical heroic paradigm; the indigenous hero has more in common with the Western mystic than he or she does with the Western hero because both the mystic and the indigenous hero equate the completion of the journey with the loss of individualism while the Western epic becomes more strongly individualistic.

I take the position that the work of Asturias and Silko must be viewed in indigenous contexts. Chapter One of this study considers the need to re-evaluate Asturias and centres on the ways in which Silko and Asturias use a variety of sources to establish their visions of synthesis and balance in storytelling in order to validate the continuity of indigenous identity within a contemporary setting. Colonization is connected to a specific historical process that begins with Columbus’ arrival in the Americas in 1492 and continues to reverberate into the present. Within the context of spiritual teachings, cyclical history, and mythical heroes, the awful solitude of alienation created by colonization cannot endure, since nothing bad—or good, can last
forever. Identity is fluid, not static; survival and continuity depend on the ability of individuals to adapt, change, and resist.

Chapter Two addresses domination as an ancient issue that antedates Columbus. In this chapter, I describe the various ways Asturias and Silko show how alienation is perpetuated. Colonization is a form of domination that is imposed from without, but as both the authors and their ancient sources reveal, no one has a monopoly on domination as long as there are individuals who put self-interest ahead of everything else and fail to fulfill their role in creation. The desire to dominate can transcend the personal to pervade an entire social system to the point where social and political despair are the norm. Those who envy others or desire comfort at another's expense will make choices that have negative repercussions for future generations.

Chapter Three looks more closely at the way Asturias and Silko positively re-value the ancestral past for present generations of both Native and non-Native readers. Asturias and Silko fuse mythical-mystical representations to re-centre spiritual and ethical teachings and demonstrate that the quest re-integrates the alienated individual with Spirit, landscape, and community. Mythical heroes provide powerful models of heart and sacrifice for the colonized to emulate. The journey creates unity—it de-colonizes the individual as it re-aligns the mythical and geographical landscape, discloses an already present identity, and restores the individual to his or her community.
Chapter Four concludes the comparative study. Asturias can be successfully re-evaluated within the conceptual framework provided by contemporary Native literary criticism, while interpretations of Silko can be enriched by the inclusion of Meso-American concepts. I show that viewing Asturias' and Silko's narratives from the point of view of spirituality is a viable interpretive approach to their novels. A contemporary identity maintains continuity with the indigenous past; the mixed-blood is free of the static and ambiguous definitions of Indianness imposed by the dominant culture, and freed from the competitive and hierarchical Western social system when he or she accepts the underlying principles, attitudes, and values of Native spirituality as a positive foundation for a co-operative, communally-oriented identity.
CHAPTER ONE:
A COMPARISON OF
MIGUEL ANGEL ASTURIAS AND LESLIE MARMON SILKO

A comparative study of the Guatemalan writer Miguel Angel Asturias and the Laguna-Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko has two purposes. The first is to re-evaluate Asturias’ work from within the perspective of Native literary studies. The second and equally important purpose, which will achieve the intended re-evaluation, is to examine two authors whose mixed-blood heritage leads them to explore a literary path in search of a contemporary identity based on their depictions of spirituality and their shared Meso-American heritage. Previous studies have linked Silko with Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa and Chilean author Isabel Allende, but Asturias has never been compared with North American Native writers.

Asturias gives more than enough indication that his conception of a contemporary Latin or Central American identity is an identity rooted in a spiritually-centred indigenous perspective. A dynamic and vital indigenous epistemology dominates his entire perspective and narrative structure, as it does Silko’s. As a mixed-heritage writer, he uses ancient literary sources to create richly intertextualized novels, and has a lifelong commitment to his "most 'Indian' of all the Latin
American republics" (Martin, MoM xii), yet his novels are persistently interpreted from surrealist, psychological, socio-political, anthropological, and Marxist perspectives. As interesting as these alternative perspectives are to illuminating Asturias' broad range of influences, the pre-eminent Western epistemology of the scholars often overshadows the indigenous epistemology that informs the literary structures being analyzed.

Many western critics make assumptions that the tribal world has ended and that Indian identity is subsumed in class struggle. Even recent mythical interpretations which so enrich reader context with their detailed presentations of Meso-American myths do not treat myths as dynamic spiritual teachings which underpin Silko's and Asturias' depiction of a spiritually-centred identity but as fictions allied to a primitive human past, and reducible to literary motifs. Both authors may lament the ease with which spiritual connection is forgotten, but I argue, neither shares the Western romanticized assumptions of the Vanishing Indian, or the Noble or Ignoble Savage. The Western separation of spirituality and religion may obscure understandings of mixed-blood literature to precisely the same extent that Serge Gruzinski suggests that the Western separation of myth and history may hamper anthropological understandings of how the Nahua conceived their own history (Markman and Markman 270).

Asturias' mythical literary vision grew out of his Parisian exile. There is no doubt that Paris was an important turning point for him, yet he is treated as an outsider coming to Native
sources instead of as an insider exploring his ancestral heritage through literature. Gord Brotherston notes how ironic it is that Asturias discovered his heritage in Paris ("Mayan Literature" 68), but current US Native writers find it more ironic that Western institutions presume to own the indigenous world (Vizenor 203; Silko, *YWBS* 51; Rose 406). Mixed-blood literatures and efforts to have bones and ceremonial objects restored to the people represent two types of actions taken to repatriate integral elements of indigenous identity (Monroe 391-402; Cooper 403-12). If Asturias also confronted this irony, one can never know, but René Prieto notes that Asturias arrived in Paris holding strongly assimilationist views and within six years had done a "full turnabout regarding the Indian" (*Asturias* 22).

I conjecture that while in Paris he addressed the internalization of the colonizer's ethic and used his writing to embrace his ancestral identity. Like other contemporary US mixed-blood authors such as Silko, Scott Momaday, Louise Erdrich, and James Welch, Asturias used literature to subvert the static stereotypes of a dead 'primitive' world to identify with their ancestral heritages. They integrate the two cultural points of view to create, aesthetically complex narratives in which a link with the indigenous past is sought and accepted within the context of spirituality.

In Asturias's *El Señor Presidente* (1946), *Men of Maize* (1949), and *Mulata* (1963), and Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) the characters are, as Ruppert
observes, individuals whose experiences or mixed-bloodedness give them access to two cultures (Ruppert 20). Spirituality encompasses indigenous and Western spirituality in its perceptions of the underlying oneness of lifeforms; both are differentiated from religion, according to James Moffet, because religion "functions through human institutions and is, therefore, culturally biased" (qtd. in Blaeser 23). The depiction of ongoing tensions and conflicts between orthodox religion and Native spirituality is characteristic of contemporary indigenous fictions, as Kimberly Blaeser notes (22). The fusion of indigenous and Western spirituality enables Silko and Asturias to give equal weight to both and to use each to inform the other according to Ruppert’s definition of mediation given earlier in this chapter, and to "challenge" the exclusiveness of religious myths and ideas, as Blaeser asserts (28).

Both authors share a spiritual vision in which their alienated characters become integrated with their indigenous heritage. For Asturias and Silko, alienation ends when an intense spiritual experience initiates a radical change of consciousness and manifests in correct behaviour—the "spiritual behaviour" that results when the individual moves to act on the perception that there is an underlying unity within all life (Moffet, qtd. in Blaeser 23). The model for heart exists within indigenous creation texts and myths as well as in European mythical and mystical literatures; the heroic quest paradigm enables the alienated individual to experience the spiritual
quest for a change of heart. Heroic quests are universal but Asturias' and Silko's synthesis of universal and indigenous quests acknowledges the multiple influences which contribute to their novels.

While the Mayan and Hopi creation texts, the *Popol Vuh* and the *Book of the Hopi* integrate heart and wisdom with remembering the Creator and singing praises (Tedlock 84; Waters 22), the Nahuatl ideal identified by Miguel Léon-Portilla as "an aesthetic conception of the universe and life" fuses beauty and truth (qtd. in Gingerich 118). The concept of heart unifies the aesthetic and the sacred in Nahuatl literature:

At the centre of that tradition he identifies the concept of the self as *in ixtli, in yóllotl* (the face, the heart) . . . an educational ideal identified as *yolmelahualistli* ('the rectification of the heart'), and *ixtlamachiliztli* ('the action of teaching wisdom to the face'). The supreme goal of the artist he identifies as the *yolteotl* ('the deified heart') and the artist's task as *tlayolteobuiani* ('continually putting a divine heart within things'). The true artist is he who becomes *moyolnonotzani* (one who continually converses with his own heart'). (Gingerich 118)

As mediators of ancient sacred literatures, according to James Ruppert's definition provided on page 4, Silko and Asturias would, I assert, also mediate the aesthetic ideals of these texts. The ideal establishes a correlation between the authors
as artists and authors as teachers. The ideal also emphasizes
the interplay between heart and face as inner and outer, and
spiritual and material realities which are balanced when the two
become one. The unity of a Nahuatl aesthetic ideal mirrors the
unity of the Meso-American sacred ideal which permeates all
facets of culture in its understanding of reality and in its
expression in poetry, ceremony, ritual, and rulership, as Markman
and Markman note (270).

Asturias and Silko, mediating between ancient and
contemporary worlds, are consistent in their presentation of a
reality in which the sacred forms the basis for all cultural
thought and experience. As Markman and Markman assert, "reality"
for Meso-American indigenous peoples is "the constant
interpenetration of the planes of spirit and matter, and
'history' [is], for them, a record of the workings of the world
of the spirit as it manifest[s] itself on the earthly plane"
(270). The Meso-American belief that myth is the way one
interprets history and that history is the realization of myth
(270) is borne out in Asturias’ and Silko’s narratives. Their
presentations of heroic quests become intensely political
narratives reflecting the way in which spirit is manifested in
the earth through the bodies of the mythical heroes as well as in
the bodies of political leaders.

Willard Gingerich makes a valid point when he observes that
contemporary authors whose familiarity with Western aesthetics
has not destroyed "the vestiges of Native knowledge to which they
find themselves heir" are continually strengthening that knowledge and defining an aesthetic ideal which may provide an "intuitive, visceral perspective" into the older oral forms of expression (Gingerich 124). While he specifically names Leslie Silko, Scott Momaday, and Simon Ortiz, we can confidently include Asturias as part of this assembly of twentieth-century authors who structure a dynamic literary form on an indigenous epistemological foundation.

With the support of Mayan, Nahuatl and Hopi sources, Asturias and Silko focus on spirituality that is centred on heart--for heart is the unifying metaphor signifying the alignment of spiritual and material realities and the restoration of balance and order. They also illustrate the heartlessness that separates the individual from sacred connections and glorifies greed and domination. The metaphoric quest for heart is very closely allied with the quest for connection with ancestral indigeneity, while heartlessness metaphorically links the colonizer with the colonized who have assimilated a destructive, materially-centred, Western worldview.

Miguel Angel Asturias and Leslie Marmon Silko use the quest to reconcile the divisive elements that create alienation. Tayo and Emo from *Ceremony* and Menardo from *Almanac of the Dead* all exhibit the characteristics of alienation that are common to other male Native American literary characters, like Scott Momaday’s Abel, from *House Made of Dawn*, and the narrator in James Welch’s *Winter in the Blood*. These characters may or may
not be alcoholic, are often violent or abusive, are estranged from themselves and their people, and usually have little capacity to love. Such characters are often juxtaposed with older and more heart-centred people.

A number of Latin American novels, such as Carlos Fuentes’ *Death of Artemio Cruz*, and Gabriel García Márquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, depict characters who suffer from solitude; solitude is used pejoratively to identify an alienated condition and is not to be confused with solitude’s contemplative or romantic connotations. I use alienation and solitude interchangably to represent a negative inner condition of fragmentation or isolation which manifests outwardly in equally negative qualities such as greed, self-centredness, despair, envy, ambition, and exploitation. The North American Native and Latin American authors write within the parameters of a twentieth-century Western literary tradition in which the alienated individual is the consequence of modernization (Owens 18-20; Ruppert x).

Asturias and Silko examine the effects of colonization and its consequences for indigenous people and focus on spirituality as the source of hope for a future that may be derived from embracing a tradition that the colonizer has relegated to the past. The fusion of indigenous myths and western mysticism enables Asturias and Silko to integrate the conflictual, ambiguous, and spiritually desolate individual into a new vision of unity. Whereas Western man in not alleviated from his
alienated condition, mixed-heritage authors use the theme of alienation, as Ruppert observes, "for Native purposes" (x).

Colonization traps indigenous peoples in Western history. The limited freedom available to those who cannot oppose history is clearly split in Asturias' work as the 'subhuman existence' of urban mestizos in Presidente, and the flight of rural Indians, like Goyo Yic, into the highlands in Men of Maize. Each author subverts the modern political realm by depicting domination as a characteristic of the Underworld. The mythic and mystical spiritual quests of Asturias and Silko thus re-vision history. The individual escapes from historic time (Eliade 157) when he equates the city with Xibalba and remembers that the fate of the Xibalban Lords is to be vanquished. The questing hero may be confined and tested by this Underworld, but is destined to pass through, triumph, and contribute his or her wisdom to the people in order to establish a new world. Through the mythic structure, the suffering of the colonized is neither pointless nor hopeless; the cyclical structure confers meaningfulness because repetitious return negates the permanence of either fortune or misfortune (Eliade 151).

The Mexican author Octavio Paz also contends that solitude is a consequence of historicity--a post-Conquest phenomenon that is symbolized by the sexual liaison of Cortés, the conqueror, with Malinche, his Indian concubine (87). Malinche is regarded as both the whore and victim of the Spanish Conquest; she violates the integrity of the feminine and, in turn, is violated
(Paz 86). The powerful yet isolated men who epitomize the ideal of **machismo**, or 'manliness'—"hacienda owners, politicians, generals, [and] captains of industry" (82) are modeled on a standard of manliness introduced by a foreign **conquistador** and reinforced when the mestizo confronts his origins in violation, shame, and self-betrayal. The ideal of **machismo** violates the masculine-feminine balance that is regarded as necessary to spiritual wholeness in both mystical and indigenous sources.

**Machismo** is a negative ideal upon which to build a sense of self-identity. In Asturias' portrayal of the dictator in *El Señor Presidente* and Silko's portrayal of Menardo, the Mexican businessman in *Almanac*, the **machismo** of the dictator and Menardo merges with the destructive, mythical, Underworld antagonists to illuminate the spiritual and ethical bankruptcy of the Westernized self-made man who is idealized by the contemporary world. In Silko's *Almanac*, Menardo's alienation begins in childhood with the shame of discovering that he is Indian and ends in lonely middle-age with his "nightly ritual of the brandy... looking at himself in the mirror wearing the [bullet-proof] vest and pajamas" (Silko, *Almanac* 259, 497). Menardo's solitude, like the more intense solitude of Asturias' invisible president, is fuelled by denial of heritage, resentment, fear of death, and the inability to love or trust. As Octavio Paz notes of the alienated individual, Menardo and the dictator are "power isolated in its own potency, without relationship or compromise. ... pure incommunication, a solitude that devours itself and
everything it touches" (Paz 82). As Paz asserts, in the denial of heritage, an individual becomes a mere "abstraction: he is a man. He becomes the son of Nothingness" (87).

The characters who complete their quests in Asturias' and Silko's narratives move from alienation to unity when they can synthesize life's many ambiguities and paradoxes within a unified vision; as Louis Owens suggests, successful characters move toward a unification of the "past and future with the present" (20). The authors blend and/or juxtapose many realities, oppositions, dimensions, and time; by blurring myth-ritual with the human and socio-cultural, or by blurring the divisions between myth, romance, and realism (Owens 168) the authors invite readers to integrate multiple realities as a simultaneous experience. Asturias states that Indian narrative lives on two levels: "the dream level and the level of reality"; the dream level, representing the inner spiritual reality, "conveys an oneiric, fabulous, imaginary reality" while the everyday reality refers to the external material reality of the senses (Harss 79).

The sense of spiritual order unifies and heals alienation; ceremony, ritual, and myth enable the authors to explore certain truths that Owens identifies as "immutable" within an indigenous epistemology (Owens 20): a spiritually-centred view eludes "historical fixation . . . places humanity within a carefully, cyclically ordered cosmos and gives humankind irreducible responsibility for the maintenance of that delicate equilibrium" (Owens 20). The 'immutable' truths which permeate their texts
and reflect their indigenous inheritances are identified with the Meso-American-Anasazi sacred reality of sacrifice and the divinity of maize.

Asturias and Silko mediate the concept of sacrifice and blood-letting which is essential to ancient Meso-American thought; whether depicted as victim-sacrifice or auto-sacrifice, observe Markman and Markman, blood-sacrifice is the key to cosmic order and to the transformative process which enables the living to access the spirit and vice versa (179). The emphasis on blood and sacrifice retains its spiritual significance in Silko’s and Asturias’ literature, but it is transformed to critique all forms of domination. Self-sacrifice becomes the ultimate image of an individual’s willingness to give, but it is modified to express heart—selflessness, and unconditional love. The potent image of the still-beating heart extracted from the body becomes a powerful metaphor to indict those nations and individuals who exploit others. The mythical figures of domination such as Fire-Eye Macaw (also called Seven-Macaw in the Popol Vuh) and Death-Eye Dog (gods Xolotl and Tezcatlipoca) unify Silko with the Meso-American mythical sources used by Asturias (Almanac 257).

Asturias and Silko identify domination as a destructive aspect of the mytho-historical past as well as of contemporary Western culture. They critique a specific experience of Spanish and U.S. military domination and colonization, but those who dominate are unified across time, cultures, and international space. Silko’s Gunyeedahs, or Destroyers, her own invention
rather than a traditional aspect of Laguna narrative, according to Ruppert (84), are a "secret clan" and the moving force behind domination (Almanac 760). Montezuma is, therefore, implicated in Cortés' American Conquest by their mutual blood-sacrifices, and the United States is implicated in the Jewish Holocaust by providing an American model of Native genocide for Hitler to use (Silko, Almanac 760, 215). Asturias' president is linked mythically to all of Latin America, but he is also interconnected with figures as historically diverse as Guatemalan dictator Estrada Cabrera, the Athenian Pericles, and the Roman Julius Caesar (Asturias, ESP 97). Their shift across numerous boundaries condemns all expressions of domination and self-glorification.

The remembered mythical-historical past and previous world creations identify domination as an old and familiar story of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual imbalance; the lives and bodies of the characters are profaned by the political systems in which they live, as well as by individual choices related to appetites, desires, and fears. The authors update the mythical stories of heroic liberators and in so doing, they remind the people that tyrants may change faces and clothes, but tyranny can always be identified by the characteristic desire for blood-sacrifice and the profane quest for self-glorification, power, and wealth. The self-sacrificing mythical hero provides a powerful model for liberation from tyranny.

Asturias' and Silko's efforts to synthesize the urban and
rural worlds in their novels can be more fully appreciated when urban development is understood as both a mythic and historic creation. Mircea Eliade states that landscape constitutes a people’s territory and "gives them their reality and their validity" (10). Ancient cities, and especially the temples of a people, conform to a "celestial prototype" that mirrors the spiritual realm (Eliade 7); cities, as well as other features within a specific territory, form a unified whole to create a mythical sacred landscape that is all-inclusive of "the mountains that he climbs, populated and cultivated regions, navigable rivers, cities, [and] sanctuaries" (9). Eliade’s description of a unified landscape precludes the creation of an urban-rural dichotomy for either the Mayan or the Hopi people because the spiritual landscape and the physical geography are synthesized.

But, as Angel Rama notes in The Lettered City, Spanish domination did create such a dichotomy in the landscape. His socio-economic perspective has parallels with the Eliade’s mythical model in that Rama presents a European economic norm that situates the urban world within a unified landscape. The ‘European norm’ represented slow but gradual urban growth; cities had always grown out of rural development according to rural needs for trade and market centres (Rama 11). The cities of the colonizer, however, deviate from both a European economic norm and a mythic norm in that Latin American urban growth either preceded or was simultaneous with rural development (11). Cities had a "free-standing character" (10); they were "isolated and
practically out of communication from one another, while the territory between the new urban centres continued to be inhabited almost solely by the dismayed indigenous populations" (10).

Spanish-built cities represented an historical paradox in that they deviated so significantly from previously-built European cities that they inverted the norm (Rama 11). Most important to our considerations here is that a lettered elite, the letrados whom Rama likens to a "priestly caste" (16), are central figures in the inversion of the norm and development of an urban ideal. The inverted norm created a distinctive phenomenon that serves as a model of isolation. The letrados isolated themselves geographically from the rural Indian landscape beyond the city. They isolated themselves within the urban world, hierarchically separated from the blacks, native people, and mestizos who lived at the periphery. The elites further isolated themselves behind barriers of protocol, language, literacy, and levels of conspicuous consumption (32).

This self-protective, self-perpetuating bureaucratic elite operated as petty tyrants within their respective domains, acting as "servants of power, in one sense," Rama notes, but as "masters of power, in another" (22). Rama’s description of bureaucratic tyranny is graphically portrayed in Asturias’ Judge Advocate, as a person who is central to the dictator’s structure. He carries out the president’s directives, yet exceeds those directives whenever profitable and wields life-and-death authority over the general population.
Urban growth in Latin America was an historical development in which military and bureaucratic efficiency were integral to the creation of the isolated city. Rama's portrayal of an inverted norm and the impact of an urban ideal are as pertinent to Silko's representations of the Mexican and American southwestern urban worlds as they were to Asturias, because Silko integrates the fate of Tucson with the fate of Mexico (Almanac 598). She regards the American inverted model as the collusion between the military and commercial interests. Tucson was founded by criminals and profiteers who traded their ill-gotten wealth for social status. Tucson remains a criminal centre throughout Almanac. Spanish Conquest was a "frenetic gallop across continental immensities" in comparison with the incremental movement westward in the U.S. (Rama 10). Whether viewed as frenetic or as incremental, both Asturias and Silko mythically integrate the colonized city with the landscape.

In this latter part of the twentieth-century, Silko's urban vision in Almanac differs from Asturias' earlier urban vision of the dictator's city and later depictions of Tierrapaulita in Mulata only by the degree of extremes. Silko shifts her focus away from the personal quest of Ceremony toward a polemic and apocalyptic vision of the role of ancestral spirits and spirituality in a rapidly changing world. The divisiveness of the landscape is highly pronounced in both authors' narratives as each depicts colonization, industrialization, and capitalism contorting and splitting Indians. Asturias focuses on the
dictator's city as a site of concentrated power. *Almanac* is centred in Tucson, but Silko encompasses the length and breadth of North and Central America and Europe to show that current events are globally inter-connected. All westernized cities, according to Silko's perspective, are bastions of the middle class where competition and conspicuous consumption are the norm.

Asturias' and Silko's paradoxical views of the colonized city held in thrall by powerful Underworld forces are part of the authors' landscapes. The pre-eminence of landscape forms an ancient conceptual framework of indigenous belief in which the stories "grow out of the land," as Nelson states (7). Asturias' nameless president has parallels with the Xibalban Lords, Tezcatlipoca, and Seven-Macaw in the same sense that his equally nameless city has parallels with Xibalba or Tulan because the stories already exist in the land. Likewise, the sacred landscape that is central to Tayo's journey in *Ceremony* becomes the "basis for re-centring of self-consciousness" (Nelson 6) because the stories of Spider Woman and Sun Man are already present in the land. Those who know their land and her stories can readily identify spiritual connectedness as the ability to identify with the landscape and by extension, enter into "identity with whatever tribal traditions--encoded in stories and ceremony--happen to have come about in these places" (Nelson 7).

Western critics and readers in general need to accommodate alternative perceptions of the land so as to be able to approach the literature with the knowledge that this land ethic is always
contextualized with the storyline. Some Western literary critics, as Nelson notes, put humankind in the position of being the pre-eminent creation rather than seeing humans as part of Nature and have the tendency to anthropomorphize the land (8). Many critics have a difficult time accepting an indigenous land ethic that moves humanity to work and live "with the land" rather than against it as whites do (Nelson 8). The essential idea remains that human beings are created beings who are entirely dependent on the land's bounty and utterly helpless against its power.

In this focus on spirituality, however, the mediating role of the author is identified as a positive force for bringing Native and Western spiritual teachings together to "reinforce and re-create the structures of human life" and situate the individual within the two codes (Ruppert 3). Paula Gunn Allen views the Native approach to myth, ritual, and the acceptance of a non-material/non-ordinary reality as visionary in its scope. The mystical attitude and symbolic use of language offers a metaphysical perspective of a unified and balanced universe that far exceeds previous criticisms by non-Natives who reduce indigenous spirituality to pagan, childish, or folkloric expressions (Allen 67-9, 107).

Asturias' and Silko's visionary role gives them much in common with both the Nahuatl poets previously mentioned, and with Western visionaries who implicate themselves in a specific responsibility to share a vision with their people, a 'people' in
this case who reflect a non-Native as well as a Native audience. The Western mystical tradition has long accepted the idea that artists and mystics share inter-related roles as visionaries who accept the spiritual experience as a power latent within all humanity. Compared to the 'average' person who relates to the external reality only through the intellect or the senses and denies a non-material reality, artists and mystics are most apt to express and share their vision of the spiritual reality seen beyond the boundaries of the everyday world (Underhill 73, 75).

The visionary, whether artist or mystic, must wrench from the inadequacy of language the words most apt to give form to an "unspeakable experience" (Underhill 76). Language which adequately expresses a material or intellectual reality does not easily express a spiritual reality. The language which expresses the mystical and mythical experience must convey its truths through symbolism that is always allusive and oblique (Allen 70; Underhill 126). Symbolic language, notes Underhill, does not appeal to "the clever brain" but to "the desirous heart [and] the intuitive sense" of human beings (126). A rational-only view of the world is an obstacle impeding access to the spiritual reality. Thus, mystical expressions subvert the rational and intellectual capacity and focus on the emotions, intuition, and imagination as gateways to the visionary experience.

Asturias' and Silko's narratives express the human spiritual journey, even as they synthesize Native and Western symbols of that journey. Asturias and Silko harmonize Christian and
indigenous journeys and suggest that the spiritual experience is universally accessible. Heroic actions of the indigenous mythical quest blend with mystical, occult, and alchemical images of an inner quest toward the sacred. The quests generally follow one of three patterns: the journey of the pilgrim or wanderer for either a "lost home" or a "better country" (Underhill 126); the craving of the soul "for a perfect mate" (Underhill 127); and the craving for "inward purity and perfection" (127). The interior mystical experience fills the empty mythical characters whose actions are known but whose inner states are not, while the destiny of the mythical hero translates the inner quest into physical action.

For example, Angel Face's death in Asturias' El Señor Presidente seems meaningless unless he is viewed as a synthesis of both mythical and mystical elements. In the presence of these elements, I would have to disagree with T. B. Irving's view that Presidente conveys hopelessness and that Angel Face is only a troublesome "picaresque" hero who overturns the reader's expectations of a Western hero (194, 196). Angel Face conforms both to the indigenous model of One Hunahpu, one of the first sacred twins depicted in the Popol Vuh, and to the mystical model of the quest for the perfect mate. Mythically, Angel Face's identification with One Hunahpu signifies that he cannot avoid his fate as a sacrificial victim to the Xibalban Lords (the dictator), but he is propelled toward that fate by the inner mystical quest for the perfect mate.
Angel Face’s love for Camila initiates an inner spiritual transformation that is expressed externally through their union as husband and wife. The president rightly identifies the love within the mystical union as a threat to himself and his destructive political structure. Love sets in motion the fulfilment of Angel Face’s mythical sacrificial death and sets the stage for Camila to emulate Blood Woman as the mother of the future liberator of the people. Angel Face’s death as an individual is tragic, but because he is transformed by love, and his act of love is realized in a future generation, both his death and his small human struggle are meaningful. Situated within the larger mystical and mystical vision, Presidente ends with a promise of liberation.

Similarly, Silko’s character Tayo from Ceremony combines both mythical and mystical elements, and in contrast to Angel Face’s tragic end, Tayo’s quest has an optimistic outcome. A variety of poems scattered throughout the text indicate that Tayo has multiple mythical roles to play in order to fulfill the ritual that will end the drought. Tayo is Pa’caya’nyi, Old Woman K’yo’s son, who does not know his father and disrespects the Corn Mother (Silko, Ceremony 48). Then he is Pollen Boy, a man who is turned into a Coyote and then restored to manhood (Silko 141). Next, Tayo is Sun Man, Spider Woman’s grandson who rescues the storm clouds from the Gambler (176). Finally, he is Summer who shares Ts’eh Montaño with her husband, Winter (Owens 187). Silko’s fusion of many mythical roles unifies Tayo’s personal
mystical quest for the lost home, the ceremony for rain, and the larger ceremony to deny the witchery complete success. The mystical quest takes him on a circuit of the Laguna landscape; his journey and the ritual are complete when Tayo dreams of riding in a wagon with Josiah, Rocky, and Grandma (Silko, *Ceremony* 254).

In contrast to classic epic quests which celebrate heroes as greater than ordinary men, the paradigms of the culture-hero and the mystic used by Asturias and Silko invert that which Louis Owens identifies as the "romantic impulse" to subsume the 'nobody' into a great 'somebody' (168). Characters like Silko's Tayo, and Asturias' Angel Face, Goyo Yic, and Nicho Aquino are heroic 'nobodies' whose inner quest for spiritual unity, as suggested by Louis Owens, merges the individual with the communal identity (168). The fusion of mythical and mystical elements unifies the internal spiritual life of the individual with external actions which have practical application to cultural continuity.

Asturias and Silko strive to subvert negative images of the mixed-blood to consider what it means to be Indian. Both authors fly in the face of colonizers' imaginative constructions of the 'real' Indian -- a "treasured invention," Owens asserts, that has little bearing on living people whose contemporary experiences are an accumulation of centuries of contact (4). Artistic attempts to articulate identity must take into account the persistent stereotypes, centuries of contact, and the
contemporary reality in which indigenous populations are spread across an immense landscape. The broad range of cultural practices and the diverse experiences of urban and rural populations make writing about identity a daunting endeavour (Owens 5).

Contemporary authors such as Asturias and Silko practice an adaptive restructuring system which uses the language of the dominant group. They shift between the communal ‘authorless’ voice of oral literature and the individualized voice of the novelist familiar to Western readers. Asturias’ and Silko’s syncretic blending of elements reflects the efforts of the mixed-blood author to find adaptive strategies which will allow an author to retain the creative power of the oral within the written descriptive structure. The shift from oral to written narrative reflects a radical departure from the past, and is a shift, as Owens observes, from creating a living reality to describing an historic reality (9). They graft old stories and myths and the “thematic and structural principles found therein upon the ‘foreign’ and intensely egocentric genre of the written prose narrative, or novel” (Owens 10).

By adapting the Western novel to their needs, Asturias and Silko demonstrate that they appropriate rather than are appropriated by European forms; they restructure the Western novel to depict the indigenous spiritual reality of the Mayans, Nahuatlts, and Pueblos in poetic language that frees the myths from their Western status as artifacts from the past. Luis Harss
observes that Asturias "deliberately broke with the mental structures of the Spanish tradition" and strove to "revitalize the language" from within (Harss 81). He rejected the "flowery rhetoric, ornament, and academic elegance" of Spanish-American novels; he replaced colonial "nostalgia for Castilian purism" with poetic images from ancient Mayan texts along with such Native oral structural components as alliteration, refrains, onomatopoeia, and parallelisms (Harss 81, 84). Owens notes that Scott Momaday also faced a similar task of needing "to appropriate, to tear free of its restricting authority, another language--English--and to make that language accessible to an Indian discourse" (13).

The Nahuatl aesthetic ideal identified by Miguel León-Portilla on page 30 is incorporated into the present by Asturias and Silko who restructure language and reality in order to convey the concept of heart. Silko’s poetry in her modern novel *Ceremony* mirrors the ancient Meso-American aesthetic ideal of poetry as "the fundamental index of [the individual’s] ability to speak the truth of his [or her] existence" (Gingerich 119). In *Ceremony*, Silko alternates prose with poetry; the prose reflects Tayo’s existence as unbalanced and disordered, while the poetry is the ordered and balanced spiritual reality with which Tayo aligns his quest (Ruppert 80-81; Owens 169). In Tayo’s movement toward healing, the poetry increases, and the discordant prose decreases. Poetry continually restructures Tayo’s reality until he conforms to an indigenous "aesthetic vision of reality" (León-
Portilla qtd. in Gingerich 119) which is at once both a poetic and a spiritual reality; "poetic inspiration" states León-Portilla, is the only way "to stutter from day to day 'the truth' on this earth" (119). Whether as a 'tearing free' or as poetic form, Asturias and Silko literally subvert the colonizer's language and, as Owens observes, enter into "dialogue with the language itself" (Owens 15).

Both Asturias and Silko mediate ancient sources in their presentations of spirituality, which will be explored further in Chapters Two and Three, but I suggest that they restructure not only language but imagery as well and exercise considerable artistic license in the process. Asturias liberally borrows passages, images, lines of verse, and themes from these indigenous sources and other texts to create rich intertextuality: the Mayan creation text, the Popol Vuh; the Annals of the Cakchiquels; the "Annals of Cuauhtitlan" and "Legend of the Suns"; The Books of Chilam Balam; and Sagahún's Hymns of the Gods (Martin, MoM 461-65). I find it plausible to suggest that as an academic, Silko would also have access to the above texts, Asturias' novels, and a variety of anthropological sources such as Frank Waters, Franz Boas, E. C. Parsons, Charles F. Lummis, R. J. Parmentier, and Dennis and Barbara Tedlock which detail the myths and spiritual beliefs of the various Pueblo peoples (Todd 170).

Asturias creatively adapts many elements, often blending several within a single paragraph. He is criticized for doing so
by Gord Brotherston who states of *Men of Maize* that Asturias "does not hesitate here to create his own Mayan folklore and intercalates the underworld 'tests' with the successive creations of man [ . . . ] narrated in the *Popol Vuh* ("Mayan Literature" 72). Brotherston concludes that at least *Men of Maize* makes a political point, in contrast to that which he negatively identifies as "the 'pure' fiction" of *Mulata* (Brotherston, "Mayan Literature" 72). Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* borrows the entire form of the Mayan almanacs rather than direct textual content. Since the Mayan almanacs are fragmentary manuscripts, Silko establishes a creative premise that a literary character can possess fragments that "no one else has" (Coltelli 152). Silko adds that "I can do anything I want in pre-Columbian times. I'm not even going to call it Mayan. And then because the people believe that these almanacs projected into the future, I can write about a dream I had . . ." (152).

As heirs of an indigenous prophetic and apocalyptic tradition which foresaw the arrival of Europeans, Asturias and Silko derive much literary inspiration from that tradition. The apocalyptic endings of Asturias' *Mulata* and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* may not always reflect an objective treatment of ethnographic details and thereby fall within the realm of fiction according to the strictures of purity applied by such critics as Brotherston, yet intuitive re-valuing of ancient sources examines the cumulative forces that contribute to the twentieth-century world in which those of Native ancestry reside. Silko and
Asturias employ the apocalyptic narrative form, as Lois Parkinson Zamora observes, as interpreters; apocalyptists in general, she notes, explore "the relationship of the individual, the community and the novel itself to the process of history" and question the "nature of history itself" (4). Issues such as assimilation and genocide, foretold in the Book of the Hopi and the Books of the Chilam Balam, enable both authors to review the dynamics of colonization in relation to those prophecies.

Both authors fuse spiritual teachings and demonstrate that a mixed-heritage gives access to multiple expressions of spirituality which enable people to live an ordered and balanced life. Mystical and mythical stories of quests, whether oral or written, Western or indigenous, give shape to the prospect of personal renewal through inner healing. The Popol Vuh, the creation text of the Quiché, and the Book of the Hopi assert a unified vision of human beings as both divine and material beings. Spiritual teachings and material conditions are often in conflict, according to these creation texts, but through sacrifice, both are brought into alignment with each other.

Both Asturias and Silko stress that Christianity, urbanization, Western education, and the loss of language does not end Indian identity; individuals may celebrate a contemporary identity that mixes multiple heritages and understandings. With modification and innovation, the alienated individual can renew spiritual connection. Both Asturias and Silko demonstrate the potential for renewal when they mediate ancient teachings for
contemporary audiences. Remembering stories helps the individual to adapt or resist change; both indicate that one cannot deny who one is without serious repercussions to the future. Asturias and Silko take their characters toward an individual expression of spirituality, not as a tragic end, but as a continuous expression of their ancestral heritage.
Indigenous and Western mystical sources bear witness to the ongoing tension between material and spiritual existence. In Asturias' *El Señor Presidente*, *Men of Maize*, and *Mulata*, and in Silko's *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*, alienation is perpetuated when individuals forget or deny the Mayan and Hopi teachings which present the idea that humans negotiate the physical world by 'remembering' their connection to the spiritual world (Tedlock, *Popol Vuh* 83; Waters, *Book of the Hopi* 22). Remembrance creates a harmonious balance that reconciles the spiritual and material tensions. On the other hand, the triumph of the physical over the spiritual is equated with an imbalance, or a forgetting that manifests as heartlessness (83; 22).

The heartlessness of alienation, when viewed from the perspective of Mayan and Hopi Creator-Beings, is an intolerable deviation from a sacred norm established at the time of Creation. The Quiché Maker-Modeler states that humans must be providers and nurturers who recognize their Makers (*Popol Vuh* 80). The Hopi Creators, Sótknang and Spider Woman, likewise expect humans to sing praises to their Creators and to follow the plan of Creation (*Book of the Hopi* 22). Cashtoc, Asturias' Earth demon in *Mulata*, reiterates the lessons of creation and destruction presented in
the *Popol Vuh* when he states that humans beget their own annihilation as soon as they "forget, deny, or reject their condition as kernels of corn, parts of an ear, and become self-centred, egotistical, individualists" (Asturias, *Mulata* 173). Individualists, Cashtoc asserts, are "solitary beings" and "puppets lacking any senses!" (173).

Christian mystics urge the individual to escape the sense world through union with the Absolute (Underhill 56), but far from sustaining a dualistic approach to physical and spiritual tensions, the mystical tradition acknowledges that the tensions co-exist within the individual, sometimes as conflict, and sometimes as complements to each other (227). Both indigenous spiritual sources and Western mysticism urge remembrance of spiritual connection and lament the ease with which individuals are tricked by their senses, appetites, and intellect into believing the physical world is the only reality.

The image of the "two eyes of the soul," from the fourteenth-century mystical work, the *Theologia Germanica* (Underhill 55), for example, is a versatile image of humanity's dual spiritual and material nature. Silko and Asturias creatively adapt the image to indicate both balance and imbalance between the two. In both cases, the imagery confirms that the perception of reality is limited when the eye sees only the physical world; "if the left eye be fulfilling its office toward outward things," states the *Theologia*, "that is, holding converse with time and the creatures; then must the right eye be hindered.
in its working; that is, in its contemplation" (Underhill 56).

In Ceremony, Tayo’s alienation is over when he "dream[s] with his eyes open that he [is] wrapped in a blanket in the back of Josiah’s wagon" (Silko 254). Silko’s portrayal of Tayo’s quest synthesizes the mystical imagery with indigenous belief to inform the reader that Tayo’s inner spiritual vision is balanced with its outer manifestation, and he is restored to his place in the community. Asturias synthesizes the ‘two-eye’ imagery with Mayan and mystical sources in order to highlight both the attainment of balance and the imbalance associated with heartlessness and sacrifice. The successful journey from alienation to integration involves discovering what it means to have heart, but to a very great extent, such a discovery is possible only after facing the contrary lessons of heartlessness that fragment the individual.

The sacrificial theme is prominent in Mayan and Nahuatl literature and remains prominent in the novels of Asturias and Silko. The blood-sacrifice so essential to spirituality in ancient Meso-American cultures (Markman and Markman 179) is redefined within a contemporary context. The two types of sacrifice present in Asturias’ and Silko’s works represent two streams of thought that must be reconciled in order to restore unity: the willingness to sacrifice others links the ancient sacrificial priesthood with the political leaders, civil servants, and businessmen who maintain the heartlessness of the modern Western social system. Self-sacrifice, the subject of the
next chapter, links mythical self-immolation and the ancient practice of self-bleeding with a modern willingness to have the heart to give of oneself for the benefit of the community.

In *El Señor Presidente*, Asturias adapts the 'two eyes of the soul of man,' also identified as the surreal image of the 'Eye of Glass/Eye of Truth' (Campion 125), in two visions, one light and one dark. The integration of opposites foreshadows and then confirms the heartlessness in human political systems. The Zany, a mentally-handicapped beggar, synthesizes spiritual truth through inner visions of the Mother; "I give to everyone one glass eye and one real eye;" she says, "those who see with my glass eye see because they dream, those who see with my real eye see because they are looking!" (Asturias, ESP 24). As an innocent, the Zany envisions the sacrificial atmosphere of the president's world in child-like terms; "floury-faced clowns" announce a gala spectacle for the president, but the president is an absent figure and the "circus performers" leave the Zany all alone in a building perched above "a bottomless abyss" (25).

Angel Face, on the other hand, is no innocent to the political structure. His vision clearly integrates his world with blood-sacrifice, but whereas the Zany's vision grants him a moment of grace that he is unable to articulate, as Campion observes, Angel Face is articulate but denies its truth (125, 128). Four "priestly figures" have the "eye on the bright side of their faces shut, and the eye on the dark side open" (Asturias, ESP 259) to indicate the pre-eminence of the dark
forces of sacrifice that distort the most basic of physical human needs to serve political domination. Asturias derives 'Tohil's Dance' in *Presidente* from the Quiché quest for fire in the *Popol Vuh* and mediates past and present to illuminate the human weaknesses that perpetuate political systems from within. In contrast with Asturias' larger vision of the struggle between spiritual and material values, T. B. Irving critiques Tohil only as a symbol of "absolute government" (199), thereby restricting criticism of domination to dictatorships while excluding the domination that enables First World nations to remain First World nations.

Domination, unmediated by any sense of heart or spiritual connection, centres on physical existence—the possession of fire—who has it and what the price will be for those who want it. Tohil, a batwinged Xibalban, promises the Quiché "fiery splendour and majesty" if they make a deal with him (Tedlock 175); those who possess the fire can magnify their own glory over others, while those who envy and most desire its warmth and light exist like "men-animals" within the realm of appetites (Asturias, *ESP* 259). Humans are "animals of hunger . . . birds of thirst," says Asturias, "and with their fear, their nausea and their physical needs" humans will do anything, even agree to hunt other men in order to supply Tohil with human sacrifices, as long as he relieves them from a precarious existence (Asturias, *ESP* 260). Tohil asserts that "henceforth, there will be neither true death nor true life," for he is content with agreements that enable him
to "prevail over men who are hunters of men" (Asturias, ESP 260).

Using the spiritual teachings of the need for heart and sacrifice, Asturias and Silko critique colonization and subvert the glorification of conquest to show that both the oppressor and the oppressed are humiliated by their own desires. The Quiché founders discover too late that the price for self-magnification is high. They express regret at the division caused by worshipping Tohil's fire: "We were lost at Tulan!/We shattered ourselves!/We left our elder brothers behind!/Our younger brothers!/Where did they see the sun?/Where must they be staying,/Now that the dawn has come?" (Tedlock, Popol Vuh 183).

While Jack Himelblau notes that the ancient possession of fire under Tohil's terms is a "great humiliation imposed upon the masses" (444), the regret expressed by the Quiché founders suggests that the victors also lost something of inestimable value. The Quiché magnified themselves, but at the cost of unity and brotherhood. A deal with the Devil is, as Celestino Yumí states in Mulata, "an agreement to trade" that is never "unmade" (Asturias, Mulata 30).

Asturias remembers the Quiché quest for fire for those who have forgotten the ancestral past. Ancient and modern states are built on human sacrifice, though the victims may differ in kind or degree. Asturias measures the divisive effects of ancient sacrifice against modern and critiques the process of acculturation that sets individuals against each other and in pursuit of social status and material wealth. The willingness to
sacrifice others for self-interested goals is dehumanizing. Tazol, the corn-leaf god in *Mulata*, states that the heartless are cannibals who "stuff themselves on human flesh" every time they exploit others and in whom "the Christian and the wild beast are all woven up together" (Asturias 34). Desire is a major source of alienation between *mestizos* and Indians in his novels. Material wealth only creates an appetite for luxury; for the majority who are excluded from wealth, however, perpetual lack generates resentment and envy. One of Celestino Yumi's first thoughts after Tazol promises him wealth is to imagine destroying his prosperous best friend, Don Timo; Celestino says, "I feel like a hawk hovering over the house of my friend . . . if I set fire to his house I'll leave him mumbling to himself on the corner" (*Mulata* 15).

Like Asturias, Silko treats the heartlessness of sacrifice as a commonplace feature of domination and remembers the need for cosmic balance and order through stories. In *Ceremony*, Ts'eh says that the Destroyers "work to see how much can be lost, how much can be forgotten" (Silko, 229), while in *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit*, Silko reinforces the need to consider that whether or not individuals forget or deny the spiritual reality, none can escape the consequences of disorder; "whether we know the stories or not," she says, "the stories know about us . . . the old stories encompass all events, past and future" (150). Elizabeth McNeil observes the cosmic disorder in the contact and conflict between individuals and Western society in
Almanac as "the vicious realities of the 'fifth world'" (McNeil 29). In Almanac, the colonizers' "carefully constructed historical narratives have attempted to erase the brutality of this conquest" Ann Folwell Stanford asserts (28), but the colonial myths are ineffectual against the spiritual disorder caused by genocide.

The ancient Quiché alliance with Tohil created division; Tohil promoted fear, envy, discontent, and unequal relations, but as Silko's narrator in Almanac notes, inter-tribal competitions were not the only source of division. Silko demonstrates that sacrifice was a contentious issue long before Europeans arrived, when the rejection of blood-sacrifice motivated some tribes to flee north to escape the ancient practice (Almanac 336). She links human sacrifice cross-culturally and trans-historically with a global network of evil, called Destroyers, or Gunyeedahs who "delight in blood" (336). Tayo in Ceremony sees the Destroyers at work in the night sky as the counterforce of all the ceremonial actions that keep the universe in motion (Silko 247). The Destroyers leave people feeling hopeless and helpless and ready to blame others for their losses, and they work to make the people "forget the stories of the creation and continuation of the five worlds" (Ceremony 249). In Almanac, Tacho, a Mexican Indian, relates stories of ancient spirits who crave blood, sorcerers who misuse the power of blood, and human sacrificers who contribute the "energy of destruction" to the Destroyers (336). Sterling, a Laguna man, also remembers the stories that
link the Laguna with Meso-American blood sacrifice; the Gunyeedahs were born from the excitement of the "victim’s feeble struggle" and the taste of "hot blood" (Almanac 760). The tribes can reject ritual sacrifice, but the Destroyers are wherever humans gather.

Sacrificial blood-letting is central to ancient Meso-America spirituality because it is the transformation point enabling spirit to move into matter and vice versa. So important is blood, state Markman and Markman, that sacrifice is considered one’s "ritual duty" all the way back to creation (179). Tacho identifies blood as a powerful and dangerous substance; "human beings should not see or smell fresh blood too often or they might be overtaken by frightening appetites" (Almanac 336). Blood-sacrifice is divorced from its ritual setting in Almanac; the laboratories and operating rooms are the new altars upon which the heartless bio-materials industry and the medical profession bleed their sacrificial victims, as Ann Folwell Stanford suggests (26).

The beggars and the tortured in Asturias' dictatorship and the destitute in Almanac live and die as human refuse (Asturias, ESP 17, 25; Stanford 34), but in Almanac, Silko’s depiction of wanton bloodlust confirms Janet St. Clair’s observation that "the primacy of the individual has in fact stripped individuals of the social and spiritual structures that define their humanity" (141). State interrogators-turned-entrepreneurs modify torture to suit the pornographic video market (Almanac 343). The Mexican
police chief is repulsed by this "beast feast" and needs to justify interrogation by giving it moral or thematic unity (Almanac 344). General J., the commander of Menardo’s security forces, theorizes that "those inhibited by blood would in time [be] greatly outnumbered by those who [are] excited by blood" (Silko, Almanac 337); the "suspicious bulge" in his pants belies his own efforts to establish intellectual justification for his bloodlust (337). Max Blue, as St. Clair notes, elevates assassination to an "art form" (143); Max believes that death and all crimes are natural, because all criminals are a "consequence of human evolution" (Silko 353).

Domination is easily recognized by those who remember their origins, but for those who have forgotten, Asturias blends ancient myth with modern surreal elements to create an artistic vision of ancient Xibalba as identical with the modern political world. In El Señor Presidente, Asturias’ dictator incorporates several mythical beings into a single representative of darkness, enslavement, and human sacrifice. The synthesis of an entire system with the Xibalban Underworld anticipates the arrival of a mythic liberator. Daniel Campion observes that the "tiny spark of hope kindled with the birth of little Miguel" creates a sense of future renewal that does nothing to change the present conditions (130), but the far-ranging purpose of Angel Face’s death, as Markman and Markman note of his model One-Hunahpu, is that the failure of the One-Hunahpu establishes the structure of the task for the next generation (280).
Colonel José Parrales Sonriente's arrival and death are marked by the "sinister hoot of a bird from the dark, navigable, bottomless night" (Asturias, ESP 11). Corruption and fear in El Señor Presidente are integrated with the prophecy of the Kátun 1 Ahau, from the Books of the Chilam Balam to reveal the time of "filth, shame, [and] ill will in government," and a time when "the owls will come down from the ruined buildings" (Craine and Reindorp 81). Owls--"messengers of Xibalba"--have multiple police functions associated with death; as messengers, guards, escorts, and executioners (Tedlock 109, 115), Parrales Sonriente and Judge Arne in Almanac merge with the owls as servants of a heartless sacrificial structure. Judge Arne is a member of the Owl Club, along with many other "law enforcement officers, judges, and lawyers" in Tucson (Silko 643). Corruption is veiled by the exclusivity of Club membership; Arne and his associates compare notes on graft and bribery and indulge in a variety of self-gratifying sexual activities.

The greatest difference between the spiritually-centred sacrifices in Men of Maize and the profane sacrifices in El Señor Presidente is in Asturias' attention to order. Ceremonial observances are carried out in an appropriate, timely, and sacred fashion by the firefly wizards in Men of Maize. The wizards mediate sacrifice and are consistently recognized in that role. Most importantly, the people accept the sacrificial reality that sustains the endless cycle of the maizefield and unifies the people with gods and land, and ancestors and descendants. The
sacrificed are easily recognized by the people as enemies of the land. Even the Westernized Machojón, accursed by the wizards to be sacrificed, accepts their power to invoke the curse; "Señor Tomás sighed . . . . The curse was being fulfilled . . . all that remained was for the glow of the firefly wizards to fall on his son" (Asturias, MoM 28).

In contrast, profane sacrifice is disordered and divisive; it lacks clear cut rules, boundaries, or rationale, and is alienated from earthly rhythms and seasonal cycles. Both the sacrificed and those who profit from the sacrifice are members of the same community and may be known to one another. In El Señor Presidente, Niña Fedina is shocked into disbelief by the fact that her accuser and judge is the same man she sees in Church every Sunday playing the organ (Asturias, ESP 111). Sacrifice is contingent on the reality that anyone can be the next victim. As Richard Callan notes, the characters in El Señor Presidente win or lose life in a tyrannical lottery system (30). The random quality of the dictator's sacrificial reality generates terror, chaos, and social disorder.

Urban sacrifice in Almanac is likewise alienated from the earthly rhythms and seasonal cycles, but Silko does not evoke the lottery system which Richard Callan imputes to Asturias' dictatorship. Rather, socially undesirable persons sacrificed—the poor, the dispossessed, the dirty, and the non-White—the "human debris," says Stanford (34). Sacrifice is motivated by a "menacing pragmatism" as Stanford asserts (32); the dominant
society maintains order when it rids itself of undesirables, but simultaneously, the harvesting of undesirables creates "the means to save those worth saving" (Stanford 32). Thus, the oppression of the impoverished and the resultant social unrest provides valuable raw materials which translate into profit for the ambitious entrepreneur. Menardo, like Emo below, distances himself from his origins to become, "like the Euro-Americans, heartless, passionless machines of greed and destruction" (Stanford 28).

Ceremony also has its profane ceremonial element, although my use of heartlessness exceeds coldness or cruelty to encompass a total disconnection from a sacred source. In Ceremony, the reader is given to understand Emo’s profanity through the veterans’ ritual gatherings and re-telling of war stories and sexual conquests which anticipate the sacrifice at the uranium mine. Emo "revels in telling stories of killing and torture," according to Jude Todd. In developing her notions of Emo’s ‘black humour’ Elizabeth Evasdaughter notes that Emo expresses a "black or unrelieved hatred" for the world (89). He profanes the earth and all people, and his humour is the "agent of hatred" (89). The veterans’ too loud laughter and mockery of others, Evasdaughter points out, forewarns Tayo of evil (89) because the veterans behaviour is contrary to "traditional Pueblo life” (85). Emo’s rage against white domination masks his hatred for "Indian culture and for his Indian brothers" (89).

Overall, Emo’s destructive behaviour confirms Ts’eh’s
assessment of him as linked with the Gunyeedahs; "Their highest ambition is to gut human beings while they are still breathing," she says, "to hold the heart still beating so the victim will never feel anything again" (Silko, *Ceremony* 229). All elements converge at the uranium mine to create the profane sacrificial ceremony on the autumnal equinox. Unable to locate Tayo, Emo serves the Gunyeedahs by sacrificing Harley, who is cut up, as Gretchen Ronnow observes, like the "cut in the earth from which uranium was mined for the first atomic bombs" (84). Tayo sees the separations created by the Destroyers who divided the rocks to create bombs, and divided the people to perpetuate war. Here, the witchery also assaults the landscape of both the Pueblo and the Japanese, and as Stuart Cochran suggests, Silko's "analogy of Pueblo defeat and Japanese annihilation is made explicit" (79).

In Asturias' works, terrorism and murder are silent accomplices of a closed political system of dictatorship. In Silko's contemporary United States, on the other hand, where the American political and cultural system is open to external influences, there are no personal or institutional ethics to check the entrepreneurial spirit, as St. Clair contends, and free enterprise is taken to extreme degrees of expression (141-42). The predatory qualities of Silko's entrepreneurs bring into focus the degree to which the structure of power is "spiritually and ethically rotted," as St. Clair further notes, "by an ideology that rewards egotism" (142). Yet, even as Asturias' and Silko's texts are separated by time and space and a multitude of
differing cultural and political conditions, their presentations of blood-sacrifice form the common denominator which links their respective nation-states, Guatemala and the United States.

In *Almanac*, the wealthy benefit from the humiliation, or the de-humanization, of the poor and undesirable lower social classes in much the same respect as the ancient Quiché benefited from the humiliation of the tribes. Ann Folwell Stanford cites alienation in *Almanac* as the social norm of the "morally bankrupt living dead" (24). She indicts modern medicine and technology for their roles in de-humanizing people. As Stanford observes, the designation of certain 'others' as undesirable and their oppression is but one step toward dehumanizing people, but once people have been dehumanized, the steps that move from objectifying the body to commodifying its parts are easily rationalized (28).

Like the Quiché founders who discover too late that they paid a high price for self-glorification, contemporary Americans have in *Almanac* have paid dearly for a middle-class lifestyle. Even as the wealthy benefit materially from medical and technological advancements, neither medicine nor science alleviates the angst created by the spiritual and moral emptiness of their lives. Lecha Cazador, the psychic twin in *Almanac*, observes that "affluent, educated white people" suffer from "a deep sense that something had been lost" and seek her psychic skills in secret (Silko 718). Angst is further manifested in the "urgency and desperation" of Whites who attend the International
Holistic Healers’ Convention where hundreds of vendors profit from the spiritual-void of an affluent consumer-society (Silko, Almanac 719). The commodification of spirituality and the desperation of Whites who flock to Indian fakes and White shamans are not limited to Almanac; Vine Deloria Jr. states that "the hunger for some kind of religious experiences is so great that whites show no critical analysis when approaching alleged Indian figures" (252).

In Presidente, angst is linked with the terror of being implicated in political intrigues by family association; charges against General Canales cause his brother, Juan to deny both his brother and his niece, Camila (Asturias 104-5). James Brown suggests that the "perversion of values" in the city is symbolized, quite ironically, by the Casa Nueva Prison, formerly a convent, but now home of the torturer and interrogator (343).

In Almanac, various storylines highlight the degrees and types of corruption to which the heartless can aspire within a competitive and hierarchical environment. Margaret McNeil contends that Silko’s perception of the many perversions within the public and private spheres of life in the Americas makes Almanac "horrifying," and the immediate reaction to Almanac’s tragedy and depravity causes readers to overlook its "redemptive humour" as "comic trickster discourse" (McNeil 2). Speculators in real estate, and traffickers in illegal aliens, pornography, cocaine, blood plasma, and donor organs all share the common characteristic of success—the ability to reduce "land, money,
Corruption in *Almanac* is aptly summarized by Max Blue: "in today's world, judges [are] a better buy; they [give] more for the money than other politicians or the police" (Silko 463). The success of Venice, Arizona, Leah Blue's canal community in the desert, depends on Leah's ability to make technology and government hierarchy work to her advantage. Leah has "that killer quality" that her husband Max admires (*Almanac* 374), and she knows how to use Judge Arne, the Federal Court Judge, and the corrupt judicial system to by-pass Native resistance to land development (376); "Thanks to the judge's directed verdict, she [Leah Blue] had all the water she wanted without interference from environmentalists or Indian tribes" (656).

Like Judge Arne, the Judge Advocate in Asturias' *Presidente* shares Arne's corruption and his casual "indifference" toward his fellow humans, as St. Clair states (143). The Judge Advocate's secret agendas are entwined with the president's larger secret plots; trumped-up charges against General Canales generate a side-profit of ten thousand pesos from his plan to sell Canales' daughter, Camila, into prostitution. When his plan is thwarted, he simply substitutes her maid, the unfortunate Fedina de Rodas (*ESP* 149). Although they represent two different judicial systems, Judge Arne and the Judge Advocate are little changed from earlier colonial counterparts with respect to the idea that the bureaucratic elite are a protean urban group who exist.
between their institutions and the social classes below them; both support Angel Rama's contention that the lettered elites are self-important "servants of power" and self-serving "masters of power" (22).

The dead play a significant role in the maintenance of sacred cosmic order in both the Mayan and Hopi-Laguna-Pueblo sources (Waters 231; Markman and Markman 180). Within the context of Almanac, however, contemporary social chaos is integrated with the blood-letting of the past--genocide is a threat to cosmic order. Extreme violence, profiteering, and excessive self-absorption are all symptoms of heartlessness and Silko deepens the discordancy further in Almanac by integrating the dead with the living so that the spirits of the dead are not only interacting with the living, but are exacting vengeance for the wrongs of the past: "the Americas were full of furious, bitter spirits; five hundred years of slaughter had left the continents swarming with millions of spirits that never rested and would never stop until justice had been done" (Silko, Almanac 424).

Silko states in her essay "Stone Avenue Mural" that the "spirits of the ancestors cry out for justice": these ancestral voices of resistance will grow louder, shake through the mountains and move in hurricane winds to announce "the time that will return" (YWBS 150). Given the Markmans' earlier statement that blood-letting was intrinsic to Meso-American spiritual belief because it provided access to the spirit world within a
ceremonial setting, and Tacho's further statements that blood is a dangerous substance and that the spirits crave blood (Silko, *Almanac* 336). *Almanac's* apocalyptic premise is based on a spiritual reality that genocide has literally rent the veil between the human and spirit worlds, giving the ancestral spirits access to the physical dimension.

The outraged spirits who are destroying the sanctity of the middle-class connect the genocide of the colonial past, the material excesses of the present, and impending ecological disasters of the future. The narrator of *Almanac* depicts colonial overseers urged to excesses by the spirits until they fell into moral and spiritual bankruptcy (425); in modern times, the spirits invade middle-class suburbia "to haunt the dreams of society matrons" (723). In *Almanac*, Wilson Weasel Tail echoes Asturias' firefly wizards in *Men of Maize* when he speaks on behalf of the spirits; "To all those humans too weak or too lazy to fight to protect Mother Earth . . . now we will kill you for being so weak, for wringing your hands and whimpering while the invaders committed outrages against the forests and the mountains" (Silko, *Almanac* 723).

The use of apocalyptic narratives is well-documented by Lois Parkinson Zamora's analysis of apocalyptic writing in the U. S. and Latin America. Citing such authors as Carlos Fuentes, Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, and Gabriel García Márquez, Zamora states that American apocalyptic writing has assimilated the Western biblical traditions but has been "conditioned" by indigenous
apocalyptic beliefs (Zamora 2). Asturias' *Mulata* and Silko's *Almanac* reflect the intermingling of dread and anticipation that is common to the tradition. Apocalyptists exercise considerable literary license, as Zamora suggests is possible within the tradition, in order to express their own visions of the future, or to modify or even to reject the future (3).

For both Asturias and Silko, spiritual alienation and social division identifies the urban world as a mythical, spiritual 'hellish' Underworld. Silko’s city in *Almanac of the Dead*, and the city in *El Señor Presidente*, offer a paradoxical view of the urban world beset by powerful negative forces; the westernized city is simultaneously a secular realm, as Angel Rama observes, where the White elite dominate as purveyors of a new hierarchical structure with themselves at the apex (32) and a mythical realm of evil that James Brown identifies as a physical manifestation or as an extension of the president’s body (344). As Angel Rama contends, the cities of the colonizer are isolated externally from the Indian countryside, and self-isolated from within by an urban ideal in which a White, literate, mass-consuming citizen is the norm (10, 32). Janet St. Clair remarks that Silko's city in *Almanac* is a "nightmarish wasteland of violence, bestiality, cruelty, and crime" (141); Ann Folwell Stanford identifies it as a "modern technological hell" (38).

A number of scholars have also noted the 'hellish' quality of the president's city in *El Señor Presidente*, notwithstanding the obvious repetitions of Lucifer's name in the opening
paragraph (ESP 7). As an author whose heritages, education, and interests brought him into contact with numerous influences, Asturias is indebted not only to the Popol Vuh and to Nahuatl myths but also to Christianity and Western literature for his depiction of the president and the 'hellish' images of an Underworld city. Dorita Nouhaud observes of the fusional quality of Asturias images that Asturias put poetry ahead of anthropology; the truth of the "myth behind the literary myth" is more important to our understanding of his novels ("Black Tezcatlipoca" 171).

The numerous scholars who comment on El Señor President leave no doubt that Asturias' dark visions of the Underworld and its presiding Lord represent a composite of many elements in synthesis. T. B. Irving acknowledges Tohil, though he adds that Asturias' original title was Malebolgue, from Dante's Inferno (193); Jack Himelblau's study, "Tohil and the President: The Hunters and the Hunted in the Popol Vuh and El Señor Presidente" clearly refers to Mayan sources (437), as do William Myron Davis' references to Xibalba in "Maya Quiché Sacred Myth in Asturias' Novel El Señor Presidente" (97). Dorita Nouhaud identifies the president with the Mayan god Tezcatlipoca, but refers also to the Nahuatl figure of Huitzilopochtli in her essay, "Black Tezcatlipoca" (171). Richard Callan stands alone in identifying the president with the 'Terrible' aspect of the Cosmic Mother in Miguel Angel Asturias (41).

James Brown's Western perspective creates a strongly
polarized urban-rural dichotomy, or "spatial opposition" (Brown 341) in his interpretation of the colonized city, but Asturias' and Silko's mediation of the landscape refuses to recognize the opposition. They unify the post-Conquest isolated city with the landscape, fusing binary oppositions, as Louis Owens states, and using synthesis to blur the reader's ability to distinguish between them (168). Order is established when they de-centre and re-integrate the city with a Native-centred landscape. The city, no longer foreign or alien, now functions within an indigenous framework as the Underworld whose mythical coercive evil still threatens to engulf the sacred landscape unless a hero vanquishes that evil. The Native is no longer the city's marginalized inhabitant but the indigenous hero who journeys through the city, recognizes its dangers, and endures its trials with the assistance of the spirits.

The grotesqueness of Asturias' city of Tierrapaulita is an apt metaphor for the Native landscape caught in the throes of colonization. The struggle between the Mayan spiritual forces and the Christian God and Devil in Mulata represents blurring of perceptions that has drawn a variety of critical responses to his presentation of Tierrapaulita. Gerald Martin contends that Catholic influences imported to the Americas were soon distorted when the Mayans assimilated Christianity into indigenous beliefs to create a syncretic blend of the two ("Animated Cartoon" 402). Susan Willis states that Tierrapaulita is "besieged by pagan gods" (149). René Prieto takes Asturias on his word that
Tierrapulita is the site where two traditions struggle for supremacy; the struggle represents both the spiritual and material struggle between traditional indigenous communal values and the contemporary forces of a commercialism and Christian religious hegemony (Prieto, Archaeology 171).

In Tierrapulita, the impact of Christianity is played out in the tolling of church bells. Its inhabitants' body parts twist and distort with each toll, the priest's no less than the Indians' (Asturias, Mulata 96). Although it is the priest's most fervent desire to banish the Indian gods from the city, the gods still dominate, especially the powerful Underworld figure of Cashtoc, a deity so powerful that the Catholic priest and the Mayan deities alike must do obeisance to him. The priest desires to dominate and the Native gods desire to remain dominant in their own realm. When the Catholic priest and the gods are caught in the shift to an industrial economy and new Christian demons, both the old Catholic priest and the Mayan gods are disgusted by what they see, and both leave the city. The Mayan gods, however, are not defeated; rather, they have abandoned the city and retired to the distant hills. The gods are still the spiritual energies of the land, but have just withdrawn from the urban world (Mulata 175).

In the towns dominated by the priest and the Christian Devil, spiritual connectedness is more difficult to maintain. For Indians and gods alike, the delights or temptations of the urban material world is strong. In Mulata, Celestino, Catalina,
and a "legion of spooks and spirits" desert Cashtoc's rural retreat to return to Tierrapaulita (Asturias, Mulata 180). Even Tazolín, "the son of Tazol and the navel of Catarina" cannot resist the material world and cries "kernels of corn" and begs to return to the city where he can play and chatter (182). Tazolín loses his status as a god because he becomes trapped in the material world; the son of the Corn God is reduced from a god to a "little devil trickster," and finally to the "seed of wild corn" (182).

The interior landscape of the alienated individual is as spiritually desolate as the dictator's city. Mexican author Octavio Paz views alienation as a post-Conquest phenomenon that is identified very precisely with the relationship between the conqueror Cortés and his Indian concubine Malinche, who gave birth to the first mixed-blood (87). Associated as she is with the conqueror, she is seen as whore, collaborator, and victim of the Conquest (Paz 86). Mixed-bloods, he asserts, carry the stigma of the Malinche's violation and self-betrayal; shame leads the individual to identify with the colonizer rather than with one's own people (Paz 87). Shame and misplaced identification with a destructive and powerful stranger result in an ideal of manliness, machismo, that is equally destructive--"a solitude that devours itself and everything it touches" (Paz 82).

Although the Malinche exists as a Central American image, Silko adapts the Malinche for her depiction of the tragic figure of Tayo's mother, Laura, in Ceremony. Silko's use of the
Malinche, like her use of Meso-American spiritual concepts, continually reinforce the impression that Silko’s strongest influences are drawn from Central America. Laura’s involvement with White men brings shame on her family and community, but as Louis Owens notes, her family’s and the community’s shame is not just for Laura’s corruption which leads to her death, but also for their own helplessness to restore her safely to their midst (179). Paula Gunn Allen attributes Tayo’s alienation to the Destroyers in Silko’s *Ceremony* (125), and Louis Owens supports Allen’s statement when he observes that Tayo’s Auntie contributes to the witchery by ostracizing Tayo for his mother’s misdeeds, with the result that Tayo is alienated from mother, community, family, and spiritual connection (179).

Alienation is identified with many separations—from the spirit, the land, the family, from self, and from one’s humanness. In her biography, Rigoberta Menchú states that "Indians who have done military service . . . return to their village, brutalized men, criminals" (Burgos-Debray 103). Similarly, Ku’oosh recognizes that the returning veterans have been brutalized by killing and need to be ceremonially cleansed of their actions in war (Silko, *Ceremony* 36). Tayo is brutalized by the memories of "dismembered corpses" (Silko 37); he is withdrawn, burdened with survivor’s guilt, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and schizophrenic symptoms that leave him virtually inarticulate, as Owens notes (174). Emo, on the other hand, revels in his war-memories, carries a bag of human teeth as a
trophy of his experience, and feeds the witchery by causing as much dissension as possible. Brutalized by killing, Emo continues to brutalize.

Asturias mediates the paradox of two types of women depicted within the landscape—the Indian woman and the colonized mestiza. The potent images of the Great Mother Goddess will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter on integration, but let it suffice for now to say that within the Meso-American spiritual reality, there is no single comprehensive representation of the Goddess; she is a unity with infinite aspects. The Goddess is both the "human female and the female earth, the mystery vessel of life" from which the spirit manifests in material form (Markman and Markman 186).

The Indian women in Asturias' *Men of Maize* and *Mulata*, and Silko's *Ceremony* embody facets of the Great Goddess which subvert the Western Christian patriarchal class structure to which the mestizas belong. René Prieto negatively mis-identifies all of Asturias' women as uniformly "pitiless toward men" because they all "turn out to be runaways" (*Archaeology* 108). The machismo suggested by Paz (82) mirrors the ladino ideology of masculine-feminine imbalance. Masculine ego is inflated, and masculine anxieties are eased through stereotypes that split the feminine and subordinate women and the earth. The myths of the passive, longsuffering woman, such as Candelaria Rosa in *Men of Maize* and Tayo's Auntie in *Ceremony*, and the feckless woman, Vaca (Cow) Manuela in *Men of Maize*, are colonial stereotypes of the feminine
that have been superimposed on the Indian landscape.\(^{22}\)

Asturias illuminates one category of women which causes
great angst for the Westernized man--the uncontrolled and
uncontrollable feminine--the tecuna\(^{22}\) women--the faithless yet
desirable spider-women. I view the tecuna myth as Asturias' attempt to subvert negative Western images of women. René Prieto, in contrast, concludes that the tecuna myth is Asturias' literary concept of "feminine malevolence" (Archaeology 113).\(^{24}\)

Within the narrative structure of *Men of Maize*, the tecuna myth is named after María Tecún, a Moon-goddess figure who is neither faithless nor desirable, but rather, she is maternal, independent, and self-sufficient. The tecuna myth in *Men of Maize* is a wholly malevolent image of women only for those alienated males who fear both the creative and destructive aspects of the Great Goddess. In *Mulata*, Asturias depicts overblown self-importance and anxieties as frequent physical size changes; Celestino and Catalina are alternately dwarfs and giants in the landscape.

Silko carries the negative image of the feminine to excess in *Almanac*, but Silko's excess goes deep to depict the violation of the feminine. Feminine malevolence is a survival strategy for women in contemporary Western society. Lecha and Zeta Cazador parallel Asturias' tecuna women because they reject the macho ideal of feminine subordination to masculine domination. Elizabeth McNeil notes that their Grandmother, Yoeme regards them as the only two who "turned out human" (*Almanac* 118) because they
are "spirited, not passive like her other progeny" (Almanac 24). Lecha and Zeta, the unmotherly twins are, as both McNeil and Janet St. Clair note, products of childhood sexual molestation (24; 148). As adults, Lecha and Zeta engage in self-protective strategies against further violation; Lecha is promiscuous and numbs herself with drugs, while Zeta trades her sexuality only once in order to gain economic leverage and thereafter, is celibate; McNeil assesses both promiscuity and celibacy as sexual extremes (24).

Colonel Godoy’s is a composite of Octavio Paz’s conquistador and the mythical Seven-Macaw of the Popol Vuh who usurps the role of the Sun. As a White man, Godoy’s invasion of sacred space virtually replicates the Conquest. The self-magnifying macho military leader is, as Martin points out, a "product of a disarticulated neo-colonial society, a man who imposes conventions but also tramples on them as and when he sees fit" (MoM 342 n5). Godoy exhibits all the arrogance and racist attitudes of his predecessors, but because he is also Seven-Macaw of the Popol Vuh, he will be slain for self-magnification (Tedlock, Popol Vuh 94).

Silko likewise depicts alienation in Almanac as a synthesis of mythical and colonial elements as she equates Menardo with both Seven-Macaw and with Paz’s macho man in isolation. Both Seven-Macaw and Menardo magnify themselves by ostentatious display; Seven-Macaw’s arrogance is linked with "jewels and gems" (94), while Menardo’s arrogance is associated with money. The
"self-made" man (Silko, *Almanac* 277) has grand ambitions to buy social status. His wife, Iliana, descended from the conquistador De Oñate (*Almanac* 269) has the social connections and the taste for expensive collections and a grand home that are consistent with her family’s history of privilege; Menardo’s desire to have status is fulfilled through all that Iliana represents.

Alienation is aggravated by material success. Seven-Macaw’s self-magnification merges with the ambitious mestizo, but then Silko further immerses Menardo into the mythical world with her allusions to monkeys. The former ambassador’s wife envies Menardo’s wealth, but refers to him as "that monkey face" because Menardo tries to pass as white (*Almanac* 274). He is code-named "Red Monkey" by the Marxist and Indian revolutionaries (290), and Tacho also calls Menardo a "yellow monkey who imitate[s] real white men" (339). While the comparison clearly refers to the monkey’s imitative capacity, the allusions to monkeys also foreshadows his impending humiliation. The monkeys were once people, but were reduced to monkeys by the Creators and the Sacred Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, as punishment for cruel and abusive treatment toward others (Tedlock, *Popol Vuh* 86, 124).

The connection between alienation and dreams is enlarged in *Almanac*. The spiritual truth about the political structure that emerges in the Zany’s and Angel Faces’s visions in *Presidente*, emerges also in Menardo’s dreams of the Governor’s Palace (*Almanac* 323), but because he is closed to spiritual experiences and can neither accept nor interpret the dreamtime reality,
Menardo can only identify his dreams as recurring nightmares. He relies on Tacho, his Indian chauffeur, to interpret his dreams, but Menardo never understands as Tacho does, that "enemies could use your dreams to destroy you" (Almanac 321). Tacho purposefully misreads the dreams and helps to destroy Menardo.

Because the alienated mixed-blood individual sees him- or herself isolated from other life forms and effectively separated from the spiritual world by class ideology (Martin, Mom 326 n4), individual agency turns on opportunism. Self-centred choices now supplant actions that were previously mediated by spiritually-centred considerations. Thus, Menardo can turn his back on his family, the Machojones and Zacatones can collaborate with Colonel Godoy to betray Gaspar Iló, and Celestino Yumí can sell his wife to Tazol because none recognize any longer the need to reconcile the inner spiritual reality of the heart with the external expressions of the face.

Celestino Yumí, in Mulata, is a poverty-stricken Indian who has always been subject to the dictates of wealthy landowners and Church; he sees unlimited freedom and power in the outward manifestations of wealth and equates the possession of material trappings with the possession of power itself. He envies others their apparent freedom to do as they please; Susan Willis contends that envy should not be overlooked as the driving force for the story because "envy is the single most common experience of lived relationships in much of rural Latin America" (152). Envy reflects the hostility of the powerless against the
powerful, she states, but it is often "drained off into petty bickering," dividing the very people who should be allies (Willis 152). Willis' comment recognizes the need for unity, but in relation to class struggle rather than as a unified Indian and mestizo struggle against a colonizer; nevertheless, she identifies envy as a strong motivational factor which perpetuates alienation and applies just as much to Emo in Ceremony as it does to Celestino.

The urban ideal fostered by Spanish Conquest and the conspicuous consumption enjoyed by urban denizens play a major role in contrasting the pious, almost ascetic values of the rural communities, with the decadence of urban individualism. Nicho Aquino in Men of Maize initially attains considerable spiritual growth through attunement with his nagual, or animal guardian, and even remains spiritually connected for a considerable length of time after his arrival in the city, but eventually the city and its lifestyle contribute to his alienation. The urbanized Indian loses his connection to the land and his ancestral truths. His Underworld journey is ultimately twisted by his transition from rural Indian to the owner of the "Hotel King and its sixteen thousand rats" (Asturias, MoM 306). The most telling indication of Nicho’s loss is in the Epilogue; time had "the weight and solitude of lead" and the flies, associated with Xibalba, death, and decay, are buzzing around his twisted mouth (306).

The social and spiritual world of the colonized is altered and unbalanced by colonization, becoming the place of both
silenced voices and disordered words—of carelessly invoked prayers, broken ceremonies, and communal strife. Silko and Asturias reinforce the connection between alienation and voicelessness. The voice enables an individual to self-articulate identity and to find unity with the communal voice and the sacredness of words that comprise ceremony. Therefore, the various alienated characters depicted by both authors as separated from community cannot give voice to who they are. The *Books of the Chilam Balam* prophesy the alienated condition of the colonized Mayans and their descendants: The Mayans will misuse voice, or become inarticulate and socially discordant as a consequence of foreign domination; the prophecies state that the impoverished workers "will seem to be talking to themselves... they will have no spirit for conversation" (Craine and Reindorp 85). Discontent with Spanish rule will cause discordant talk but little action; "without education, crazed, [the Mayans] will bite with their big mouths all year long" (87).

In *El Señor Presidente*, the silenced and discordant voice is closely allied with omnipresent ears; Asturias critiques the voices and ears that weave a profane web of lies between husband and wife, mother and child, family members and neighbours, destroying the fragile web of relationships that comprise the fabric of community. The leaves of the trees are ears gathering and transmitting the voices of resistance back to the president, thus serving and preserving the political structure; "A network of invisible threads, more invisible than telegraph wires,"
connected every leaf with the President, enabling him to keep watch on the most secret thoughts of the townspeople (ESP 39). Silenced voices are complicit in the structure; individuals may not be consciously vicious, as T. B. Irving observes, yet they "echo the powers-that-be in order to save their own skin or property" (194).

Asturias obviously critiques his own mestizo world and laments the divisive factors that separate mestizos from Indians and move each side to deny kinship with the other. Asturias' representation of Indians and mestizos focuses on two different lifestyles. The Indians are defined by a spiritual connection to the Spirit World, a mythical, geo-physical landscape, and the cycle of the maize. The mestizos are defined by identification with a conqueror and his Christianity, material connections to wealth, class hierarchy, and participation in wage labour. What Asturias clearly admires in his writing is the spiritual strength of the Indians to value ancestral teachings and to endure, often against great odds, while his mestizos are, as René Prieto observes, rendered sterile by "commerce and greed" in a life that has neither "joy nor love" (Archaeology 178); a selfish life negates the intangible spiritual and ethical values of their ancestors.

The colonized in Asturias' and Silko's novels are people who are in the process of forgetting or denying their ancestral heritages as 'men of maize.' Characters like Nicho Aquino, Machojón, Emo, and Celestino envy the wealthy and invert the
spiritual values of the Meso-American landscape. The negative stereotypes of opportunistic individuals who oppress their own people in El Señor Presidente, Men of Maize, Mulata, and Ceremony represents an accumulation of many self-betrayals that converge in the single idea of heartlessness. They internalize the self-glorifying ideals of individualism; the personal desires, needs, and aspirations of the individual supersede the well-being of the people as a whole and contrast with communally-held spiritual values which idealize humility, sharing, and respect. In forgetting, they plant the seeds of self-destruction, for the colonized emulate prior creations who also forgot and were destroyed by the Creators.

While Gaspar Ilóm sees heroic resistance to and rejection of materialism as his only possible response to foreign invasion, other less heroic characters reveal that materialism, here identified with westernization, creates a spiritual, moral, and ethical dilemma. Emotionally unhealthy and spiritually bankrupt individuals are lauded as self-made men. Personal desires and human flaws influence agency; individuals respond to the availability of new opportunities and new temptations, creating both humour and poignancy in these texts. Choices will be made, some good, some not, but all choices will have implications for the future generations.
CHAPTER THREE:
INTEGRATION: ANDROGYNES, TWINS AND GODDESSES

Myths presented in Asturias’ *El Señor Presidente*, *Men of Maize*, and *Mulata* and Silko’s *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead* reveal the brutality within the physical world when human existence is unmediated by spirituality. Asturias and Silko fuse self-glorification and domination into a single heartless image of blood-sacrifice. Both authors reject domination and provide alternate models of self-sacrifice; physical journeys and acts of self-immolation become interior processes—metaphoric journeys leading to the sacrifice of one’s own destructive attitudes, habits, and behaviours. Asturias and Silko use indigenous and Western spiritual sources to re-value the ancestral past, and then synthesize that past with the present through the remembrance of stories. Stories emphasize the need to maintain connection with the Spirit World, ancestors, landscape, and community.

Encoded within the remembering of stories are timeless values, ethical choices, and loving relationships that infuse existence with connections, making stories integral to continuity, adaptation, and resistance. Heart confers more rather than less responsibility on the seeker; the individualist moves toward an understanding that collective inter-dependency is
a key element of balancing the tension between physical and spiritual existence. As Tayo concludes, the cure for alienation is found "only in something great and inclusive of everything" (Silko, *Ceremony* 126).

In this chapter, the need to remember connection and to restore heart is presented in quests that creatively adapt and integrate elements of the indigenous quest with one or more elements of the three most common metaphoric quests used by Western mystics: the journey of the wanderer for either a "lost home" or a "better country"; the quest "for a perfect mate"; the quest for "inward purity and perfection" (Underhill 126-27). The quest for heart is a heroic journey which subverts the "label of folkloric mysticism" so often attached to myth (Ruppert 17); multiple expressions of spirituality are a blending of complementary spiritual teachings which acknowledge multiple options for healing alienation. Asturias' and Silko's novels synthesize past and present, reject binary oppositions and stereotypes, and use the mythical and mystical language of spirituality to forge a vision of contemporary identity; their novels, as James Ruppert notes of contemporary Native American literature, fail to succumb to "schizophrenic pursuits" (17).

Asturias and Silko use specific literary images, especially images of androgynes and twins, to represent unity and duality in synthesis, whether of mixed-blood and mixed-heritage experiences, or of adaptation and continuity, or of unity as the juxtaposition of oppositions. Asturias and Silko employ the twins and
androgynes such as Hunahpu, Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca, and Xolotl who represent the Meso-American mythical tradition. Each author also creates his or her own specific literary images which serve their novels. Asturias has his firefly wizards, and Silko has Josiah's spotted cattle and Betonie, the medicine man. Their characters exemplify many contradictions, thus encouraging readers to see the world as a unified synthesis of many complexities. As Betonie tells Tayo in Ceremony, "don't be so quick to call something good or bad. There are balances and harmonies always shifting, always necessary to maintain" (Silko 130).

Asturias's Parisian exile is important as a time when Mayan studies, surrealism, and the creation of El Señor Presidente coincide (Swanson 51). The occult and the 'primitive' appealed to European artists, and the androgyne in particular fascinated the "artists of the decadence movement and the surrealists" from the 1850's until the 1940's (Choucha 8, 99). The synthesis of occult and indigenous myth serves a decidedly mixed-blood perspective for the Guatemalan author. Asturias uses the surrealist's androgyne to embody paradox and ambiguity--the juxtaposition of feminine and masculine, and creative and destructive elements subverts dualism. In a politically chaotic mestizo universe, his androgyne is the transformative power of the hermetic trickster who can, according to Cherry Gilchrist, "exalt matter into its most refined state" (39).

In his treatment of the androgyne or hermaphrodite as a
masculine-feminine destroyer-creator, Asturias layers and fuses surrealism’s occult and alchemical symbol of unity with Nahuatl sacred beliefs in dualities as complementary forces within a unified whole. Dual-aspect gods and goddesses are but single entities who mirror the duality of the creator-god, Ometeotl, God of Duality (Taube 31; Thompson 199). “Creation,” says Taube, “is the result of complementary opposition and conflict” (31). Quetzalcoatl is also the hermaphrodite “in whom the laws of opposites and of the separate sexes are finally united” (Cirlot 145). The perfect human beings, according to the Popol Vuh’s creation story of the first ‘men of maize,’ are the androgynous mother-fathers who mirror the perfection of their androgynous Creators. These first androgynous beings are later separated into Man and Woman because they are too perfect, and therefore, apt to set themselves above the gods (Tedlock 165-66).

In El Señor Presidente, the androgyne is first portrayed as two separate entities and then synthesized in a single entity. The Zany, an innocent ‘truth-speaker’ in the novel, envisions the mysterious ”Angel of the Golden Ball and the Devil with Eleven Thousand Horns” shuttling souls ”between the earth and sky” (Asturias, ESP 25); his vision of the Archangel Michael and the Christian Devil portends the arrival of Angel Face, the president’s favourite assassin. The fragmented aspects of good and evil exist in opposition within the Zany’s vision, but merge in the body of Angel Face. An old wood-cutter describes Angel Face as ”an angel: a complexion of golden marble, fair hair, a
small mouth and an almost feminine appearance, in strong contrast with the manly expression of his black eyes" (Asturias, ESP 26). Asturias synthesizes Angel Face's feminine beauty and masculine alienation with his capacity for good and evil in the epithet that is attached to his name and repeated throughout the novel; Angel Face is "as beautiful and wicked as Satan" (37).

A complementary blending of spiritual teachings synthesizes the indigenous myth of the Sun and the Moon, the hero's Mystical Marriage to the Great Goddess and the alchemical Mystical Marriage of Sol and Luna. Each source illustrates that attraction and conflict brings destruction, but that destruction is the basis for creation (Ramsay 139; Campbell 109-11). In the cyclical pattern of endings as beginnings, the Mystical Marriage gives form to the universal child, the alchemical filius macrocosmi who is "Mercurius-child" (Ramsay 128), but may also be depicted as the universal cosmic egg, identified in the cabalistic teachings as "the power of generation, the Mighty Living One" (Campbell 276). In Mulata, Catalina gives birth to Tazolito, the universal child; Catalina’s impregnation through the navel emulates the Nahuatl myth of the Aztec goddess Coatlicue, who is impregnated by a ball of feathers through her navel and gives birth to Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec Sun god. The universal child here is a mystical symbol of the birth of a new consciousness (Ramsay 178) as well as a mythical symbol of sacrifice. Thus, Asturias continually reinforces the link between death and rebirth.
Asturias' mulata is also a *filius macrocosmi*. The mulata, who has "too much dinky-inky for a woman" and not enough "inky-dinky for a man," is the agonized central figure in *Mulata* (Asturias 53). As the monstrous offspring of the Sun and the Moon, she is the child of colonization--the Malinche who embodies all the best and the worst of men and women and of Indians and Whites, even as she blurs the distinctions between them. The mulata is a paradox who encompasses all oppositions to form the quintessential image of synthesis in Asturias' works. She is barren but blatantly sexual, "electric, atmospheric . . . dancing like a will-of-the-wisp" (Asturias, *Mulata* 40, 45). She betrays and victimizes Celestino; "A hundred dogs, a hundred tigers would come out of her mouth in search of the morsel that would satisfy not her appetite but her raging need to destroy" (43). She is the obsessive-compulsive need to possess and to be possessed; overtly sadistic, innately masochistic, and pathetically childish, she either cries "like a coffee-coloured doll" or "become[s] enraged and attack[s] him as if he were her worst enemy" (43).

Her monstrosity and lust for Celestino's golden skeleton is emphasized throughout *Mulata*, but she only mirrors Celestino's envy and desire to have the colonizer's material lifestyle for himself. Tazol transforms Celestino from a poor Indian with a small plot of village land and a change of clothing (24) to a corn-grower with "his big house, a sumptuous . . . empty residence" (Asturias, *Mulata* 41). Material wealth makes his
courtship of the mulata possible, for courtship consists of his handing her his wallet and "the rolls of fifty- and one-hundred-peso bills" (Mulata 38), while efforts to secure face-to-face sex is a futile bribery of "jewels, perfumes, silks, [and] trips" (41). Celestino’s ambitions are so great that the box of material goods given to him by Tazol is soon emptied (42). The mulata transforms Celestino Yumí’s fantasy into an earth-shaking nightmare. She turns his world into an apocalyptic "river of movement"; domestic animals and farm hands flee and the land is converted "into the waters of a wrathful sea" (64-5).

The mulata is, however, also transformed as a consequence of the quest. Her drug-induced wish "to do away with her present image in exchange for a future image" (46) is realized in the end, but only after she marries Celestino Yumí in a Requiem Mass that links them beyond death, loses her female sex and half of her body, and journeys to reclaim herself. Coyotes and cataclysm transform the mulata; she is her own mother and her own daughter but she is "dispossessed of everything" (300). Transformed, she is denied her "single little piece of mystery for having come out in the defense of the Square Deity, the Chief of the Four Corners" (300). She is no longer the powerful "intermediary between the real and the unreal" and she returns as her own future to lay claim to "Yumí’s golden bones," the metaphoric golden centre that identifies Yumí with the golden maize of his Indian heritage (303). In this claiming of his bones, she claims her Indian heritage.
Two previous studies indicate the difficulties of interpreting Mulata from a Western perspective. Susan Willis' study identifies Celestino Yumí's envy and desire for wealth as rooted in "class antagonism" (152); the experience of the colonized is acknowledged but the distinction between Indians and those ladinos who "put aside Indian culture and language" (153) is a social division within a national identity, not a major factor dividing the Indian world within itself. Celestino Yumí has no identity here. He is an Indian, but his social status identifies him as neither Indian nor "'typical' peasant" (152), but merely unproductive, which entirely alters interpretation of the text.

Though Willis does identify the mulata as a subversive figure (157), her emphasis on production (155) obscures the role of the mulata as the mercurial trickster who subverts the process of assimilation in Mulata. The mulata creates more questions than answers, and Willis is left in the awkward position of trying to apply a literal interpretation of her as a black woman within a class struggle context. Asturias explains that the mulata is a literary invention; the word 'Mulata' "suggests that special grace of movement" he wished to achieve but felt he could not achieve with the terms 'Mestiza' and 'Zamba' (Harss 98). 27

According to Gerald Martin, "The subject of Mulata de Tal, if it has one, is that of cultural conflict" ("Animated Cartoon" 399), (emphasis added) though his version of contact and conflict, with sex and religion as the catalyst, is treated as a
"mutual attraction and rejection between cultures" (Martin, "Animated Cartoon" 401) rather than as an unequal relationship between colonizer and colonized. He admits that interpretation is "extremely hazardous business, and a single, static perspective is virtually impossible to attain" (398-99). He sees only multiple realities, but "no one reality" and certainly "no determinable norms" (401). In the absence of "meaning," Martin shifts his attention to Asturias' "method" (399). He compares Asturias' literary images to animated cartoons, specifically to the virtues of Mickey Mouse's "vigorous crudity" (405). Martin makes no attempt to probe the complexity of the figure of the mulata; he merely recognizes her as Celestino's "tyrannical spouse" (409).

In Men of Maize, Asturias reconciles the duality within the Indian landscape according to mythical models that integrate the Indian and the mestizo within a single vision. Goyo Yic's willingness to sacrifice himself and Nicho Aquino's reluctance to sacrifice are linked to the culture-specific mythical models of Quetzalcoatl-Tezcatlipoca and Nanahuatzin-Xolotl. The two heroes "blunder" into the journey, as Joseph Campbell suggests is possible (58); both answer the call, but only Goyo returns to his people. The police and judicial system symbolize the colonizer's authority over the Indians, and here in the urban Underworld, criminalization plays an integral part in the trials faced by the heroes. Goyo is victimized by the judicial system, but he survives the ordeal and insists throughout that he did nothing
wrong; "We lost the permit," he says, "and they shit on us" (Asturias, MoM 300). Nicho, on the other hand, so fears being criminalized that he refuses to complete the quest; he could not return because "they'd have burned him alive just as the letters he was taking to the Central Post Office were burned by the wizards with black hands and firefly nails" (Asturias, MoM 285).

The myths that unite Quetzalcoatl with either Tezcatlipoca or Xolotl identify them as hero-twins--brothers (Taube 17). The unity of oppositions is very important, observe Markman and Markman, for contradictions were logical to a culture which saw "death as the necessary pre-condition of birth" (190). Like their mythical and narrative models, Indians and mestizos are co-creators who make the Earth habitable, competitors for a place in the sun, and adversaries in the landscape. In Men of Maize, however, the brotherly relationship is an ambiguous relationship; their narrative counterparts, Goyo and Nicho, are strangers. They both journey through the dictator's urban Underworld, yet each journeys alone and moves in opposite directions. The brothers are historically separated by a process of acculturation and forget that their destinies are mythically intertwined. Goyo's identity as an Indian is confirmed by his endurance of the trials that beset him as he is criminalized by the colonizer's laws, while Nicho cannot endure the trials. Nevertheless, they are brothers of the same land and heritage and like the hero-twins, they are united in an endless mythical cycle of creation and destruction, one esteemed for his sacrifice, the other one
unwilling to make the sacrifice.

'Sacrifice' means to give what is most valued; "to sacrifice what is esteemed is to sacrifice oneself, and the spiritual energy thereby acquired is proportional to the importance of what is lost" (Cirlot 276); Goyo’s models Hunahpu and Quetzalcoatl are esteemed for their self-immolation--their self-sacrifice to fulfill the ceremonial cycle of the Sun which sustains life. In contrast, their brotherly counterparts are either reluctant or unwilling to sacrifice themselves, but this does not mean that Xbalanque, Tezcatlipoca, and Xolotl are denied a part in creation. All parts of the whole contribute to divine order, and they too have a role to play as night-beings who move the Sun through its Underworld journey so that time and life can continue (Brotherston, *Book of the Fourth World* 276).

Xolotl, Nicho’s mythical model, declares his intent to sacrifice himself, but fails to contribute his spiritual energy to the movement of the Sun and to the life of the people. As a modern Xolotl, Nicho esteems only his mailbags, symbols of colonial presence. He is unwilling to sacrifice them because he derives a sense of manhood from his secular function as a mailman. Gerald Martin identifies the sacrifice of the mailbags as an act of "ritual mutilation" or castration preparatory to his initiation into esoteric knowledge (*Mom* 375 n153). The bags are sacrificed due to the efforts of Coyote and the wizard to divest Nicho of useless baggage. Nicho journeys to the nexus of the *axis mundi*, or World Tree to see his ancestral past while the
mythical Xolotl is confined forever to the nexus of the World Tree to hear the words of the dead. Xolotl is physically disfigured by regret—his eye-sockets are permanently empty from weeping (Spence 94). Like Xolotl, Nicho is also disfigured by loss—his jaw is permanently twisted with forgetfulness.

Even though Nicho abandons the rural landscape of his ancestors and participates in urban life, his journey expresses an ongoing spiritual reality which enables him to access the memories, dreams, visions, and stories that comprise his remembrance of heritage. Nicho’s loss has both a mythic and historic foundation; the unwilling sacrifice and the hero’s refusal to return is integrated with his shift to an urban lifestyle. Martin alleges that Nicho’s loss of connection is nothing personal; loss is not a moral judgment against Nicho as a bad or evil person, but a fact of Latin-American history (MQM 380 n204), but Nicho’s unwillingness to sacrifice is, however, an intensely personal experience when Nicho’s physical disfigurement is compared with Xolotl’s condition of perpetual regret.

As Asturias’ androgyne unifies oppositions, Silko’s spotted cows in Ceremony also unify oppositions, subverting the negative stereotype of mixed-bloodedness and transforming what was previously separated into an integrated whole. The ability to survive through adaptation is central to Josiah’s dream of creating a new breed of cattle that can thrive in the Laguna landscape. Herefords do not adapt to harsh landscape and drought conditions, while Mexican cattle are “born in dry sand and
scrubby mesquite" and survive like the desert antelope (Silko, Ceremony 74). As Josiah envisions a wholly new American breed of cow, he envisions duality as the basis for creation. These cattle represent for the Tayo the same admixture of wild and domestic potentiality as does the mulata for Celestino. Louis Owens suggests that the spotted cows open up a dialogue of "renewed vitality and viability through a dynamic syncretism" (183), but Elizabeth Evasdaughter also observes that while "the ornery cross-breed cattle" (85) who symbolically represent half-breeds may be "the solution to our problems as a nation, they are not an easy solution" (84). Nevertheless, as Tayo sees Josiah's dream unfolding "in bone and muscle," he recognizes his own diverse heritages as a strength rather than as a weakness (Silko, Ceremony 227).

Twinship and androgyny in Ceremony are further expressed in the relationship between Tayo and his cousin, Rocky. Tayo is twinned, that is, brought into both unity and opposition with Rocky when Rocky identifies him as 'brother.' Tayo grows up being told that he and Rocky have opposing destinies; Tayo is to be the stay-at-home son while Rocky, the more success-oriented other son is to pursue a career. They are the mythical twins Ma'see'wi and Ou'yu'ye'wi who are duped by Pa'caya'nyi, an "evil yet charming magician," into serving magic rather than the Corn Mother, as Paul Pasquaretta states. Tayo and Rocky are duped by the army recruiter's promises into serving the magic (25). Their alignment with the mythical twins alters their destinies and
brings the drought (Pasquaretta 25). Rocky is killed in the war and Tayo returns home; warfare has negated Tayo’s feminine nurturing side as well as his ‘twin’ brother.

Tayo undertakes his vision quest as a gambler, according to Pasquaretta’s view of the journey as an unknown on which Tayo "stake[s] his life on the outcome and gamble[s] against the forces that would stop his progress" (25-6). Tayo’s gamble is not akin to the perception that life is a lottery system drawing winners and losers in random fashion, but involves his inner trust that Ku’oosh and Betonie have directed him along a good, yet unfamiliar path. Kimberly Blaeser subverts the notion that healing puts Tayo on an easy path; protagonists of Native American texts, she observes, "must themselves work for their healing" (27). His path becomes a healing ceremony which restores his masculine and feminine energies; as Jude Todd notes, Tayo becomes the mythical Sun Man who restores balance to the land, yet his heroism is synonymous with his becoming androgynous (166). His androgyny signifies spiritual unity and wisdom as masculine-feminine balance. As an androgyne, Tayo now embodies two roles and the wisdom to discern the difference between them; "He must protect and look after the village people as a nurturer as well as a warrior" (Todd 166).

The mythical heroes appear either as a single androgynous being or as twins who embody dual concepts. Like Asturias’ use of androgynes and twins, Silko also uses both images in order to convey the duality in unity and unity in duality that may be
applied to mixed-blood experiences. As noted above, Tayo’s androgyny in Ceremony brings together the nurturer and the warrior. Similarly, in Almanac there are two pairs of twins; Tacho and El Feo, and Lecha and Zeta Cazador. The masculine and feminine counterparts mirror each other; Elizabeth McNeil notes that Lecha, like Tacho, is "primarily a visionary" and Zeta is "a revolutionary" as is El Feo (20). The twins synthesize spiritual with physical resistance; El Feo engages in guerilla tactics while Tacho-Wacah manipulates Menardo’s dreams with the aid of the spirit macaws who say that the struggle will be "won or lost in the realms of dreams" (Almanac 475).

In Men of Maize, the reluctant sacrificer, Nicho Aquino, is associated with Xolotl, death, the Underworld, and the Dog-Coyote. Tacho shares some of Nicho’s characteristics as the reluctant sacrificer in Silko’s Almanac, where Tacho and his boss, Menardo are linked with the ‘Reign of the Death Eye Dog’ and the ‘Reign of the Fire-Eye Macaw.’ Tacho esteems his job as a chauffeur almost as much as Nicho esteems his job as a mailman, which can be seen in the fact that Tacho even wears his uniform to visit his brother (Silko, Almanac 469). When the spirit macaws call Tacho to sacrifice himself in service to them, he "hurrie[s] past the tree into the garage" to avoid them (339). They pursue him and even rename him Wacah. Tacho eventually responds to their call and becomes the mythic slayer of Fire-Eye Macaw when he kills Menardo.

Betonie, in Ceremony, also shares the attributes of the
androgyne; he synthesizes oppositions within a single entity. Betonie's mixed-bloodedness integrates the material elements of an enduring Indian world with Western material culture; his ancient hogan pre-dates white settlement, and it is stuffed with "bouquets of dried sage and the brown leaves of mountain tobacco," "medicine bags and bundles of rawhide," "bundles of newspapers," "thick bluish Coke bottles," and "layers of old calendars" (Silko, Ceremony 120). The timeless quality of ceremonial paraphernalia is a synthesis of the past and future of ceremony and healing within the present and provides the foundations for comprehending the link between an ancient concept of evil and the modern technological potential for global destruction.

So, while Betonie is the medicine man who does not "act like a medicine man" (Ceremony 118), yet he plays an important role as the Guide who prepares Tayo for his quest, as Campbell's heroic model suggests (72). Part of that preparation takes place as therapeutic dialogue, and the rest takes place as a ceremony which partially heals and fortifies Tayo for the trials to come. Betonie enables the alienated Tayo to realize that the individual is part of an evil witchery story that has been going on for a long time (Silko, Ceremony 125). The witchery of the Destroyers causes division; alienating race from race, they make each race conscious of its losses and complicit in its own destruction (132). Witchery also makes people afraid to grow and change (126). Betonie calls Tayo out of his apathy, as Kimberly Blaeser
suggests, to recognize personal implication in that evil
(Ceremony 26).

Betonie’s Grandmother had taught him that "things which
don’t shift and grow are dead things" (126). Betonie is
instrumental in reinforcing a continual message of "change and
adaptation and the place of both within the traditional Indian
world" (Owens 184). While Betonie’s message appears gentle and
all-inclusive, at least in comparison with the magnitude of the
destruction wrought by the mulata, yet his insistence on
continual change and adaptation illustrates the acceptance of
destruction as the basis for creation. Betonie subverts belief
in division and stasis. He subverts ceremonies so that Tayo will
know that even in ceremony, life continually changes, "if only in
the aging of the yellow gourd rattle" and the "different voices
from generation to generation" (Silko, Ceremony 126). All of
life becomes part of Betonie’s sand painting, as James Ruppert
observes—the "time boundaries, discourse boundaries and racial
boundaries all fall away" (89).

The firefly wizards in Men of Maize and Betonie in Ceremony
play similar roles as Guides. Guides provide supernatural aid to
the hero and often have a mercurial aspect (Campbell 72-3). They
are not always visible, but their presence pervades the texts
even while they remain absent from view. The firefly wizards are
the spiritual and ceremonial guardians of the land and the maize
and are the real ‘men of maize’ for whom the novel is entitled,
and like the first ‘men of maize,’ are androgynous. Their sacred
functions clearly delineate the firefly wizard as priests and protectors of their culture. Asturias capitalizes on their mercurial elements to show them as a beneficial force working for the well-being of their people and as a malevolent force against outsiders who threaten the land.

The role of the firefly wizards in *Men of Maize* is to perpetuate the maizefield ceremony through sacrifice. Asturias portrays them as a beneficial force for continuity, resistance, and renewal because they have a dual role as both the sacrificers and as the sacrificed. The wizards do not treat identity as a social construction, but rather as derived from sacred sources and remembered through the ceremonies and stories that emphasize the preeminence of the Spirit World. The wizard-priests synthesize past, present, and future into a coherent fabric; they remember the ancient stories that align the people with the land and the sacred maize, but they also incorporate modern stories into their repertoires. Gaspar Ilóm's guerilla activities and the dramatic fulfilment of the curse form new memories that are integrated with the mythical history of the land.

Allusions to their residence in "tents of virgin doeskin" (Asturias, *MoM* 19) indicate that the priests in *Men of Maize* wear the flayed skin of sacrificial victims (Martin, *MoM* 323 n71), but the "tents of virgin doeskin" may also refer to the construction of the ancient Mayan texts as screenfolds of "deerskin and bark" as Craine and Reindorp state (xiv). As the literate mediators between the esoteric images of the sacred
texts and the people, they are the keepers of sacrificial knowledge, history, myth, and prophecy. Asturias, like the firefly wizards, is also the literate mediator in a non-literate landscape and interprets the esoteric wisdom for contemporary readers.

The firefly wizards unify spirituality and military resistance, as do Silko’s El Feo and Tacho in Almanac; they defend the land against intruders who threaten the unity of Spirit, land, people, and growth of the maize. Woven into the mythical-mystical eternal present, human actions large and small, are implicit with consequences that are implemented simply by the doing and must play themselves out, regardless of motivation. In this landscape, a basic system of checks and balances is fulfilled in the timelessness of a curse; their curse utterly permeates the narrative and the landscape. If the chronology of Men of Maize is ambiguous, it is because historic time is inconsequential to the wizards’ larger spiritual functions as priests who maintain the sanctity of the land for the perpetuation of the maize cycle.

The heroic quests portrayed by Asturias and Silko synthesize a variety of elements from indigenous quests with those of Western mystical quests and generally coincide within Joseph Campbell’s definition of a universal quest theme:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero
comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (Campbell 30)

The indigenous quest, says Julie Cruikshank, in Life Lived Like a Story, is different for a man than for a woman. Whereas the above defines a man’s quest, a woman’s quest often entails a kidnapping. The journeying male relies on a spirit guide or helper while the woman’s success relies on her ability to outwit her captors (Cruikshank 341). I raise this point of difference in order to highlight a culture-specific feature of the indigenous quest, though within Asturias’ and Silko’s narratives, the journeyer is a man. Joseph Campbell observes the need for the hero’s return to the human world, but also the possibility that the society may be unreceptive to the hero’s gift, and may even negate the boon, rendering it useless. In the face of a negative reception, the hero may elect to stay in the sacred realm unless prevented from doing so (Campbell 218).

In both the male and female indigenous quests, however, the community not only responds positively to the hero’s return, but anticipates that return and seeks out the hero for the wisdom that will be integrated into the communal world in order to strengthen the community (Cruikshank 341). Tayo’s return is followed by an invitation into the kiva to tell his story to "old man Ku’oosh" and the other "old men" (Silko, Ceremony 256); "It took a long time to tell them the story; they stopped him frequently with questions about the location and the time of day; they asked about the direction she had come from and the colour
of her eyes" (Ceremony 257). After considering his narrative, "they started crying/ The old men started crying/ 'A'moo'ooh! A'moo'ooh!/ You have seen her/ We will be blessed again" (257). The pronoun shift (emphasis added) marks their acceptance of his journey and gift as belonging now to the people.

Asturias' and Silko’s alienated protagonists share much in common with mythic heroes. Campbell’s monomythic hero is frequently disdained by his society (37), a factor verified by Gord Brotherston who says that the hero’s childhood is often a "time of danger, impediment, or disgrace" when the child-hero is "thrown inward to his own depths or outward to the unknown" (326). Gord Brotherston links disdain with the ambiguous origins of mythical heroes who are often conceived from "spittle, sun ray, feather, jade, [or] snake phallus" and have childhoods of rejection and tribulation (Book of the Fourth World 266). They have little connection with family beyond a mother or a grandmother, or may have foster parents or stepkin who mistreat or threaten them (267). Their sense of alienation also contributes to the acquisition of cunning survival skills (267).

As Brotherston suggests in his Book of the Fourth World, the ambiguous conditions of the mythical hero’s early life pivot on the question of illegitimacy (267) and provide the rationale for a quest that is central to the recovery of a birthright. The twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque, complete two steps toward the recovery of their birthright prior to their quest in the Popol Vuh. First they turn their elder brothers into monkeys (Tedlock
Grandmother's laughter legitimizes Hunahpu's and Xbalanque's claims to their birthright and resolves the "anomaly of miraculous conception" (Brotherston, *Book of the Fourth World* 267). Then they reclaim their fathers' ballgame gear, "their kilts, their arm guards, [and] their rubber ball" (Tedlock 128). The completion of the quest, however, far exceeds "kin and sexuality," transcending the personal to encompass an entire people (Brotherston, *Book of the Fourth World* 268). The Mayan twins free the enslaved from the Underworld and introduce maize. Tayo's completion of the quest brings personal healing, but he serves the people when he recovers the stormclouds to end the drought and frees the people of Ck'o'yo magic.

The monomythic quest provides a model for travelling in the Underworld, but Asturias' and Silko's use of indigenous mythical sources reinforces the meaningfulness of Meso-American concepts in their texts: Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca, Xolotl, and the Twins are also Venus, the Moon, and the Sun which play central roles in Meso-American cosmology and sacrifice. The hero replicates both the ascendent and descendent positions of these planetary bodies, which means the Underworld is a necessary stopover before passing through to complete the journey (Brotherston, *Book of the Fourth World* 268-72). In the timeless environment of the Underworld, the colonized individualist is stripped of ego and brought face to face with the "contraries of phenomenality" (Campbell 93). The resultant purification enables the individual to recognize the spiritual desolation created by
acculturation. In the mythical Underworld where Goyo Yic travels in *Men of Maize*, as well as in the open landscape of Tayo’s journey in *Ceremony*, time and the irreversible historic moment are negated and entrapment ceases (Eliade 150).

The mystical quests for a "lost home" or a "better country," for perfect love, or for "inward purity and perfection" (Underhill 126-27) are inner journeys that also approximate movement through a dark time of the soul before illumination and union mark the completion of a quest. The solitary quest heals the Seeker, but healing benefits everyone because the Seeker is restored to the community, and the community gains by his boon of knowledge and wisdom. The quest is a transition, both an ending and a beginning rather than a final destination. Seekers yearn neither to return to a lost Golden Age nor to a utopian future, but rather to the centre—to a place in the family, the community, and the landscape. Creation always takes place at the centre, says Eliade, and a return to the centre is always a dangerous and difficult journey because it is a "rite of passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life" (18). Successful return consecrates the individual and moves him from a "profane and illusory" life, to a life that is "real, enduring, and effective" (Eliade 18).

Asturias states that the language in *Mulata* has a "new dimension." Unlike *Men of Maize*, which he says is "still overloaded with religious and mythical terminology," *Mulata* "is
done in popular language, as a sort of verbal picaresque" (qtd. in Harss 97). Martin, however, notes that "there is no question that influences are largely pre-Columbian and wholly American" ("Animated Cartoon" 397). In this 'be careful what you ask for' misadventure, Celestino Yumi is tricked, first by his naïve greed for uncountable wealth, and then by his libido, into a quest that illuminates the history of Guatemala that makes possible this triangulated tale of the impoverished Indian, his loving wife, and the rapacious mulata. The mulata is the catalyst for the Indian couple’s spiritual quest since they flee her vindictiveness. They are also the catalyst for her journey. As they run from her, they are in fact, showing her the way. She pursues, but she is also their follower; she needs the Indian couple to show her the way as much as they need her presence to motivate them to continue.

While the mulata remains anonymous throughout Mulata, the names of the poor Indian couple continually shift. Celestino Yumi’s given name suggests a celestial or cosmic being, a ‘star-man,’ perhaps, and is consistent with Mayan and Nahuatl concepts of stars as ancestral forces. His family name, Yumi, suggests that Asturias uses a creole pronoun, yumi, ‘we, you and I,’ to indicate his quester as ‘everyman.’ His wife, Catalina is variously called Catarina, Catalina and "the tender diminuitive, Niniloj" (Mulata 8). Briefly, she is also Celestina, a possible feminine variant signifying that husband and wife are masculine and feminine elements of a single but now separated entity that
must, through the journey, become synthesized. Celestina also has another meaning, that of "bawd and procuress," and manifests one facet of the Earth goddess. Celestino will become Hayumihaha and then Chiltic before finally reverting to Yumi.

Catalina's identity will also shift, marking a decided ascendancy of feminine energy as the story progresses, from "Niniloj, his rib," (Mulata 8) to the dwarf Lili Puti, to Hazabalalahaha, to an aged yet fertile Giroma, another aspect of the Earth goddess, and finally to "powerful Niniloj, the mother witch" (304). Celestino Yumi and Catalina Zabala journey across the landscape emulating the Mayan mythical models Hunahpu and Quetzalcoatl, yet Asturias fuses their mythical quest with allusions to an alchemical quest. The name-changing corresponds with shifts in size and awareness as well as with the union, separation, and reunion of masculine and feminine that culminates in the androgynous first Father-Mother of the Popol Vuh and the alchemical union that is the Sacred Marriage. In both Asturias' and Silko's novels, masculine-feminine balance is integral to spiritual union.

In alchemy, the Sacred Marriage, or transmutation of base material into metaphorical gold is called the Magnum Opus, or 'Great Work.' The Great Work comprises two parts, the 'Lesser' and 'Greater Work'; the Lesser moves colourfully from Nigredo, the 'blackening,' to Solutio, the 'whitening,' while the Greater Work continues the process through Coagulatio, the 'yellowing,' and finally to Rubedo, or the 'reddening' where the process is
complete (Ramsay 176-78). The alchemical tradition, like indigenous cosmology, assigns colours to the four cardinal points of the compass and denotes phases of life and spiritual growth.

The "journey to the mine" is an alchemical phrase denoting the 'going in or going down' in search of the prima materia (176), the common and passive substance which corresponds in Mulata to Celestino's passive wife, Catalina and to maize. Tazol fulfils his part of the bargain by directing Celestino to 'journey to the mine' to 'discover' his prima materia, but since Celestino has no concept of what is valuable, he literally trades away the earth for a bag of Spanish gold and a pocket full of paper money. Asturias plays with the words 'Tazol' as the Maize god, and tazol, the dry maize leaves that are valueless to Mayans. Corn is the valuable substance of the flesh; corn is gold, as Celestino's skeleton is gold--Celestino can only deny but never escape his heritage as a 'man of maize.'

The alchemical "Secret Fire" initiates the alchemical process (Ramsay 176). In Mulata, Celestino's corn-crib blazes without burning. His pockets rustle with the sound of paper money that has reverted to worthless dry corn leaves. Bounty is conferred, yet Celestino cannot see the source of his wealth until it is too late. The valuing of the material over the spiritual, apparent also in Men of Maize, is evident in the tension that exists between the spiritual heritage as a 'man of maize' and the desire to be a wealthy, landowning 'grower of maize.' Celestino learns of the fleeting nature of material
wealth, however, after he has gained and lost all that he has
desired—after he has descended into the alchemical "blackening"
stage of complete loss (Ramsay 177). Catalina and his best
friend, Theo, try to halt Celestino’s descent at its earliest
stages. As his humble, good-hearted companions, they recognize
in his lack of humility a level of selfishness, ego, disrespect,
and unbridled sexuality that invites divine wrath. They deplore
his attention-getting habit of exposing himself in church and
during religious processions as the Fly Wizard brings shame upon
the entire community; Celestino, as the ‘blackening’ phase
suggests, is about to confront his soul. Not coincidental to the
storyline, Asturias’ antagonistic mercurial trickster is a
mulata; she initiates this necessary ‘blackening’ phase that
heralds the onset of the dark night of the soul as the
preliminary force for change.

Yumi, his wife, and the bear become wandering musicians who
fulfill yet another mythical role of the heroic twins in the
Popol Vuh. They begin the alchesical "whitening," stage when
they enter the remote community of the Boar people. The eloquent
Grandmother Boar explains the Boars’ loss of humanity; "There are
two things that we can’t do no matter how human we may be—laugh
and cry." The Boars "imitate laughing, but how far that animal
rattle is from real laughing . . . . when I was a young girl, I
used to prickle my eyes to feel the water running down my cheeks
and pretend that I was crying" (Asturias, Mulata 75).” René
Prieto states that "laughter is all-pervasive" in Mulata, and he
consistently equates it with debasement, pain, decay, and excrement (Prieto, *Archaeology* 217, 218). Asturias draws so many images and concepts from the *Popol Vuh*, however, that it is most advantageous to retain its allusion to laughter as both the losing and the gaining of birthright (Tedlock 122-23). Laughter as birthright, and therefore, identity is evident in the fact that the Boar people adopt Celestino Yumí and Catalina Zabala and give them Boar names, Hayumihaha and Hazabalahaaha. Celestino further seals his connectedness with the Grandmother Boar in a blood-ceremony. I identify the naming and the blood-ceremony as Celestino’s first positive step toward reclaiming his indigenous heritage and relinquishing his desire for the colonizer’s material wealth.

Celestino and Catalina leave the Boar village and enter the alchemical "yellowing" phase that marks their entrance into the Underworld and their purification. Armed with the magic potion and instructions given by Grandmother Boar, Celestino is forced to draw on all his physical and mental resources to overcome the Devil and Felicito Piedrasanta, the 'Happy Holy Stone' who is the 'man-that-is-a-stone' and Guardian of the Nine Turns of the Devil. Margaret McClear asserts that Piedrasanta is an ex-drunk who represents the alternating desire to feel and not-feel life, i.e., to be 'stoned.' McClear interprets Piedrasanta as the negative stereotype of the drunken Indian--he is, for her, a "pathetic commentary on the Indian" who "just rolls along--unfeeling, unthinking, passive in the face of adversity" after
centuries of colonization (McClear 42).

I contend that Asturias would not provide such a negative image unless it was with the intent to subvert that image. Within this labyrinthine indigenous landscape, the Devil and Piedrasanta must be reconsidered as a positive force; their adversarial roles create the trials of the Underworld which test, refine, and strengthen Celestino and Catalina. Their experience with the 'Happy Holy Stone,' is a metaphoric allusion to an interior process of purification and refinement—an alchemical process. The similarities between the alchemical quest and the indigenous quest illuminate the unifying elements within spiritual systems. The interaction between the questers and 'The Happy Holy Stone,' the philosopher's stone, provides a view of alchemy as a complementary spiritual discipline to indigenous spirituality. The alchemical quest views the individual as both the flask (material) and the stone (spiritual) which exists within. The flask and the stone are always the obstacle and the potential for purification and perfection—the shadow and light of self (Gilchrist 85; Ramsay 39).

Celestino and Catalina are required to work co-operatively, and for the first time ever, he has to put Catalina’s needs ahead of his own so as to restore her to her rightful size. The experience stretches Catalina’s body and stretches Celestino’s capacities to the fullest, enabling them to pass through the transitional soul-cleansing journey that carries them back to the village. The cure for her dwarfishness, to be stretched by the
Devil, leaves an imprint of his face on her back which only
Celestino sees; as a positive force, Catalina embodies "the dual
or androgynous character" of the Central American gods and
goddesses (León-Portilla 44; Edmonson 67).

The adventure of passing safely through the Devil's
labyrinth lasts but a night. Journeying in sacred time, however,
is deceptive; the night of the Underworld is an almost timeless,
or out-of-time experience, like the shaman's journey. Celestino
and Catalina return to their village, Quiavicús "strange and old"
(Asturias, Mulata 91); their aged appearance and their ability to
relate the earthquake as a distant event reveal that they are
Elders whose journey has taken many years of earth time. From
their lean-to on the edge of the village, Catalina's and
Celestino's desires and needs are aligned. They have nothing and
lack for nothing, and answer the neighbour's queries simply: "A
good life is life and nothing more, there is no bad life, because
life itself is the best thing we have" (Mulata 92).

Having been purified by his stint in the Underworld,
Celestino is wiser, but he has still to fulfill his destiny as a
'man of maize.' To this end, the old Indian couple set out for
Tierrapulita to become "a healer-witch" and "a clairvoyant-
wizard" (Asturias, Mulata 94), marking the onset of the
"reddening" phase which comprises the greatest part of the
narrative, the most complex imagery, the birth of Tazolito, the
dance of the Giants, the return of the mulata, the release of the
snake and the final union. Celestino Yumi, the man with the
golden skeleton, has much to learn. As Celestino and Catalina set out on this phase of their quest, their aspirations are consistent with mythical antecedents in the *Popol Vuh* and with the mystical sacred union of the alchemical King and Queen.

The acceptance of the belief that creation comes out of destruction is well-integrated in Central American belief and ceremonial practice. The Mayan and Nahuatl Creators made the first sacrifices to bring human beings into existence and so provide a divine sacrificial model for *in illo tempore*. Sacrifice is introduced first by the gods, then demonstrated in action by the sacrifice of mythical heroes, and then ceremonially re-enacted on the sacrificial altar (Eliade 21). Thus, eternal return is not just a precedent set by a culture hero, as Eliade notes of other cultures' practices (21), but is a reciprocal action on the part of humans to do no less than to give life for life in continuous thanksgiving. The gods provide an additional sacrificial model in the maize seed; as the maize god, the seed and god must die in order to be reborn as the maize plant. The graphic blood-letting associated with human sacrifice and the death of the seed are part of a larger holistic view that the "life force never dies" (Markman and Markman 182). Life energy is transformed or reborn, according to Markman and Markman, and "humanity play[s] its part in maintaining the cyclical life of the cosmos" (182).

Sacrifice and the opposition between blood-sacrifice and self-sacrifice is a perspective that Asturias explores not only
El Señor Presidente, as Dorita Nouhaud observes (163), but equally in Men of Maize and Mulata. Asturias says that a political analysis of the pre-Columbian myths reveals that Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl represent "two very precise forces in the art of manipulating peoples and individuals," one which embraces blood-sacrifice and the other which rejects it (qtd. in Nouhaud 163). Asturias creatively uses the "mythical vision or cosmovision" to re-value the continuity of ancient sacrificial energies in a modern context, according to Nouhaud (163). The cyclical conflicts and alliances of Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl enable Asturias to present the already-mentioned belief that destruction is the basis for rebirth and to explore the relationship between mestizos and Indians.

The concept of sacrifice and the opposition between blood- and self-sacrifice are central to Silko's work as well. Both the Book of the Hopi and Silko's Almanac identify common Mayan-Hopi origins and remembrances of distant blood-sacrifices, but while Mayan blood-sacrifices were contemporary with Spanish Conquest, blood-sacrifice was excised from the ceremonial world of the Hopi long before European contact. As a descendant of the Hopi people, Silko reflects their historical movement away from the blood-sacrifice. In Ceremony and Almanac, Silko's Meso-American heritage reveals that she has access to the same sacrificial models as Asturias, but her Gunyeedahs, or Destroyers also indicate an adaptation or alternative sacrificial model that fills the void created by the rejection of human sacrifice.
The mythic models present self-sacrifice in its most extreme form—self-sacrifice is self-immolation. As an ancient cultural practice, however, self-bleeding was the commonly accepted ritual practice (Markman and Markman 180). While self-immolation signifies the individual’s ultimate preparedness to contribute to the cosmic cycle, Asturias’ Goyo Yic and Silko’s Tayo need not make that ultimate sacrifice. Rather, Asturias and Silko re-value self-sacrifice to retain its spiritual significance even as they shift away from blood-letting. Self-sacrifice is transformed to provide a ritual death for the attitudes, habits, and beliefs that impede spiritual awareness. In re-valuing the sacrificial element within myth, Asturias and Silko subvert the negative Western view of myths as primitive fictions and convey the idea that there is a dynamic spirituality within myth that is valid for contemporary audiences.

Silko and Asturias mediate stories that “rise out of the land,” as Robert Nelson suggests (11), but they are stories that re-vision the landscape within a condition of absence. Whether by choice or by exile, the dislocation caused by absence is a crucial element in their literary visions. Silko, living in Alaska at the time of writing Ceremony, states that “I was so terribly devastated by being away from the Laguna country that the writing was my way of re-making that place, the Laguna country, for myself” (qtd. in Nelson 11). Gerald Martin observes that El Señor Presidente is a vision of “Guatemala viewed through a lens ‘made in Paris’” (“Asturias” 57). Martin adds that “this
is not only a novel which brings to bear on his small country a consciousness enlarged by his European experience, but also a novel that could not have been written without that experience" (Martin, "Asturias" 57).

Silko and Asturias share similar views on the need for spiritually-centred ceremonies to correct the internal dissonance associated with alienation and solitude. In *Ceremony*, Tayo’s ceremony aligns with the stars, myths, and the landscape-defined perimeters of Laguna identity. Self-sacrifice is a gentle surrender to the land, as in Tayo’s lovemaking with Ts’eh when he "felt the warmth close around him like river sand, softly giving way under foot" (*Ceremony* 181). In *Almanac*, however, Silko portrays sacrifice as violent destruction of an intruder as the prelude to rebirth. The prophesied reclamation of tribal lands by indigenous peoples will usher in a period of renewal only after a period of upheaval; The spirits are outraged by "the Europeans who had burned alive the sacred macaws and parrots of Tenochtitlán; for these crimes and all the killing and destruction, now the Europeans would suffocate in their burning cities" (*Almanac* 711).

*Men of Maize* revolves ceremonially around the maizefield, the centre of the universe; all levels are brought together to contribute their concerted energies to the regeneration of the maize, and through the maize, the continuity of life and time. Asturias unites the four cardinal points of the compass with three planes of being, the Sky, Underworld, and Surface World in
the sacrificial centre of the maizefield (Martin, *MQM* 333 n1). In *Men of Maize*, Asturias creates a wholly unique novelistic form in Latin American writing (Prieto, "Idiom" 192). While René Prieto acknowledges the cultural importance of "fire, water, and corn" ("Idiom" 192), he identifies Asturias' complex indigenous structure, with ceremonial, ritualistic, and sacrificial unity, as Joycean for its "layered relationships embracing elements, animals, colours, and numbers" (193) and Saussurean for its "paragrammatic" structure. 35

Robert Nelson notes that Silko's *Ceremony* lives on three levels; "three modes of reality come into constellated congruence" which allows each to serve as a metaphor for the others (13). Silko's Tayo and Goyo Yic, in *Men of Maize*, have an internal landscape, a cultural landscape, and a geographical landscape that are aligned as a result of completing the quest. Tayo and Goyo Yic must conform to the plan of creation in order to be whole again. Tayo's alignment is aided by Betonie, Night Swan, and T'aseh Montano. In *Men of Maize*, Gaspar Ilóm's interior landscape never deviates from the cultural or geographical reality, while Nicho Aquino's interior, cultural, and actual landscapes are first re-aligned and then terribly mis-aligned. Goyo Yic's landscapes are aligned in the course of drunken, cross-country journey in which Coyote and Possum are key figures.

Goyo's final ascent into the hills to begin life anew in *Men of Maize* is reminiscent of similar movements in the prophetic *Books of the Chilam Balam* and the creation text, the *Popol Vuh*.
According to *Books of the Chilam Balam*, the hills and forests signify a refuge from conflict, often accompanied by the physical hardship of surviving by foraging for sustenance away from the maizefields (Craine and Reindorp 67 n15)); "If you should not bear up under them [coming sorrows], everything will change, and you will have to gnaw the roots of trees and eat the leaves of weeds" (67). The *Popol Vuh* identifies the hills positively as a place for new beginnings; The four Quiché Fathers and the other tribes travel to the mountain which is the citadel of "Tulan Zuyua, Seven Caves, Seven Canyons" and they are happy: "'We have found what we were looking for,' they said" (Tedlock 171).

When María Tecún leaves Goyo Yic, in *Men of Maize*, Goyo goes down to the coast looking for her, marking his descent into the trials of the Underworld. María, on the other hand, ascends "into the mountainlands" and reaffirms our perception that she self-identifies as an Indian woman (Asturias, *Men of Maize* 291). Goyo’s prison is so far removed from the Indian landscape that he is literally off the map. Like Quetzalcoatl’s mythic island, the once-Spanish fortress is on an island far to the east. In fulfilling Quetzalcoatl’s prophesied return, Goyo Yic returns from the east. The geophysical reality of the hill country as an ancient stronghold of native communities and a refuge for survival in Guatemala remains continuous into the present. The lowland coastal areas which represent the colonizer’s world can easily be viewed as an Underworld because contemporary Native populations are still exploited labourers on the coffee, banana,
and sugar plantations \textit{(fincas)}. In her autobiography, Rigoberta Menchú confirms the geographical reality of a divided landscape which heightens appreciation of Asturias' allusion to the colonizer's world as an Underworld realm; Rigoberta's journey to the \textit{fincas} was a two-day descent in an enclosed lorry with forty people, their animals, and supplies into a situation that all avoided if they could "scrape a living" from their gardens (Burgos-Debray 21-7, 43).

The ceremonial readying of the maizefield, in \textit{Men of Maize}, is a harmonious movement from the initiation of the cycle to its completion, but true to Mayan and Aztec tradition, the ceremony is replete with the blood sacrifice that will sanctify and purify the land. Gaspar Ilóm is bidden to set aside his farm implements in order to become a defender of the maizefield when outsiders threaten to profane the sacredness of the land. After the massacre of Ilóm and his followers, the wizards, as intermediaries between the human and the Spirit Worlds, work to restore the harmony that has been lost as a result of the massacre. Sanctification of the rural landscape is accomplished by sacrificing those who have created imbalance; all who participated in the massacre are cursed so as to obliterate their seed from the land. The Zacatones are ritually beheaded, the Machojones are immolated, and Colonel Godoy and his soldiers are annihilated in a cosmic battle for their direct involvement; others who are indirectly involved, like Benito Ramos, are cursed with sterility.
Within this ceremonial atmosphere, gods and Earth are accorded a living and dynamic presence; they act in unison to create life as well as to unleash the elements that destroy the interlopers. In so doing, the spiritual world demonstrates its primacy over the material world and human affairs. The firefly wizards in Men of Maize who are real 'men of maize' because they embody the sacrificial reality perpetuate ancestral customs through rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices, as do their Laguna counterparts in Ceremony who have privileged access to the kivas.  

The firefly wizards exhibit a malevolent aspect toward outsiders, and a benign aspect for their people within the sacred rural landscape. Goyo Yic is guided and protected by the Divine creative influence of Possum in Men of Maize and has no need for the wizards, but Nicho Aquino, the Coyote-Postman, meets and is guided through his quest by a compassionate wizard. The wizard does his best to purge Nicho of his colonized identity as a postman and helps Nicho remember the indigenous heritage that has been denied or forgotten. Coyote, Nicho’s nagual, or guardian spirit also helps Nicho to realize his destiny. Nicho survives the Underworld and emerges much enlightened by the experience, but his subsequent refusal to return to his people and his flight to the urban world indicates that the wizards are not omnipotent, but relatively powerless against personal choice. It becomes steadily more clear as the story progresses that in spite of Nicho’s rebirth, spiritual connectedness is better sustained with
the support of a community rather than in isolation.

In context with the creation myths of the Mayans and the Hopi, Asturias and Silko depict alienated individuals as deviating from their sacred purpose of singing praises and giving thanks to their Creators. In *Men of Maize* and *Ceremony*, Asturias and Silko emphasize their indigenous cultural heritage when they stress the importance of a sacred, ceremonial centre and when they discuss maize. Both authors recognize a sacred landscape where an *axis mundi*, or 'World Tree' unifies all levels of Creation and where the people first emerged into the world. For the Pueblo peoples, the kiva is the *axis mundi*, while for the Mayans the *axis mundi* is both the maizefield and the ceiba tree. Emergence from this sacred centre informs us that human beings are both material and divine creations. Silko's and Asturias' focus on maize is a sacred substance from which human flesh is created; maize harmonizes humanity with both their divine and material worlds. The lack of respect for the Laguna Corn Mother, "Our mother/ Nua’ats’ity’i" and for the Quiché Maker-Modeler results in drought and sterility, two common motifs throughout both authors' novels. The need to respect maize and the Earth as the source of life and bounty magnifies the disrespect that is present in the masculine characters.

Asturias and Silko use the heroic quests to re-conceptualize the feminine. The alienated male must re-value and re-integrate the feminine in order to restore the unity that is inherent in the figure of the androgyne. Many Western images of women
separate the feminine from the masculine, and still other images negate the feminine, as I indicated in the previous chapter in the discussion of ladinized Christian woman. Both Campbell’s monomythic hero and the Meso-American indigenous hero must quest for union with the feminine—the Great Goddess in all her benevolent and malevolent power. Asturias presents the Goddess as the “creator and destroyer of life, both nourisher and protector of humanity, but simultaneously the embodiment of the forces of decline and death” (Markman and Markman 186).

The Great Mother is a benevolent force, and for those who maintain proper sacrifice and the correct completion of ceremonies she assures bounty and continuity and defines the actions of all humans. In Men of Maize, in scenes where armed resistance is most visible, the paradox of the Goddess’s creating-destroying power is evident. Her benign aspects ally her with the people, the fruitfulness of the land, and the bloodshed of battle; Gaspar Ilón is embraced by the Serpent when the god calls Gaspar to war. Her terrible aspects make her a powerful enemy against those who profane the sacred landscape; Colonel Godoy and his men are destroyed by an alliance of the Mother, the Spirits, and human warriors; Old Yaca, as the ‘serpent-skirted’ goddess, Coatlicue, motivates her sons to enact the ritual beheading of the traitorous Tecún family.

The Goddess is likewise both benign and terrible in Ceremony and Almanac. In Ceremony, Tayo’s mystical fulfilment of the quest for perfect love is synthesized with his sexual encounters
with Night Swan and T'seh Montaño and his sensual re-awakening to the Earth's energy. Night Swan, an aspect of the Great Goddess, Spider Woman, or Ts'its'tsi'nako, is as ageless as "the wind and the rain" and surrounded by blue images which associate her with the west and the rain (Silko, *Ceremony* 98). In their lovemaking, "her rhythm merg[es] into the sound of the wind shaking the rafters and the sound of the rain in the tree" (*Ceremony* 99).

Jude Todd asserts that "sex is not opposed to spirituality," for in the Pueblo cultures where the Earth is revered as a Goddess, "the earthiness of sex makes it sacred" (163); sex represents humanity's most basic level of participation in creation. Todd identifies creative energy as a very basic "belly-to-belly exchange of stories" (163).

Night Swan's malevolent aspect appears earlier in the novel when a former lover misidentifies her sensual and sexual creative qualities with the 'whore' and witch' (*Ceremony* 85). She uses the rhythm of her dancing to kill this man who rejects her for touching "something which had been hiding inside him, something with wings that could fly, escape the gravity of the Church, the town, his mother, his wife" (85). As a creative and destructive being, Night Swan makes Tayo conscious that change is continually occurring. Like Tayo, she has the "distinctive hazel eyes of the mixedblood" (Owens 180) and that the hazel eyes are an uncomfortable reminder to others that the world is always changing. As Owens observes, Night Swan "makes it clear that the evolution of Indian people and culture is a part of this cosmic
ceremony designed to ensure both spiritual and physical survival (Owens 182). Todd observes that Night Swan associates Tayo’s eye colour with the "green bottle fly and the hummingbird" who are mythical mediators for the Goddess (Ceremony 163).

T’seh Montano, another aspect of the Goddess, is benevolent and sensuous and associated with Mount Taylor, or Tse-pi’na, ‘Woman Veiled in Clouds.’ Tayo is returning to the Place of Emergence, and as Todd states, his return to "a place of origins" is a "rebirth" (165). Lovemaking is an earthy affair; she was "as warm as the sand, and he couldn’t feel where her body ended and the sand began" (Ceremony 222). Through her, Tayo becomes the mythical figure of Summer who will spend part of each year with her, and through her, he regains the cattle and his spiritual connectedness to the earth.

Ma ah shra true ee, the Giant Serpent, "sacred messenger spirit from the Fourth World below" (YWBS 127), is as important to Almanac as it is to Asturias’ Men of Maize or Mulata, for once again, the Goddess is an ally of those who respect the sacredness of the earth and an adversary of those who do not. The serpent, based on the presence of a genuine rock serpent that appeared at the Jackpile Mine on Laguna land in 1980, serves to reinforce the prophecy that "all things European will eventually disappear" (YWBS 125) which Silko pushes to the greatest extreme in Almanac. Those who violate women also violate the earth, as Janet St. Clair notes when she says that women’s treatment in Almanac "metaphorically reflects the culturally male contempt for the
female earth . . . the word 'rape' is applied uniformly to land and women, and to the land as woman" (St. Clair 150). Silko portrays extensive violation of the feminine in *Almanac*, yet she observes that when humans desecrate the earth, they really "desecrate only themselves. The earth is inviolate" (YWBS 125).

The Great Goddess is duality in unity, the potent, dynamic feminine force of creation and destruction that exists beyond the control of Western man; she is the earth and the moon, spinning and weaving." Silko’s spiritually-centred indigenous women, Night Swan and T’seh in *Ceremony* are really aspects of the Great Goddess and very different from women like Tayo’s Auntie. Asturias similarly represents two radically different types of feminine characters, one subjected and the other uncontained. The women labelled tecuna embody the duality of the Goddess which the alienated heroic quester must accept in order to complete his quest. La Piojosa, Old Yaca Tecún, Moncha, and María Tecún in *Men of Maize* and Catalina in *Mulata* are goddesses—the Moon, the Earth, and the Rain. The Earth herself, aside from being personified as feminine, remains always the Mother and the Snake—the giver and the devourer of life.

Images of the Great Goddess, whether as benign, malevolent, or as a blending of all aspects in the Cosmic Mother, are universally part of the hero’s journey (Campbell 111, 115). Catalina in *Mulata* is wife and Great Goddess whisked away on the wind, revealing how little Celestino values the feminine; she is further dishonoured when she is commodified, along with
Celestino's other material goods, as a doll-sized creche-figure. When she again assumes human form, she is a dwarf and a plaything for the mulata, for whom all possessions are hers to smash at will. Catalina, creative and resourceful, entombs the mulata in a mountain cave, emulating the heroic action of the Sacred Twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanque in the Popol Vuh, who similarly imprisoned the ferocious Zipacna in a mountain (Tedlock 98).

As an aspect of the Great Goddess, María Tecún, like Gaspar's woman, La Piojosa, is the Moon and provider of rain in Men of Maize. Goyo knows María in all of her moon phases; she is the Maiden when he finds her, the Mother when she leaves him, and in the end she is the Crone. María is a fertile goddess reduced to a drudge, leaving "a man who was worse than useless"—leaving in self-defense with "one child in the rise of her belly, another in her arms, the small waving hands of those who could just walk hanging onto her flying petticoats, and the raised ones steering the oxcart" (Asturias, MoM 99). In the tantrum of "a man who had remained a child," Goyo rages at her leaving (100); he calls her "no good slut" and shouts her ingratitude to the empty air—"It's thanks to me you ain't dead" (101). He is jealous, as "blind men always are," treats her as chattel and keeps her continually pregnant (107).

Goyo Yic, emulating the quest of Quetzalcoatl in Men of Maize, is weak with human flaws, yet he is the culture hero who regenerates and redeems his people. As Joseph Campbell suggests, a redeemer is identified with a "period of desolation" caused by
"moral fault" (Campbell 352). I would identify that 'period of desolation' with colonization and Goyo's 'moral fault' with his assimilation of the Western attitudes of the feminine which devalue and dishonour the Great Goddess, the Earth, and women. Goyo, like Silko's Tayo in Ceremony, will be the successful hero when he can know 'Woman' as "the totality of what can be known" (Campbell 116). The prophesied return of Quetzalcoatl is fulfilled only when the proper relation and unity between goddess and man, feminine and masculine, and love and sex restores his equilibrium so that he can take his place as a 'man of maize'. Reconciliation brings man and woman into a position of balance; they are the Moon and Venus, the Morning Star, husband and wife returning to complete the maizefield cycle of harvesting the maize.

The Vanishing Indian and the role of the Noble Savage, Owens observes, have always served the interests of the colonizer and his millennial drama of the "romantic, tragic, and epic" hero (17-18), but throughout this chapter, Asturias and Silko clearly deconstruct colonial myths and the idealization of selfish individualism using the heroic quest to counter the imposed European political and social structures. Their recognition of domination as a profane and unethical way of life is substantiated by the historic cycles of sacred history which identify domination as a comprehensive 'evil.' In the Mayan and Hopi pasts, evil has engendered annihilation on a number of occasions. Each subsequent creation story repeats the spiritual
teachings and the repercussions of domination and materialism carried to extremes. The colonial experience is distinguished as singular in relation to earlier cycles, but at the same time, domination is denied permanency as a 'once-and-for-all' event; the repetitive movement of cyclical history disempowers Western historicity and foregrounds continual change and emphasizes the role of individual agency.

The quest aids in the remembrance of the stories of heroic actions and creates a viable space for the discovery of spiritually-centred identities drawn from ancestral pasts. The quest challenges the Western ideal of the individualist as a insulated entity who is free to act without regard for the human community; the quest merges individual self-identity with community identity, whether that community is perceived as family, village, tribe or the larger humanity and instills respect for life's many inter-connections. Simultaneously, the quest subverts assimilation, decolonizes the individual, discloses how foreign Western values are to personal and political stability, and re-values indigenous cultural values.

The quest does not end in contemplative withdrawal, but rather it heals the self-destructive alienated state and prepares individuals to share what they have gained with their family and community. Individuals may, like Asturias' Goyo Yic, simply return to the maizefield, or they may, like Silko's Tayo, become healers, but in any case, they provide role-models for others. The spiritual experience of questing, healing, and sharing
reinforces the idea that as the individual evolves, the entire community evolves as well. Selfish individualism is discouraged, but the individual is re-valued as an important facet of cultural adaptation which contributes to survival.
CONCLUSION

Mixed-blood authors play an important role in the contemporary world by using narrative to engage the reader in discussions of identity and the re-valuation of an inherited indigenous epistemology that differs from Western epistemology. How do mixed-heritage individuals incorporate the knowledge of their ancestral past into a contemporary identity? Asturias and Silko insist that identity is to be found in the old stories, and if identity is found in the old stories, those stories can be updated for modern audiences. They continually reference the importance of remembering and forgetting the old stories as synonymous with the remembering or forgetting identity. Silko imputes a dynamic quality to stories. Stories live "in the belly" where "the rituals and the ceremony are still growing" (Ceremony 2).

A creative process unites the intellectual with the intuitive and imaginative capacities of the individual, as can be seen in the comments by Scott Momaday and Asturias who present the idea of an imagined identity. "An Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself," notes Momaday, "And it is a moral idea, for it accounts for the way in which he reacts to other men and to the world in general. And that idea, in order to be realized completely, has to be expressed" (qtd. in Jahner 164).
But as Elaine Jahner reminds us, Momaday’s words cannot be taken out of context to imply that intellectual will dominates over what is already present as an inheritance; she asserts that "the intellectual with its creative potential is but the means of realizing the inherited" (Jahner 164). Asturias offers a similar perspective in the bringing together of the stories heard in childhood and the ancient sources that he studied academically; "I heard a lot, assumed a bit more, and invented the rest" (qtd. in Harss 89). Harss, like Jahner, reminds us that we cannot take 'invention' out of context to imply the 'made up' when it is drawn from the shadows of his own inheritance (89).

René Prieto states that the relationship between Gaspar Ilóm and the chapters that involve Goyo Yic and Nicho Aquino have "eluded readers of [Men of Maize] since its publication" (Archaeology 103); Prieto puzzles about an apparent "weak link" (103) between Gaspar’s tribal past and Goyo’s and Nicho’s colonized present. I introduce this here in the conclusion only in order to re-emphasize the point that if either Asturias’ or Silko’s novels are ambiguous, it is an ambiguity that is largely fuelled by Western interpretations which do not appreciate the centrality of spirituality in their texts. Their novels need to be read as texts which synthesize past and present, spiritual and material, and indigenous and Western sources.

Asturias and Silko create a fusion of indigenous and Western spiritual images and subvert the idea that it is possible to define Indianness by materialistic values. Rather, they draw
from their spiritually-centred ancestral inheritances to find therein their conceptions of identity, as well as the moral and ethical means to differentiate between values which are anathema to life and values which are life-affirming. For both authors, their representations of the indigenous reflect an extensive knowledge of a Meso-American sacrificial reality of blood-sacrifice and self-sacrifice that both authors transform in order to critique the struggle between spiritual and material existence which is intrinsic to human life. Colonization is critiqued as the specific expression of domination and dominant materialism over spiritual values.

The Meso-American spiritual and sacrificial reality is a particularly disturbing concept for Western readers to deal with, yet in order to fully appreciate Asturias’ and Silko’s literature, we must see in sacrifice a profound beauty. Certainly, when Asturias and Silko apply the concept of sacrifice to Western society, an equally graphic brutality is evident, though the emphasis on brutality is self-centred rather than spiritually-centred. Individualistic ambitions for profit or social status, within Asturias’ and Silko’s novels, is a meaningless brutality which lacks any incentive for peace or social stability. Silko carries the destructiveness of Western urbanization to the furthest extremes in Almanac, as Asturias carries his vision of the president’s world to extremes; both illuminate urban worlds that are unmediated by spirituality and are, therefore, anathema to life-confirming values. The
competitive urban world engenders precisely the type of uncivilized beings who dominate Almanac and El Señor Presidente. The alienated individual who has no spiritual connection is unredeemed.

Spirituality humanizes, and as it humanizes, it civilizes the individual. In Asturias’ El Señor Presidente, both the dispossessed rural Indian and Señor Rodas, his urban counterpart, have lost their wives and children and been criminalized by the government, yet spiritual-connectedness confers on the unnamed Indian a greater humanity than that shown by the alienated Rodas. The Indian tries to rescue his family even though he loses everything in the effort. He memorializes his losses in a story; he remembers the criminals who caused his loss and yet he resists the temptation to become like them and to treat others heartlessly (ESP 186). In contrast, Rodas is so happy to save himself that he relegates the memory of his wife to an unrecoverable past and makes no attempt to rescue her. Remembrance makes life in the city unbearable; "No thanks!" says Rodas. "If you start looking back at what you’ve been through, you feel like taking to your heels and running for your life!" He accepts loss as inevitable and succumbs to the system’s ‘dog eat dog’ mentality (Asturias, ESP 271).

Both Asturias and Silko are quick to identify the discontent, envy, and misery created by desire. Envy of the material goods and the status of the dominant class drives Emo’s conflict in Ceremony, as it does Celestino’s wish in Mulata. As
Roland Barthes notes of those who desire but are excluded from the 'bourgeois myth,' the cost is "immobilization and an impoverishment of consciousness" (141). Silko’s portrayal of the restless spirits of the dead in Almanac and Asturias’ depiction of the fury of the firefly wizards in Men of Maize virtually condemn not only the greed of individuals, but class-systems which idealize greed, waste, and the exploitation of the weak.

Asturias and Silko also illuminate ways of life that value communal identity, a land ethic, and egalitarianism and reject both the capitalist and the Marxist political forms as little more than two sides of the same coin. Their depiction of the heroic quest subverts the competitive effects of a brutalizing Western political system and a social system which marginalizes indigenous people—the quest’s purpose is quite the opposite of assimilation—to mobilize the individual and to change or enrich the individual’s consciousness.

While the heroic paradigm is a universal phenomenon, Asturias and Silko are addressing the mixed-blood experience, and they achieve their ends beautifully by referencing a Meso-American indigenous paradigm. The heroes of the indigenous paradigm are either twins or androgynes and ideally suited for the authors to explore the complex paradox of unity in duality and duality in unity as applicable both to the inter-relationship of spiritual and material life and to Asturias’ and Silko’s depictions of the mixed-blood or mixed-heritage individual. The extensive interplay between androgynes and twins continually
subverts boundaries and reinforces the idea that myths provide a spiritual foundation for sacrifice, renewal, and unity which may be updated to show that potent spiritual models which served pre-Conquest indigenous people are viable in the present as a response to the alienated condition.

Human beings are spiritual beings who struggle to give meaning to life in the material world, and meet that need through the transformative power of the quest. The most powerful humans are not those with the greatest political or material success, but those who have persevered in spite of human frailty and sorrow to fulfill their role within the community. Those who are true to the sense of heart that is present in ancestral teachings neither aggrandize nor deny themselves, but integrate the many ambiguities and paradoxes of their lives, their personal quests, to create the wisdom that is valued by the community. In their works, Asturias and Silko show how the alienated become healed or healers, while the tensions that created their alienation continue to exist simultaneously as part of ancient and post-contact, actual and mythological experience.

In conclusion, the literary expressions of the spiritual journeys presented by Miguel Angel Asturias and Leslie Marmon Silko do not represent a utopian vision, but rather a holistic vision in which good and evil are ever-present in human affairs and the human task is to discern between the two. The mythical heroic quests very dramatically differentiate good from evil, but since individual existence is entangled with personal fears and
desires, such discernment is difficult. In conjunction with their fusion of ancient sacred texts, oral mythical stories, and Western mysticism, Asturias’ and Silko’s literary expressions remind us that spiritual-connectedness is our common heritage.
NOTES

1. When I say 'colonization' I refer to Ania Loomba's definition of colonization as "the takeover of a territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation" (Colonialism/Postcolonialism 6).

2. Please see the attached Appendix for a brief summary of these novels. For the sake of brevity, future references from El Señor Presidente, Men of Maize, and Almanac of the Dead will be shortened to ESP, MoM, and Almanac.

2. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to an author as "Native" only if they self-identify as such. Throughout this study, the use of the term 'mixed-blood' refers to mestizos/as, half-breeds, and all those individuals who are descended from indigenous, Native, Indian, or First Nation peoples. I acknowledge that within the contemporary reality, pure-bloodedness is a fiction, and there are few if any people who have not assimilated, in some way, Western cultural values or goods or encountered the above terms as derogatory slurs. Asturias and Silko use such terms strategically, i.e., they use them in both a positive and a negative sense, depending on their intent to subvert stereotypes. Since Asturias refers to those who follow a non-Western way of life as "Indians" and refers to Westernized individuals as mestizos/as, I retain his use of these words.

4. It is necessary to eliminate the all too easy temptation to criticize colonization through the application of an all-encompassing 'Western perspective' without regard for the reality that there is no homogenized West, only a variety of nation-states within the European continent, each with varied histories, cultures, and linguistic traditions. When I speak of a Western perspective, I refer to colonial and capitalist assumptions of the primacy of individualism, of progress, linear history, and the triumph of science and technology over Nature, of social Darwinism and an intolerant attitude of racial and cultural superiority over those they considered 'uncivilized,' of the imposition of the colonizing culture on these others through such institutions as the Church and the military, of middle-class status and an ever-growing consumerism. I would also like to add that the 'West' had and still has its share of critics, like Jonathan Swift, who were and are outspoken in their condemnation of colonial and capitalist exploitation.

When I speak here of a Native or indigenous epistemology I acknowledge that indigenous groups have differences from each other, but in the broadest sense, share a more similar worldview
with each other than they do with those for whom the term 'colonizer' is applied. The Meso-American-Anasazi epistemology presented here recognizes the primacy of the Spirit World and the centrality of spirituality in ordering culture, ceremony, ritual, and human behaviour. Myth plays a prominent role in the interpretation of a cyclically ordered history and cosmos. Sacrifice is integral to all of the above. Unity in duality and duality in unity are important concepts in which the apparently polarized elements of the life are unified within the whole. Overall, such beliefs in unity and spirituality are diametrically opposed to the dualism that marks the Western epistemology. Interested individuals should refer to the 'Works Cited' for more in-depth presentations of Western and Native perspectives.

5. James Ruppert's Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction identifies other Native North American authors mediating between their respective indigenous heritage and the contemporary culture of the U.S.--N. Scott Momaday, Louise Erdrich, James Welch, Gerald Vizenor, and D'Arcy McNickle. Momaday synthesizes the indigenous and Spanish influences of the American south-west in House Made of Dawn; Erdrich and Vizenor incorporate Caribbean and/or Mayan elements into their respective novels, Crown of Columbus and Heirs of Columbus. Silko, however, is the only one of these contemporary authors who identifies with the Central American world depicted by Asturias. Her mythical imagery, apocalyptic tone, and landscape, especially in Almanac of the Dead, reflect a strong Meso-American influence.

6. Further references from Silko's Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit will be shortened toYWBS.


8. In René Prieto's Miguel Angel Asturias's Archaeology of Return the author creates a paradoxical view of a brilliant novel that does not age well (2).

9. Mario Vargas Llosa, in "A New Reading of Men of Maize," states that the novel is considered controversial for several reasons: its fragmented, non-linear, non-Western structure; its complex cultural references; and its "stylistic hermeticism" (445).

10. Martin's assertion is supported in an interview with Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann where Asturias states that "In Hombres de Maiz there are no concessions. There is no story line. Whether things are clear or not doesn't matter. They are simply
given" (Into the Mainstream 87).

11. Gerald Martin states in "Mulata de Tal: The Novel as Animated Cartoon" that "no respectable critical approach to [Mulata] has yet been found, which is partly why so little has been written about it" (397). He treats the novel as cartoonish. René Prieto’s Archaeology of Return and Susan Willis’ "Nobody’s Mulata" tend to regard it as a text about class envy.

12. I am indebted to Mircea Eliade whose presentations of linear and cyclical histories confirm the ease with which alienation and solitude are negatively associated with modern historicism and the belief that history is a series of singular and irreversible events (148). Modern historicity is created and sustained by elites; the non-elite majority is free to oppose the elite, but Eliade likens opposition to choosing between "suicide and deportation" (Eliade 156). Unable to oppose history, the non-elite group is free to choose either a de-humanized or "subhuman existence," or flight (156). While I focus specifically on alienation as it is viewed in context with indigenous acceptance of cyclicity, Eliade makes it clear that linear historicity is the bane of many people for it makes suffering meaningless to human existence.

13. Such a view seems to idealize intuition and imagination over intellect, which again creates a divisive approach to how humans can know their world. Seen in a more balanced perspective, however, Underhill, as well as Asturias and Silko, imply that too little credence has been given to intuition and imagination, and too much emphasis has been placed on intellect. Rather, a compensatory movement which over-represents intuition provides an attempt to balance what has previously been negated and acknowledges the appropriateness of using all capacities.

14. A ‘picaresque hero’ is a roguish character who moves from one episode or one misadventure to another, usually undergoing little or no character change. He often satirizes his society (Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms 130).

15. For discussion of the Nahuatl aesthetic ideal, see page 30.

16. This image is treated in critical sources as surrealism’s "Eye of Glass/Eye of Truth" but within the context of spirituality it makes more sense to re-establish it as mystical reference. See Campion.

17. In "Eye of Glass, Eye of Truth: Surrealism in El Señor Presidente" Campion states that The President reflects the "surrealist spirit," yet he says that Asturias was never part of the surrealist mainstream. Campion differentiates André Breton’s surrealism which fuses dream and reality from Asturias’s version which reflects a Native fusion of dream and reality (123-24).
In *Surrealism and the Occult: Shamanism, Magic, Alchemy, and the Birth of an Artistic Movement* Nadia Choucha states that while the surrealists were attracted to ethnology, psychology, mythology, and Marxism (and Asturias is critiqued from all of these perspectives), it is clear that surrealism was also influenced by spiritualism, especially in the practice of automatic writing, and that by the 1940's "concepts and imagery borrowed from alchemy, the Tarot, Gnosticism, Tantra, and shamanism" formed "not only [literary] subject matter, but as influences on production and technique" (3). I raise this point here to suggest that perhaps the spiritual teachings that are common to all of these mystical/occult sciences were more pertinent to Asturias' own perspective.


19. Gerald Martin states that *ladino/a* is the word Guatemalans use for *mestizo/a* (MoM 320n42).

20. Martin refers to the internalization of the Western patriarchal ideology as a "Ladino ideology" (MoM 327 n5). He also identifies the division between Indian women who retain the link to the spiritual world, and the "Ladino peasants" who are obviously Christianized Indians for whom "the spirit world is literally, another world" (Martin, MoM 326n4).

21. Obviously both are a post-Conquest development. "Indians and Ladinos were ruthlessly kept apart"; the hacienda system and the church were institutional contact points between the two groups, while unofficial points of contact were provided by muleteers and travelling salesmen (Martin, MoM 353 n44).

22. In *Archaeology of Return*, René Prieto notes that Candelaria is the conventional 'good girl' in a "phallocentric society"; she lives only for her man and remains true to him after he disappears (110).

23. The tecuna myth is Asturias' own literary invention, but he derives it from social reality. Martin suggests that there is an "obsession with infidelity in San Miguel Acatán," but adds that Asturias greatly expands on the tecuna phenomenon to represent "passing time . . . and forgetfulness, both symbols of the great existential abyss opened in America by the Spanish conquest" (MoM 358 n4).

24. Prieto generally agrees with Richard Callan and Gerald Martin that *Men of Maize* is a quest for the feminine; they recognize, as I do here, that men need the feminine in order to be whole, but the women that men chase, at least in Prieto's
estimation, are universally treacherous, untrustworthy, and totally lacking in loyalty to their men (Archaeology 108-113).

25. See Rama’s The Lettered City, 16.

26. Campbell identifies the encounter between man and the Great Goddess as an encounter with all oppositions in unity. The Great Goddess is all that is desirable, beautiful, and nurturing, and all that is monstrous and destructive. In a similar, yet different vein, the alchemical quest described by Ramsay unifies all oppositions as well, but the ultimate expression of unity will see Sol and Luna retaining their masculine and feminine exterior, while each absorbs traits of the other to create androgynous beings.

27. Mulata=Black/White; Mestiza=Indian/White; and Zamba=Indian/Black. According to Luis Harss interview with Asturias in Into the Mainstream, Asturias reflects on his depiction of a mixed-blood woman. He associated a sense of gracefulness with the word ‘Mulata’ that he found lacking in either ‘Zamba’ or ‘Mestiza.’

28. Both Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell confirm that quests and cyclical theories of history contribute to the creation of meaningfulness. In Myth of Eternal Return Eliade states that "the formulation, in modern terms, of an archaic myth betrays at least the desire to find a meaning and a transhistorical justification for historical events" (147).

In Hero With a Thousand Faces, Campbell asserts that "earlier generations were guided by the symbols and spiritual exercises of their mythological and religious inheritance" while modern humanity has so rationalized "gods and devils" out of existence that human beings are basically on their own (104).

29. To be human here involves respect on two levels. On the first level, the Boar people engage in drunken revelry while wearing their Boar Dance regalia, with the result that they are condemned by their animalistic behaviour to be visible as animals. The mythical Quetzalcoatl also gets drunk, sleeps with his sister and is compelled to leave Tulan.

On a second level, the Boars are disrespected as ‘sauvages’ or Indians who are de-humanized by the invader, hunted and treated like animals despite the fact that they speak a human language and have cultural, spiritual, and ethical values with which Yumí can identify. Susan Willis indicates a twofold purpose for this segment on the Boars; their inability to laugh or cry is a historical reference to Pope Paul III who identified Indians as human because "they could laugh," and they represent the stereotypical image of the "pagan wildmen" who "satisfy the white Christian world’s need for a primitive order" (Willis 154).
In "Those Made Worthy by Divine Sacrifice: The Faith of Ancient Mexico," Miguel León-Portilla states that these multi-named, multi-faceted, multi-gendered/ungendered beings have no constant or fixed attributes by which they can become a rigid motif. Their identity and functions remain quite fluid, yet they all represent "numerous countenances or aspects of Ometeotl, (the Dual God, 'Our Mother,' 'Our Father')" (45). In "The Mayan Faith," Munro Edmunson likewise the multiplicity of the gods; the Mayan idea of god is plural yet singular. Hunabku is aptly called the Unified God. Edmonson further notes that "polytheism is a poor description of Mayan belief" (67).

31. In "Black Tezcatlipoca, Sower of Discord," Dorita Nouhaud observes with some astonishment that "Hispanism wanted its great political novel" so the importance of Asturias' mythical focus was virtually ignored because in order to highlight The President's "ideological worth." Critics thereafter "adopted the credo that Asturias was dominated by the Spanish model" (166).

32. The Hopi believe that the Mayans are "simply aberrant Hopi clans who did not complete their migrations" (124) and that both groups share a common "Place of Emergence" in Central America (Waters 141). Silko contradicts the Hopi interpretation of migration in Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit her collection of essays. After citing the accepted belief that all people "emerged at the same place and at the same time" she states that "the Pueblo people do not view any single location or natural springs as the one and only true Emergence Place. She adds that one cannot take literally the stories of Emergence and Migration because they exist "for ritual purposes only" (36).

33. The narrator in Almanac says that "Those who went North (the Hopi) refused to feed the spirits blood anymore" (Silko 336). The spirits hungered for the blood of the "rich and the royal" but usually had to gratify that hunger through the natural catastrophes that claimed the lives of the more numerous poor (337).

During the Hopi winter solstice ceremony, called Soyál the Hopi sacrificed a young girl from the Parrot Clan was every four years during ancient times. Later, physical sacrifice was transformed into spiritual sacrifice, which still resulted in death, and was finally transformed into a symbolic gesture. Like the Mayans and Aztecs, the Hopi share the same belief that "life must be paid for with life; the germinated seed must give up its identity as a seed that a new form may rise from it" (Waters 197).

34. Begun in Guatemala in 1922, El Señor Presidente underwent nine re-writes between 1923 and 1932 while Asturias was in Paris,
and it was completed in Guatemala. The darkness of the opening and closing of the Guatemalan sections are a sharp contrast to the light-filled Parisian-written segments (Martin, "Miguel Angel Asturias" 57).

35. "Paragrammatic" is a term René Prieto borrows from linguist Ferdinand Saussure to define a novel which "absorbs a multiplicity of texts" ("Idiom" 192).

36. Kivas are sacred ceremonial chambers which "symbolize a womb of Mother Earth from which people are born and the underworld from which they first emerged. Each kiva has a small hole in the floor, an earth navel called a sipapu, which symbolically denotes the umbilical cord leading from Mother Earth and the path of the people's emergence from the underworld. The ladder through the roof represents the reed up which people climbed during the emergence into the world above" (Hirschfelder and Molin 149).

37. The axis mundi or 'axis of the world' is a universal symbol which identifies all peoples as having their own centres. Mountains, temples, obelisks, and pillars can also serve as centres (Biedermann 25).

38. In The Flayed God, Markman and Markman state that Mother Goddess as weaver unifies the masculine/vertical (Sun/warp) and the feminine/horizontal (temporal/woof). In a text about mediation, the weaving sums up the indigenous epistemology presented by these authors. "The crossing of these two forms a union of opposites suggesting the duality of all life, a duality that grows from, depends upon, and will return to the underlying and essential unity of spirit" (186).
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Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native


This novel has a number of stories, but there are several plots that predominate. The main plot is about the president, a dark and invisible omnipresence who needs to maintain control, elicit total loyalty, and be rid of potential political adversaries. The story begins with the death of the president’s oldest friend, Colonel Parrales Sonriente by Pelele (the Zany), a mentally handicapped beggar. The Colonel’s death initiates a chain of arrests, accusations, tortures, imprisonments, and executions which implicate many innocent characters and form the basis for the many stories within the novel. A second storyline, that of Angel Face’s and Camila’s love, is integrated with the main plot. As the president’s right-hand man, he owes all of his loyalty to the president, but his falling in love betrays that loyalty and Angel Face soon finds himself falling out of favour with the president, setting off another chain of events that leads Angel Face toward his death. The Judge Advocate has a third story, as the ambitious bureaucratic official who runs the Casa Nueva prison like a personal kingdom in which he has life and death control over others. He helps to maintain the dictatorship by using his position to profit from the fear and
misery of the populace.

**Men of Maize (1949)**

Gaspar Ilóm is a Native resistance leader who is betrayed. His death brings a curse to all who were involved in that betrayal. As a leader who adheres to his ancestor’s spiritual values, he defends his land against invasion, and his death is remembered by the wizards and the community as a model worthy of emulation. With the passage of time, the curse is fulfilled. Another generation lives with Gaspar’s memory as a story retold. Goyo Yic makes a heroic-journey as a Quetzalcoatl-figure. He ventures forth from his village in search of his runaway wife, María Tecún, follows a drunken journey which carries him east to an island prison where he languishes for several years. He is eventually re-united with his wife and together they return to their village. Nicho Aquino similarly makes a journey in search of a missing wife. His journey takes him into the Underworld where he learns that his wife has died, and learns about the history of his people. Nicho disappears into the city where his most important function will be to help Goyo and his wife return. **Mulata (1963)**

Celestino Yumí sells his wife, Catalina Zabala, to Tazol, the cornleaf god in exchange for wealth, and so initiates a chain of consequences for his foolish wish which result in his making a quest. He meets and marries the mulata, a hermaphrodite of destructive proportions, and soon regrets his wish. Celestino and the dwarfish Catalina imprison the mulata in a mountain; the
earthquake that marks her return sets them fleeing her wrath. They meet the Boar people and then journey into the Devil’s nine turns in order to return Catalina to regular size. After many years they return to their village, only to embark on another journey, this time to Tierrapaulita where they intend to study to become a wizard and a witch. Catalina gives birth to Tazolito and becomes Giroma, a powerful witch.

Tierrapaulita is a twisted city where the Catholic Church and the Mayan gods vie for control. When the Christian Devil arrives, the gods and the old priest abandon the city. A new priest returns to do battle with the Devil. The Christian Devil takes up residence in Celestino’s body, and the Mayan Devil takes over the sexton’s body, which has already been taken over by the mulata, and the battle proceeds. In the end, the sexton finds himself in bed with a serpent and the priest is riding around on a meat-eating mule. An earthquake levels the town, Celestino dies, Catalina sinks back into the earth, and the mulata is reborn as her own daughter and reclaims Celestino’s skeleton.

**TWO NOVELS BY LESLIE MARMON SILKO**

*Ceremony* (1977)

*Ceremony* is Tayo’s quest. Tayo is already alienated from community and family by his Auntie’s ostracism of his mother. As a World War Two veteran, he returns home to the reservation even more alienated than before. Old Ku’oosh, a Laguna healer, has no healing ceremony strong enough to heal the veteran, so he takes him to Betonie, a mixed-blood healer. Betonie helps Tayo to
realize that he is part of a larger witchery which causes fear, misery, and destruction. He enacts a healing ceremony which strengthens Tayo to begin his quest. The decision to quest brings Tayo in contact with Ts'eh Montano, an aspect of Spider Woman and spirit of Mount Taylor, a sacred mountain which is the Laguna Place of Emergence. His quest, a search for the cows that belonged to his Uncle Josiah, centres Tayo within the Laguna landscape, reconnects him to the earth through the woman T'seh, and heals him from his alienation. The ceremony that is his quest ends the drought both within himself and within the landscape. Thus healed so that he can identify the strengths of his mixed-bloodedness, he can prevent the witchery cycle from being completed by another veteran, Emo, which is connected with the uranium mining on Laguna land. In the end, Tayo is invited into the kiva to tell his tale to Ku'oosh and the other Laguna spiritual leaders. This re-unites him with his community.

_Almanac of the Dead_ (1991)

Many storylines and characters—estimates range as high as seventy-seven—converge in Tucson, a city where many evils vie for supremacy. The predominant plots, however, centre on two sets of twins; Lecha and Zeta Cazador, a psychic and a smuggler who receive fragments of a lost Mayan almanac from their Yaqui Grandmother; and Tacho and El Feo, two Mexican Indians who are part of a larger Native resistance group that is linked vicariously to Cuban Marxist revolutionaries. The almanac relates the prophecy that all things European will disappear.
Its fragments confirm that the time of destruction is already evident in the economic and social systems within the contemporary Western world. The numerous lesser characters, like Menardo and Max Blue, contribute their own tales as the 'wolves' who prey on human misery. Both the criminals and their victims orbit the twins and illuminate the destructiveness of capitalism and Western individualism. The International Holistic Healers' Convention is the convergence point where the two sets of twins and their many allies mark the beginning of the end of American colonization prophesied in the almanac.

SACRED TEXTS

The Book of the Hopi

The Book of the Hopi relates a long history of cyclical changes and prophecies of more changes to come, yet it presents an optimistic vision of the lengthy process of spiritual purification. The retention of wisdom, and so the song of the heart from World to World, makes the journey continually more difficult. Periodic destruction gives the people a chance to start anew (Waters 22). Spider Woman conveys the idea of ongoing spiritual growth when she advises the survivors who seek a home in the Fourth World, not to stop in a place that is "too easy and pleasant" because a luxurious landscape makes it tempting to "fall into evil ways again" (Waters 23). Sótuknang confirms the role of agency in the purification process: "What you choose," he says, "will determine if this time you can carry out the plan of Creation on it or whether it must in time be destroyed too"
In the Hopi Second World, the people had "everything they needed" but "they began to want more" (Waters 19). They "began to sing praises for the goods they bartered and stored," and "forgot to sing joyful praises to the Creator" (19). The decreasing number of those who remembered were derided by the wicked so that "they could sing it only in their hearts" (19).

In the Hopi Third World, the people again have everything they need, but they create cities and civilizations and "become wholly occupied with their own earthly plans" (22). They misuse their "reproductive power" in lust (22), and "under the leadership of the Bow Clan they [begin] to use their creative power in another evil and destructive way"--to create instruments of war (23). This time Sótuknang and Spider Woman conclude that "there is no use waiting until the thread runs out" (23) before they plunge the "worldly treasures corrupt with evil, and those people who found no time to sing praises to the Creator" to the ocean bottom (26). Survivors of the Bow Clan arrive in the Fourth World, establishing that "the power of evil is very great" because they had purposely been left behind (108). Their reputation for evil stays with them into the new world, but reconciliation with them is necessary because the Bow People carry certain ritual items that are vital to the people as well as knowledge of the previous worlds that are necessary to knowing the Hopi history (Waters 110).

Mayan
As with the Hopi, creation, continuity, and destruction in the Mayan book of creation, the Popol Vuh, centres on attempts to create beings who will worship their Creators. The first beings created by the Modeler-Maker, the animals, were directed to "Name our names, praise us," but they had no coherent language; "they just squawked, they just chattered, they just howled" (Tedlock 78). The second creation, made of mud, failed to hold its shape; "Its face was lopsided, its face was just twisted" (79). The third creations, made of wood, had to be destroyed because "there was nothing in their hearts and nothing in their minds, no memory of their mason and builder. . . . Now they did not remember the Heart of Sky" (83). Lacking both the memory and the heart which linked them to their Divine Source, these puppets were so disrespectful of other life forms that all of creation rose up to destroy them. Likewise, the destruction of Seven-Macaw, his wife Chimalmat, and his two sons, Zipacna and Earthquake, by the hero-twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque, is a necessary ending that prepares the way for the men of maize (89). Hunahpu and Xbalanque, hearing Seven-Macaw proclaim himself to be the sun, "saw evil in his attempt at self-magnification before the Heart of Sky" (89).

The haste with which the Hopi Creators, Sōtuknang and Spider Woman, and the Quiche Creators, Maker and Modeler admonish but forgive their creations, or quickly cut their losses with regard to failed creation projects, suggests Creators who are not only learning by trial and error, but see their errors with humour, and quickly modify their experiments by changing their word.
"This will not do," say the Bearers and Begetters of the animals' inability to speak. "We have changed our word" (Tedlock 78). "It won't last," they say of the Mud Man; "It seems to be dwindling away, so let it just dwindle . . . so let it be merely a thought" (79). **Codex Pérez and the Book of the Chilam Balam of Maní**

This is a prophetic-historic almanac that is a virtual "hodge-podge" of information: it contains the prophecies of the Jaguar Priests (Chilam Balam), tun and katún prophecies (annual and larger time cycles), land documents, Itzá and Xiu histories, herbal remedies, computations of time, bleeding, and horoscopes (Craine and Reindorp xvi). Literate sixteenth-century Mayans first translated the pre-Conquest hieroglyphs into Mayan using the Spanish alphabet. Then, nineteenth-century Mayans further re-interpreted and translated the documents into Spanish, and was later translated again into English. This Yucatecan almanac is a bicultural text in its content, its translation, and its interpretation. As a record of both adaptation and resistance, the almanac-form is a versatile source of literary inspiration for both Asturias and Silko.

The Books of the Jaguar Priests, which prophesy the arrival of the Spaniards, are important in conjunction with the works of Asturias and Silko because they provide a darkly pessimistic, almost fatalistic vision of Spanish domination and indigenous acculturation to the conqueror that contrasts the unifying image of light cast by the rising sun in the *Popol Vuh*. When read in
context with the tun and katun prophecies, the impression of an inherently flawed humanity struggling to survive only intensifies the pessimism. Periods of self-glorification, domination, drought, and famine alternate with periods of good fortune and illuminate a spiritual perspective that divine intervention and cyclical patterns of indigenous history periodically check, but do not stop evil from happening.