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**Reimagining the Modern American 'Monomyth': A Comparative Study of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, the Midcentury Myth-and-Symbol School, and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller***

Carley Peace

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REIMAGINING THE MODERN AMERICAN “MONOMYTH”: A COMPARATIVE STUDY  
OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD’S *TENDER IS THE NIGHT*, THE MIDCENTURY MYTH-AND-  
SYMBOL SCHOOL, AND LESLIE MARMON SILKO’S *STORYTELLER*

by

CARLEY PEACE

Under the Direction of Audrey Goodman, PhD

ABSTRACT

This study reflects on the midcentury myth-and-symbol school of criticism as a tool for comparatively reading F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night* (1934) and Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Storyteller* (1981). The first chapter applies Joseph Campbell’s “monomyth” paradigm of the archetypal hero’s journey as the foundation for a comparative character study of *Storyteller*’s Yellow Woman/Kochininako figure and the characters of Dick and Nicole Diver in *Tender Is the Night*. In subsequent chapters, I situate *Tender is the Night*, the myth-and-symbol movement, and *Storyteller* within their interrelated historical contexts. I argue that Fitzgerald used emergent mythologies of psychoanalysis to illustrate the plight of the misled, pathologically extraverted modern man; Campbell refashioned psychoanalytic and modernist sensibilities alongside traditional mythologies in service of his influential “monomyth” paradigm; and Silko drew from diverse familial and cultural influences to emphasize the power of syncretic narrative to resolve dissonance and achieve cultural translation.

INDEX WORDS: F. Scott Fitzgerald, American modernism, Leslie Marmon Silko, Native American writers, Myth and symbol criticism, Joseph Campbell, Hero's journey, Archetypes, Indigenous storytelling, Cognitive dissonance theory

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CARLEY PEACE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Georgia State University

2018

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May 2018

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my loving parents, David and Denise Peace.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am indebted to my committee members, Gina Caison and Christopher Kocela, for their input and support, and to my director, Audrey Goodman, for her scholarly acumen, thoughtful guidance, and consummate patience, without which I would not have been able to complete this project. Thank you.



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose and Structure of the Study

At first glance, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night* (1934) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981) seem unlikely candidates for comparative analysis. Fitzgerald's novel depicts a disillusioned American psychiatrist and his mentally unstable wife; it probes the pathological underpinnings of their romantic relationship in an unorthodoxly structured narrative that begins on a sun-drenched beach in the French Riviera and ends with the protagonist's disgraced retreat into upstate New York. Silko's genre-bending collection of Laguna Pueblo stories, family history, photography, poetry, and original fiction, on the other hand, takes the mesa-framed landscape of what is now called New Mexico as its primary backdrop and the integration of diverse familial and cultural influences as its unifying theme. Content, context, genre, and almost fifty years separate these two seemingly disparate pieces of twentieth-century American literature.

Despite such considerable differences, however, we may discern their subtle and hitherto unexplored points of connectivity when we consider the "myth and symbol" school of literary criticism that emerged between their respective dates of publication. The work of Joseph Campbell in particular affords an intriguing space for their comparison. Melding comparative mythology with psychoanalytic theory and many religious, historical, literary, sociological, and anthropological texts, Campbell's archetypal approach elucidates parallels among the world's many religious traditions and ambitiously argues for allegedly universal motifs that transcend historical, geographical, and cultural divides. Pioneering the concept of the "monomyth," a term borrowed from James Joyce, Campbell outlines what he claims are universal components of "an

archetypal story that springs from the collective unconscious” (*Pathways* 112-113). In his landmark text, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949), Campbell claims:

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation—initiation—return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. (23)

This motif begins with a “call to adventure” in which the protagonist breaks away from the safety and protection of his/her known sphere in order to undertake a journey that, Campbell argues, signifies not just physical travel but also psychological transformation. He writes, “The passage of the mythological hero may be over-ground, incidentally; fundamentally it is inward—into depths where obscure resistances are overcome and long lost, forgotten powers are revived, to be made available for the transfiguration of the world” (*Hero* 22). Campbell’s signature amalgamation of age-old mythologies and twentieth-century psychology make his work a fitting bridge with which to link Fitzgerald’s psychoanalytic themes with the overtly mythological material in Silko’s *Storyteller*.

Why identify mythic parallels in *Tender Is the Night* and *Storyteller*? Silko’s multi-genre collection offers abundant opportunities to reflect on the role of Indigenous mythologies within late twentieth-century American literature, including the ways in which Native writers reimagine traditional stories in the face of European intrusion, while Fitzgerald’s tale of a psychiatrist’s gradual disillusionment and decline, though ostensibly uninterested in traditional mythology, offers insight into the myth-making psychology of individuals and a sense of how new, collective myths are created and propagated by cultural institutions such as consumerist capitalism and the Hollywood film industry.

In the first chapter of this project, I demonstrate the surprising parallels that emerge when one applies Campbell's "monomyth" paradigm of the archetypal hero's journey as the foundation for a comparative character study of *Storyteller's* Yellow Woman/Kochininako figure and the characters of Dick and Nicole Diver in *Tender Is the Night*. I analyze the profoundly ambiguous nature of Kochinako's hero journey as reimagined within the modern-day setting of *Storyteller's* "Yellow Woman," tying the conditions of her thwarted hero's journey to those of Dick Diver's similarly renounced "call to adventure." Dick's unwillingness to dive into his own unconscious (an ironic refusal given both his name and profession) contrasts tragically with the experience of his wife, Nicole, whose descent into and ultimate recovery from madness can be read as a successful example of the inwardly-oriented hero journey.

In the second section of my project (chapters 2-4), I situate *Tender is the Night*, the myth-and-symbol movement, and *Storyteller* within the broader historical context of twentieth-century American literature. Structured as three distinct chapters devoted to Fitzgerald, Campbell, and Silko, respectively, this section explores these three vastly different yet interconnected writers as storytellers who each refashion their own inherited mythologies to make sense out of both personal and cultural chaos. More specifically, I argue the following: Fitzgerald used emergent mythologies of psychoanalysis to illustrate the plight of the misled, pathologically extraverted modern man; a decade and a half later, Campbell refashioned psychoanalytic and modernist sensibilities, stringing them up alongside more traditional mythologies in service of his influential "monomyth" paradigm; finally, Silko revised the approach of the Euro-American scholars who had previously presented Native mythologies to a Western audience, gathering fodder from diverse branches of her family tree as well as from her literary forebears to create a syncretic mix of "old stories and new" grounded in firsthand experience and emphasizing the

empowering capacity of narrative to resolve dissonance and achieve cultural translation (*Storyteller* xxvi).

## 1.2 Methodology

Throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis, I have endeavored to address the sensitive issue of cultural appropriation, specifically as regards my work with Silko's text. In his introduction to *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (1999), literary critic and Creek Nation member Craig Womack writes, "The current state of Native literature is, at least partially, a colonized one," as its critical reception has been largely dominated and determined by the voices of white, non-tribal "outsiders" (7). Womack's point brings up a problematic element of my research: I am a white woman reared in mainstream culture and therefore am absolutely an "outsider." My analysis of Silko's *Storyteller*, then, could be considered an irreverent appropriation of Laguna literature and culture, especially given the way in which I perform a comparative reading that folds Silko into the same space with two white, Anglo-American men. There is no way around this problem; however, I have tried my best to avoid irresponsible or disrespectful treatment of Silko's text by acknowledging the limitations of my perspective as an outsider and by bearing in mind the dangers of over-universalizing Silko's work. In service of the latter, my third chapter notes the weaknesses in Campbell's universalizing framework, while my fourth chapter, devoted to Silko's work, discusses the ways in which Silko both builds upon and critiques the work of her archetypally-oriented predecessors.

I would also like to take the opportunity to clarify the sense in which I use the terms "myth" and "mythology" within this project. Although these words are sometimes used disparagingly to indicate falsehood, fantasy, or superstition, I use them in their most respectful and traditional sense—as stories and belief systems associated with a given culture and/or religion.

The cross-cultural, comparative approach that I take in this project is uncommon but not unprecedented. In *How to Read World Literature* (2009), David Damrosch aptly describes the benefits of approaching literary analysis from such a perspective. Explaining that he wrote the book “in the conviction that a work of world literature has an exceptional ability to transcend the boundaries of the culture that produces it” and “find readers in distant times and places [by] speaking to us with compelling intimacy” (2), Damrosch asserts that reading works of literature from vastly different cultural contexts can yield surprising and useful insights into “how beautifully the poet [or author] has modulated the traditions available in that culture, in order to give a unique expression to concerns that can appropriately be described as universal” (13). Although he warns us to “beware of the perils of exoticism and assimilation, the two extremes on the spectrum of difference and similarity” (13), Damrosch also advises, “A fruitful basis for reading across cultures is often the comparison of two works that resonate with and against each other on several levels” (62). *Tender Is the Night* and *Storyteller*, I feel, offer just such resonance “with and against each other.” By reading them in tandem, we have the opportunity to better understand not only their unique characteristics but also the ways in which their authors “modulated the traditions available in [twentieth-century American] culture.”

Damrosch’s wisdom also supports my use of a theoretical framework. He writes, “To be effective, a comparison of disparate works needs to be grounded in some third term or set of concerns that can provide a common basis for analysis” (46). Campbell’s monomyth paradigm, along with the ideas of other midcentury theorists of myth, provides just such a common basis. The tenets of the “myth and symbol” school of criticism are particularly relevant to my study given the time during which they came to prominence—the space between Fitzgerald’s and Silko’s writing—and can arguably be considered works of twentieth-century literature

themselves, worthy of cultural studies-oriented analysis for their own sake and certainly representative of a chapter that must be included within the greater narrative of twentieth-century literary culture. Adding to the pertinence of referencing the monomyth paradigm within this study is Ritske Rensma's observation that although Campbell achieved popular fame in the late twentieth century through his influence on prominent Hollywood screenwriters—most notably George Lucas and Steven Spielberg—his work has yet to receive a commensurate level of critical attention within academia. In *The Innateness of Myth: A New Interpretation of Joseph Campbell's Reception of C.G. Jung* (2009), Rensma asks, "Given his [Campbell's] popularity, one of the most important reasons to justify studying his ideas is a sociological one: just why are so many people drawn to his work? What kind of 'spiritual hunger' lies at the root of the 'Joseph Campbell phenomenon'?" (ix). It is partially in acknowledgement of this critical deficit that I wish to take up Campbell's ambitious and controversial hero's journey archetype alongside Fitzgerald's novel and Silko's collection.

Finally, I freely acknowledge a personal interest in Campbell's ideas—I can even cite an excerpt from his 1988 interview, *The Power of Myth*, as a key influence on my decision to apply to graduate school three years ago. This firsthand investment naturally informs my professional interests. In bringing Campbell's ideas into dialogue with Fitzgerald's and Silko's work, I hope not merely to yield more academic discourse concerning the role that myth and literature play in American life but also to discover insights that may prove of personal value. If Campbell's depiction of the successful hero's journey proves possible, if we can indeed achieve "[d]estruction of the world that we have built and in which we live, and of ourselves within it; but then a wonderful reconstruction, of the bolder, cleaner, more spacious, and fully human life" (*Hero* 5), then I hope that my little piece of academic research may further its realization.

### 1.3 Literature Review: Previous Scholarship on *Tender Is the Night* and *Storyteller*

In the thirty-five years since the original publication of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*, scholarly criticism of the work has largely followed the lead of shifting theoretical trends. Originally received with enthusiasm by a handful of New Historicist critics emphasizing its polyvocal texture and historically revisionist account of Pueblo history, *Storyteller* subsequently underwent critical examination based on the principles of deconstruction in the late 1980s. Finally the postcolonial thought of the 1990s and early 2000s ushered in a period of heightened interest in the political implications of Silko's work. One consistent theme shines through these shifting critical perspectives, however: like a thread running through the mythological Spider Woman's web, *Storyteller*'s grounding in the oral tradition and mythology of the Laguna Pueblo has engaged critics of every decade and theoretical persuasion.

Although most of this scholarship pursues the political or aesthetic implications of the text's definitive blend of traditional orality and written word, a handful of articles examine the significance of specific mythological tropes. Lynn Domina, for example, analyzes Silko's use of the trickster archetype in her recent article "'The Way I Heard It': Autobiography, Tricksters, and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*" (2007), while Joan Thompson's "Yellow Woman, Old and New: Oral Tradition and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller*" (1989) and A. LaVonne Ruoff's "Ritual and Renewal: Keres Traditions in Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Yellow Woman'" (1993) examine Silko's creative reworking of Pueblo creation myths. Most pertinent to my own research interests, however, is Louise Barnett's "Yellow Women and Leslie Marmon Silko's Feminism" (2005), which highlights the connection between the heroic legacy of the traditional Yellow Woman figure and Silko's personal brand of feminism. No critics, however, have posited *Storyteller* within a larger conversation about myth in modern American literature and culture,



nor have any established a dialogue between Silko's work and that of the traditionally male, Anglo-American literary canon. I am venturing into largely uncharted territory, then, in my attempt to draw mythic parallels between *Storyteller* and *Tender Is the Night*.

Many scholars have explored the Fitzgerald's rich treatment of subjective, psychological experience, and many critics have explored this novel's overt preoccupation with psychoanalytic theory, but virtually none have considered the role of myth within the novel. E.W. Pitcher does address Fitzgerald's treatment of "the myth of the self-made man...the greatest of American illusions" (72), and others explore the significance of myth-like illusions—cinematic, national, and romantic. Yet Fitzgerald's work has not received attention from a primarily archetypal lens, nor, to my knowledge, has it been considered beside another, more overtly mythical piece of American literature. Therefore, my unusual juxtaposition of *Storyteller* and *Tender Is the Night* promises to yield not only more insight into the attributes of each text but also an appreciation for the ways in which myth persists, shifts, and renews itself within the context of modern American life.

## 2 CHAPTER 1: THE HERO'S JOURNEY IN *TENDER IS THE NIGHT* AND *STORYTELLER: A COMPARATIVE READING*

This chapter will apply Campbell's "monomyth" of the archetypal hero's journey as the foundation for a comparative study of *Storyteller's* Yellow Woman/Kochininako figure and the characters of Dick and Nicole Diver in *Tender Is the Night*. I will analyze the ambiguous nature of Kochinako's hero journey as reimagined within the modern-day setting of *Storyteller's* "Yellow Woman," tying the conditions of her thwarted hero's journey to those of Dick Diver's similarly renounced "call to adventure." Dick's unwillingness to dive into his own unconscious (an ironic refusal given both his name and profession) contrasts tragically with the experience of his wife, Nicole, whose descent into and ultimate recovery from madness can be read as a successful example of the inwardly-oriented hero journey.

Kochininako's appearances in *Storyteller* are varied but usually involve sexual adventures that underscore a distinctly female brand of the archetypal hero's journey. Kochininako, also known as the "Yellow Woman," is a traditional figure in Laguna Pueblo mythology who uses her sexuality and connection with nature to save her people from drought, famine, and other hardships. Kochininako makes various appearances in *Storyteller*, sometimes figuring as a self-sacrificial wife and mother, other times as a morally suspect shape-shifter. Critic Louise Barnett makes sense of these inconsistencies, however, by identifying a shared theme: "The common denominator of [Silko's] Yellow Woman retellings seems to be escape from the narrow life of the feminine domestic world" ("Yellow" 20). Such a goal aligns with Campbell's description of the hero as "the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms," forms

that “are by no means always beautiful, always benign, or even necessarily virtuous” (*Hero* 14, 35).

Silko dramatizes the tension between the conventionally virtuous and the pursuit of one’s heroic calling in “Yellow Woman.” In this short story, a modern woman must choose between her domestic duties as a wife and mother and the mythic possibility offered by a tall, handsome stranger who claims to be a ka’tsina, or wind spirit, of Pueblo legend. Silko’s carefully weighted prose toes the line between mundane explanation and mythic possibility, striking a balance so equivocal that neither the reader nor the narrator herself can confidently decide whether to believe Silva’s claim that she is the Yellow Woman of lore and he her destined lover. The narrator tries to convince herself of the impossibility of myth in her day and age:

I will see someone, eventually I will see someone, and then I will be certain that he is only a man—some man from nearby—and I will be sure that I am not Yellow Woman.

Because she is from out of time past and I live now and I’ve been to school and there are highways and pickup trucks that Yellow Woman never saw (54).

The narrator’s rejection of mythic possibility reflects a postcolonial, postindustrial attitude, one that makes the pure myth of oral lore no longer possible.

Silva never proves himself to be a true ka’tsina of legend—he may just be another tall, cattle-thieving Navajo, a mundane explanation that, if true, renders their sexual sojourn an adulterous transgression rather than a heroic pursuit of transcendence. Even if Silva is to be believed, the narrator’s life with him is undeniably messy, even dangerous. The narrator feels an acute vulnerability during their intimacy—““I lay underneath him and I knew that he could destroy me” (56)—an awareness of Silva’s strength that, though suggestive of superhuman virility, also portends physical abuse. Silva’s eerie power over the narrator’s emotions threatens

her mental clarity, rendering her resolutions to return home weak and inconsistent. Finally, despite its extraordinary pleasures, life with Silva comes at a high price for the narrator—it entails abandoning her home, her family, and her community for a strange, isolated life on a windswept mountaintop seemingly dissociated from modernity, perhaps even from time itself, its edge dropping “forever into the valleys below” (55).

Ultimately, the narrator turns her back on the dangerous heights of mythic adventure. She descends from Silva’s mountain and returns to the safety and comfort of her domestic duties, perhaps at the expense of transcendence. Notably, she makes this decision only after encountering reminders of the modern world to which she belongs—the accusatory white rancher she and Silva meet on the way to Marquez evokes the twentieth-century reality of white, Anglo-American hegemony, while “the fading vapor trails left by jets” in the sky above suggest that modernity and all its technological advancements invade even the most isolated and mythical of places (59). Both thwart the narrator’s attempt to embody Pueblo legend.

The narrator experiences a pang of regret upon reaching the riverbank—“I saw the leaves and I wanted to go back to him—to kiss him and to touch him—but the mountains were too far away now” (60). Her reaction seems to betray the painful consequences of what Campbell calls the “refusal of the call”:

Refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative. Walled in boredom, hard work, or ‘culture,’ the subject loses the power of significant affirmative action and becomes a victim to be saved. (*Hero* 49)

And indeed, the resigned narrator comforts herself with a hope characteristic of the passive “victim to be saved”: “And I told myself, because I wanted to believe it, he will come back sometime and be waiting again by the river” (60).

Is the narrator's inability to live up to mythic possibility the result of a personal failure, or is it the inevitable choice of a twentieth-century woman conditioned to reject such possibility? Silko's complex treatment of myth and the modern in "Yellow Woman" invokes structuralist critic Northrup Frye's description of "ironic literature" that "begins with realism and tends toward myth, its mythical patterns being as a rule more suggestive of the demonic than of the apocalyptic" (140). For rather than achieving transcendence or saving her people from ruin, Silko's modern-day Yellow Woman is afflicted with the demon of Euro-American culture and his materialism, the "fading vapor trails left by [his] jets" obscuring her view of heaven.

The modern worldview similarly thwarts Dick Diver, the failed hero of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*. A psychiatrist by profession, Dick should be a master of the inward hero journey, for, as Campbell writes, "The basic psychological problems of youth, maturity, age, and death—and the mystical problem of the universe—these... remain essentially unchanged. Consequently, it is largely from the psychological standpoint that one can reinterpret, re-experience, and reuse the great mythical traditions..." (*Pathways* 25). Dick's role as psychoanalyst should be that of the modern-day shaman, but instead, he holds himself aloof, preferring the clean, controlled nature of clinical diagnosis to the messy, emotional process of psychoanalysis. The comically long title of his pet writing project—*An Attempt at a Uniform and Pragmatic Classification of the Neuroses and Psychoses, Based on an Examination of Fifteen Hundred Pre-Krapælin and Post-Krapælin Cases as they would be Diagnosed in the Terminology of the Different Contemporary Schools Together with a Chronology of Such Subdivisions of Opinion as Have Arisen Independently* (146)—illustrates his obsession with scientific labels. Fueled by his fear of disorder and the irrational, Dick attempts to evade the inward hero's journey altogether, both his patients' and his own. Dick tells a fellow clinician,

“The weakness of this profession is its attraction for the man a little crippled and broken. Within the walls of the profession he compensates by tending toward the clinical, the ‘practical’—he has won his battle without a struggle” (137-138), not realizing or admitting that he describes himself.

For a brief time during his training in Vienna, Dick almost answers his psychological call to adventure. During his self-described “heroic period” (116), Dick experiences self-doubt, questioning his hitherto assumed mental superiority and wondering if a breakdown might be necessary for wholeness: “—And Lucky Dick can’t be one of these clever men; he must be less intact, even faintly destroyed. If life won’t do it for him it’s not a substitute to get a disease, or a broken heart, or an inferiority complex, though it’d be nice to build out some broken side till it was better than the original structure” (116). Ultimately Dick decides to adhere to the “good sense” of the scientist rather than allow himself such a breakdown, but he is haunted by a sense of missing his call to adventure: “He knew, though, that the price of his intactness was incompleteness” (117).

Dick cannot evade the call forever, however. The unexamined psyche is a dangerous force, which Campbell poetically describes as follows:

There [in the unconscious] not only jewels but also dangerous jinn abide: the inconvenient or resisted psychological powers that we have not thought or dared to integrate into our lives. And they may remain unsuspected, or, on the other hand, some chance word, the smell of a landscape, the taste of a cup of tea, or the glance of an eye may touch a magic spring, and then dangerous messengers begin to appear in the brain (*HWTF* 5).

Dick’s “dangerous jinn” remain hidden from the average observer for several years, during which time he marries one of his patients, the rich and mentally unstable Nicole Warren, and

spends most of his time vacationing on the French Riviera. The “glance of an eye” that finally activates Dick’s “magic spring,” however, comes from a young Hollywood actress named Rosemary Hoyt. Her initial attempt at seduction disorients Dick and marks the beginning of his professional and personal demise. The desire with which he returns the affection of the youthful Rosemary—Hollywood’s “Daddy’s Girl”—reveals his own inner immaturity, an emotional deficit that makes him vulnerable to a romance based entirely on illusion.

These mental and emotional disruptions create yet more opportunities for Dick to take up his inward hero’s journey, but he repeatedly chooses to anesthetize himself with superficial illusions, empty romance, and alcohol rather than face the mythological realm within. At the novel’s end, we witness Dick moving from town to town in New York state, his life and career caught in a downward spiral. Instead of reaching the final promise inherent in Campbell’s description of the call to adventure—“Destruction of the world that we have built and in which we live, and of ourselves within it; but then a wonderful reconstruction, of the bolder, cleaner, more spacious, and fully human life” (*Hero* 5)—Dick seems caught in an infinite repetition of the first stage, sinking into an ever deepening cycle of self-destruction.

Dick’s failed hero journey stands in stark contrast to that of his wife, Nicole. Initially plunged into mental illness by childhood sexual abuse, Nicole’s journey in *Tender Is the Night* follows the monomyth narrative of separation, initiation, and return. According to Campbell, “the first work of the hero is to retreat from the world scene of secondary effects to those causal zones of the psyche where the difficulties really reside, and there to clarify the difficulties, eradicate them” (*Hero* 12). This is exactly what Nicole does. She retreats to “those causal zones of the psyche” through her prolonged mental illness, and she ultimately heals herself by renouncing childish dependence of mind:

It had been a long lesson but she had learned it. Either you think—or else others have to think for you and take power from you, pervert and discipline your natural tastes, civilize and sterilize you. (290)

Having first acceded her power to her father and later to Dick, Nicole finally transcends the societally rampant trap of “Daddy’s Girl” when she decides to pursue a relationship with Tommy Barban, a decision that allows her to claim her own autonomy. In this way, Nicole resembles the Yellow Woman of Laguna legend, her escape from the confines of a limited existence made possible by an act of sexual transgression.

My comparative reading of *Tender Is the Night* and *Storyteller* would be incomplete without considering how the circumstances of modernity influence the nature of myth and its dissemination in twentieth-century American culture. The potentially destructive impact of an overly rational, materialist worldview on the mythical hero has already been noted in each work respectively—the narrator of “Yellow Woman” seems unable to realize her mythical potential because of her skeptical worldview, while Dick Diver is unable to comprehend the necessity of the inward hero journey due to his faith in the systems of classification afforded by scientific rationalism. However, fundamental differences exist between the content and context of societal myth in these two works.

As Silko explains in her introduction to the 2012 edition of *Storyteller*, the oral storytelling tradition of Laguna culture developed as a survival technique, the stories of lore giving listeners “the heart to face danger with the hope that if they did exactly what the survivor had done then they too might survive” (xviii). For this reason, “The impulse of the old-time Pueblo people was to leave nothing out—they were not prudish about subject matter because valuable experience and knowledge are found in all levels of human activity” (xix). The raw,



honest content of Laguna myth stands in stark contrast to the simplistic, sentimental content of societal myth as portrayed by Fitzgerald in his description of Rosemary's film, "Daddy's Girl":

Before her tiny fist the forces of lust and corruption rolled away; nay, the very march of destiny stopped; inevitable became evitable, syllogism, dialectic, all rationality fell away. Women would forget the dirty dishes at home and weep, even within the picture one woman wept so long that she almost stole the film away from Rosemary. She wept all over a set that cost a fortune, in a Duncan Phyfe dining-room, in an aviation port, and during a yacht-race that was only used in two flashes, in a subway and finally in a bathroom. (69)

In portraying "the forces of lust and corruption" and even "the very march of destiny" retreating before the "tiny fist" of a young, inexperienced, and uninitiated heroine, the film generates a mawkish myth with a false core, telling viewers that salvation lies not in the difficult trials of the inward hero journey but in good looks, innocence, and childlike submission to authority. In this way, Fitzgerald portrays Hollywood film as the vehicle of a psychologically destructive mythology, what Campbell calls America's "pathos of inverted emphasis: the goal is not to grow old, but to remain young" (*Hero* 7).

Dick is aware that the "somewhat littered Five-and-Ten" and its "tawdry souvenirs" are unhelpful, even detrimental, yet he remains a passive consumer of the illusions they engender (196). This invites comparison with Silko's account of the actively participatory nature of traditional Laguna storytelling. "Everyone grew up hearing the old stories," Silko tells us, "so that when old storytellers got forgetful, the audience members gently joined in so that the process was self-correcting and inclusive" (Silko xxi). By contrast, motion pictures are far too removed

from their original “storyteller” to allow for active correction from the audience, thus perhaps accounting for their misleading content.

The conditions of modernity threaten to obliterate any remaining “self-correcting and inclusive” processes of traditional storytelling, however. In her introduction, Silko writes candidly about the ways in which Euro-American hegemony has threatened the traditional beliefs and practices of her Laguna Pueblo. Campbell too notes the destructive implications of such loss in a description that echoes the bleakness of Dick’s fate in *Tender is the Night*:

It is not only that there is no hiding place for the gods from the searching telescope and microscope; there is no such society any more as the gods once supported.... One does not know toward what one moves. One does not know by what one is propelled. The lines of communication between the conscious and the unconscious zones of the human psyche have all been cut, and we have been split in two. (*Hero* 334)

Loosed, then, from the tried and true wisdom of traditional belief systems, the mythopoeic nature of the human imagination runs rampant, creating the “tawdry souvenirs” of empty illusion.

Roland Barthes’s writings on modern-day mythologies corroborate this view by highlighting how anything—even professional wrestling’s “spectacle of excess” and the contemporary striptease’s “spectacle based on fear”—can become societal-level myth given the proper circumstances. Where, then, is the modern American to turn for guidance in an age filled with countless illusions and “tawdry souvenirs” vying for his/her attention?

Campbell ultimately stresses the value of contemporary poets and artists who can “look past the broken symbols of the present and begin to forge new working images, images that are transparent to transcendence” (*Pathways* 20). It is precisely the efforts of modern-day storytellers such as Silko and Fitzgerald that, according to Campbell, offer hope to the spiritually-unmoored

modern human through their integration of the timeless and the contemporary, the “old stories and new stories” that, according to Silko, can “tell us who we are” and “enable us to survive” (*Storyteller* xxvi).

## 2 CHAPTER 2: ‘A LOT OF LOST AND LONELY PEOPLE’: F. SCOTT FITZGERALD AND THE MALAISE OF MODERNISM

“We felt like small children in a great bright unexplored barn. Summoned out to Griffith’s studio on Long Island, we trembled in the presence of the familiar faces of the ‘Birth of a Nation’; later I realized that behind much of the entertainment that the city poured forth into the nation there were only a lot of lost and lonely people,” writes Fitzgerald in his 1935 essay “My Lost City” (110). Referring to the celebrity lifestyle that he and his wife, Zelda, led in New York in the early 1920s, Fitzgerald’s lines lament not just the loss of his “splendid mirage” (115)—his former sense of the city as a supremely evocative site of cultural splendor, social ascendancy, and hedonistic pleasure—but also his growing uneasiness with certain aspects of American popular culture. By the time he sat down to sketch Dick Diver’s character in 1932, Fitzgerald counted himself among the “lot of lost and lonely people,” an identification that largely drove the content of his fourth and final completed novel. As his biographer Matthew Bruccoli has argued, “*Tender Is the Night* became in writing his attempt to understand the loss of everything he had won, the loss of everything he had ever wanted” (330). In other words, it served as a means for Fitzgerald to process his own troubled personal experiences as well as his uneasy, ambivalent relationship with the culture that only the decade before had so enthusiastically thrust him into the spotlight as “spokesman for the time” and “typical product of that same moment” (*My Lost City* 110).

Few American writers have been as closely associated with the shifting tenor of their culture and times as Fitzgerald, or for so many different reasons. Bruccoli notes the writer’s remarkable “facility for expressing the mood of an era in his life and work,” both of which “embodied...the excesses of the Boom and the anguish of the Depression” (401). Suzanne del Gizzo highlights

Fitzgerald's close association with American consumer culture, writing that he "came of age as a man and a writer toward the end of a significant transition in American capitalism—the shift from a culture of production, in which one is identified and valued by what one makes, to one of consumption, in which one is defined and assessed by what one consumes or buys" (35). E.W. Pitcher finds the "inhibitingly self-conscious egoism" of Fitzgerald's protagonists to be quintessentially American in nature and reads *Tender* in particular as "a case history of twentieth-century malcontent...[in which] nations as much as individuals suffer psychological breakdown" (72, 87). More recently, Christian Messenger has analyzed the way Fitzgerald's fourth novel captures shifting cultural sensibilities, ultimately showcasing a "'whole new world' in which Dick and the twentieth century would come to 'believe,' the world of institutional and therapeutic sympathy represented by Freudian analysis and the performative world of Hollywood" (22). Given these associations, as well as the novel's experimental form and narrative style, one can reasonably posit *Tender* as quintessentially representative of American literary modernism. Doing so allows for an analysis of the novel not just on a micro but also on a macro level, or as a window into a larger cultural discussion; thus, it will facilitate the construction of the historical arch that the second part of this thesis intends to build from modernism to the midcentury myth-and-symbol school of criticism, and, finally, to the Native American Renaissance.

In this chapter, I will use Fitzgerald's depiction of the "lost and lonely" in *Tender* to examine the fundamental reason for Dick's demise as well as the cultural institutions that contribute to it. I will argue that through his depiction of the Divers and Rosemary Hoyt, Fitzgerald offers a cultural critique that highlights the misleading messages promoted by both Hollywood film and the system in which it is enmeshed—consumerist capitalism. The resulting

portrait of the modern subject—one who struggles to resolve his/her experience of cognitive dissonance in the face of pressure to engage in superficial social performance—typifies modernist faith in what Raymond Chandler called “terrible honesty,” a new cultural mythology to which later writers, including Campbell and Silko, would respond.

Critics have famously disagreed over the reasons for Dick Diver’s demise in *Tender Is the Night*. Some blame the circumstances of his marriage to Nicole and the strain he undergoes in his role as both husband and psychiatrist. John Irwin, for example, argues that Nicole’s “psychological neediness as well as her growing wealth gradually deplete the emotional, psychological, and moral resources of her husband” (119-120). Such attributions of guilt seem lifted straight out of Fitzgerald’s nascent plan for the novel, which he sketched while living in a large Victorian farm house outside of Baltimore and rethinking the story’s trajectory during the summer of 1932. Of Dick, this plan states, “The difficulty of taking care of her [Nicole] is more than he has imagined and he goes more and more to pieces, always keeping of a wonderful face” (qtd. in Brucoli 331). However, it should be noted that several aspects of this particular sketch were abandoned during the drafting process—Nicole’s homicidal impulses, for example, as well as Dick’s decision to educate his son in Soviet Russia. Moreover, Fitzgerald envisioned multiple factors contributing to Dick’s decline, as evidenced by another line from the same sketch: “Show a man who is a natural idealist, a spoiled priest, giving in for various causes to the ideas of the haute Bourgeoise, and in his rise to the top of the social world losing his idealism, his talent and turning to drink and dissipation” (qtd. in Brucoli 330). Unsurprisingly, numerous critics have capitalized on this explanation as well, blaming either the “romantic concept of [Dick’s] character,” one that is “destroyed by the same elements...that might have made him a great figure” (Brucoli 358, 359) or else citing the corrupting influence of the Warren’s wealth as the

real reason for his moral disintegration (Gizzo 50, Irwin 109-110). More creative hypotheses include Pamela Boker's contention that Dick's demise is the result of his failure to properly treat Nicole, "greedily accept[ing] the reciprocal devotion of his patient" rather than helping her "translate" her transference love "into self-knowledge" (312, 302); Tiffany Joseph's exploration of Dick's "non-combatant shell shock," which she argues leads to a traumatic experience of gender identity through Dick's "failure to achieve the contemporary masculine ideal" (72); and E.W. Pitcher's theory that Dick's fatal flaw is his unwillingness to acknowledge the inherent darkness of human nature, an evasion of truth that compels him "[lie] to her [Nicole] and to himself" (85). One might say that such discrepancy reflects the rich complexity of Fitzgerald's characterization of Dick in *Tender*. On the other hand, it can be argued that such colorful disagreement simply supports the complaint voiced by several critics upon the novel's initial publication in 1934—"that the causes of Dick Diver's destruction were not sufficiently clear" (Brucoli 366).

What has been largely overlooked in the course of this critical debate, however, is a deeper, more fundamental explanation for Dick's demise. Although external circumstances, such as his non-combatative work in World War I and later exposure to the Warrens' morally questionable wealth, certainly don't help him, neither should they be considered the primary culprits behind his gradual descent into depression and alcoholism. Instead, Dick's health and happiness are thwarted by his own unwillingness to engage in serious, productive introspection. In chapter one, I discussed this particular character flaw in my reading of Dick's narrative as a failed example of the archetypal hero's journey; however, I will now expand on that reading to illustrate how Dick's story may be regarded as a warning for the modern subject, one whose "lost and lonely" condition both contributes to and is abetted by specific cultural institutions.

The tragic flaw in Dick's character, the real reason he spirals into depression and alcoholism, is his apparent inability—or, perhaps more accurately, his unwillingness—to engage in serious self-examination, the type of inner work necessary for good mental health. This is, of course, one of the great ironies of the story—the fact that Dick, a psychiatrist by training, neglects to treat himself. We might read this particular failing as Fitzgerald's commentary on the state of the psychological establishment in the 1930s, one dominated by what Ann Douglass calls Freud's "quasi-anthropological equation of the 'primitive mind' and the 'savage' with the unconscious and the id" and which took a "crisis model of masculine medical treatment" that focused less on effectively curing mental illness and more "on the master plot of diagnosis" (115, 138-139). It is common knowledge that Fitzgerald was well-acquainted with the psychological theories of the day, his familiarity the result of firsthand experience with his wife's multiple prolonged treatments for schizophrenia, with which she was diagnosed in 1930 (Brucoli 291). In fact, on several occasions, Fitzgerald even collaborated with her doctors to develop treatment plans. Brucoli notes that during Zelda's fifteen-month stint at Les Rives de Pragins clinic in Geneva, Switzerland, beginning in June 1930, Fitzgerald "wrote long letters to Dr. Forel analyzing his relationship with Zelda and suggesting courses of treatment" (292). (Interestingly, this Dr. Forel—son of the famous Swiss sexologist and contemporary of Freud, Auguste Forel—appears to be the real-life model for the character of Franz Gregorovius, resident pathologist at the hospital where Dick first meets Nicole in *Tender* and who later becomes Dick's business partner and co-director of their Zurich clinic (Messenger 112)). Similarly, when Zelda was again hospitalized in 1932, this time at the Henry Phipps Psychiatric Clinic of the John Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, Fitzgerald again attempted to "participate in Zelda's treatment" and struck up a friendship with one of the Baltimore psychiatrists, a man named Benjamin Baker



whose status as a former Rhodes Scholar invites comparison with the character of Dick Diver (Brucoli 320, 327). Such biographical parallels indicate the notable extent to which Fitzgerald was acquainted with the psychoanalytic theories and treatment practices of his day when writing *Tender* and therefore provide context for our examination of Dick Diver's fundamental weakness.

Today we might say that Dick's descent into alcoholism and depression stem from his failure to engage in the process of "cognitive restructuring," a concept central to the current leading evidence-based treatment for mental disorders—cognitive behavior therapy (CBT). Founded by psychologist Aaron Beck in the 1960's as an empirically-backed alternative to the largely unsupported psychoanalytic approaches of the time, CBT rests on a cognitive model that posits cognitive distortions, or "dysfunctional thinking (which influences the patient's mood and behavior), [as] common to all psychological disturbances" and proposes an educational approach to therapy whereby patients "learn to evaluate their thinking in a more realistic and adaptive way... [in order to improve] their emotional state and...behavior" (Beck 3). According to *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques and Strategies* (2016), a guide for practitioners published by the American Psychological Association, cognitive restructuring allows "clients to identify aspects of their thinking that have the potential to be overly negative or limited in scope, systematically evaluate the accuracy and helpfulness of that thinking, and modify that thinking into a more balanced appraisal of their problems" (87-88). Learning to notice, evaluate, and finally replace one's own dysfunctional thought patterns is the goal of this approach, and treatment is intended to be temporary rather than ongoing. The patient who undergoes CBT should, ideally, learn to treat him/herself. The effectiveness of this approach as a treatment for many mental health conditions, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, various

phobias, and even bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, has been largely validated by numerous studies (Wenzel et. al 3). Although such knowledge and treatment was, obviously, unavailable to Fitzgerald, he manages to masterfully convey the destruction wrought by unexamined cognitive distortions thirty years before Beck and others began providing their antidote in the form of CBT.

Such an antidote, we may speculate, may not only have improved the outcome of Dick's patients but have also helped the doctor himself curb the mental disturbances and alcoholism that increasingly take hold of him during the progression of book II. Unfortunately, however, Dick Diver's inner life noticeably lacks a parallel to contemporary cognitive restructuring practice. Rather than look inward to evaluate and replace his cognitive distortions, Dick engages in all sorts of externalizing activities: he examines patients, brainstorms new diagnostic classifications, enables Nicole's neediness, pursues sensory pleasures, consumes alcohol, and, of course, engages in elaborate social performances during which he basks in the admiration of others. Each of these activities serves as a means of escape for Dick, a way to evade the self-examination that he senses is necessary but from which he repeatedly shies away. In fact, Dick ironically embodies Freud's concept of patient "resistance," a concept which Douglas describes thus:

According to Freud, the analyst plays 'detective' to the patient's 'criminal.' The patient barricades himself against the analyst, against unwanted 'truth' and 'reality,' *against necessary self-knowledge*, by a blocking process that Freud called 'resistance'; the analyst must help the patient to overcome this resistance in the interests of recovery. (34, my emphasis)

Throughout the novel, Dick seems to “barricade himself” against the kind of self-knowledge that at the time was considered necessary for recovery from all sorts of mental afflictions and which would also have served as the first step of a cognitive restructuring process, thus failing to use his own professional techniques on himself.

The disparity between Dick’s capacity for self-examination and its realization is made clear in the narrator’s description of Dick’s self-described “heroic period,” when, as a student at John Hopkins, he first experiences self-doubt. Fitzgerald writes, “His contact with Ed Elkins aroused in him a first faint doubt as to the quality of his mental processes; he could not feel that they were profoundly different from the thinking of Elkins—Elkins, who would name you all the quarterbacks in New Haven for thirty years” (116). These lines reflect a new challenge to Dick’s hitherto unquestioned worldview and self-concept. Faced with evidence to the contrary, he can no longer totally buy into what he calls the “illusions” of his youth: “the illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people; illusions of a nation, the lies of generations of frontier mothers who had to croon falsely, that there were no wolves outside the cabin door” (117). In other words, Dick’s naïve childhood worldview is breaking down, and, as a result, he questions both his identity as an individual and as an American. This crisis affords him the opportunity not only to question the legitimacy and justice of the existing world order and his privileged place within it, but, more importantly for the purposes of this discussion, also provides an impetus for productive self-evaluation. Dick intuitively feels that such an examination is critical for his full development, but because of the profound disorientation involved, he ultimately shirks it, a choice that costs him dearly in the long run: “He knew, though,” the narrator foreshadows, “that the price of his intactness was incompleteness” (117). This “incompleteness” becomes

increasingly evident as the novel's narrative progresses, Dick continuing to run away from his dysfunctional cognitions and losing himself ever more in the pursuit of external validation.

In addition to providing an unrealized opportunity for cognitive restructuring, Dick's self-doubting "heroic period" reflects a type of mental stress pertinent to our discussion of both his character's and his creator's mental and emotional struggles—cognitive dissonance. First coined in 1957 by the influential social psychologist Leon Festinger, the term refers to the mentally uncomfortable state resulting from the experience of two or more conflicting cognitions at once. (One thinks immediately of Fitzgerald's famous definition of "a first-rate intelligence" in his 1936 essay "The Crack-Up: "the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function" (139).) Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance rests on two basic tenets:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance [inconsistency] and achieve consonance [consistency].
2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance. (Festinger 3)

In the sixty years following its inception, Festinger's elegantly simple theory has gained traction in social psychology as well as other fields, most notably communication and political science, sparking lively debates and, according to psychologist Joel Cooper, serving to connect "such disparate concepts as autonomic somatic arousal, individuals conceptions of the self, as well as cultural perspectives" (x). In this chapter, I will use the concept to explain Dick's experience of mental disorientation, and I will identify unresolved cognitive dissonance as the barrier that keeps him caught in a downward spiral. The concept of cognitive dissonance will also serve as a

connecting tie between “disparate concepts” in my upcoming chapters on the midcentury myth-and-symbol school and the Native American Renaissance.

The hallmarks of cognitive dissonance—namely contradictory cognitions and a resultant experience of mental discomfort—are clearly evident in Fitzgerald’s description of his college-aged protagonist. Dick experiences mental distress when his newfound suspicion—that his football-obsessed roommate may not think all that differently from himself—contradicts his self-image as an intellectually superior being. As a result of this unpleasant dissonance, Dick compulsively ruminates over circumstances that may or may not have resulted from his own merit, as if hoping to stumble across a new piece of information that can either confirm or contradict his sense of innate superiority. This too is in keeping with Festinger’s theory, which holds that individuals are driven to seek psychological consistency and thereby attempt to reduce dissonance through one or more of the following: first, by actively changing a conflicting behavior or thought so that it coincides rather than contradicts their beliefs, values, and/or thought processes; second, by reconciling the conflicting behavior or thought by changing their underlying thought process or beliefs; third, by justifying the conflicting behavior or thought by adding new cognitions; or fourth, by trivializing or denying the information that conflicts with their existing beliefs (Festinger 19-22). Dick’s cognitive landscape in this episode reflects a vacillation among these modes of dissonance reduction, as he compulsively ruminates over instances in which his personal success may have been due to luck and circumstance rather than inherent merit. It is as if he can’t decide which cognitions to credit and which to deny as, for example, he recollects the circumstances surrounding his initiation into Elihu, one of Yale’s secret honor societies:

Could I help it that Pete Livingstone sat in the locker-room Tap Day when everybody looked all over hell for him? And I got an election when otherwise I wouldn't have got Elihu, knowing so few men. He was good and right and I ought to have sat in the locker-room instead. Maybe I would, if I'd thought I had a chance at election. But Mercer kept coming to my room all those weeks. I guess I knew I had a chance, all right. But it would have served me right if I'd swallowed my pin in the shower and set up a conflict. (117)

In this passage, Dick wavers between two contradictory beliefs, the sense that Pete Livingstone, rather than himself, should have been the new initiate, and a competing narrative in which he earned his spot, if only by virtue of his friendship with Mercer and his availability on Tap Day.

Despite his extended rumination on the subject, Dick apparently fails to resolve his cognitive dissonance, succeeding neither in changing his superior self-image nor dismissing the cognitions that challenge it. Instead, Dick seeks out the opinion of “a young Rumanian intellectual” who advises him to rely on “Memory, force, character—especially good sense” rather than engage in the kind of mental and emotional conflict characteristic of a “romantic philosopher” (117). Thus “reassured,” Dick apparently disengages from the process of introspection altogether, thus establishing a pattern of self-avoidance that determines his downward spiral for the rest of the novel.

The trouble with repressing rather than resolving cognitive dissonance is that its tensions can bubble and brew beneath the surface, manifesting as symptoms of anxiety and depression. As Adrián Montesano et al. point out in their 2014 study of how identity-related cognitive dissonance impacts depression severity, the presence of unresolved cognitive conflict has been linked to a range of mental health concerns (43); moreover, the symptoms of depression are specifically correlated with implicative dilemmas, or the cognitive dissonance that arises

“whenever there exists a strong association between a construct in which the person wishes to change (discrepant) and another construct in which change is not desirable (congruent) such that change in a desirable direction on the former is associated with movement away from the ideal self on the latter” (Montesano 42). In fact, according to the study, participants “with this type of conflict showed more depressive symptoms and general distress than those without dilemmas,” and, “furthermore, a greater number of implicative dilemmas was associated with higher levels of symptom severity” (41). Dick Diver’s inner conflicts certainly seem to coincide with his “depressive symptoms and general distress.” In fact, as the novel progresses, Dick struggles increasingly with the mental and emotional fallout resulting from decisions that trigger his implicative dilemmas. For example, after Dick marries Nicole, he allows Franz Gregorovius and Nicole’s older sister, Baby, to talk him into “buying” a clinic in Zurich. Although Dick is initially turned off by the idea of being beholden to Baby Warren for the money to purchase the clinic—his reaction to the initial conversation on the topic, one during which “Baby had said: ‘We must think it over carefully,’” meaning, “‘We own you, and you’ll admit it sooner or later’” (177), is to tell Nicole, “‘I must show Franz that I’m not intended for a clinician’” (179)—he ultimately overlooks an important identity-related construct (his desire to “own” himself, professionally speaking) so as to go along with the plan, rationalizing his choice with an odd combination of concern for Nicole and snobbish disdain for the increasing popularity of their Riviera community:

But two days later, sleighing to the station with Franz, Dick admitted that he thought favorably upon the matter.

‘We’re beginning to turn in a circle,’ he admitted. ‘Living on this scale, there’s an unavoidable series of strains, and Nicole doesn’t survive them. The pastoral quality down on the summer Riviera is all changing anyhow—next year they’ll have a Season.’ (179)

Such reasoning masks the unease he feels at overriding his personal preferences in order to appease others. Rather than retain his professional autonomy, Dick decides to do what he thinks is best for Nicole (as well as what is best for his pocketbook). This causes him to experience an unpleasant sensation of “being owned,” and it marks the point in the novel in which Dick’s depression and alcoholism become markedly more severe.

Interestingly, Dick’s almost self-sacrificial choice to prioritize the needs and demands of others over his sense of self-respect mirrors a plausible mechanism for depression cited by Montesano et al.:

...according to the hypothesis of Linares and Campo, the identity of people with depression is built on the ineluctable need of doing “what is right,” “what must be done” and “being what the others are expecting.” The effort to maintain these requirements can undoubtedly lead to personal dilemmas in circumstances in which these conflictual structures are activated. Thus, emotional well-being could be jeopardized due to the need for preserving coherence of self-identity and personal values. From this point of view, is not only the emotional symptomatic aspect that disheartens depressed patients but the insurmountable weight of moral values and duty. (Montesano 46-47)

Throughout *Tender*, Dick struggles to reconcile his desired self-identity with “the insurmountable weight of moral values and duty” as they concern his wife, his financial circumstances, and his profession. As already noted, however, Dick’s decline is not so much due to the fact that he falls prey to cognitive dissonance but that he fails to use cognitive restructuring



to resolve it. Given that researchers have identified the resolution of identity-related cognitive dissonance as a probable mechanism underlying CBT's therapeutic effectiveness (Cooper 157; Tryon and Misurell 1298), it stands to reason that the longstanding presence of unresolved cognitive dissonance likely leads to ever-increasing levels of discomfort that could manifest as mental disorders. In Dick's case, increasingly severe cognitive dissonance is never really resolved, only temporarily relieved, first through Dick's narcissistic efforts "to help, or to be admired" by others (206), and, when that fails, through the escape of alcohol.

But though Dick ultimately bears the blame for never facing his inner conflict, he is perhaps something of a victim of circumstance. Fitzgerald seems to indicate that Dick's pattern of self-avoidance is abetted by cultural influences, specifically the Hollywood film industry and consumerist capitalism. The novel is openly critical of the Hollywood establishment, that "somewhat littered Five-and-Ten" that "made up...the tawdry souvenirs of his [Dick's] boyhood" (196). In his narration of the scene in which Rosemary Hoyt shows her hit film *Daddy's Girl* to the Divers and their group of friends, Fitzgerald lampoons the overtly incestuous content of the film—"Then back to *Daddy's Girl*: happier days now, and a lovely shot of Rosemary and her parent united at the last in a father complex so apparent that Dick winced for all psychologists" (69)—as well as the way in which it is glossed over with "vicious sentimentality," unrealistic plot developments, and a fetishizing display of Rosemary's physical beauty. "You were about the nicest sight I ever looked at," Dick tells Rosemary afterwards, a statement that betrays the way in which the film objectifies rather than humanizes its characters. Instead of leading the viewer into a deeper exploration of the human mind and heart, the film glorifies attractive but ultimately misleading veneers, "embodying all the immaturity of the race, cutting a new cardboard paper doll to pass before its empty harlot's mind" (69). Perhaps it is in

part because of such psychologically unhealthy messages, the ones promoted *en masse* by “the somewhat littered Five-and-Tens” of his boyhood, that Dick learns to externalize his self-worth; perhaps it is the silver screen that, in the fashion of an ever-looping reel of film, introduces and reinforces the maladaptive message that it is better to be beautiful than to be real, to be adored than to be understood, to gain the love and approval of others rather than the love and approval of oneself. One is reminded again of Fitzgerald’s haunting words in “My Lost City”: “we trembled in the presence of the familiar faces of the ‘Birth of a Nation’; *later I realized that behind much of the entertainment that the city poured forth into the nation there were only a lot of lost and lonely people*” (110). It would seem that lost and lonely people behind and on the silver screen serve only to make more lost and lonely people.

“The Crack-Up” provides further evidence to this effect. Calling film “a mechanical and communal art...capable of reflecting only the tritest thought, the most obvious emotion,” Fitzgerald mourns the “deflation of all my values” and worries that “the novel,...the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another” was becoming “subordinated to another power, a more glittering, a grosser power” (148). With its voyeuristic aesthetic, Hollywood film glorifies “glittering” images and neglects depth, thus proving itself a “grosser” medium of storytelling than the novel, according to Fitzgerald. For him, weakened “art” cannot truly enliven or enlighten or edify the viewer; it can only produce “tawdry souvenirs” that encourage social performance, the enactment of a polished appearance rather than the exploration of one’s own interior landscape. In fact, Fitzgerald’s depiction of Hollywood is the artistic equivalent of consumerist capitalism—storytelling mass-produced, commodified, storytelling that subliminally pushes viewers to purchase goods to enhance their all-important personal presentation, all the while masking the ugly conditions that belie their

production. And as we have already seen, such emphasis on surface appearance rarely leads to health and happiness. For Dick at least, the “glittering” chimera represented by *Daddy’s Girl* proves a red herring, a way to derive short-term pleasure, yes, from another’s admiring gaze, but ultimately a dead-end distraction from the real task at hand: self-knowledge, self-evaluation, and self-creation.

The tie between Hollywood film and consumerist capitalization is embodied in the novel through the friendship of Rosemary and Nicole. As Hollywood’s representative starlet, the teenaged Rosemary is, like the industry to which she belongs, a newcomer to the world of wealth, and she looks on with wondering admiration as her older, more self-assured rival unthinkingly spends lavish sums, courtesy of her family’s economic empire, on trivial goods. In one of the novel’s most famous passages (and one of his most overtly Marxist commentaries), Fitzgerald writes:

Nicole bought from a great list that ran two pages, and bought the things in the window besides. Everything she liked that she couldn’t possibly use herself, she bought as a present for a friend. She bought colored beads, folding beach cushions, artificial flowers, honey, a guest bed, bags, scarfs, love birds, miniatures for a doll’s house and three yards of some new cloth the color of prawns. She bought a dozen bathing suits, a rubber alligator, a travelling chess set of gold and ivory, big linen handkerchiefs for Abe, two chamois leather jackets of kingfisher blue and burning bush from Hermes—bought all these not a bit like a high-class courtesan buying underwear and jewels, which were after all professional equipment and insurance—but with an entirely different point of view. Nicole was the product of much ingenuity and toil. For her sake trains began their run at Chicago and traversed the round belly of the continent to California; chicle factories fumed and link belts grew link by link in

factories; men mixed toothpaste in vats and drew mouthwash out of copper hogsheads; girls canned tomatoes quickly in August or worked rudely at the Five-and-Tens on Christmas Eve; half-breed Indians toiled on Brazilian coffee plantations and dreamers were muscled out of patent rights in new tractors—these were some of the people who gave a tithe to Nicole, and as the whole system swayed and thundered onward it lent a feverish bloom to such processes of hers as wholesale buying, like the flush of a fireman’s face holding his post before a spreading blaze. She illustrated very simple principles, containing in herself her own doom, but illustrated them so accurately that there was grace in the procedure, and presently Rosemary would try to imitate it. (55)

Detailed in breathtaking prose, Nicole’s shopping extravaganza exemplifies the excesses of consumerist capitalism. The passage simultaneously highlights both the god-like buying power enjoyed by those at the top of the “whole system [that] swayed and thundered onward” and the utter meaninglessness of the goods that such power affords: not one of the items on Nicole’s receipt list is necessary, nor do any of them seem to give her particular pleasure. Instead, Nicole’s impulsive purchase of this litany of nonessentials is compared to a fever and “a spreading blaze,” imagery that evokes ill-health and danger. Fitzgerald seems to say that the whole impulse and design of consumerist capitalism is unhealthy and unsustainable, “the product of much ingenuity and toil” gone wrong, a system that “[contains] within [it]self [its] own doom.”

The dysfunctional element of the system is further highlighted by the revelation that it was Nicole’s father, the man through whom she accesses this wealth, who sexually abused her as a child, thus inducing her long bout of mental illness. Clearly, consumerist capitalism is portrayed as exploitative and unhealthy. And yet, despite this, “there was [enough] grace in the procedure,”

enough show of social power in the products that capitalists' money can buy, to exact not only tithes but even reverence and admiration from others—Fitzgerald tells us that “presently Rosemary would try to imitate it.” In other words, in spite of being itself a cog in the great machine of consumerist capitalism—a girl who “worked rudely at Five-and-Tens on Christmas Eve”—Hollywood tries to imitate capitalism's example, adopting its values and similarly glorifying social performance at the expense of both society's and the individual's health and well-being. As a result, the performative mentality and, in Marxist terms, “commodity fetishism” of consumerist capitalism persists, renewing itself with each new movie that goes out, each new viewer who comes in, and the multitude of consumers who continue to mistake retail goods for the means to greater love and happiness (Gizzo 50-51).

It is telling that Nicole's ultimate recovery from schizophrenia coincides with the very opposite of this scene of consumerist excess. Nicole finds that she doesn't need the lavish shopping power afforded by her family's wealth. In fact, she needs the opposite, as it is in fact in the presence of simplicity and utility that Nicole finally achieves tranquility:

Their room was a Mediterranean room, almost ascetic, almost clean, darkened to the glare of the sea. Simplest of pleasures—simplest of places....

She liked the bareness of the room, the sound of the single fly navigating overhead. Tommy brought the chair over to the bed and swept the clothes off it to sit down; she liked the economy of the weightless dress and espadrilles that mingled with his ducks upon the floor....

Nicole leaned up on one elbow.

“I like this room,” she said.

“I find it somewhat meagre. Darling, I’m glad you wouldn’t wait until we got to Monte Carlo.”

“Why only meagre? Why, this is a wonderful room, Tommy—like the bare tables in so many Cézannes and Picassos.” (294-295)

The room’s “bare” quality resembles the naked state of Nicole’s body in this scene—simple, honest, and free of distracting trappings—as well as her open, vulnerable, simple state of being. Rather than the expensive glamor and social performance of Monte Carlo, it is the wonderfully ascetic simplicity of this little hotel room, like the sparse, focused aesthetic characteristic of Cézanne’s and Picassos’ artwork, that allows Nicole to get in touch with her own thoughts and feelings, to finally figure out whose heart pumps beneath the beautiful clothes and glittering jewelry and whose mind reasons independently of the Warren name and regardless of Dr. Diver’s diagnoses, to discover whose being runs deeper than all the “glittering, grosser power” of Hollywood and consumerist capitalism—and, as a result, heal herself.

Thus the story of Dick and Nicole Diver illustrates both the common pitfalls and the potential salvation to which those who lived in Fitzgerald’s modern era were heir, their respective endings illuminating two disparate approaches to the common experience of cognitive dissonance and the cultural institutions that so often create it, namely Hollywood film and consumerist capitalism. As Pitcher observes, “Fitzgerald meant to convey a very complex set of themes with universal implications. He tried to diagnose not only the underlying tensions, the individual torments, and interpersonal conflicts of the Divers’ love-hate relationship, but also to generalize their private drama into a case history of twentieth-century malcontent” (87). In creating a tragic hero who fails to resolve his deep inner divisions alongside a self-actualized heroine who learns how to “no longer [lie] to herself,” Fitzgerald offers both a warning and a

model, in the process epitomizing modernist faith in “terrible honesty,” that so often disturbing but always empowering route to cognitive consonance.

### 3 CHAPTER 3: BEYOND ‘TERRIBLE HONESTY’: JOSEPH CAMPBELL AND THE CALL FOR A NEW MYTHOPOEIA

Through the larger-than-life quality of both his life and work, F. Scott Fitzgerald became something of a mythological character himself. His initial literary successes were bound up with New York City culture during the booming 1920s, an association that, together with his and Zelda’s good looks, wild antics, and savvy relationship with the press, made him “spokesman for the time,” as he put it in “My Lost City” (Prigozy 121, *My Lost City* 110). Contributing just as much to their notoriety, however, are the sad facts of the Fitzgeralds’ personal tragedies—Zelda struggled with diagnoses of schizophrenia and periodic hospitalizations from 1929 until her death at age 48 in a fire at Highland Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina, while Scott’s battle with alcoholism ended with a coronary occlusion that precipitated his premature death at age 44 (Brucoli 491, 486). The dramatic nature of Fitzgerald’s and his wife’s respective “crack-ups,” as well as both of their untimely deaths, secured their place in the American imagination as quintessential representatives of “the Beautiful and the Damned,” to borrow from the title of one of Fitzgerald’s early novels. Their story, in turn, became part of America’s cultural mythology. Ruth Prigozy points out the many different ways in which recent books, plays, movies, and television shows have built on the Fitzgeralds’ now mythic reputation, commenting, “For better or worse, mostly worse, they are part of our lives, appropriated probably forever into mainstream American culture” (121).

The modern mythological landscape to which the Fitzgeralds’ lives and legacies helped give shape in turn became fodder for the work of later artists, thinkers, and critics. One such creative reworker of this modern mythology was Joseph Campbell, a scholar associated with the midcentury movement known as “the myth and symbol” school and whose scholarship combines



religious, psychoanalytic, anthropological, sociological, and historical sources in service of a universal theory of mythology. Although Campbell's ideas would not gain widespread popularity until after the airing of PBS's interview series *The Power of Myth* in 1988, his work and that of other midcentury theorists of myth prompted what ultimately influenced subsequent generations of readers and writers interested in archetypal themes of the hero's journey. In this chapter, I analyze the impact of the myth-and-symbol school on the American cultural landscape through the lens of Campbell's work. I argue that Joseph Campbell responded to the concerns of modernist literature by casting the works of authors like Fitzgerald as "courageous, open-eyed observation of the sickeningly broken figurations that abound before us, around us, and within" and simultaneously positing the "inward" hero's journey as the solution to such "broken figurations" (*Hero* 20). Next, I reflect on the overall impact of Campbell's scholarship, noting that whereas previous scholars had ridiculed the "unscientific" content of mythic belief systems, the work of Campbell and his contemporaries reflects a culturally syncretic critical space that emphasizes mythology's sociological and psychological functions as well as its ability to evolve with changing circumstances. Although this discourse helped prime Western audiences for the mythology-infused works of writers associated with the Native American Renaissance, it also proved problematic, likely contributing to the "white shaman" movement of the 1960's and engendering a "colonial parallelism" later challenged by Native writers and critics.

The *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* defines the midcentury myth-and-symbol school as a loosely-organized, diverse collection of critical work united by "a shared interest in myth as a narrative, symbolic, and structural phenomenon which significantly impinges on literature and its interpretation" (811). Drawing heavily from the fields of anthropology, psychology, and philosophy, critics of the myth-and-symbol persuasion can be

seen to share three major tenets: first, they view the human capacity to invent myth as an inherent part of our thinking process and, thus, the means of satisfying a basic human need; second, they posit mythology as the historical and cultural matrix out of which literature is produced; third, they argue that the symbols and patterns found in myth serve both to inspire fresh creative work and to elucidate the critical interpretation of ancient as well as contemporary literature (811-812). Campbell's work, while embodying each of the above-listed principles, stresses the psychological origins and functions of mythology, in the process drawing from an extensive and interdisciplinary list of sources. In his first book-length study of comparative mythology, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949), Campbell cites a number of psychoanalysts, most notably Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung, whose famous split in 1912 over the nature and origin of the unconscious has led most scholars to regard their respective philosophies as incompatible (Rensma 18-19). In addition, Campbell cites anthropologists Géza Róheim, Franz Boas, Alice C. Fletcher, George A. Dorsey, Alfred F. Kroeber, and Leonhard S. Schultze, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, R.H. Codrington; ethnographers A. van Gennep, Adolph Bastian, Bruno Gutmann, Washington Matthews, David Clement Scott, Henry Callaway, Duarte Barbosa, Knud Leem, E.J. Jeesen; archaeologists Harold Peake and Leo Frobenius; geographer and zoologist Herbert John Fleure; folklorists Uno Harva and Jeremiah Curtin; historians Arnold Toynbee, Oswald Spengler, S.N. Kramer, Standish H. O'Grady; philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, and Max Müller; literary critics James G. Frazer, Frederick E. Pierce, and Werner Zirus; religious scholars Louis Ginzberg, Evelyn Underhill, Henry Clarke Warren, James Hastings; as well as stories from a vast array of cultural origins, forms, and time periods—everything from ancient Sumerian tales to the Christian Bible, from Navajo legends of the Spider Woman to the Hindu *Upanisads*, from Virgil's *Aeneid* to

thirteenth-century Italian love poetry, from Grimm's fairy tales to the seventeenth-century New Englander Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*, from William Blake's poetry to a cosmological myth told by a Pawnee high priest to the novels of James Joyce (*Hero* 341-362). It is important to note, however, the discrepancy between the cultural diversity of the stories Campbell analyzed and the cultural homogeneity of the academic sources from which he gathered them—western, Euro-American scholars. This point is crucial not just because it highlights a significant limitation in Campbell's scholarship but, more importantly, because the “secondhand” nature of his source material on Native religion and culture represents a methodology later critiqued and challenged by Leslie Marmon Silko and other Native writers and critics.

Albeit culturally biased, Campbell's set of sources reflects the intellectual climate of the period in which he was writing *Hero*—the late 1940s. Still reeling from the two world wars that had undermined Western faith in the rational project of the Enlightenment, this period attempted to understand man and society in new terms, in the process witnessing the birth of innovative artistic conventions as well as novel academic disciplines—the “terrible honesty” of the modernists, competing theories of socialization and human development posited by psychoanalysts in both Freudian and Jungian camps, the lens of anthropologists concerned with traditional rites of passage, and the work of philosophers, sociologists, and other social scientists concerned with the integrity and coherence of society under the rapidly changing conditions of the twentieth century. By absorbing and repurposing ideas from each of these camps—many of which he studied independently while living in a rustic shack in Woodstock, New York during the Great Depression (*The Power of Myth* 149)—Campbell's self-admittedly generalist but

ambitious take on mythology represents an interdisciplinary microcosm of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholarly discourse.

In some ways, Campbell's philosophy of myth as presented in the *Hero with a Thousand Faces* seems diffuse, as if he attempts to tie together too many disparate sources, in the process attributing too many origins, functions, and modes of evolution to mythology, all the while claiming a unifying universality among distinct traditions. Yet this is ultimately what makes Campbell's scholarship notable—rather than characterizing mythology in simplistic, one-sided terms, as many of his sources had done, Campbell provides a complexly relativist, reverent, and ultimately affirming reading of world mythologies that differed from that of many of his predecessors, a fact that he acknowledges in the following passage:

Mythology has been interpreted by the modern intellect as a primitive, fumbling effort to explain the world of nature (Frazer); as a production of poetical fantasy from prehistoric times, misunderstood by succeeding ages (Müller); as a repository of allegorical instruction, to shape the individual to his group (Durkheim); as a group dream, symptomatic of archetypal urges within the depths of the human psyche (Jung); as the traditional vehicle of man's profoundest metaphysical insights (Coomaraswamy); and as God's Revelation to His children (the Church). Mythology is all of these. The various judgments are determined by the viewpoints of the judges. For when scrutinized in terms *not of what it is* but of *how it functions*, of how it has served mankind in the past, of how it may serve today, mythology shows itself to be as amenable as life itself to the obsessions and requirements of the individual, the race, the age. (*Hero* 330, my emphasis)

Campbell's perennial affirmation of the continued relevance of mythology, in all of its varied incarnations and contexts, reflects a new way of thinking and speaking about the topic that

gained traction over the course of the twentieth century. By emphasizing not the *content* of myth but, rather, its *sociological and psychological functions*, Campbell breaks with the perspectives and mentality of many of his nineteenth and twentieth-century predecessors, who largely regarded myth as “false and misinforming” or as “a pre-scientific method to understand the environment” (Oziewicz 116). As a result, Campbell represents a key voice contributing to what Marek Oziewicz calls the twentieth century’s “rehabilitation of myth” (115). Along with religious studies scholar Mircea Eliade, psychologist C.G. Jung, and literary scholar Northrop Frye, Campbell’s treatment of myth composed part of an influential body of work that “explained myths as carrying one message which reflects the psychic unity of humankind” and which also criticized “Western civilization’s neglect of *mythos* and unqualified idolatry of *logos*” (Oziewicz 121). As a result, these thinkers “argued for the need to ‘return to myth,’” a message which Oziewicz notes was largely informed by their “acute sense of crisis—an almost life or death choice, the stake of which was an individual’s sanity and the survival of a civilization” (121).

It is in the service of this point—that mankind is in crisis due to Western civilization’s idolatry of *logos* and lack of *mythos*—that Campbell characterizes modernist literature as “the courageous, open-eyed observation of the sickeningly broken figurations that abound before us, around us, and within,” a reading that reflects the modernist aesthetic of “terrible honesty” and which he supports with examples culled from, among others, Sinclair Lewis’s *Babbitt*, James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Wake*, T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, and Francis Thompson’s *The Hound of Heaven* (*Hero* 20). In fact, Campbell posits much modernist literature as transmutations of ancient, classical forms of tragedy into contemporary circumstances (*Hero* 20).

However, rather than simply lamenting the tragic elements of modernity, Campbell, like Eliade, Jung, and Frye, advocates a return to mythopoeic ways of thinking, arguing that a solution can be found in what he calls “divine comedies of redemption,” or a mode of storytelling that, in his words, is “of a deeper truth, of a more difficult realization, of a sounder structure, and of a revelation more complete” than tragedy (21). According to Campbell, many genres, including fairy tales and comedic myths, fall into this category, despite being frequently misunderstood by “sober, modern Occidental judgement” (21). Such stories should be understood, Campbell argues, not as wishful thinking or as the denial of human suffering but as a more complete rendering of the human experience, one that includes both “the down-going and the up-coming (*kathodos* and *anodos*), which together constitute the totality of the revelation that is life” (21). Like seasonal rituals that, in the fall, “prepare the community to endure, together with the rest of nature, the season of the terrible cold” and which, in the spring, “dedicate the whole people to the work of nature’s season,” these stories acknowledge the “wonderful cycle of [human life], with its hardships and periods of joy,...celebrated, and delineated, and represented as continued in the life-round of the human group” (331-332).

Of these “divine comedies,” Campbell considered the most practically helpful to be those which followed the paradigm to which the title of *Hero* alludes: the archetypal “hero’s journey” motif. As I explained in chapter 1, Campbell describes this “monomyth” as a cycle of separation, initiation, and return in which “the passage of the mythological hero may be over-ground, incidentally” but which is “fundamentally...inward—into depths where obscure resistances are overcome, and long lost, forgotten powers are revived, to be made available for the transfiguration of the world” (*Hero* 22). Such stories often involve tragic circumstances, loss, or death. However, according to Campbell, these tragic elements represent not cynicism or

resignation but, rather, healthy endings that are necessary for new growth: he writes that such “deconstruction” make possible “a wonderful reconstruction, of the bolder, cleaner, more spacious, and fully human life,” not just for the hero individually but for his or her entire community (*Hero* 5).

Perhaps this was Campbell’s signature contribution—he presented what might be called an evolutionary model of mythology, one that recognizes both the way in which myths develop and function on a societal level but also how they can morph to meet changing circumstances or to reflect the new insights brought back home by the hero who has successfully undertaken his or her journey. Campbell viewed mythology as the product of stable, tribally-vetted modes of socialization that help guide the individual through the psychological challenges associated with his/her various roles and stages in life; however, he also presented it as the product of remarkable individuals, men and women who heard and heeded the call to adventure and thus ventured beyond the boundaries of their tribe, village, or social conventions, in order to discover some new, useful bit of knowledge which they eventually bring back for the benefit of their community. Paradoxically, Campbell contends that the individualist seeker wishing to transcend the limitations of his/her specific society and time must undergo a process of separation, initiation, and return that conforms to the “broadly formulated,” archetypical hero’s journey motif (*Hero* 101). In other words, he argues that those who find themselves called to adventure can find guidance within traditional stories of other, similarly restless, seeking individuals.

Given this evolutionary quality of Campbell’s theory of mythology, the role of the hero is inextricably bound up with that of the storyteller who disseminates his or her tale. Campbell goes so far, even, as to equate the role of the artist storyteller with that of the contemporary hero in a lecture delivered after the publication of *Hero*, arguing that society should look to “the same

source that the people of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries did when their civilization was foundering: to the poets and artists,” to “people [who] can look past the broken symbols of the present and begin to forge new working images, images that are transparent to transcendence” (*Pathways* 20). An artist can only do this, Campbell claims, if she or he can manage to “read the contemporary scene in ways that allow the great elementary ideas to come shining through all the time, portraying and inspiring the individual journey” (*Pathways* 20). In other words, contemporary heroes are those who can tell the age-old story of individual self-realization within the context of new, decidedly modern circumstances and challenges.

Campbell’s call for a new, artistic mythopoeia coincided with that of the other aforementioned theorists of myth. It also overlapped with the message of two influential literary scholars and writers of the twentieth-century—C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Their respective essays “On Stories” and “On Fairy-Stories,” both originally published in 1947, call for the development of a new genre of mythopoeic fantasy, the realization of which our culture is still experiencing. Oziewicz notes that, as a result of Campbell’s and his contemporaries’ recovery work, “the remaining decades of the twentieth century saw an unprecedented amount of research into myth and its survival in our culture,” with scholars from various disciplines including anthropology, psychology, sociology, and religious studies applying their specific perspectives to the topic of mythic systems (115, 117). In addition, their work helped inspire the rise of the mythopoeic fantasy genre over the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Though stopping short of implying a causal relationship, Oziewicz nevertheless argues that myth-and-symbol theorists’ “shared belief that the imaginative and spiritual impoverishment characteristic of much of contemporary life may be countered by soul-nourishing stories composed in the ‘poetics of myth’” informed and inspired “numerous mythopoeic authors such



as, among others, Ursula Le Guin, Lloyd Alexander, Orson Scott Card, Madeleine L'Engle, Peter Beagle and Susan Cooper" (123-124). Most importantly for the purposes of this study, Oziwicz also sees Campbell's work specifically and the mythopoeic fantasy genre generally as catalysts for increasing levels of multiculturalism and diversity in Western art and discourse. He writes, "Campbell's conviction that the new story will embrace, respect and treat equally the people of all religions, all racial backgrounds, and of both genders is being realized in mythopoeic fantasies which stress that only through cooperation instead of separatism, through mutual respect instead of mere tolerance, and through partnership instead of domination we can secure peace and happiness for our multicultural, multi-religious and bi-gendered planet" (125).

Given the way in which Campbell's and his contemporaries' work sparked increased interest in multiculturalism and mythology, it is pertinent, then, to consider how this school of thought likely helped prepare a Western public, both academic and popular, for the reception of Indigenous mythologies conveyed within "the efflorescence of literary works that followed the publication of Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* in 1968," a period dubbed "the Native American Renaissance" (Velie 3). As Alan R. Velie and A. Robert Lee note in their introduction to *The Native American Renaissance: Literary Imagination and Achievement* (2014), the term was originally coined by literary critic Kenneth Lincoln when he published a book by the same name in 1983 (3). Authors associated with this movement include James Welch, Louise Erdrich, Thomas King, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor, Joy Harjo, and Paula Gunn Allen. The reception and integration of these authors' works into a "canon" of American literature traditionally dominated by white, Anglo-Saxon men signal both a recovery of and renewed appreciation for Native writings, cultures, and mythologies. The works of these authors also signal a creative integration of Indigenous knowledge and mythologies with the circumstances of

life in late twentieth-century America, a blending that serves to unsettle Western perspectives dominated by scientific rationalism and linear thinking. In fact, as I argue in the next chapter, one of the hallmarks of Silko's writing is a heterogenous syncreticism—a blending of elements old and new, familial and fictional, mundane and mythical, Native and not—an amalgamation that embraces the possibility of transcendence within modern, contemporary circumstances and which serves to challenge the categorical thinking so traditionally entrenched in the Euro-American mindset.

Of course, Campbell and the myth-and-symbol school may have also helped pave the way for the infamous “white shamanism” of the 1960's and beyond. In *Indigenous Bodies: Reviewing, Relocating, Reclaiming* (2013), Rebecca Tillett and Jacqueline Fear-Segal connect the mid to late twentieth-century's interest in Indigenous culture to the same hunger that fueled interest in Campbell's work—the disorienting effects of industrialization and modernization. They write, “The dynamism of rapidly modernizing American society and the ensuing crisis of identity created a sense of nostalgia for origins, best illustrated in the fascination with the primitive” (102). Tillett and Fear-Segal read this “fascination” as largely superficial and ultimately disempowering to Native peoples—they describe it as “going native” and “assuming native costumes and identities,” a negative assessment shared by both Silko and Womack (Tillett 102, “Old-Time” 213, “Theorizing” 375). Although I maintain that Campbell's work represents a more serious and respectful inquiry into Indigenous mythologies than the superficial explorations of Womack's “New Agers,” I nevertheless discuss this issue in detail within my concluding chapter.

Another point which I consider at length within the following chapter is the problem of over-universalization, a critique that many scholars have levied against Campbell and the myth-

and-symbol school more generally. In his 1972 essay “Myth and Symbol in American Studies,” for example, Bruce Kuklick charges the school with presentism, or “ahistoric” thinking that fails to adequately take historical context into account and which is too closely tied “to our very specific contemporary problems” (79). Other critics have focused on the problematic implications of attempting to fit culturally specific stories and figures into a supposedly cross-cultural, archetypal mold. Native critics such as Cutcha Risling Baldy have applied the term “colonial parallelism” to the myth-and-symbol school’s archetypal approach, one that “attempts to portray commonality between cultural epistemologies and erase culturally based knowledge, which contributes to a settler colonial mentality that we are all ‘one world’ who can be united as ‘one people’ through universal knowledges or experiences which, conveniently, parallel westernized ideas of how the world works” (5). The real danger of this type of scholarship, Baldy argues, is its potential to be yet another vehicle through which the Euro-American settler “[erases] and [silences]...Indigenous epistemologies and knowledges to prevent challenges to settler colonial claims to land and history, and to subvert Indigenous efforts of decolonization” (4). Craig Womack similarly issues a word of caution concerning universalism in his essay “Theorizing American Indian Experience.” He points out that such thinking and scholarship ignores the fact that “race, class, and gender are both real and substantial markers that affect experience,” and he advocates for the necessity of strategic essentialism that recognizes unique, culturally-specific aspects of American Indian experience as a tool for asserting the political sovereignty of Native peoples (“Theorizing” 375). These points, which I revisit in the conclusion to this thesis, represent important ways in which the myth-and-symbol school has sparked debate among Native writers and critics.

Finally, no discussion of the influence of the myth-and-symbol school of criticism and of Campbell's work specifically would be complete without acknowledging the way in which Campbell and his hero's journey paradigm have now achieved something akin to mythical status in popular American culture, largely through the influence of his ideas on Hollywood. As Ritske Rensma observes in the preface to his book-length study of Campbell's revision of Jung's ideology:

The most well-known example of this connection is his [Campbell's] influence on George Lucas, the billionaire writer and director of the *Star Wars* films (which are often reported to be among the highest grossing films of all time). Ever since the first movie came out in 1977 Lucas has claimed in interviews that he used Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* to help structure the screenplay for the movies. (viii)

Rensma goes on to list other "Hollywood 'insiders'" who have credited Campbell as a formative influence, including "director Stephen Spielberg (*E.T.*, *Schindler's List*), the screenwriter and director George Miller (*Babe*, *Mad Max*) and the script consultant Christopher Vogler (whose best-selling book *The Writer's Journey* is based for a large part on the 'hero's journey' model from *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*)" (ix). By virtue of his influence on such Hollywood titans, Campbell's ideas have clearly played a significant role in shaping new mythopoeic stories disseminated through contemporary film.

In addition, Campbell has become, for many, a household name. Rensma notes how a series of interviews with Campbell conducted by Bill Moyers and aired by PBS in 1988 under the title *The Power of Myth* "drew about 2.5 million viewers [per episode]," making it "one of PBS' most popular broadcasts to date" (viii); in addition, a print transcription of the interviews published under the same name "stayed on the *New York Times* best-seller list for over six months after it

was published” (viii). As a result of the exposure afforded by these popular successes, Campbell’s hero’s journey motif has been absorbed into a number of mainstream discourses, including not just film and fantasy but even self-help literature, as has his now-famous injunction to “Follow your bliss” (*Power* 120).

In this way, Campbell’s own formulations, his own ‘hero’s journey’ past the conventions of his profession, have essentially become a new cultural myth, a paradigm referenced and recreated in a plethora of societal spheres. Like Fitzgerald before him, whose biographical and fictional embodiments of the “Lost Generation” became part of our modern cultural mythology, Campbell and his “hero with a thousand faces” have taken on lives of their own within the American imagination.

**4 CHAPTER 4: ‘OLD STORIES AND NEW STORIES’: LESLIE MARMON SILKO’S  
*STORYTELLER*, SYNCRETIC HETEROGENEITY, AND A ‘BEAUTY WHICH IS  
 PURELY FROM THE AMERICAN HEART’**

I don’t think anyone—no American—has ever written like you do, has ever written this American language like you do. You are fearless of the language America speaks, and you love it. Some I think did not or do not fear it, but they do not love it and so write an English we seldom hear outside the university; and then there are many who love it but are afraid it isn’t ‘poetic’ or ‘literary.’ You bring such grace and delicacy from it, coax out the astonishing range of dissonances and harmonies it allows us, that with your poems behind me I can speak confidently now about a beauty which is purely from the American heart. (Silko, *Delicacy* 81)

The above lines appear within a letter Leslie Marmon Silko wrote to the American poet James Wright in September of 1979. The two writers met in person only twice during their lifetimes—once at a poetry conference in Michigan, before Silko had published *Ceremony* (1977), the novel that would prompt Wright to initiate their correspondence in August 1978, and, later, at a New York hospital as Wright lay dying of cancer of the tongue. Nevertheless, the two writers cultivated a warm friendship founded on mutual admiration and a shared appreciation for a certain kind of storytelling, that “beauty which is purely from the American heart.” Written during the time in which Silko was compiling the proof copy of *Storyteller*, the above passage affords insight both into her frame of mind at the time and into the artistic philosophy underpinning her work. Great American art, the kind that speaks “purely from the heart” should, according to Silko, be subtle and attentive and appreciative, emerging from a space of “grace and delicacy.” It should be both “fearless” and “lov[ing],” employing a combination of courage and care that allows for acknowledgement of both the difficult complexities as well as the ultimate beauty embedded in “the language American speaks.” Great American art should, in other

words, “coax out the astonishing range of dissonances and harmonies [American language] allows us.” Inherent in Silko’s philosophy is a critique of the hyper-intellectual side of the academic and literary establishment—those who “did not or do not fear it [American language] and so write an English we seldom hear outside the university”—and an affirmation of the everyday, the colloquial, and the heartfelt. This rejection of the overthought and overwrought in favor of a more direct, intuitive mode of expression is a consistent theme in Silko’s oeuvre. In this letter, Silko goes on to further define her sense of characteristically “American” storytelling in terms of geographic diversity. “When I say American language,” she writes, “I mean it in the widest sense—with the expansiveness of spirit which the great land and many peoples allow. No need ever to have limited it to so few sensibilities, so few visions of what there might be in this world” (81).

Such a conception of American language is central to Silko’s work and especially to the construction and content of *Storyteller*. In this chapter, I show the way in which Silko’s *Storyteller* weaves together a vast array of influences—ancient and modern, oral and written, Indigenous and colonial, instinctive and scholarly—and which reflects her conception of American language as “the expansiveness of spirit which the great land and many peoples allow” (*Delicacy* 81). I argue that *Storyteller*’s defining characteristic of heterogeneous syncretism allows for just that “astonishing range of dissonances and harmonies” for which Silko praises Wright’s poetry; in particular, I highlight the way in which Silko posits storytelling as a powerful negotiator of cognitive and cultural dissonance. In the process, I consider the ways in which Silko’s work may respond to Fitzgerald and Campbell, and I ultimately link the three together by highlighting their similar uses of narrative to achieve greater individual and community empowerment. Finally, I acknowledge the ways in which Silko’s *Storyteller* anticipated major

themes in feminist and postcolonial scholarship of the 1980s and 90s, namely their acknowledgement of the painful but creative consequences of cultural hybridity as well as their recognition that narrative functions as the primary psychic mechanism essential for the construction and reconstruction of identity.

It is impossible to understand *Storyteller* without understanding the complex web of familial and cultural influences in which Silko was raised and which in turn informed her writing. Silko highlights the especial importance of her family history to *Storyteller*'s composition when she writes in her introduction to the 2012 edition, "When I put together *Storyteller* in the early months of 1978, I wanted to acknowledge the continuity of storytelling and the storytellers 'from time immemorial,' as Aunt Susie used to say. I wanted to pay tribute to the stories and storytellers of my early life. So I include stories I remembered hearing from Aunt Alice Marmon Little and Aunt Susie Reyes Marmon alongside the short stories that came from my imagination so the reader might get a sense of the influences that the storytellers had on my writing as it developed over the years" (xxv).

Although Silko is usually categorized as a "Native American" or "Pueblo" writer, she and her work embody a complex intersection of diverse influences. In fact, as I will argue in this chapter, cultural hybridity is a defining characteristic of both Silko's familial background and her work. Her familial heritage includes various Native American and European influences. In the fourth prose piece of *Storyteller*, for example, Silko explains that her father's paternal grandfather, Robert C. Marmon, was a white man from Ohio who married Marie Anaya from Pagate Village north of Laguna, unfortunately garnering the nickname "Squaw Man" among whites beyond the bounds of Laguna (15). There are other branches of Silko's family tree that originated outside the Laguna Pueblo as well. In part one of her 2010 memoir, *Turquoise Ledge*,



Silko explains the diverse roots of both her paternal and maternal lines, a subject which she largely leaves tacit in *Storyteller* (but which, nevertheless, played a part in shaping her formation as a storyteller). She explains, for instance, that her father's mother, Grandma Lillie, "was a mix of Mexican, German and English and one quarter Texas Indian—she wasn't sure which tribe" and was largely brought up under the care and attention of a Navajo woman named Juana, a lifelong domestic servant and, originally, a slave working for Lillie's wealthy Mexican maternal family (*Turquoise* 30). Silko discusses her German ancestry in more detail in an interview she gave with Ellen Arnold in 1998, when she speaks of feeling a connection to these ancestors while on a tour in Germany for her novel *Almanac of the Dead* in 1994 (Arnold 4). Additional ethnic and cultural roots appear on the maternal side of Silko's family tree: her mother hailed from a small coal-mining town in Montana, the daughter of a father with Scottish ancestry who "had belonged to the Ku Klux Klan during the years he...lived in Georgia" and a mother of Cherokee descent whose great-grandfather had been born in Kentucky in the midst of the forced relocation of southeastern American tribes in the early nineteenth-century (*Turquoise* 38, 37).

This diverse ancestry gave the young Silko an uncomfortable experience of being caught between worlds. Even as a young child, she was distressed by the tensions that existed between different branches of her family:

I realize now I was moved by the undercurrents of tension I sensed between the Pueblo and non-Pueblo members of my extended family....I always felt such anguish when one side of the family said something mean about the other branches of the family. I understood all of them in their ways, I loved all of them...For a long time, I wondered why they did not see themselves as I did and love each other. Of course I was a young child then and did not yet

understand the injustice that fueled the undercurrents between the Marmons, the other family branches, and the rest of the Pueblo (*Turquoise* 25).

Silko's distressed inquiry into this problem of cultural disconnect likely sowed the seeds for her later acts of cultural translation and mediation, as when, for instance, with *Storyteller*, she chose to make traditional Pueblo stories accessible to an English-speaking audience more familiar with printed texts than with oral storytelling traditions.

In addition to the pain she felt because of family divisions, Silko also experienced discomfort at others' reactions to her biracial physical appearance. In an essay entitled "Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit," Silko writes that even as a small child, "I had sensed...that something about my appearance was not acceptable to some people, white and Indian" (*Yellow* 61), and she recounts an experience she had as a kindergartener at the Bureau of Indian Affairs day school in Laguna, when tourists travelling along Route 66 stopped to take a photographs of the children at recess:

Just as we were all posed and ready to have our picture taken, the tourist man looked at me. "Not you," he said and motioned for me to step away from my classmates. I felt so embarrassed that I wanted to disappear. My classmates were puzzled by the tourists' behavior, but I knew the tourists didn't want me in their snapshot because I looked different, because I was part white. (63)

Silko continued to struggle throughout her childhood and adolescence with feeling like an outsider in each of the communities associated with the various branches on her family tree. However, painful personal experience seems to have paved the way for creative expression, in Silko's case: it is largely because of feeling different, feeling judged as an outsider, that Silko learned to take refuge in stories. In the same essay, Silko explains the associations she developed

early on between love, belonging, and storytelling because of the total acceptance she felt while in the presence of two key storytellers in her family, her Grandma A'mooh and Aunt Susie. She recounts how she always felt loved and accepted by her paternal great-grandmother Marie Anaya, whom she called Grandma A'mooh "because that's what I heard her say whenever she saw me" (61). Grandma A'mooh's "great feeling and love" combined with all of the time she spent telling and reading stories to Silko and her sisters helped create the budding author's bond with language. Silko felt a similar love and acceptance in the company of her bibliophilic Aunt Susie, who was actually her father's aunt and who, as a member of "the last generation here at Laguna/ that passed down an entire culture/ by word of mouth" while being educated at the Carlisle Indian School and Dickinson College, shared her great-niece's experience of being caught in between two worlds (*Storyteller* 4). Silko recalls with fondness her early interactions with Aunt Susie in *Storyteller*:

She was already in her mid-sixties  
 when I discovered that she would listen to me  
 to all my questions and speculations.  
 I was only seven or eight years old then  
 but I remember she would put down her fountain pen  
 and lift her glasses to wipe her eyes with her handkerchief  
 before she spoke.

It seems extraordinary now  
 that she took the time from her studies and writing  
 to answer my questions

and to tell me all that she knew on a subject,  
but she did. (4)

With Aunt Susie, Silko not only had all her questions answered but also had her first introduction to traditional cosmological stories of Pueblo mythology. In her “Yellow Woman” essay, Silko writes that her Aunt Susie as well as another relative, whom she called Aunt Alice, “told me the *hummah-hah* stories, about an earlier time when animals and humans shared a common language” (63). Of these traditional tales, the “Yellow Woman” stories seem to have made a special impact on Silko. She recalls, “The Kochininako stories were always my favorite because Yellow Woman had so many adventures” (*Yellow* 71). There was also a way in which Yellow Woman’s status as a transgressive figure spoke to Silko’s liminal experience as biracial person who faced frequent prejudice: “The stories about Kochininako made me aware that sometimes an individual must act despite disapproval, or concern for appearances or what others may say. From Yellow Woman’s adventures, I learned to be comfortable with my differences. I even imagined that Yellow Woman had yellow skin, brown hair, and green eyes like mine” (*Yellow* 71). The Yellow Woman stories, then, served as both a refuge and a model for Silko from the time she was a child, thus prompting her to take to heart the advice of the “old-time people” to “remember the stories, the stories will help you be strong” (*Yellow* 71). Unsurprisingly, the figure of Kochininako appears frequently in *Storyteller* and is the subject of one of the collection’s more famous short stories, “Yellow Woman.”

Silko’s education in storytelling is as culturally complex as her family background, however. Far from being limited to the likes of Kochinanko, ka’tsinas, and other figures of Pueblo lore, the mythology of Silko’s childhood was also populated by biblical heroes and even Brownie Bear. In *Storyteller*, Silko explains the impact of the “European intrusion” on her family

members. In the introduction, she explains how her Grandma A'mooh had been transported to a Bureau of Indian Affairs School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, as a child, converted to Presbyterianism, and urged “not to go back to the blanket” (Storyteller xxii); as a result of this, as well as the criminalization of traditional Indigenous religious and ceremonial dances by the early twentieth-century’s legal establishment, Grandma A'mooh protectively limited her great-grandchildren’s exposure to traditional stories and practices. She stopped speaking the Laguna language to Silko once she reached age five, for example, and she refused to tell Silko traditional Pueblo *humma-hah* stories about the creation of the world. However, rather than “refus[ing] me or fail[ing] to acknowledge my request for a story,” Silko recalls in her introduction to *Storyteller*, “she picked up the worn copy of Brownie the Bear to read to my sisters and me. She read us this story many times, and we loved it. She read us the stories of Jonah and the whale and Daniel in the lions’ den from a Bible with dramatic Dore engravings of the lion and the whale” (xxiii).

Silko’s cultural inheritance from her Aunt Susie was similarly blended. As Brewster Fitz has pointed out, Susie, like Grandma A'mooh, “embodies this European alteration, this intrusion of European education and literacy into Pueblo tribal and family life. As scholar, bibliophile, schoolteacher, and storyteller, this remarkable woman spoke and wrote from the perspectives of two generations, of two pedagogies, of two cultures—one oral, the other literate, one Laguna Kersean, the other Euro-American” (11-12). These dualities infused Susie’s transmission of cultural material to her niece, just as they would later infuse Silko’s work. This influence is made clear when Silko presents stories in just the way she heard them as a child. In a talk she gave at Harvard the year when she was finishing *Storyteller*, Silko told a traditional Pueblo tale (also included in *Storyteller*) in English “just as Aunt Susie tells it,” pointing out, “You can

occasionally hear some English she [Susie] picked up at Carlisle—words like *precipitous*” (*Yellow 57*). Thus the modern and the European mix with traditional oral elements like repetitive structures “designed to help you to remember” and content specific to the Laguna Pueblo, including “a little reminder about *yashtoah* and how it’s made” and “information about the old trail at Acoma” (*Yellow 57*).

In addition to the culturally hybrid transmission and content of her family members’ stories, Silko’s early education occurred within the context of a Bureau of Indian Affairs day school, where, as she would later write, “we...had the conqueror’s language imposed on us” (*Yellow 57*). The effect of this exposure to Euro-American English was perhaps counterintuitive. “...the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools were not interested in teaching us the canon of Western classics,” Silko recalls in one of her essays. “For instance, we never heard of Shakespeare. We were given Dick and Jane....But in a way, this dreadful formal education freed us by encouraging us to maintain our narratives” (*Yellow 57*). Silko’s English-language education through the BIA school, then, actually had the effect of pushing her further towards her Pueblo roots, although her experience of those roots was necessarily altered, occurring as it did not through the Laguna language but through that of “the conqueror.”

But though Silko received, as she puts it, “damn little” exposure to literature through the BIA school curriculum (*Yellow 57*), she was extremely well-versed in Western intellectual history by the time she constructed *Storyteller*. Just in the course of her correspondence with Wright in 1978-9, Silko cites a wide array of Western thinkers, writers, and artists: she references Shakespeare, Pound, and Lowell (4), alludes to Plato’s theory of Forms (29), praises David Hume and Albert Camus (30, 35), vows to read Spinoza again (47), and promises to look up the French impressionist Alfred Sisley’s work at the University of Arizona library on

Wright's recommendation (78). Certainly Silko engaged heavily with the Western intellectual tradition during her time as an English major at the University of New Mexico (1966-1970), where she studied under "Katherine Simons, Edith Buchanan, Mary Jane Powers, George Arms, Hamlin Hill and Ernest Baughman—the best teachers in the English department" (*Turquoise* 63), during her brief time in law school, and, later, in the course of her duties as a professor of English at the University of Arizona.

Given the historical project of this thesis, it is pertinent to consider Silko's influences within the traditional American literary canon. It is always a tricky business to attempt to outline an author's "significant" influences—as Silko herself puts it, "No writer wants her work to resemble another writer's work, even when that writer is...great" ("Delight" 205)—but it is even more difficult to identify such connections for an author like Silko who claims, "I work intuitively without chapter outlines, so the novel or story I want to write is generally known by me, but not precisely," and "It seems that I conveniently forget things that my subconscious plans to steal and use later to construct my fiction" ("Delight" 205). However, Silko also provides a rationale for the kind of cross-cultural, cross-generational inquiry undertaken by this thesis when she writes, "although "[a]t first glance [such] relationship[s] might seem unlikely because a gulf of time and a gulf of cultural differences would seem to separate us...the power of a great writer's work to reach and affect subsequent generations of writers is both miraculous and necessary, for it constitutes the ceaseless flow of that great river of world literature" ("Delight" 205). Although I have yet to find any clear evidence that Silko was directly influenced by F. Scott Fitzgerald (though it seems almost impossible to imagine that Silko could have made it through an undergraduate degree in English and periods working in a university English department without at least encountering his work), Silko herself has recently written about the deep impact that two

of Fitzgerald's own predecessors exerted on her creative consciousness: Henry James and Herman Melville. In a piece published in the 2012 issue of *The Henry James Review*, Silko credits James as a profound influence on her 1999 novel *Garden in the Dunes*, one that she admits she was unconsciously channeling. She writes, "I've never thought of my writing as being of the same high order as that of Henry James, and I followed my own path to write my stories and novels" (205). In this essay, she writes that she herself didn't realize just how much of an influence James had had on her novel until she "took a closer look," and she ultimately concludes that "without the stories and novels of Henry James I quite likely would not have written *Gardens in the Dunes*" (205, 206). Similarly, in the March 2012 issue of *Leviathan*, Silko acknowledges what was initially an unconscious debt to Herman Melville. From Melville, she seems to have taken a lesson in irony, dark humor, and a sense of literature's ability to act as a voice for justice. She recalls, "I was twenty years old the first time I read *The Confidence-Man*, and I was bound for law school where I thought I would find justice," when "Melville's genius in using satire and irony and his dark humor filled me with happiness and hope." She goes on to write, "the fact that Melville's intelligence and moral vision could reach me more than one hundred years later was an early, important lesson for me about the power of fiction and the novel to transform consciousness even in the most hostile political environments" ("Indian" 94). For the purposes of this analysis, the important point is that by publishing these pieces, Silko casts herself within a lineage of American writers. Moreover, she posits her own work within a "river of world literature," thus indicating the importance of non-Pueblo literary writings in shaping her writing consciousness.

The culturally hybrid nature of Silko's family background as well as her education in storytelling parallel one of the most significant and overarching qualities of *Storyteller*: its



consummate syncretism. A compilation of *humma-ha* stories, family tales, community gossip, and original fiction inspired by her experiences with Western and Indigenous influences and with ancient and modern legacies, or, as she puts in her 2012 introduction—of “old stories and new stories” (xxvi)—*Storyteller* represents a literary composite of the varied influences that colored Silko’s heritage, upbringing, and education. As various critics have noted, both the structure and content of the collection reveal its culturally liminal position. Brewster Fitz observes, “in Silko’s worldview the conflict between the oral and the written resolves itself dialectically in a web of cultural syncretism, interweaving the Western and the Indian,” and so her work therefore “vascillat[es] between ‘primary orality’ and ‘secondary orality’ (aka textuality)” (8). *Storyteller*’s web-like quality thus reflects Silko’s notion of “American language” as she articulated it to Wright—a rich intersection of many voices, a polyvocality made possible by Silko’s own experience of an “astonishing range of dissonances and harmonies” (*Delicacy* 81).

As a result of Silko’s deep regard for the heterogeneity of American language, there is a certain egalitarianism of storytelling in Silko’s collection: like the “old-time Pueblo people” who “left nothing out...because valuable experience and knowledge are found in all levels of human activity,” *Storyteller* gives space to a range of genres, subjects, and styles (*Storyteller* xix). Family snapshots, personal recollections, and bits of community gossip take their places alongside the more traditionally canonized sacred stories, poetry, and short stories. In this way, Silko challenges the approach of previous writers, mostly anthropologists and ethnologists, who had presented Pueblo culture to the reading public. In fact, there is evidence that Silko consciously had such revisionist treatment in mind as she prepared *Storyteller*. Consider the following comments she made during a talk delivered to the English Institute at Harvard on

September 1, 1978 (later published as the essay “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective”):

Anthropologists and ethnologists have, for a long time, differentiated the types of stories the Pueblos tell. They tended to elevate the old, sacred, traditional stories and to brush aside family stories, the family’s account of itself. But in Pueblo culture, these family stories are given equal recognition. There is no definite, preset pattern for the way one will hear the stories of one’s own family, but it is a very critical part of one’s childhood, and the storytelling continues throughout one’s life. (*Yellow* 51).

*Storyteller*, with its emphasis on family history, is clearly a response to this kind of selective appropriation of Pueblo culture, which had become much more common by the time Silko began contributing to the so-called “Native American Renaissance” of the 1970s. For the purposes of this thesis, it is interesting to note that the anthropologists and ethnologists whom Silko likely had in mind included several of Joseph Campbell’s sources for *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. In *The Turquoise Ledge*, Silko criticizes the research conducted at Laguna from 1917-1918 by the anthropologist Elsie Clews Parsons, whose *Tewa Tales* (1926) is a source credited in the bibliography of Campbell’s *Hero*. Interestingly, one of Silko’s relatives—her Aunt Alice’s mother, Margaret, served as an informant for Parsons, a role that Silko suggests may have contributed led to Margaret’s premature death in 1918:

Parsons noted that all the Laguna people who worked as informants for her the two previous summers had died—two by influenza and one by lightning strike, but that no one at Laguna linked the deaths to their work with her. Parsons fooled herself if she believed this; such links would have been made at once because it was well known that anyone who dared to

reveal ceremonial secrets risked severe reprisals from the supernatural world. (*Turquoise* 51).

In addition to this rather grim connection, Silko's family had personal ties to two other sources for Campbell's *Hero*—Silko notes that both Edward Curtis and Franz Boaz boarded with her great-grandfather Robert G. Marmon, whose house was located near the railway station, during visits to Laguna (*Turquoise* 50).

In trying to understand the ways in which Silko's work may respond to the work of myth- and-symbol critics like Joseph Campbell, we must certainly consider her critique of anthropology's tendency "to elevate the old, sacred, traditional stories." Whether or not Campbell was among those she had in mind in her address to the English Institute at Harvard, it is certainly true that the mythologist and his sources privileged the cosmological, sacred, and traditional, treating them largely as a religious canon. In addition, the fact that Silko's work emphasizes her personal experiences with oral tradition at Laguna and its intimate role in defining both the community and the family suggests a tacit critique of those who, like Campbell, draw mythological material "secondhand," or from the research of Euro-American scholars such as Elsie Clews Parsons, Franz Boaz, and Edward Curtis, rather than from deeply meaningful, firsthand experience.

However, there are also ways in which Silko's work seems to further Campbell's ideas, particularly regarding the role of the hero and the empowering function of storytelling. In my last chapter, I argue that Campbell's signature contribution to his field was his evolutionary model of mythology, one that recognizes both the way in which myths develop and function to unify and guide society but also how they can morph to meet changing circumstances or to reflect the new insights gained by a member of the community who has successfully undertaken

the archetypal “hero’s journey.” Silko translates this idea of an ever-evolving collection of community-oriented mythologies into literary form in *Storyteller*, the vestiges of ancient stories as told by Aunt Susie or Aunt Alice relayed alongside the new insights and creative vision of the author herself. In this way, Silko’s work overlaps with Campbell’s philosophy, reminding us that traditional stories remain relevant and that the artist is the modern day storyteller who disseminates reinvented mythologies.

One of the ways in which *Storyteller* speaks to the spiritual needs of contemporary audiences is by using the power of narrative to resolve chaotic forces. A web-like reflection of heterogeneous influences, *Storyteller* not only satisfies Silko’s own definition of true American art which should evoke “an astonishing array of dissonances and consonances” that reflect the “great land and many peoples” but also masterfully depicts experience of dissonance, both cultural and cognitive, in her short stories especially (*Delicacy* 81). Moreover, the manner in which she wields it—either resting in its tension or leading into consonant resolution—proves critical to the narrative impact of the piece. Dissonance, of course, is the uncomfortable effect produced by two or more conflicting ideas; recall Leon Festinger’s 1954 theory of cognitive dissonance, which identifies the unstable, negative affect induced by two inconsistent cognitions. Cultural dissonance, then, might be defined as the unstable, uncomfortable state of tension produced by two conflicting cultural paradigms. Both types of dissonance figure prominently, for example, in “Yellow Woman.” As I wrote in chapter 1, this story presents two contradictory but equally likely interpretative possibilities—both we the readers and the narrator herself are left wondering which to believe in the end. There is Silva’s version of reality, which corresponds with the cultural discourse of traditional Pueblo mythology and which claims that the protagonist is Kochininako, the Yellow Woman of legend, on her way to a mountaintop with her destined

lover, a ka'tsina. On the other hand, we are presented with the narrator's point of view as a modern woman immersed in the world created by the European intrusion, the perspective that declares she can't possibly be Yellow Woman "Because she is from out of time past and I live now and I've been to school and there are highways and pickup trucks that Yellow Woman never saw" (*Storyteller* 54). This juxtaposition of cultural paradigms generates cognitive dissonance for the narrator, whose mental vacillation between the two possible explanations for her relationship with Silva ultimately cumulates in a difficult choice—stay on the mountaintop, in the realm of the mythological, continuing to enjoy the simple but powerful pleasures of life with Silko, or return home to the safety and security of the modern world, where her husband and children wait for her, cooking breakfast on a stovetop and anxiously corresponding with the police about her absence.

The narrator ultimately chooses to leave Silva and return to her family; however, her pained thoughts on the journey home reveal that she remains caught in cognitive dissonance:

I thought about Silva, and I felt sad at leaving him; still, there was something strange about him, and I tried to figure it out all the way back home.

I came back to the place on the river bank where he had been sitting the first time I saw him. The green willow leaves that he had trimmed from the branch were still lying there, wilted in the sand. I saw the leaves and I wanted to go back to him—to kiss him and to touch him—but the mountains were too far away now. And I told myself, because I believe it, he will come back sometime and be waiting again by the river. (60)

After making the decision to return home, the narrator wants to believe that Silva's "strange" reality is impossible, that Kochininako and ka'tsinas don't really exist, because such impossibility would reduce the difficulty of her choice. When confronted, however, with

physical evidence of Silva's material agency—the green leaves that he had trimmed from the willow tree the day before—the narrator is suddenly thrown back into cognitive confusion. Beset by renewed desire for both his body and his reality, she regrets her choice, thus displaying a hallmark of cognitive dissonance—the intense emotional discomfort that results from taking an action at odds with one's underlying desires. And, in keeping with Festinger's theory—"The presence of dissonance gives rise to the pressure to reduce or eliminate the dissonance," usually accomplished by changing or trivializing a conflicting thought/belief by adjusting one's actions, changing one's actions, or, in this case, by introducing a new, more cognitively consonant idea (Festinger 18)—the narrator tells herself, "he will come back sometime and be waiting again by the river." Such a story helps the narrator establish a more cognitively comfortable position, one which doesn't force her to choose between two very different but equally compelling roles. She can have her life as a modern wife and mother and still be the Yellow Woman of legend next time she meets Silva down by the river.

The more cynical among us may regard the narrator's self-soothing as an act of self-deception, and indeed, many scholars who work with cognitive dissonance theory have explored self-deception as a common mechanism for reducing psychic tension. When I applied Joseph Campbell's monomyth paradigm to this story in chapter 1, this was the sense in which I interpreted the narrator's words—indulgence in a self-soothing illusion to quell the pain that follows a refusal of the archetypal "call to adventure." However, it strikes me now that the narrator's words may not actually be false at all. Who's to say that Silva won't come back? Who's to say that she won't again be Kochininako and he a ka'tsina of legend? Who's to say that modern life has no room for mythological archetypes? Rather than committing an act of self-deception—Silk's narrator seems to profess authenticity—"I said it because I believed it." The

narrator's words might very well signal an act of imaginative power and self-determination, a performance of powerful storytelling that has the ability to reduce cultural and cognitive dissonance. In refusing to give up mythic possibility within contemporary circumstances, therefore, the narrator tells a new and more inclusive narrative about the possibilities for her life. She weaves together "an astonishing range of dissonances" in order to create a more harmonious self-narrative.

Such an interpretation is further supported by the story's ending, which emphasizes the empowering possibilities of storytelling. Silko maintains the story's carefully-constructed ambiguity, thereby drawing out the reader's own experience of cognitive dissonance. This is an intentional and provocative choice that ultimately serves to underscore a message about narrative significance—that what we *believe* about the story doesn't matter so much as *the satisfaction of telling it*. Greater harmony is established simply by giving voice to dissonance. Silko concludes the story with the narrator pausing at the screen door of her house, hearing the familiar sounds of her family preparing dinner inside. She reflects:

I decided to tell them that some Navajo had kidnapped me, but I was sorry that old Grandpa wasn't alive to hear my story because it was the Yellow Woman stories he liked to tell best. In this way, Silko puts the power to determine meaning, to determine what to believe and how to define reality, squarely in the hands of the storyteller (the narrator) and her audience. If she tells the kidnapping narrative to her family, she creates one version of reality. If, however, she had told the story to her grandfather, one who himself loved to tell the Yellow Woman tale, she would have affirmed a completely different worldview. In this way, "Yellow Woman" both reflects on the tension created by two opposing worldviews, which, as we have already discussed, was a subject of Silko's lived experience, and pays homage to the imaginative

possibilities of the oral tradition, in the process positing storytelling as a powerful negotiator of cognitive and cultural dissonance.

Such reflection on the disorienting effects of cultural dissonance and the potentially harmonizing role of storytelling are what unify the disparate elements of Silko's *Storyteller*. They constitute one of the most frequently explored and important themes in the collection. For example, at the end of the elegiac "Lullaby," the old woman who has suffered the loss of her home, her way of life, and, most heartbreakingly, her children as a direct result of the European intrusion finds solace in the words of a traditional lullaby, one that her mother had sung to her as a child and which she chants in the cold snow while thinking of her lost but still loved little ones:

*The earth is your mother,*

*she holds you.*

*The sky is your father,*

*he protects you.*

*Sleep,*

*sleep.*

*Rainbow is your sister,*

*she loves you.*

*The winds are your brothers,*

*they sing to you.*

*Sleep,*

*sleep.*

*We are together always*

*We are together always*



*There was never a time*

*when this*

*was not so.*

In remembering and reiterating the words of the lullaby, the old woman reduces the anguish she feels as a result of the all-too-real consequences of cultural dissonance. Most importantly, the words enable her to access an atemporal, mythological space in which “We are together always” and “There was never a time when this was not so.” Silko once again posits the oral tradition as a tool for creating harmony out of dissonance, for constructing a more freeing and inclusive narrative out of tension and chaos.

In this way, Silko’s work anticipates key ideas explored by postcolonial, gender, and queer studies during the last two decades of the twentieth century. In her book *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (1998), feminist scholar Susan Stanford Friedman considers the disorienting impact that cultural dissonance has on the experience of identity. Reflecting on then-recent trends in diasporic and postcolonial studies, Friedman writes that “identity is not ‘pure,’ ‘authentic,’ but always already a heterogeneous mixture produced in the borderlands or interstices between difference,” an apt description that perfectly characterizes both Silko’s own familial and writerly identity as well as the “heterogeneous” quality of her work. Friedman goes on to describe the profoundly painful but also potentially empowering consequences of this dissonance, which she calls “cultural grafting”:

Such grafting often takes the form of painful splitting, divided loyalties, or disorienting displacements. Sometimes it leads to or manifests as regenerative growth and creativity.

Moreover, this discourse frequently moves dialectically between a language of diasporic

loss of origin or authenticity and a language of embrace for syncretic heterogeneity and cultural translation. (24)

Certainly the narrator of Silko's "Yellow Woman" experiences "painful splitting, divided loyalties," and a "disorienting displacement," just as her creator described feeling "moved by the undercurrents of tension I sensed between the Pueblo and non-Pueblo members of my extended family" as a child (*Turquoise* 25). However, both the narrator and Silko herself use narrative as a tool for "regenerative growth and creativity," in the process demonstrating just the dialectic movement that Friedman identifies in larger bodies of cultural discourse: a shift from mourning the "loss of origin or authenticity" to an "embrace for syncretic heterogeneity and cultural translation." For that, ultimately, is Silko's purpose in writing *Storyteller*, to achieve "a language of embrace for syncretic heterogeneity and cultural translation," thereby honoring that American "expansiveness of spirit which the great land and many peoples allow" (*Delicacy* 81). Silko attempts to translate her personal experience of mythology and the oral tradition—already blended as it is with various cultural influences—into an accessible and inclusive literary form. The resulting collection beautifully illustrates "syncretic heterogeneity."

By positing storytelling as the tool that makes such syncretically heterogeneous harmony possible, Silko's *Storyteller* also anticipates Friedman and her contemporaries' discussion of narrative as the primary mechanism through which identity is constructed and reconstructed. For example, Friedman writes, "identity is literally unthinkable without narrative. People know who they are through the stories they tell about themselves and others. As ever-changing phenomena, identities are themselves narratives of formation, sequences moving through space and time as they undergo development, evolution, and revolution" (8). Friedman's words echo Silko's own reflections on the significance of storytelling in her 2012 introduction to *Storyteller*:

Old stories and new stories are essential: They tell us who we are, and they enable us to survive. We thank all the ancestors, and we thank all those people who keep on telling stories generation after generation, because if you don't have the stories, you don't have anything. (xxvi)

Silko's embrace of both "old" and "new stories" in *Storyteller* acknowledges what Friedman calls the "ever-changing phenomena" of identity, something that must "undergo development, evolution, and revolution" if it is to remain useful or relevant. Moreover, both Silko and Friedman cast narrative as an "essential" psychic structure, one without which "identity is literally unthinkable," without which "you don't have anything." In short, then, they both highlight storytelling as the basic process through which "People know who they are," the process through which individual and collective narratives are constructed and interwoven, thereby "tell[ing] us who we are" and "enabl[ing] us to survive."

Silko and Friedman's shared observations signal an important similarity linking the work of all three writers on which this thesis has focused: the use of storytelling as a means of understanding and empowering oneself and one's community. Recall Mathew Brucocolli's words concerning Fitzgerald's approach to writing *TITN*: "*Tender Is the Night* became in writing his attempt to understand the loss of everything he had won, the loss of everything he had ever wanted" (330). Fitzgerald brought Dick and Nicole Diver to life in an attempt to better "tell [him] who [he was]" and to "enable [both himself and his contemporaries] to survive." By creating a tragic hero who fails to resolve his deep inner divisions, Fitzgerald constructs a narrative around the ways in which he himself had fallen prey to the debilitating effects of unresolved cognitive dissonance; in the process, he warns his contemporaries to beware of cultural institutions that so often compound it, namely consumerist capitalism and its empty

narrative-making machine, Hollywood. And by creating a self-actualized heroine who learns how to “no longer [lie] to herself,” Fitzgerald offers a positive model who illuminates the route to greater cognitive consonance. Similarly, Campbell characterizes mythological stories as both ever-evolving vessels of collectively accumulated wisdom—a repository of both positive and negative models of human functioning, in other words—and as narrative paradigms through which twentieth-century readers could construct ever more empowering narratives of self and community. According to Campbell, such archetypal narratives—both those derived from traditional mythology and from the modern era’s new mythology of psychoanalysis—allow for “Destruction of the world that we have built and in which we live, and of ourselves within it” as well as “a wonderful reconstruction, of the bolder, cleaner, more spacious, and fully human life” (*Hero* 5). In addition, Campbell, like Fitzgerald, told stories, first to his students at Sarah Lawrence, next to a community of readers, and, finally, to the television audience made familiar with his work by his famous PBS interview “The Power of Myth,” ostensibly as a means of guiding his listeners to greater wisdom. In the process, he emphasized the role that artists like Fitzgerald and Silko play in telling all of us “who we are.”

Finally, as explained above, Silko too celebrates the freeing power of narrative in *Storyteller*, particularly the heterogeneous harmony that can be woven out of “borderlands or interstices between difference.” Like Fitzgerald, Silko used the composition process as something of a therapeutic ritual for constructing more coherent and empowering personal narratives. As Brewster Fitz has observed, “Silko and her writing storyteller, from the time she first started to write in grade school, had been yearning for something like a perfect language that would heal the cultural wounds embodied in her own mixed-blood ancestry” (ix-x). *Storyteller* in many ways achieves this healing syncretism, thereby reflecting that “expansiveness of

[American] spirit,” that that generous depth and breadth “which the great land and many peoples [of America] allow” and of which Silko wrote to Wright while finishing *Storyteller* in September 1979. An inclusive, dynamic collection of heterogeneous voices that both considers and, in many cases, transcends cultural and cognitive dissonance, it achieves exactly that which Silko praised in Wright’s poetry: the capacity to “bring such grace and delicacy from it [American language],” to “coax out the astonishing range of dissonances and harmonies it allows us” (*Delicacy* 81).

And so, with Silko’s and her predecessors’ work behind us, we “can speak confidently now about a beauty which is purely from the American heart,” in all of its multifaceted, multi-generational, cross-cultural richness.

## CONCLUSION: THREE WRITERS, THREE “SKELETON FIXERS”

What happened here?  
 she asked.  
 Some kind of accident?  
 Words like bones  
 scattered all over the place....

Old Man Badger traveled  
 from place to place  
 searching for skeleton bones.  
 There was something  
 only he could do with them.

On the smooth sand  
 Old Man Badger started laying out the bones.  
 It was a great puzzle for him.  
 He started with the toes  
 He loved their curve  
 like a new moon,  
 like white whisker hair.

Without thinking  
 he knew their direction,  
 laying each toe bone  
 to walk east.  
 “I know,  
 it must have been this way.  
 Yes,”  
 he talked to himself as he worked.

He strung the spine bones  
 as beautiful as any shell necklace. (236)

-Leslie Marmon Silko, excerpt from “Skeleton Fixer”

In my last chapter, I argued that Silko uses narrative as a therapeutic ritual, a way of negotiating cultural and cognitive dissonance. Piecing together varied elements of her own experience—Laguna and English, Native and Euro-American, oral and written—Silko manages to achieve heterogeneous syncretism: the pages of *Storyteller* reinvigorate seemingly disparate elements through creative recombination.

In this way, Silko is like the Old Man Badger of Pueblo lore. Described in “Skeleton Fixer,” one of *Storyteller*’s prose poems, this mythological figure gathers scattered bones from

the desert ground, strings them together to form a complete skeleton, and, finally, brings them back to life:

“A ’moo’ ooh, my dear one  
 these words are bones,”  
 he repeated this  
 four times  
     Pa Pa Pa Pa!  
     Pa Pa Pa Pa!  
     Pa Pa Pa Pa!  
     Pa Pa Pa Pa!

Old Coyote Woman jumped up  
 and took off running. (236)

Significantly, it is an incantation—power wielded with words—that ultimately resurrects Old Coyote Woman. Such a mechanism for renewed life invites comparison with storytellers’ use of language. “Words are bones,” intones Old Man Badger. They are the connective tissue that binds together the disparate vestiges of history to make mobilizing new narratives. We might say, then, that Silko is a storytelling skeleton fixer.

This analogy extends to Fitzgerald and Campbell as well. It has been the purpose of this comparative study, after all, to trace the links among these three seemingly disparate writers, each of whom absorbed and reworked the scattered bones of their cultural forebears. Fitzgerald used emergent mythologies of psychoanalysis to illustrate the plight of the misled, pathologically extraverted modern man. Campbell, in turn, refashioned psychoanalytic and modernist sensibilities, stringing them up alongside more traditional mythologies in service of his influential “monomyth” paradigm. Finally, Silko gathered fodder from diverse branches of her family tree as well as from her literary forebears, using them to create a mix of “old stories and new” that “tell us who we are” and “enable us to survive” (*Storyteller* xxvi).

The catalyst for each of these writers' creative "skeleton fix[ing]" constitutes an additional thread among them: the need to acknowledge and, to some extent, resolve cultural and/or cognitive dissonance. Recall social psychologist Leon Festinger's landmark 1957 theory, which I referenced in Chapter 2 and which states the following two simple but critical points:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance [inconsistency] and achieve consonance [consistency].
2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance. (Festinger 3)

Such "psychologically uncomfortable" dissonance infuses and informs the prose of all three, each of whom grapples with the rapid social change and cultural clashing so emblematic of the twentieth century as a whole. Thus, or so I argue in this conclusion, Fitzgerald, Campbell, and Silko refashion old mythologies to negotiate these chaotic forces, thereby using the constructive power of narrative to outline the individual's path through dissonance to self-determination.

Consider Fitzgerald's purpose in writing *Tender Is the Night*, for instance. In Chapter 2, I argue that this novel served as a means for Fitzgerald to create a cautionary tale derived from his own troubled experience. As his biographer Matthew Bruccoli has pointed out, "*Tender Is the Night* became in writing his attempt to understand the loss of everything he had won, the loss of everything he had ever wanted" (330). In other words, it was an opportunity for Fitzgerald to exorcise his own dissonant demons: to process his wife Zelda's mental breakdown, his own personal and professional disappointments, and, perhaps less obviously, his uneasy, ambivalent relationship with the culture that had dubbed him "spokesman for the time" (*My Lost City* 110). This close connection between author and protagonist is evident in Fitzgerald's preliminary



sketches for the novel. One line reads like a brief autobiography: “The hero born in 1891 is a man like myself brought up in a family sunk from haute Burgeoisie [sic], and in his rise to the top of the social world losing his idealism, his talent and turning to drink and dissipation” (qtd. by Brucolli 330). Another establishes a physical link between author and character: “For his external qualities use anything of Gerald, Ernest, Ben Finny, Archie McIlesh, Charley McArthur or myself. He looks, though, like me” (332). Dick has a strong literary bent, described as “very intelligent, widely read,” an obvious parallel with his creator (332). The two even share similar wives—Fitzgerald calls the character of Nicole Diver a “Portrait of Zelda—that is, a part of Zelda” (333). Clearly, Fitzgerald’s personal experiences—as well as the frequent cognitive dissonance with which they were riddled—colored his fiction.

Further evidence to this effect can be found in the way that Fitzgerald uses *Tender Is the Night* to explore cultural conditions that abet cognitive dissonance. As I point out in Chapter 2, Dick’s tragic flaw—an unwillingness to examine his inner life—is at least in part fueled by dysfunctional cultural institutions. The novel is openly critical of the Hollywood establishment, described in the text as “that somewhat littered Five-and-Ten” which produced “the tawdry souvenirs of [Dick’s] boyhood” (196). Fitzgerald’s critique of the nascent film industry is nowhere clearer than in the famous *Daddy’s Girl* film scene, in which Dick, Nicole, and their friends suffer through a ridiculously sentimental movie that unwittingly celebrates familial dysfunction (69). This profoundly negative depiction of Hollywood coincides with that of his 1936 essay “The Crack Up,” in which Fitzgerald laments “seeing the power of the written word subordinated to another power, a more glittering, a grosser power” that all too often misrepresents human experience (148).

The novel also shows Fitzgerald's conflicted relationship with the consumerist, capitalist culture with which he is so often associated. Suzanne del Gizzo has pointed out how Fitzgerald's lyrical prose often fetishizes material objects, imbuing them with seemingly magical properties. On the one hand, this quality seems to signal Fitzgerald's admiration for the luxurious, lavish beauty made possible by great sums of wealth. However, as Gizzo aptly notes, "the very opulence and excessiveness of his descriptions suggest a critique of the remarkable, magical, but ultimately deceptive and dangerous power of objects in a consumer culture" (39). Fitzgerald's critique of consumerist capitalism reaches its height in *TITN*'s famous shopping spree scene, which describes an entire economic machine laboring to supply wealthy families like Nicole's with the power to purchase far more items than they could ever want or use (55). Again, a sense of awe mingles with moral judgement in Fitzgerald's treatment of consumerist capitalism's seductive excess, thus signaling the author's own cognitive dissonance concerning the world inhabited by the social elite of his day and age.

In the case of *Dick Diver* (and, we might reasonably assume, Fitzgerald too), such internal conflict stems, at least in part, from changing social and economic norms, which we might call cultural dissonances. Fitzgerald's writing coincides with what Gizzo calls "a shift in foundational American values and traditional notions of the self," one that "entailed a departure from the Protestant work ethic, or the belief that hard work and thrift yield success and social respect" to one based on "leisure, spending, and the demonstration of wealth" (36). In portraying a protagonist who succumbs to the latter and, consequently, loses his sense of personal integrity, Fitzgerald seems to suggest that conspicuous consumption corrupts through its pathological focus on social performance. Such performance seems to come at the expense of self-

examination, the only force through which Dick's debilitating experience of cognitive dissonance can possibly be abated.

Although Fitzgerald himself may have sometimes fallen prey to this trap, he nevertheless uses his fictional narrative to achieve a model of cognitive consonance. He creates Nicole, who proves the most successful character in the novel when it comes to navigating cultural and cognitive chaos. Through her mental illness and consequent exploration of her own unconscious, Nicole manages to integrate both the outward-oriented mythology of capitalism and the more inward-looking imperatives of psychoanalysis, a fact evidenced by the scene that marks the beginning of her self-actualization: a self-assured Nicole tells her lover, "...if my eyes have changed it's because I'm well again. And being well perhaps I've gone back to my true self—I suppose my grandfather was a crook and I'm a crook by heritage, so there we are" (292). In creating a morally ambiguous but honest heroine who is "no longer lying to herself," Fitzgerald pulls from the psychoanalytic mythology of his day while modeling the empowering transformation that come from the acknowledgement and reduction of cognitive dissonance (*Tender* 291). In the process, he epitomizes his generation's faith in "terrible honesty," thus serving to propagate a new mythology of sorts—modernism (Douglas 1).

A generation later, Joseph Campbell would take up and creatively rework both the theories of Freud, Jung, and others as well as the "courageous, open-eyed observation" of the modernists (*Hero* 20). As I argue in Chapter 3, Campbell celebrates both the "terrible honesty" of writers like Fitzgerald and the psychoanalytic mythologies by which their work was influenced. However, he refashions these perspectives, presenting them as contemporary parallels to the world's more traditional belief systems and thereby generating a paradoxically universal yet culturally syncretic theory of myth.

Campbell's archetypal vision seems to have stemmed from a sense of societal-level crisis, or the need to resolve the unprecedented cultural and cognitive dissonance of his day. Writing his seminal text *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949) in the shadow of World War II, Campbell seems to have kept the major upheavals of the first half of the twentieth century in mind. He compares his work to that of international peacemakers, when, for instance, he writes, "My hope is that a comparative elucidation may contribute to the perhaps not-quite-desperate cause of those forces that are working in the present world for unification, not in the name of some ecclesiastical or political empire, but in the sense of human mutual understanding" (xiii). In addition, Campbell identifies the rapid scientific and social changes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as sources of widespread cultural dissonance. By challenging the cosmology of traditional religions and mythologies, Campbell claims, "the ideal of the self-determining individual, the invention of the power-driven machine, and the development of the scientific method of research" had made it impossible for individuals to continue relying on the belief systems that had supported their ancestors and their communities (333). Such societal-level cognitive dissonance—the tension between faith and science—in turn leads to a collapse in the sociologically and psychologically helpful symbols of traditional mythologies. According to Campbell, it also creates a vacuum of belief that leaves the individual vulnerable to the power of exploitive economic and political institutions:

It is not only that there is no hiding place for the gods from the searching telescope and microscope; there is no such society any more as the gods once supported. The social unit is not a carrier of religious content, but an economic-political organization. Its ideals are not those of the hieratic pantomime, making visible on earth the forms of heaven, but of

the secular state, in hard and unremitting competition for material supremacy and resources. (*Hero* 334)

Clearly, Campbell's approach to mythology was influenced by the acute tensions that he perceived in his day and age. And it is in response to this sense of profound dissonance that Campbell posits a universal yet culturally syncretic solution—the individual's rediscovery of archetypal, psychologically-supportive dimensions of the "hero's journey" monomyth within the context of his or her contemporary life. In this way, Campbell too is a creative "skeleton fixer," stringing together the scattered bones of disparate traditions to bring to life "the hero with a thousand faces."

One might expect later writers to expunge Campbell's universalism entirely, especially within the context of the postmodern movement that came to characterize the literary and academic landscape of the late twentieth century. One might especially expect members of marginalized social groups, including Native peoples, to reject Campbell's archetypal paradigm as overly simplistic, assimilative, and insensitive to the very tangible, real-world consequences of perceived difference. To some extent, this is absolutely the case. In chapter three, I discussed Cutcha Risling Baldy's critique of archetypal scholarship that strips figures such as Coyote First Person of critical, tribal-specific context in service of a universalist settler mentality that "[embraces Indigenous] knowledge but only in so far as [the settlers] are able to draw parallels between this knowledge and western ideologies" (5). Such "colonial parallelism," Baldy argues, constitutes not only the dismissal of Native wisdom but also the colonizer's attempt to achieve "easier paths to reconciliation" while maintaining "settler privilege" and continuing to "[occupy] stolen land" (4). Creek-Cherokee author and critic Craig Womack too proves wary of universal theories of human experience, which he sees as naïvely ignoring the fact that "race,

class, and gender are both real and substantial markers that affect experience” (“Theorizing” 375).

Based on these and other Native critics’s critiques of archetypal scholarship, one might reasonably infer that Silko would likely reject the notion of the monomyth. It is especially interesting, then, to consider that Silko’s conception of Kochininako or Yellow Woman—one of her favorite mythological figures, specifically the one she credits with giving her courage in difficult times (Barnett 20)—bears remarkable similarities to Campbell’s account of the archetypal hero. Silko uses this mythic heroine as a model in the same way that Campbell claims that traditional hero stories can serve the personal growth of contemporary readers. In addition, Silko describes Kochininako’s role in terms very similar to Campbell’s. In an interview with Kim Barnes, Silko says of Kochininako, “She’s a...what do you call it in anthropology or sociology, one who shatters the cultural paradigms or steps through or steps out,” a statement strikingly similar to Campbell’s characterization of the archetypal hero as “the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations” (*Yellow 57, Hero 14*). Moreover, the ultimate purpose behind these cultural transgressions is the same for both: Silko explains that Kochininako leaves her home in search of food for her starving community, a problem that is ultimately remedied through her transgressive alliance with Buffalo Man; similarly, Campbell writes that the final stage in the archetypal hero’s journey is the “return,” or “threshold crossing,” during which the hero delivers a “boon that...restores the world” (*Yellow 57, Hero 211*).

How then has Silko responded to Campbell’s work? Although Silko has not addressed Campbell’s ideas directly (at least as far as I am aware), she certainly has criticized several of the white ethnologists from whom he pulled source material for *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

(see Chapter 4). In addition, in an essay entitled “An Old-Time Indian Attack Conducted in Two Parts” (1979), Silko lambasts the “white shaman” subculture of the 1960’s, one that was likely enthusiastic about Campbell’s work. In this piece, she criticizes those “young white Americans [who] travelled to Japanese monasteries, or studied books of Native American ‘lore’ in an attempt to remake themselves and obliterate their white, middle-class ancestry and origins” (213). She points out the inherent contradiction in such an approach, shrewdly noting that “as white poets attempt to cast-off their Anglo-American values, their Anglo-American origins, they violate a fundamental belief held by the tribal people they desire to emulate: they deny the truth; they deny their history, their very origins” (213). Craig Womack has similarly critiqued this movement, warning against the approach of today’s “New Agers” to “‘become’ something they are not” (“Theorizing” 375).

And yet, there are important differences between Campbell and the “white shamans” critiqued by Silko and Womack. Rather than merely dabbling in the exoticism of Indigenous stories, Campbell’s work considers world mythologies in the context of serious intellectual inquiry. Also, whereas “white shamanists” attempt to “deny their history, their very origins,” Campbell includes the Christian tradition of his upbringing in his discussions of world mythology. Finally, although the focus of his work was elucidating cultural parallels, Campbell appreciated important variations between traditions, a point he makes in the preface to *Hero* and which is reflected in the way that he includes multitudinous and often contrasting cultural variations when describing each stage of his hero’s journey paradigm.

Another aspect of both Silko’s and Womack’s perspectives overlap with Campbell’s—all take a “skeleton fixer[’s]” dynamic view of storytelling. As I argue at length in Chapter 4, much of Silko’s career was devoted to the creative recombination of various aspects of her ethnically

diverse heritage and education. Rather than attempting to recover a purely Pueblo storytelling canon, Silko creates a heterogeneous mixture of “stories old and new” culled from many different sources, including her own rich imagination, thereby constructing a syncretic narrative out of dissonant elements. Womack too calls for the use of creative imagination as a method for creating more consonant and empowered personal narratives. He writes, “We... have to create our own personal cultures that dream, imagine, scrutinize, talk back, challenge, revise, corroborate the culture that we have inherited. We can have history imposed on us or we can create our own” (374).

Womack’s words strike me as an apt summary of the cultural reimagining process that make Fitzgerald, Campbell, and Silko storytelling “skeleton fixers”: they each “dream” and “imagine” new narratives out of the cultural bones that they inherited. They certainly “scrutinize, talk back, challenge, [and] revise” the ideas, stories, and conventions that came before them. Finally, they each “corroborate” certain mythologies. In fact, as this conclusion has endeavored to demonstrate, they sometimes even “scrutinized,” “challenged,” and “corroborated” each other’s narratives. In short, they all found ways to grapple with the cultural bones that came their way, to reorder them creatively: Fitzgerald used emergent mythologies of psychoanalysis to illustrate the plight of the misled, pathologically extraverted modern man; Campbell, in turn, combined psychoanalytic and modernist sensibilities with traditional mythologies to propose his influential “monomyth;” and Silko resolved her own profound experiences of cognitive and cultural dissonance by mixing “old stories and new stories” taken from diverse branches of her family tree as well as from her literary predecessors (*Storyteller* xxvi). Although these three writers are separated by significant gulfs of time and space, they share a common country, a common century, a common experience of dissonance, and a common creative process, each



refashioning old mythologies to make sense out of chaos, resolution out of tension, new life out of scattered old bones.

Old Coyote Woman jumped up  
and took off running.  
She never even said “thanks.”

Skeleton Fixer  
shook his head slowly.

“It’s surprising sometimes,” he said  
“how these things turn out.”  
But he never has stopped fixing  
the poor scattered bones he finds. (*Storyteller* 237)

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