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"Never again I": Death and beauty in Yaqui stories

Taigue, Michelle, Ph.D.
The University of Arizona, 1990

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"NEVER AGAIN I":
DEATH AND BEAUTY IN YAQUI STORIES

by

Michelle Taigue

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1990
As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Michelle Taigue entitled "Never Again I": Death and Beauty in Yaqui Stories and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of the Yaqui storyteller and the themes of death and beauty in Yaqui stories. Memory and voice bind together the past and present experience of the Yaqui. Theirs is an oral tradition filled with the tragedy and conquests of war, deportation, fragmentation and endurance, of love, witchcraft and cruelty, magic and ceremony. Ancestors are evoked as their adventures are recounted. The eight sacred towns, Ume Wohnaiki Pweplum, are transported, through stories, from the Rio Yaqui in Sonora, Mexico to the barrios and villages of southern Arizona, and a link is maintained between ancient origins and new beginnings. The history of the people, the Yoeme, is preserved, continued, and reinvented through stories.
CHAPTER I

INIM BUAN BWIA: THIS WEEPING LAND

"To have suffered as we did is to know what it is to be a Yaqui."

—an old man of Pascua, People of Pascua

"All sorrows can be born if you put them into a story or tell a story about them."

—Isak Dinesan

In the 1930's, on the outskirts of Tucson, Arizona, the Yaqui elders, the yo'otui, of Pascua Village explained to a young anthropologist that no one among them should attempt leadership without a thorough knowledge of Yaqui history. Knowing this history entailed an understanding of what the Yaqui have suffered collectively and individually. As an elder man of Pascua put it, "To have suffered as we did is to know what it is to be a Yaqui." Only one who comprehends this experience of suffering can "understand the people" (Spicer, People of Pascua 13).

To understand the people is to understand their endurance given the "inhuman cruelties of deportation and the extreme deprivation suffered by those separated from their families in Sonora and Arizona following the
dispersal" in the 1880s when the Yaquis were forced from their sacred homeland (Spicer, *The Yaquis* 312). Yaquis say that we live on *inim buan bwia*, this weeping land, "this world of suffering...this earth of weeping...of mourning," and they share an acute religious sense of the tragic as a metaphysic of conflict and renewal (Spicer, *The Yaquis* 312; Painter 142). "The harsh disciplines of Yaqui religious life are, inextricably connected in Yaqui thought with the hard times of ordinary life and regarded as the essence of the Yaqui lot in the universe. They hold up the expectation of constant discipline throughout life and call for teaching children not to expect an easy existence but rather always to be ready to fulfill exacting demands" (*The Yaquis* 312).

Yaquis recognize life as no easy existence, and "this consciousness of suffering and of a lost Golden Age on Yaqui land in Yaqui country" is central to understanding the fracturing of Yaqui tribal identity that escalated in the 1880s and continued into the twentieth century (Spicer, *People of Pascua* 13).

In the 1820s, Mexico's war for independence sparked rebellion in the Yaqui territory of southern Sonora where the sacred *Wohnaiki Pweplum*, Los Ocho Pueblos or the Eight Towns, had been established in the *batnaataka*, the timeless past of all origins, on the Yaqui River, which is about three hundred miles to the south of the Mexican-United
States border. Since at least 1533, Yaquis had fought decisively and victoriously for their homeland and had managed to attain a degree of autonomy from the Spaniards. Even the Jesuit priests, Andres Pérez de Ribas and young Thomas Basilio, entered Yaqui land in 1617 by invitation of the Yaqui people or Yoeme as they called themselves (Spicer *The Yaquis* 3-37). An estimated 30,000 Yoeme met and molded Jesuit thought and practice, giving it a distinctly chameleon character which has enmeshed twentieth-century anthropologists, historians and ethnographers in a labyrinthean and exhaustive search for European and/or aboriginal origins. Despite this continuing dissection and imposed definition, the Yaquis "have survived as Indians because they have not conformed to white stereotypes"; rather, the Yoeme have worked with, against, and between European classifications. "Their sense of wholeness is as much a matter of reinvention and encounter as it is of continuity and survival" (Clifford 341).

Throughout Spain's domination, the Yoeme managed to maintain a strong collective identity and tight hold over their land, so the idea of an independent Indian nation inspired by Yaqui leader Juan Bandera in 1820 was enthusiastically received not only by the Yoeme but also by the Mayos, the Opatas, and the Lower Pimas. Bandera, inspired by a vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe, effectively formed a strong Indian military organization
which held its own against Mexican forces and was very close to gaining independence when the Indian units were defeated in 1832. However, the Yaquis, determined and rebellious, continued sporadic fighting with the Mexicans for the next sixty years until the early 1890s when they were soundly defeated. The Mexican government instituted a policy of deportation, which was ruthlessly carried out (Spicer, *People of Pascua* 4-5).

Throughout Sonora, Yaquis were rounded up and sent, as peons, to the henequen plantations of Yucatan. It was one of the darkest times in Yaqui history. The Eight Towns were abandoned as Mexican military occupation took control, and Yaquis fled to the Bacatete mountains to carry on a guerrilla warfare while others, "pretending to be Mexicans," (Kelly 84) escaped to the north across the border. Spicer explains that by 1910

Yaqui society had been finally atomized. The type of Yaqui community which had been the wellspring and focus of Yaqui life during the 19th century no longer existed. There were still at least 15,000 Yaquis in the world, but they were nowhere in command of anything that they would have been willing to call their own local communities. Thousands of their families had been forced apart, so that they were living
as individuals or in broken parts of families in Mexico or North American communities. They had become the most widely scattered native people of North America, extending, as a result of forced dispersal, from the henequen plantations of lowland Yucatan among the Maya Indians to the barrios of southern California among the urbanite Anglo-Americans of Los Angeles. (The Yaquis 158)

In their flight, Yaqui identity, linked with their land and their language, began to splinter. Survival meant subterfuge. Freedom was attained in the perfection of masks. Yaqui names were masked by Spanish names (Moisés 1971). Displacement became a mask for endurement; to be displaced meant to be alive. The liminal became their center. Nowhere were they in command of anything they would have been willing to call their own. But the Yaqui, like chameleons, learned to shift with the land, whether it was surviving as gorilla fighters in the Bacatete Mountains, gandy dancing for the Southern Pacific Railroad, or dancing deer down at Pascua in Tucson, Arizona (Savala 1980; Moisés 1971). As a tribe, they existed "discontinuously, keeping open multiple paths" (Clifford 34).

Yet as they survived, Yaquis were continually challenged. In the United States, they were called "dirty
drunks," Mexicans, and Catholics (Spicer, *People of Pascua* 74). Ironically, they were identified with their oppressors and it was not unusual that they necessarily assumed a Mexican identity. In Sonora the choice was either death or disguise, and many Yaquis in both Mexico and the United States retained this protective deception or assumed it whenever necessity dictated. Yet, ironically, this deception was, in a very real sense, true. As Cecil Robinson points out, the Yaqui Indians of Sonora, "for all their separatism, are definitely Mexicans....During the Revolution, some of the most effective troops marshalled by such northern generals as Alvaro Obregon were Yaquis, and many a northern leader has attributed his prowess to the Yaqui blood in his veins" (*With The Ears Of Strangers* 224-225). However, the tyranny of Porfirio Diaz overwhelmed many of the people, and they fled from their homes. Haunted by the fear of deportation, they became a people on the edge, living in the periphery and interstices of the dominant culture, where they were, at every turn, keenly aware of their marginality and vulnerability.

In the 1940s, the *Arizona Daily Star* called the Yaquis, "men without a country," which is a characterization that crept "into almost every written account of Yaquis, whether in newspapers, periodicals, or state papers" (Spicer, *People of Pascua* 43). An Arizona state senator expressed his worry concerning Yaqui
infiltration by exclaiming, "I have watched the Yaqui problem for a number of years with terror....We have made efforts to send them back to their wild hill-life in Mexico, but without success," and he also regarded the "health situation in Pascua as menacing" (Spicer, People of Pascua 42-42, 55). This view was an extension of the overall oppressive and superior attitude expressed towards the Yoemè, who were considered "sort of slow," "smelly and dirty," "pagan savages" (Spicer, People of Pascua 67-75).

Yet sometimes the characterization was very different, depending perhaps on the motive and intent of the writers. The Tucson Chamber of Commerce viewed the Yoeme as vital contributors to the area's economic enhancement and promoted the Pascua Easter ceremonies, compiling pamphlets which described the ceremonial. In 1925, Phebe Bogan of Tucson wrote that the Yaquis are

tall, well-muscled, noted as warriors, hunters, sailors, pearl divers, cowboys, farmers, artisans and mechanics. Like the men, the women are high-hearted and of great endurance. As a race they are merry, much given to festivities and often shouting when they walk....In Arizona the Yaqui may work unmolested; he may worship God as he pleases, he may earn a living and help others, for he is not lazy nor idle from choice and he is
thrifty.... He cheerfully accepts life among a people whose language he cannot understand and whose ways are strange except where they touch his own ideals of independence and liberty.... Like all children of nature these people worship God in the great open spaces. (People of Pascua 68)

These different characterizations of the Yaqui, whether excessively optimistic, ambivalent or disparaging, display the power of language and rhetoric to determine and project specific angles upon a "subject." The Yaquis were continuously being defined by the dominant culture surrounding them. They were, in a sense, cast into molds which prevailed in the writer's inventory of experience concerning what it means to be an "Indian," and these images were projected, maintained and articulated in writing. Until the Yoeme learned to articulate and manipulate English, they would always be interpreted against and through a foreign language and foreign thought. In a way the writer and "his 'object' form a couple where each one is to be interpreted through the other, and where the relationship must itself be deciphered as a historical moment" (Sartre, qtd in Clifford 55). For the Yaqui, this particular "historical moment" is inscribed by dispersal and disintegration; Spicer calls it the "Yaqui Diaspora"
(The Yaguis 158). Even though we hear the voice of the Yoeme continually filtered through an English speaker and eventhough these angles of vision portray conflicting images, they all converge on the point that the Yaqui has suffered, even if seemingly "cheerfully," a vital loss. Even in her enthusiastic optimism Bogan cannot ignore this point:

, The Yaqui Indian is a Mexican Indian driven from his native land by a long series of wars and persecutions because he has steadily refused to subdue an inherent independence and love of liberty. (Spicer, People of Pascua 68)

This loss of "native land" is a decisive force in the disintegration of tribal voice. In a recent interview, Acoma poet Simon Ortiz explains that for the Indian "land is a material reality as well as a philosophical, metaphysical idea or concept; land is who we are, land is our identity, land is home place, land is sacred. The land is sacred. The land is voice" (333).

Ortiz is identifying an ancient, primordial lifeway which assumes that the land is a sacred totality engendering identity and voice. Given this way of being, language as sound becomes vital as a vehicle between the known and the unknown; it is a source of mythic power generating origins and endings. "Every event is part of a
story, every part is connected to the whole, every act is flooded with the sacred" (Thompson 103). Consequently, tribal "identity is conceived not as a boundary to be maintained but as a nexus of valuations and transactions actively engaging" individuals in continually shifting dialogues with the cycles of their history expressed through narratives which cannot be understood apart from the land, (Clifford 341). Be it a sacred mountain or Ume Wohnaikei Pweplum, the eight sacred towns, or a prairie, riverbed, singing tree or sipapu, the reed of emergence, the Indian "belongs" to the land. In The Ancient Child (1989), N. Scott Momaday evokes this primordial sense of connection with the land:

Above all, in the withering heat that shimmered in the noon and afternoon, the land was endless. It was the continental reach, beyond maps and geography, beyond the accounts of the voyageurs, almost beyond the distance of dreams. It was the middle and immeasurable meadow of North America. It was the destination and destiny of ancients who, coming with dogs and travois, followed herds of huge, lumbering animals down the long, cold cordillera, following the visions of their shamans, who rattled Arctic bones and cried in the voices of owls and eagles and whose
prayers were the lowing of thousand-mile winds. It was the sun's range. Nowhere on earth was there a more perfect equation of freedom and space. Those earliest inhabitants must have beheld the Plains, and each man must have said to himself, "From this time on, I shall belong to this land, for it is truly worthy of my strength, my dreams, my life and death. Here I am. Here, I am." (243-244)

To "belong" to the land is to participate in an ancient state of unity where existence is centered in a "perfect equation of freedom and space." There is no desperate, embittered sense of loss or deprivation, no derisive estrangement or wheedling alienation splintering the center of self. Cityscapes are long in the coming and the "land is endless." There is no such place as the liminal for this is the "middle and immeasurable meadow of North America." It is beyond measure and delineation, "beyond maps and geography, beyond the accounts of the voyageurs, almost beyond the distance of dreams." The circumference has become lost in the center because "here, for those old wanderers, was the center of the world, the sacred ground of sacred ground" (Momaday, The Ancient Child 244).

In the sacred, language itself is sentient. "Voice"
is the palpable presence of the intangible, the living connection between winds and prayers, eagles and shamans, dreams and destinies. "Language is the repository of [our] whole knowledge and experience, and it represents the only chance [we have] for survival" (Momaday, "Man Made of Words" 172). Yet this "sacred ground" is no easy paradise, but the destination of a long, arduous journey of struggle and survival not against the land but with it. The ancients "followed herds of huge, lumbering animals down the long, cold cordillera, following the visions of their shamans, who rattled Arctic bones and cried in the voices of owls and eagles and whose prayers were the lowing of thousand-mile winds." Arctic bones, eagles and owls, shamans, visions and voices coalesce in the sacred, each an incarnation of the other in a precarious and evanescent relationship that is not to be reasoned out but lived within.

However, in contemporary times, the land is now scored and surveyed, marked and measured, where boundaries are the norm, and Native American voices are placed in the dangerously liminal; their articulations mute and marginal. The power of sacred discourse seems silenced by "a speed that is tearing our lives asunder, a sense of deadness in the spaces we inhabit, an alienation from the products that surround us," and a vile "separation from the natural world of which we are a part" (Duvert 204). As Wallace Stevens
puts it, "we live in an old chaos of the sun" (8), so it is not surprising that in the late twentieth century, theories and beliefs, convention and invention, masculine and feminine, words and their meanings reel and collide. Momaday explains that "one effect of the Technological Revolution has been to uproot us from the soil. We have become disoriented; we have suffered a kind of psychic dislocation of ourselves in time and space. We may be perfectly sure of where we are in relation to the supermarket and the next coffee break, but I doubt that any of us knows where he is in relation to the stars and to the solstices" ("Man Made of Words" 166).

This sense of displacement and disorientation is expressed by Rick Casillas in his poem, "Yaqui Women." Published in Sun Tracks in 1977, "Yaqui Women" delineates the disintegration of a mythic connection with the land. As the women become dislocated from their "home place," so they lose their voice and identity. Their tribal language becomes spent, emptied of meaning and cohesion; its sentient connection with the sacred grows cold in Casillas' descent of women:

**Yaqui Women**

Behind her, mesquite and caliche dirt.
Before her, mesquite and caliche dirt.
Rita would have laughed had anyone been there
to tell her she'd crossed a boundary.
She'd have lifted her scarf painted
with Our Lady of Guadalupe
and uncovered her ammunition belt;
she'd have lifted her medicine pouch of a hundred pockets
and said, "There are things that people have made,
and people may make them in as many pieces as they please.
No people made the earth; no people can divide it.
The muscles of this place flex across a skeleton of mountains
and if anyone were fool enough to cut the earth it would spit blood

the way a horned toad does
the way the earth does when it splits itself
and spurts a shelf of rock to scab a wounded hillside.
Can I fail to find my home wherever rocks fall down mountains
to remind me of the blood that washes my own bones?
You might as well say that the Yaqui words could be cut from my tongue
or my soul out from me before I die.
You might as well say that the wind could push me from my home.

If there was dirt, Rita's daughter could force corn and squash from it;
If there were stones, she could make them grind her meal.
Elena gripped the land until it sweated out her harvest
and she'd have snorted had her mother been there
to deny that she'd put the caliche and mesquite behind her,
between her and the days when Rita had walked among the Yaqui
and spoken the tongue Elena never used.
"It cost enough to send your bones back to your land," Elena would have said,
"so don't tell me that nothing separates it from mine.
When the man came to take my picture — take a piece of my soul,
as you'd have said, to put on a piece of paper —
didn't I insist on standing in front of the fields
whose dirt I carry in my nails and whose pebbles hobble my step?
Could I find a home where I could not hear the mission bells,
where I could not walk to the top of the mountain
and see the roofs of the town?
You might as well say that the wind could push me from my home."

At the word of a man she'd never seen, Elena left her land.
Her bones lie under the town, where her daughter lives.
Ernestina has followed her husbands when they went to join armies
at the bidding of the same unseen man.
The women did not even feel the wind of his voice as it pushed them from their homes.
So little does Ernestine know the place she lives
that when she looks at the ground she sees dirt
and does not recognize oncoming life
and cannot feel the compelling pulse of earth
that her grandmother saw in rock thrust through a mountainside,
that her mother saw in sprouting plants that cheated smothering stillbirth,
pushing away a caul of pebbles to gasp in the open air.
Ernestine knows no Yaqui to speak to her sons
and the sons of her sons
will let the metate grow cold on the porch.

In this descent of women, one generation proceeds from
the next in a relentless movement into rootlessness. To be
unbound from the earth generates dissolution and silence:
"Ernestine knows no Yaqui to speak to her sons/and the sons
of her sons/will let the metate grow cold on the porch."
The decline of the Yaquis is prefigured in the decline of
the women, who, originally, belong to a tradition empowered
by caliche dirt, engendered by mesquite:

Behind her, mesquite and caliche dirt.
Before her, mesquite and caliche dirt.
Rita would have laughed had anyone been there
to tell her she'd crossed a boundary.

Encircled by "mesquite and caliche dirt," tough and
tenacious symbols of endurance, Rita is a woman who belongs
to the land, and her identification with it is sensual and
distinctly physical, yet there are no boundaries to hem her
in. Her spirit has not been severed from the physical, and
she "would have laughed had anyone been there/to tell her
she'd crossed a boundary." Boundaries are incomprehensible
for her: "You might as well say that the Yaqui words could
be cut from my tongue/or my soul cut from me before I die./
You might as well say that the wind could push me from my
home." Rita's "roots ran deep into the earth, and from
those depths she drew strength enough to hold still against
all the forces of chance and disorder. And she drew
strength enough to hold still against all the forces of
change and disorder. And she drew therefrom the sustenance
of meaning and of mystery as well" (Momaday, "Man Made of
Rita's sense of self is encompassed by a totality that comes from the earth, and her body moves with "the muscles of this place" that "flex across a skeleton of mountains." Rita is a woman of war and defiance, tied to fertility, death and bones, the skeleton of the land that spits blood "the way a horned toad does." Rita is a primeval woman of power centered in a violence that defies boundaries: "She'd have lifted her scarf painted with Our Lady of Guadalupe [sic]/and uncovered her ammunition belt/ she'd have lifted her medicine pouch of a hundred pockets/ and said, "There are things that people have made,/and people may make them in as many pieces as they please./No people made the earth; no people can divide it.../Can I fail to find my home wherever rocks fall down mountains/to remind me of the blood that washes my own bones?"

There is an equation of bone, blood, rock and rupture, soul and language in Rita's portrait that ties her to elemental images of generation and violence. She is a medicine woman, identified with "Our Lady of Guadalupe [sic]," or Tonatzin-Guadalupe, the mother-mountain, who is the "mother of gods and men, of stars and ants, of maize and agave" (Paz xix). Guadalupe is associated with war and independence, the engendering and suffering earth, with compassion and sacrifice. Tonatzin-Guadalupe is the incarnation of Tonantzin-Cihuacoatl, "Our mother, the wife
of the serpent," and the Virgin Mary (Lafaye 212).

Yaquis say "that the Guadalupe is a manifestation of the Virgin," and some say that "all the Marys are the same, including Guadalupe (Painter 154), and they "feel a tender compassion for the sorrowing mother" (Painter 81). One etehoi or story explains that when Christ was about to be crucified, "Mary made herself into a tree to receive Him, so that He could die in her arms" (Painter 84). The Yaqui say that "the cross is the Mother of the pueblo....And the Virgin is the Mother of everyone." This connection between the Virgin and the mesquite is carried farther in that "Yaquis do not like stone crosses and monuments because they are too artificial. They like mesquite. It is native born for this purpose. That is what a mesquite tree is for....A mesquite cross means more to them than a stone or iron cross, because they have in their minds that Jesus was crucified on a mesquite cross" (Painter 87). Growth, endurance, suffering and transformation are associated with Mary and the mesquite and, by extension, with Guadalupe and Rita. Guadalupe is a complex deity for the Yaqui, and Rita's identification with her creates an ambiguous woman of power who incorporates the invulnerability of the godhead with the vulnerability of the human.

Rita's daughter Elena has no direct identification with the Virgin, but she tried to strike root in the soil, forcing "corn and squash from it." She "gripped the land
until it sweated out her harvest and she'd have snorted had her mother been there to deny that she'd put the caliche and mesquite behind her." Elena is tough like her mother, identifying with the land, but there is a desperation in her defiance as she grips the town as well as the soil.

Elena represents the transitional woman who desperately identifies not with the supernatural wilderness of her mother, but with the cultivated fields. The modern world is moving in on Elena, and she "never used" the Yaqui language. She counts the distance between her mother's homeland and her own town by the expense of sending Rita's bones back to a land that is clearly separate and distinct from Elena's. She imagines arguing with her mother, and her voice fills with ambivalence: "It cost enough to send your bones back to your land,.../so don't tell me that nothing separates it from mine." As Elena tenaciously holds to her land she becomes alienated from Rita's, and her desperation foreshadows the boundary and rule declared by an "unseen man" who finally forces Elena to leave the land, and her "bones lie under the town, where her daughter lives."

Ernestine is the ultimate representation of the rootless woman. "So little does Ernestine know the place she lives/that when she looks at the ground she sees dirt/ and does not recognize oncoming life/and cannot feel the compelling pulse of earth/that her grandmother saw in rock
thrust through a mountainside." She has become so disconnected to the land that she drifts, aimlessly following "her husbands when they went to join armies/at the bidding of the same unseen man."

There is no defiance, laughter, or even desperation about Ernestine, only a bleak silence. Ernestine "knows no Yaqui to speak to her sons." With the loss of a vital connection with the land comes loss of voice. There is no enlivening belief in the sacred, "compelling pulse of the earth...that her mother saw in sprouting plants that cheated smothering stillbirth,/pushing away a caul of pebbles to gasp in the open air." For Rita and Elena, the earth is the source of continuing birth. Even the rupture of "rock thrust through a mountainside" is an acknowledgement of the violent nature of generation, of the complex intimacy between wounding and nurturing inherent in the feminine power of the godhead expressed by Rita and Guadalupe.

Ernestine is an inarticulate outline, defined by her husbands. Sensuality and spirituality have become nonexistent or perhaps a tedious routine in Ernestine's aimless wanderings behind her succession of husbands. She ceases to be an extension of a powerful, albeit contradictory, deity and is at the mercy of an empty oppressive domination. Power has shifted to the masculine, and it is the "sons of her sons" who "let the
The metate grow cold on the porch.

The metate is an ancient symbol of rock and work, nourishment and tradition. It is a constellation that embodies the world of Rita's wilderness and Elena's cultivated fields; it is an archaic and functional image, recalling ancient identities. As the metate grows cold so does the recognition of the earth as a sentient consciousness, where sacrifice and death have meaning and engender renewal and continuance. Ernestine and her progeny suffer a poverty of perception, a kind of death that knows no sense of regeneration. Theirs is a continuance void of meaning. "To strike root is to bury oneself in the earth," to understand that she is "both womb and grave" (Paz xix). Ernestine is rootless, therefore powerless; her abuse prefigures the abuse of the earth. Ernestine can be equated with La Chingada, "the violated mother exposed to the outside world, ravaged by the Conquest" (Paz xix). There seems to be an aimless despair ending the poem, but cultural historian, James Clifford, would encourage us to wonder and question: "is it possible to resist the poem's momentum" (5)?

If we read against the poem's momentum, we can view the descent as a dialogue, containing multiple voices, even Ernestine's silence would be viewed as only one image of many "emergent possibilities" (Clifford 7). As Casillas' poem delineates disintegration, it simultaneously creates
powerful female voices in the characters of Rita, Guadalupe, and Elena and their identification with and validation from the upthrusting rock and stolid mountainside, the fecund fields and enduring mesquite. The primeval, mythical associations of the horned toad spitting tears of blood and the tenacious, empowering caliche dirt are enduring purveyors signifying a living tradition.

Thus, we can view the poem synchronically, moving outside and beyond chronology to consider each woman as an archetype that preserves her unique characterization, so that the poem presents a pattern of reversal as well as descent. In the contemporary world, Our Lady of Guadalupe is still evoked every time we read the first two stanzas of the poem. She is a numinous entity still accessible to Ernestine's daughters as well as the sons of her sons. Given the archetypes of the poem, we have multiple paths to follow in our interpretations. Descent into deterioration is one of many emergent possibilities, or Ernestine's silence can be viewed, following Clifford's lead, as a space of discontinuity rather than as signaling the complete cessation of tribal consciousness.

Simon Ortiz tells us that "poetry is prayer...poetry is ritual language," and a poem is a "celebration of the fact of our existence; when we sing, we sing to bring about ourselves. Song is not just expression, but it really is an enactment, an act of consciousness" (367). Leslie Silko
echoes Ortiz but adds: "We are taught to remember who we are: our ancestors, our origins. We must know the place we came from because it has shaped us and continues to make us who we are" ("Old-Time Indian Attck" 213). Through his song, then, Casillas captures the disintegration of his people and "celebrates" the mythic source of Yaqui consciousness. "Yaqui Women" reminds us of who we are, where we have come from, what we have lost, and, most importantly, what we may still gain. As Momaday points out, "the loss is less important to me than the spirit which informs the remembrance" ("The Magic of Words" 183), and he emphasizes the importance and power of language: "man has consummate being in language, and there only. The state of human being is an idea, an idea which man has of himself. Only when he is embodied in an idea, and the idea is realized in language can man take possession of himself" ("Man Made of Words" 168). So it is in the language of their literature: sermons, songs and stories that Ernestine's sons and daughters can "take possession" of themselves and retrieve or reinvent the voice of their great grandmothers who, like Rita, identify with the mysterious mother-mountain, mother-water, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Yet there is a great concern that Yaqui children are losing touch with who they are and where they come from, with their ancestors and origins. Contemporary Yaqui
storyteller Mini Valenzuela Kaczkurkin writes out her stories because she is "afraid these cuentos [stories] will die out" (V). But the stories have endured as the Yoeme have survived because the Yaqui have always understood the intimacy between language and being. For the Yaqui, to survive was to know the language of the winds and their river, the desert and the deer, the mountains and the Mexican, the coyote and the city. Yaqui deer singer Felipe Molina and Larry Evers explain that "a recognition of sound as language...is central in Yaqui tradition."

They emphasize that "in a significant way, all beginnings in Yaqui oral history involve such recognitions. The sounds that need to be understood may come from fishes, caves, or invading Spaniards. They may be a part of what we call myth, history, vision, or dream, but time and again in Yaqui stories the people must understand sound from beyond the limits of the everyday language of their communities in order to continue. In this sense there are no creators in Yaqui tradition, only translators. All beginnings are translations" (36).

Translated and transplanted into English, German, Spanish and other European languages, Yaqui stories shifted and changed, shaped by the contours of foreign lands and the rhythms and nuances of alien languages. But the stories endured, reflecting and recording the transplantings, displacements and upheavels of the Yoeme as
they struggled to continue as a tribal people.

"Survival through storytelling" (Danielson 333) is a protean process which shifts and changes, metamorphosizing as the voice of the teller responds to the dictates of time, the needs of the audience, the contours of the landscape and the fluctuating pressures and tensions of the rhetorical situation. In The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation (1983), Dennis Tedlock emphasizes that the "speaking storyteller" can project the world of the story into "the collective experience of the very room or dooryard where it is being told. There is a fusion of intimacies when the speaker calls attention to the fact that the stage set of a scene in the story was the same as the present set of its telling, or compares a character in the story with someone in the audience. Fusion moves to the cosmic level when the time of day or weather or season of the story is compared with what it is right now, and when a character moves east and the speaker motions eastward from the spot of telling about it, there is a momentary fusion of centers" (11). It is this fortitude and flexibility of the story to change and, paradoxically, to remain the same as it travels through time and circumstance which binds native people together. No matter where they are or what they have suffered and celebrated, storytellers can, momentarily, suspend time, creating a "fusion of centers." Storytellers survive as long as their
words survive; they are creators. "The storyteller... creates himself, and his listeners, through the power of his perception, his imagination, his expression, his devotion to important details.... He is a holy man; his function is sacred.... The storyteller and the story told are one" (Momaday, "To Save a Great Vision" 32-36).

In 1942 when Ruth Warner Giddings accompanied anthropologist Edward Spicer and his wife, Rosamond, to the Río Yaqui to collect stories, Mexico was settling down from the tumult of the Revolution, and the Yaquis were rebuilding their sacred homeland. In 1937, President Cardenas ceded to the Yaqui tribe the "whole extension of workable land located on the right bank of the Yaqui River, with the necessary water for irrigation from the dam in construction at Angostura, similarly all the mountain lands known as 'Sierra del Yaqui,'" also known as the Bacatete Mountains (Spicer, The Yaquis 263). After many years of fighting, the Yaquis finally had attained legal rights to a large portion of their original sacred territory. The years of extermination, deportation, and warfare were over, yet there existed, until the 1970s, Mexican military occupation of the Yaqui lands, particularly at Vicam Station (Spicer, The Yaquis 236). Within this historical context, Yaqui storytellers told their etehoim or stories to Giddings, and their narratives survive in English.

Rather than being the "enemy" language, English can
shield, protect and preserve stories. In fact, one of
Giddings' narrators, Juan Valenzuela, about 55, fluent in
both Yaqui and Spanish, insisted that his stories "should
be printed only in English and only in the United states,
in order that Mexicans might not read" them. Valenzuela
"and his family took active part in wars against the
Mexicans. They lived in the sierras when they were driven
from their pueblo." In 1942, he was very active in
political affairs of Rahum, one of the sacred eight pueblos
in the Río Yaqui (Folk Literature vii). Valenzuela's
comment reminds us of the continuing tensions and conflict
some Yaqui felt for the Mexicans, yet it acknowledges also
the power inherent in narratives and language, that
language can veil as well as reveal, that stories hold
something vital that must be protected.

Consummate Yaqui storyteller, Ambrosio Castro, from
the Río Yaqui, also understood the power inherent in
stories, and he told Giddings that he refused "to give
detailed information on the geography of the Río Yaqui for
fear that it might fall into the hands of enemies of the
Yaquis." Castro, fluent in Yaqui and Spanish, fought under
Generals Matus and Espinosa, but later, "when Yaquis were
being hunted out and deported, he lived like a Mexican,
away from the Río Yaqui. He worked as a house man, a
muleteer, railroad worker in Guaymas, and, much later, as a
candy vendor and a handyman at the government agricultural
school near Vicam. Now [1942], when not farming with his family, he works as a traveling tinsmith, visiting from pueblo to pueblo" in the Rio Yaqui "where he has many relatives and friends" (Folk Literature v-vi).

Castro was about 54 in 1942 when he told his stories to Giddings, explaining that he learned a great many ancient beliefs and tales from his paternal grandmother, who was a curer or "good witch," a bruja or curandera; in Yaqui, she would be called a hitebi. Castro's great-grandfather was said to be a very great pascola which is a "special kind of dancer and storyteller" (Folk Literature v). Both the hitebi and pascola are important tradition bearers for the Yaqui; through their actions and stories, they carry on and transmit important information that culturally link the Yaqui together. As storyteller, Castro participates in his family's role as preserver and purveyor of Yaqui custom. As Muriel Thayer Painter emphasizes, "old and new legends bind the whole [Yaqui world] together" (109).

Castro told Giddings the following story, "Malinero'okai and Aaki Sewa," which shows the vital connection Yaquis make between history and story. Castro says, "This bit of history was told me by a little old lady named Mayo Juriano. She is a direct descendant of Malinero'okai" (Yaqui Oral 12):
Malinero'okai and Aaki Sewa

The Spaniards had just entered the Yaqui sierra. It was just when they battled the Indians in the heights of the Batachim sierra that Malinero'okai, with her little girl, descended into the depths of a canyon at the foot of the hill where they were fighting.

Malinero'okai was frightened because never in her life had she heard the sound of fire-arms which now echoed in the heart of the hills. Quickly she took up her baby girl whom she carried in a cradle of skins made from the wolves her husband had hunted. The valiant Ta'a Himsi, her husband, also was in battle. Malinero'okai was afraid and alone with her little girl, the beautiful Aaki Sewa. She wrapped the little one in wildcat skin and put her on her shoulders. She took a long stick with a point, that served her both as a cane and arm, and she walked down the rocky, waterless arroyo. As she traveled thus she contemplated the cliffs and occasional fronds of kauchunam. These enchanting trees reminded her that she and her husband had passed by here two weeks before.

She traveled thus, out of the Batachim sierra in the morning of that day. It was the hot month of August, and she traveled without stopping even a moment to take a drop of the fresh cool shade of the leafy trees. In the afternoon, Malinero'okai arrived where there was a bit of water, at a place where the arroyo made a sharp turn.
Taking the child from her shoulders, she placed her in the shade of a tree. She, herself, took some water and then cut some grass and branches for a bed. She lay down beside her little girl and, together, they passed the rest of the afternoon. Later she again set out and walked until night had come. In the midst of darkness she found refuge under some branches and spent the night there. She was accompanied by the songs of birds of night, the howl of coyotes and the cry of the tiger as she quietly fed her child. Those animals did not cause her to fear for she was used to hearing them all her life.

The following morning very early she hunted some fruits and roots and ate them with good appetite. The little girl, Aaki Sewa, who was scarcely three months old, rested as her mother ate. The mother said to her, "Would you like to eat some fruit?" And she offered it to her, but at the same time she added, "No, you may not eat them because you are very little and it might do you some harm and your father would be angry."

That morning, with the freshness, Malinero'okai took to the road at a good pace. She was young and strong, agile at climbing and descending the heights and depths of the trail. At midday she found herself at the waterhole which is both enchanting and enchanted. It lies at the foot of some cliffs called the pillars. The Spanish call it pilares. But the Yaquis call this water-hole
pilaesi'im. It is a great eye of water, profoundly deep and it never goes dry. The Yaquis say that it is really an enchanted pueblo which was converted into water. Here, Malinero'okai came, and she encountered some families she knew. There were all very glad to see her. They offered her atole of pechitas and of mesquites. As she rested, she talked with an intimate friend of hers, "You who are an old woman and know something, tell me, Wiru Masa, is it certain that this waterhole is an enchanted pueblo?"

"Yes, it is the pueblo of the oldest Indians. I don't know if they were Yaquis or Surem. But your disbelief will be dispersed."

Effectively, at seven in the evening they heard noises. They heard the calls of little boys and the sound of a violin. The two women went down to the shore of the pool but they saw nothing here except a gourd and some watermelons. They heard the sound of the teneboim worn by pascolas as they danced. And many laughs. Then all at once all stopped.

"Now you know," said Wiru Masa.

"Yes," said Malinero'okai.

The two women retired to their camping place. They were chatting like friends when they heard the word. It was quite late at night. The word was spoken softly, "Dios'em chani'abu."

"Dios'em chi'okwe," answered the women. The recently
arrived ones were two Yaqui men who had been fighting in the Batachim sierra. Having been greeted, they were allowed to come up to the women's camp.

Malinero'okai asked about her husband, Ta'a Himsi. And the others asked about their husbands.

"Ta'a Himsi was killed," said one of the men whose name was Wikoa Wikia. "Ta'a Himsi died out there in the afternoon. That is all we know."

"The Spaniards we chased to Otam Kaki. They turned back on us and killed some Yaquis. But on that hill and on the other hill also we killed many of them."

"This I knew, my Dios told me," said Malinero'okai. "My man, so young and valiant." With profound sadness the young girl spoke.

On the following morning Wikoa Wikia said to the women, "It would be better if all of you left here for Wicho'em or returned to Tabero Ba'am. Or, we could take you to Nabo Hakia or to Sibam. It is very pretty country there, more beautiful than here. There is much grass and wild food. Here are many dangers. Those who live in these water-holes are evil. Only wizards and devil-makers live here and if they should awake in bad humor they would harm you. They may turn into animals, or they may strike at you from the depths of the water. Also there is another very sure danger here," added Wikoa Wikia. "When it rains this arroyo fills with water. If you stay here
you risk all these dangers. So tell me to which place you would like to go."

"Take us to Sibam."

Thus they set out, leaving Pilaesi'm. In order to reach Sibam they traveled three days. It is quite distant, Sibam, away to the north.

In three days they arrived at another water-hole, new homes, new surroundings, happy and enjoyable, for now they had time to make homes and they had many new neighbors.

All was beautiful except for Malinero'okai. For her all was sad. Every day she became sadder. She didn't want to eat. She cried for Ta'a Himsi. The valiant Ta'a Himsi. Finally she died.

Her little girl, Aaki Sewa, was taken over by her friends who brought her up until she was a grown and beautiful girl. (Giddings, Anthropological Papers 41-42).

Although Castro told Giddings that he will not "give detailed information on the geography of the Rio Yaqui for fear that it might fall into the hands of enemies of the Yaquis," his story is replete with detail, lore and tradition, place names and locations (Folk Literature v). As an unreliable narrator, Castro "protects" the details of his story; he reveals but warns us not to believe the specifics. However, given the rich detail, the reader can't help but wonder if the story is a kind of disguised map; if we went to Batachim, would we find the enchanting
"Kauchunam" trees or the ancient, enchanted pueblo at the base of "pilaesi'im"? Through images that are both precise and vague, Castro catches the feeling of the Yaqui homeland. The reality of his facts cease to be important as he conveys "a little bit of history" told to him by "a little old lady named Mayo Juriano," who is a direct descendant of Malinero'okai. The story survives as a registry of descent and genealogy. Mayo Juriano knows who she is, where she comes from, who her ancestors are, their struggles, triumphs and defeats. As Castro tells her story, he becomes a kind of historian, speaking on tribal history, and we come to understand what the Yaquis have endured under the reign of the Spaniards. As Giddings records, considers, translates and rewrites, and as we read her text, all of us continue in the telling and retelling of Yaqui etehoim. Perhaps, then, we may come to learn that "the imaginative experience and the historical express equally the traditions" of our reality (Momaday, Way To Rainy Mountain 4).

The story provides us a way to enter into Yaqui history. The Spaniards are equated with drastic and dramatic change. The only thing that Malinero'okai fears is the "sound of fire-arms which now echoed in the heart of the hills." With the sound comes a new era for the Yaqui, and we follow Malinero'okai on her journey out of the Sierras. She is a woman of the wilderness, moving easily
through the steep canyons. Though she is a young mother, having given birth only three months before, Malinero'okai is "strong, agile at climbing and descending the heights and depths of the trail." And she is at home with the night birds, coyotes and wild animals of the Batachim. The "occasional fronds of the Kauchunam" trees "remind her that she and her husband had passed by here two weeks before." The mountains are her home, providing her with everything she needs for survival. Her child is wrapped in "wildcat skin," and her mother knows how to follow the canyon down to a "great eye of water, profoundly deep," which never goes dry. "The Yaquis say that it is really an enchanted pueblo which was converted into water." At the center of the story is a little bit of lore that ties the Yaqui to ancient origins, and tells the reader that the Yaqui have "always believed in other worlds" (Evers and Molina 60).

Before the coming of the Spaniards and the Jesuits, the huya ania, the wilderness world, "was the source of all things--the food and tools of everyday reality, as well as the special powers of dance and song. It was the source of all, and men were merely an element within it" (Spicer, The Yaquis 65). The Yaquis, like Malinero'okai, lived within the huya ania; there was no separation between the natural world and the world of men and women, and their world was filled with plentitude and beauty and endowed with the sacred. "This spiritual dimension of the huya ania was
sometimes spoken of as the **yo ania**, which is to say, 'the ancient and honorable realm,' that is, the domain or world of respected powers, for **yo** means 'honored' and also 'elder'" (Spicer, *The Yaquis* 64). "Yo" can also be translated as enchanted and ancient. The yo ania is always associated with the "oldest Indians," the Yaqui ancestors, the **Surem**, who were quite small, maybe 3 feet high (Painter 4). Though it is an ancient, primordial power, the yo ania is everywhere present in the **huya ania**, even in contemporary times, and it is "highly dangerous," regarded as both good and evil (Painter 3). The yo ania is associated with the **batnaataka** or mythical times, yet at any moment, it can make its presence felt. It can overwhelm one with enchantment.

There are special places in the **huya ania** or wilderness where the power of the yo ania is very strong, "such as the springs on the eastern margin of the Bacatetes or the very heart of the mountains, where snakes with rainbows on their foreheads lived and swam in the water. These serpents possessed special forms of the power of the yo ania, and they could make the power available to human beings. There were also wild sheep who lived in the mountains, the Bacatetes and others farther away, always in the highest places, and they also were the proprietors of power that emanated from the yo ania. This power, with many different sources in the huya aniya and many different
manifestations among Yaquis who shared in it, is a sort of essence of the huya ania" (Spicer, The Yaquis 64.)

As short as the story of Malinero'okai and Aaki Sewa is, it still speaks of many ancient origins, evoking a multitude of associations. That Malinero'okai would come upon the enchanted pueblo at the base of Pilaesi'im brings forth the yo ania with all its power. Malinero'okai wonders if it is really true what they say about this waterhole. She asks her friend, "You who are an old woman and know something, tell me, Wiru Masa, is it certain that this waterhole is an enchanted pueblo?" "Yes," answers Wiru Masa, "it is the pueblo of the oldest Indians. I don't know if they were Yaquis or Surem. But your disbelief will be dispersed." And surely as the dusk is settling in and the evening darkens in the "hot month of August," the women "heard the calls of little boys and the sound of a violin. The two women went down to the shore of the pool but they saw nothing here except a gourd and some watermelons. They heard the sound of the teneboim worn by pascolas as they danced. And many laughs. Then all at once all stopped. 'Now you know,' said Wiru Masa."

The story eases doubt and affirms Yaqui belief and tradition. Malinero'okai now believes. There is no reason not to; she has heard the music of the enchanted pueblo, and tradition tells her what it is and why it is. In fact, Malinero'okai is caught up in the ancient, "sacred legend
of the Talking Tree, Kutanokame or Tree Talking," which told and warned the Yaqui ancestors, the Surem, of the coming of the Spaniards, of pain and suffering, of war and death. The Surem who did not want to exist in inimi buan bwia, this weeping land, were given the chance to leave, and some went into the sea and into the ground and away into the mountains to live in an enchanted way. Those who stayed became the Yaquis, and, like Malinero'okai's husband, the "valiant Ta'a Himsi," were fated to fight with the Spaniards.

When the word of her husband's death came to her, "it was quite late at night. The word was spoken softly, 'Dios'em chani'abu, [God aid you].' 'Dios'em chi'okwe [God forgive you],' answered the women." On the thread of a line spoken in Yaqui, the women know these two are friends. Language bonds them together, it is the first language of the Yoeme, the people, and it holds its place in a story told in the 1940s and again in 1990. "There is no danger of the spirit of the language being lost...because the spirit proceeds out of the people themselves" (Momaday, qtd in Roemer 29). Malinero'okai, upon hearing that her husband was killed "out there in the afternoon," replies "This I knew, my Dios told me." Yaquis believe very strongly in a gift called seataka, flower body or cuerpo de flores, which is "given in the womb," and cannot be inherited or acquired; "it is a channel between man and
nature in all its forms, including animals. It is helpful in daily life but also carries with it the aura of the ancient, natural world, the world of flowers, trees, animals, all wild life" (Painter 12). It is through this power that Malinero'okai knows that her husband has died, and though she knows, she suffers profoundly and "finally she died." Yaquis call someone who is in such pain and filled with sorrow a tristeza (Kelly, Yaqui Women), and they know that presentiment does not necessarily waylay sorrow.

Malinero'okai's daughter, little Aaki Sewa, Organ Pipe Cactus Flower, is "taken over by her friends who brought her up until she was a grown and beautiful girl." Even though both her parents are dead, Aaki Sewa has a place among her people, and she grows and, obviously, has an incredibly long line of descent as we remember that she is the ancestor of Mayo Juriano, one of the original narrators of the story.

Though it is just a quick sketch, the story encompasses both tragedy and sorrow, yet ends in hope and promise through the survival of the child. The story prompts us to believe, to suspend our disbelief, and embedded in its simple structure is a host of other stories which would be known by Yaqui people, enhancing their perception of it. Stories always carry other stories, "and one story is only the beginning of many." As Silko points out, "stories
never truly end" ("Language and Literature" 56). If a child wonders what teneboim is, well, then someone, perhaps a deer singer like Felipe Molina, might answer:

Everything the deer dancer uses in his dance has held life. The cocoon rattles \( \text{teneboim} \) around his legs were once homes of the butterflies. As we dance we want the butterfly to know that, even if he is dead, his spirit is alive and his house is occupied. The gourd rattles in the dancer's hands give life to the plant world. The rattles around the dancer's waist are deer hooves. They represent the millions of deer who have died so that men might live. (Evers and Molina 129)

Yaquis have an inherent respect for all living things, and for them the earth is sentient, and death is a gift, a sacrifice so that others may live and prosper. Death can be understood as a kind of dance, a ritual of exchange, "which comes to everyone living on earth, even to the tiniest insect which had life itself--in payment. That it would be taken back into the earth in payment for this nourishment during life" (Painter 8). Stories tell us who we are, why we exist, why we die. Isak Dinesen reminds us "that all sorrows can be born if we put them into a story or tell a story about them" (qtd in Momaday, "Man Made of
Words" 169).

For Arizona Yaquis, the etehoim, cuentos or stories are very important. Mini Valenzuela Kaczkurkin sees storytelling as a vital link between identity and self-esteem:

Because Yaqui children do not know the Yaqui language and because they are exposed the entire day to Anglo schools and ideas, it is hard for parents to pass down the Yaqui cuentos to them. There is a need among the young to identify with something good, something to be proud of, and our elders have that pride. (V)

As refugees from the Mexican Government, many of the Yaqui elders "thought that their homes here were only a temporary shelter before they returned home to the Rio Yaqui. However, the wars went on for so long that many of these temporary shelters became permanent homes" (Kaczkurkin V). The elders brought their hopes and fears, their suffering and stories to Arizona, but they never forgot their homeland, and on warm summer evenings after a long day's work, they would gather and talk about the "old days and ways":

Then any event--a shooting star, a streak of
bad luck, a new born child--would start off an evening of "Do you remember..?" as they recounted cuentos [stories or etehoim] and talked of things that happened before the wars. Their children, our parents, would gather outside along the fringes of the group to listen to stories of the supernatural, of laughter, pain, and hope, all the voices from long ago. (Kaczkurkin V).

As a child growing up in Arizona, Mini heard most of these stories from her grandmother, and she has a great need to pass on the stories to Yaqui children because they "do not know the Yaqui language," and because "there is a need among the young to identify with something good, something to be proud of, and our elders have that pride" (V). As Mini points out, knowledge of being a Yaqui is preserved and passed on through stories, etehoim, and the storyteller embodies "all the voices from long ago." The storyteller, like a weaver, threads together and creates, if only for a moment, a quality of being that invests the teller and her audience with meaning and a sharing of identity and self through story. That unique telling is a complete whole unto itself, created by the time of day, a certain incident, the mood of the listeners, the season of the year, the occasion of the utterance, the quality of the
place and nature of the landscape.

For the Yaqui storyteller, "any event--a shooting star" would, perhaps, prompt a response like "well there goes Suawaka, the little man, you know, he's a kind of dwarf, and well, yes that was him. That streak, there, you just saw it. Well, Suawaka was killing the terrible seven headed serpent who lives in those dark caves in the Bacatete, Mountains, so he could take meat back to his father-in-law, Yuku, who rules the rain and only eats snakemeat. Suawaka shoots a harpoon of fire at the serpent, who comes out once in every seven years, and when he comes out, he creates a terrific wind and floods.

You know, one time, and no one knows why, but Suawaka took a little boy right out of his own backyard, a yard very much like this one here in Tucson. He swept the little boy high up into the clouds where Yuku and everyone lives, but the boy just couldn't bring himself to eat the snake meat, and he grew thinner and thinner, and he almost starved to death but for Yuku's wife who couldn't stand to see this poor boy suffering and said, 'Why did you bring this boy up here, anyway? Take him home'" (Giddings, Yaqui Myths 56; Yaqui Oral Literature, 1).

Memory and voice bind together the past and present experience of the Yaqui. Theirs is an oral tradition filled with the tragedy and conquests of war, deportation, fragmentation and endurance, of love, witchcraft and
cruelty, magic and ceremony. Ancestors are evoked as their adventures are recounted. The eight sacred towns, Ume Wohnaiiki Pweplum, Los Ocho Pueblos are transported, through stories, from the Rio Yaqui to the barrios and villages of southern Arizona, and a link is maintained between ancient origins and new beginnings. The history of the people, the Yoeme, is preserved, continued, and reinvented through stories. In fact, "ancient Yaqui Indian stories" provided one of the arguments that helped Arizona Yaquis "prove" that they were "real" Indians. Until 1978, Yaquis were not recognized as American Indians.

In *Yaqui Deer Songs: Maso Bwikam* (1987), Larry Evers and Felipe Molina explain how a group of Arizona Yaquis, with the sponsorship of Representative Morris Udall, succeeded in changing their status and could no longer be characterized as "men without a country" (Spicer, *People of Pascua* 43). "In 1978, President Carter signed into law S. 1633 which provided trust status for the Pascua Yaqui Indians of Arizona. What is of special interest to us here is how Yaquis went about proving that they were 'real' Indians. At a hearing on this matter before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, September 27, 1977, Yaqui leader Anselmo Valencia introduced a series of arguments: Yaquis had lived within the area we call the United States long before there were international boundaries to divide the continent; most of the members of
the Pascua Yaqui community were born in the United States; many Yaqui Indians have served in various branches of the Armed Forces of the United States. But the heart of Mr. Valencia's successful argument was this:

The Yaquis are Indians in every sense of the word. We have our own language, our own culture, such as the Pascola dancing, the deer dancing, and the coyote dancing. These dances are Indian in origin. In the deer dance, we sing to honor the great mountains, the springs, the lakes. We sing of our father the Sun, and of creatures living and dead. We sing of trees and leaves and twigs. We sing of the birds in the sky and of the fish in the ocean. Our drummers play their music in their drums and flutes. All the songs sung and played are to the olden times—ancient Yaqui Indian stories....The Catholic faith and the various governments under which the Yaquis have had to suffer have tried for centuries to undermine our "Yaquiness," but after 400 years they have not succeeded. We have retained our language, our culture, and our Indianness. (19-20)

Embedded within "ancient Yaqui Indian stories" are
cycles of song and ceremony, custom and tradition. On the
tenuous and tenacious voice of the singer, stories survive,
and they remind us of who we are, where we come from, what
we have struggled with and what we may have lost or
created, and, if we listen carefully, they tell us where we
might be going in the late twentieth century as we live on
inim buan bwia, this weeping land. As Leslie Silko puts
it:

You don't have anything
if you don't have the stories.

(Ceremony 2)
There it is just like in a dream.

-Don Jesus Yoilo'i, *Yaqui Deer Songs*

CHAPTER II

BATNAATAKA: THE TIMELESS PAST OF ALL ORIGINS

There are many ways to look at Yaqui history and stories. One way is to consider the narrative as a point in chronological time; if a narrative has ancient Yaqui words and concepts, then we can confidently assign it to a "pre-Jesuit" era, calling it mythical or legendary. If the story has Jesuit trappings, then we can date and place it in the "post-Jesuit" era as Ruth Warner Giddings does in her analysis of Yaqui folk literature, and we can talk about the way indigenous people "retroactively" introduced prophecy to assuage painful memories of their conquest and domination (Ramsey 152-156). As anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski points out, "every historical change creates its own mythology" (qtd in Spicer, *The Yaquis* 172).

However, we can also switch focus and listen to what the Yaquis say about their stories. If we do that, we find that the dichotomy between pre and post-Jesuit is a vital dividing line, but not in the usual way that anthropologists or historians have defined it. For the Yaqui, the arrival of the Spaniards and Jesuits marked a point that was already prefigured in their oral tradition.
For the Yaquis, everything began long ago in the batnaataka, the time before time. In the batnaataka, their ancestors, the Surem, who were quite small, maybe 3 feet high, lived in the huya ania, the monte, or wild lands of the desert and mountains. Yaquis say there was no death then or boundaries or time, so it was like living in a dream--anything was possible, and the Surem were never sick. Each month they were renewed by the new moon, and they lived in unity with all living things. Animals, insects, flowers, trees, rivers and the little Surem lived together and understood each other through a power called seataka, cuerpo de flores or flower body (Spicer, The Yaquis 64-68; Painter 4-14).

Seataka, or sometimes seatakaa, is an ancient power that exists in contemporary times and reminds Yaquis of their primordial beginnings in the batnaataka, the time of no time. The person with seataka is called a seatakame and is very alert with a strong will and personality, showing great kindness and consideration. The seatakame knows that all things in the wilderness are powerful and alive, even the lakes and springs. The seatakame "takes a relation with the flower world," the sea ania. He knows it intimately. "He works it. He gets his direction from the stars" and notices minute transformations in each plant, carefully watching the way a tiny leaflet unfurls, and he listens to the birds and each unique sound of the
wilderness, even to the songs of Ki'chul, the cricket (Painter 14).

Someone without seataka is a kia polobe, just a poor person, and "everyone agrees that seataka is an innate, supernatural gift, 'given in the womb,' and that it cannot be inherited or acquired" (Painter 12). Seataka is talked about as a "protective energy of the hiapsi, the heart or spirit of a person. As a person grows up and gets older, he or she might become mean or evil. This will make their seatakaa diminish greatly. If a person continues to be evil and mean and so on, he will eventually lose that special power and never gain it back. People with the seatakaa must always be with a good heart and never think about harming another person" (Evers and Molina 53).

It is also common knowledge that "the witch [brujo or moreakame] can't hurt you if you have enough seataka" because the seatakame "dreams vividly...and is clairvoyant, able to see things happening at a distance. Dreams are meaningful in foretelling the future and revealing the machinations of witches" (Painter 15; Shutler 52). Yaquis say that "dreams are probably the most important indication of seataka. To dream frequent and unusual dreams suggests the presence of seataka, especially if the dreams foretell the future" (Shutler 85). It is also said that "before the flood, God was only known by seataka" (Painter 12).

The great flood took place during the batnaataka, "or
the timeless past of all origins," long before the arrival of the first Spaniards (Spicer, *The Yaguis* 176). When you see a rainbow, bending over the huya ania, the wilderness world, you know that the flood will never come again. It is a sacred symbol between Dios and the people, and so the prophets marked out the "Holy Dividing Line" of their sacred territory, as Yaquis speak of it (Spicer, *The Yaguis* 167-168). There were no boundaries in the batnaataka, so it was only through singing that the territory became realized. The four prophets, Ysidro Sinsai, Andres Cusmes, Andres Quizo, and Rabbi Couguama, were joined by a band of angels and together they walked and sang the Yaqui boundaries into being.

They began at the mouth of the Cocoraque Arroyo, beneath a peak named Mogonea, which has since sunk into the Gulf of California. Then, they turned northward, singing along the arroyo to a point some 50 miles north where, in the 19th century, a ranch called Cabora existed. Then, they marched across the Yaqui River and over hill country to a point called Takalaim, the Crotched Peak. All of the Bacatete Mountains were inside the Holy Dividing Line. Where they sang and walked, the prophets and their angel guard made the land sacred.

Once the holy boundary was surely defined, Yaqui prophets set out to establish the eight sacred towns; they went from east to west beginning with Cocorit, its
Spanish name, or in Yaqui, Ko'oko'im, Chile Peppers, which was designated by José Ignacio Vailutey. Bahcum, Where Water Comes Out, was established by a prophet of the Singing of the Boundary, Andres Cusmes, who named Santa Rosa as patroness and identified the town with Eden. Gray Tree-Living Rodents or Torim was founded by Patricio Huicolloli, who named St. Ignatius as patron. Vicam or Arrow Points was established by Jisto Jiozo and Potam, Ground Moles, by Juan José Sealey. Jistey Couguama founded Rahum, Hardened Ones, naming St. Manuel as patron. Huirivis, Wibism or Bird With Reddish Eyes, was founded by Sion Caumea Yomomoli while Belem, Flat, Slopping Place, was designated by Cosme Ta'ajinkoi, who named St. Peter as patron (Spicer, The Yaquis 27, 170-171).

So, for the Yaquis, the sacred pueblos existed before the arrival of the Spaniards. Everything was prefigured in the batnaatakai; it was like a dream, foreshadowing everything. As the Yaquis say, they fought so vigorously with the Spanish conquistador and slave trader Diego de Guzman in 1533 and in the 1600's invited the Jesuit priests into their land because they already knew they were coming; they called it the Konkista (Painter 12). So it can be said that for the Yaquis, this world of weeping, of suffering was meant to be; it was prefigured in a song:

The Singing Tree
Long ago when the Surem, our ancestors, lived upon the land, they discovered a tree singing by their pueblo. No one, not any of the susuakame, the village wise men, could understand the meaning of the singing tree, but everyone agreed that it had some powerful message for the people. So the susuakame came together and one of them remembered that there was a Sea Hamut, a wise old woman, who lived way out in the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn. He was sure that Sea Hamut, that is, Flower Woman, could help them decipher the meaning of the singing tree.

So it was decided that a group of men would travel through the wilderness and into the mountains to find Sea Hamut. The men left at dawn, travelling long and far into the huya ania before they found Sea Hamut's home. She was in the ramada and the men greeted her, "Dios em chania, mala, God aid you, mother." And the kind old Flower Woman replied, "Dios en chiokoe, hapchim, God forgive you, fathers." But her pet lion roared fiercely, terrifying the brave men. Sea Hamut smiled and spoke to the lion to quiet him. Mountain Lion obeyed but carefully eyed the strangers who were still too frightened to come into her patio. Sea Hamut encouraged them to enter and rest. Finally, the brave men rested under the shade of the ramada, and their spokesman told her all about the talking tree and described the profound confusion and great disarray among the people since no one could understand the songs of the singing
tree. He implored Sea Hamut, the Flower Woman, to help them: "you are the only one that is greatly gifted in wisdom, there is no one else who can, or will, discover the message of the singing tree. It is understood that there are some wise men in the pueblo, but most of them have the idea that it means something to the people which they don't understand, and now they depend on you."

Suddenly, a sturdy young woman entered the ramada carrying a fine young buck over her shoulders. She was shy of the strangers and went off to put away the deer meat. When she returned, the young girl quietly sat down by her mother's side. Yo'o Sea Hamut, Elder Flower Woman, then answered the men, "I am very old now and I cannot take these things myself. They are very hard for me, and I will not be able to travel through the forest a long way. But in my place I will send my daughter whom I have trained for this purpose. And I have prepared her for all the things that are necessary. And I already knew of your departure from the pueblo, and I was expecting you. And I was expecting this to come, and I prepared my daughter to take my place. Yes, I already knew about the singing tree and all that has happened in the pueblo of the people."

Sea Hamut turned to her daughter and told her that she was going to send her back to the pueblo to interpret the message of the tree. The young woman accepted all her mother's bidding, and answered, "In obedience I will go
with the men back to the pueblo." So they rested that evening and left early in the morning before sunrise to take the journey through the wilderness. As they were leaving, Mountain Lion started roaring in a very sad way, and then they were off. Young Sea Hamut was very strong and healthy. She easily took the journey and knew the wilderness intimately, even where she had not been. Sea Hamut knew the dangers of the wild animals and led the party wind-away from the beasts so that they would not catch their scent. All the dangers of the wilderness were taken care of by her. It was said that Sea Hamut was never tired and enjoyed the journey.

Finally, the pueblo came into view and Sea Hamut changed into a white dress that her mother had given her since it was the custom of the people. Everyone came to greet the wise old Sea Hamut, but to their surprise they found a fine young woman. Some of the women tried to embrace Sea Hamut, but she took this as a challenge, ready to fight. After all, she was a hunter and had little to do with people; her home was the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn, the sea ania. But, finally, everyone calmed down, and Sea Hamut was taken to the talking tree. She listened long and hard to the songs of the singing tree and knew their meaning. So she spoke to the Surem and told them about Dios and His power, about evil and its power, about Christianity and baptism. Seeds were to be planted
and cultivated for food. New animals would come with the
the priests and soldiers. Sea Hamut looked into history
and talked about famine, floods and drought, about planes,
trains and war, phones and electricity. Finally, she told
them that death, too, was coming. Death would come to
everyone living on earth, even to the tiniest insect which
had life itself—in payment—that it would be taken back
into the earth in payment for this nourishment during life.
There will be many years of hardship, suffering and
bloodshed, but, eventually, the people will overcome their
adversaries.

The Surem were very disturbed by these prophecies, and
many of the people did not want to be part of this new way,
so they divided up and the people made a great feast of
farewell. It is said that the deer came down to dance with
them. You can still see the place to this day; it is
called yoyi'iwakapo, the enchanted place of the farewell
dance. After the dance, the Surem went underground to live
in an enchanted way. Some say they went to live in the sea
and others went up into the mountains, and they exist there
to this day as an enchanted people. Those who stayed
behind grew taller and changed into the Yaquis as they are
now, and they were strong enough to fight off the Spaniards
when the time came (Painter 6-8; Valencia 190; Savala 39-
43).

Through the power of her seataka, Yo'o Sea Hamut,
Elder Flower Woman, already knows about the coming of the men, the singing tree, and the changes taking place in the world and prepares her daughter to "take her place" as a sea hamut, a woman of wisdom. There is a sense of the continuity of knowledge passing from the earth to the old woman to the young woman to the readers. There is a sense of order in this rhythm of movement and transformation as if it's simply time for this to happen. We get a sense of the inevitability of great cycles of time and shifting patterns, of a ceaseless flux to which a change, a turn, a necessary and inescapable movement has come about because it was in the order of things. The singing tree marks a definitive boundary "between an ancient Yaqui way of living and a way of living that takes account of the new world created by the European presence, a boundary between myth and history, immortality and death, a boundary between the language of the wilderness and the language of the town" (Evers and Molina 37). The unitary world of the batnaataka has become fragmented, split into many different realms. The Yaquis call these "aniam, worlds, in the sense of a realm or domain. Yaquis speak of a tuka ania, night world; a tenku ania, dream world; a yo ania, enchantd world; a sea ania, flower world; and others...All of these realms are associated with the Surem," and these different worlds are "supernatural and dangerous if not approached correctly" (Evers and Molina 45).
Through the story of the singing tree, we approach these different worlds, especially the sea ania or flower world. Through her name and her home, Sea Hamut is associated with the flower world. She and her daughter live in the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn. It is a world of great beauty and plentitude. Some say it is the huya ania in bloom, representing "all that is good and beautiful" (Evers and Molina 51). The sea ania is "the beneficent and fruitful aspects of nature, such as rivers, streams, lakes, clouds, and rain" (Painter 18). It is the home of all the desert insects, yoeriam, and animals, yoawa, especially saila maso, little brother deer (Evers and Molina 51). Sea Hamut's daughter is directly connected to the deer which she successfully hunts and kills. A good hunter takes a relation with the deer who lets the hunter have its meat. The death of the deer at Sea Hamut's hand warns us that she is a powerful young woman, and there is a presage of sacrifice and death as the young woman encounters the men from the pueblo with her kill. Sea Hamut is no ordinary woman, and her words will transform the Surem.

Implicit in the story is a critique of knowledge; to know is to transform, to listen and speak is to interpret and change. By translating the sounds of the singing tree, Sea Hamut provides us with a new vision and a burden of knowledge. Her perception is not glued by the logic of
time or the limits of space. For her, the Spanish Conquest, baptism, the formation of planes and trains, the cultivation of seeds, war, death and suffering, good and evil come together to form an intricate web in "the multiple rhythms of time" (Tedlock, Popol Vuh 13). For Sea Hamut, all events take place once and forever; they are and are not. Hers is an imagination that is multidirectional, moving beyond a linear conception of history, and she tells us that we are only a moment, an interpretation, a line within a song.

The Yaquis tell many different versions of the singing tree story, or kutanokame, tree talking, yet always the interpreter is female, and Sea Hamut is imagined in various ways. Sometimes she is an ordinary young girl from the pueblo or twin girls or an ancient, primordial goddess called Yomumuli, who created the Indians, and in anger burned the talking tree, rolled up her river, tucked it under her arm and walked away on the clouds to the North (Giddings, Yaqui Oral 9). Yet, no matter which story we hear these women teach us about ourselves, and their message marks a boundary between an ancient, sacred lifeway and inim buan bwia, this weeping earth, a world of time and fragmentation. "It marks, then, not so much a creation as a re-creation, a time 'when the earth was becoming new here'" (Evers and Molina 37). Yo'o Sea Hamut, Enchanted Flower Woman; Yomumuli, Enchanted Bee; Seahamoot, Flower Girl;
Yueta, an unusual sound carried in the wilderness air, are all various names for the Yaqui women of knowledge in the talking tree stories, and each name connects intimately the woman or girl with the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn, the sea ania, to the earth as she is "becoming new here." The characters and the changing earth are identified as powerful re-creators who carry and convey a complex knowledge.

The simple, ordinary young girl of the pueblo who interprets the singing tree must speak. Like a poet possessed, she is compelled to shape the unknown with language, to give definition to our being. In her innocence, she is a vehicle for power, and she becomes a woman made of words. The twin girls who translate the songs of the singing tree represent the end and the beginning, the old and new, the enchanted and the ordinary, good and evil, death and rebirth; they symbolize the dichotomies inherent in life. As speakers of the known and unknown, they are the twin faces of every woman who is the mother of life, mother of death, the incarnation of paradox. Within her, Sea Hamut embodies all of these different characters. Dennis Tedlock points out that "diviners are interpreters of difficult texts" (Popol Vuh 13). Sea Hamut is the archetype of the diviner who calls down the drama of the ages to unfold itself. She represents transformation and paradox, twin principles
which shape all things. She is the mother of storytellers, and we exist within her telling. From the transcendent to the mundane, Sea Hamut communicates on all levels with all things. Such knowledge transforms her into a powerful figure who exists on the edge between the ordinary and the inconceivable, for she understands the multiple rhythms of time and brings definition to the Yaqui. "The form of a thing is described by its edge, and the edge of being is death" (Thompson 124).

Sea Hamut teaches us that creation and sound are coeval, and placed at the center of this relationship is a kind of mystery that doubles back upon itself, turning into riddle. But the riddle is enough. It may not explain everything, but it tells the Yaqui who they are, where they come from, why the world is like this, why it is fragile and complex, why we suffer. "When the imagination is superimposed upon the historical event, it becomes story. The whole piece becomes more deeply invested with meaning. No defeat, no humiliation, no suffering was beyond their power to endure, for none of it was meaningless. They could say to themselves, 'yes it was all meant to be in its turn. The order of the world was broken, it was clear'" (Momaday, "Man Made of Words" 169). Even death was accounted for--it became a ceremony of exchange; life would be "taken back into the earth in payment for this nourishment during life." Death is part of a cycle of
degeneration and renewal, an exchange that enables the wilderness world to bloom and flourish as the sea ania, the enchanted flower world.

Yaqui artist Danny Leon and his teacher Arturo Montoya explain the power inherent in flowers:

Flowers are sacred to Yaqui People because we believe that when Christ was crucified his blood turned to flowers when it touched the ground. The regalia of all the Yaqui ceremonial society groups is called seva. That means flower. On Easter Saturday morning the attacking forces of evil (which are represented by the Chapayéka Society) are defeated by the forces of good (the Matachinis, the Angelitos, the Deer Dancer, the Pahkolam, and other church groups) by the use of flowers as weapons. The flowers are thrown at them. (qtd in Evers and Molina 60)

There is a consistent return to beauty and renewal in Yaqui stories and tradition that is represented by flowers, sewa, and the sea ania. Flowers form a nexus around which ceremony, song, dance and story revolve. The Yaquis say that "we think of flowers as being something beautiful. So, being beautiful, [they] would always win over something evil" (Painter 104). Christ's blood, his lifeforce, becomes flowers, which in turn become the fruit of the cactus and the beans of the mesquite which nourish the Yoeme. Spicer
expains that "all important relationships between groups of Yaquis within a village involve ceremonial exchanges of food. It is regarded as the compensation that a household group or the village as a whole gives to ceremonial performers and their families. The ceremonial society members often talk about the amount and quality of food which they had at a certain fiesta." (People of Pascua 14). People worry that they may not have enough food to serve everyone, and they always worry about whether their guests have enjoyed the stew called wakabaki, or the calabasitas, beans and tortillas, coffee or corn tamales. Women spend hours preparing meals, all the while exchanging gossip and stories, teaching the girls how to properly prepare the food; everything is always measured by the hand and eye, and you know a good cook by the good feelings she puts in her food. She must cook with a good heart, tu'i hiapsimak, for all the people.

"Not only must the ceremonial societies be given food for the ritual and other work they perform, but also two families whose children marry engage in an exchange of feasts, and a significant and indispensable part of the ceremony is the presentation of a basket of corn tamales or other food by the bride's family to the women of the groom's family....In this manner food serves as a medium of exchange and as an instrument for the establishment and fulfillment of social obligations within any Yaqui village"
Food is also served in abundance at a funeral, and there is a little Pascola or Pahkola story which reveals and mocks this connection:

The Calabazas Funeral

I tell you, one time I sowed lots of corn and beans and calabazas, many, many calabazas. When I harvested, I filled a whole house full of calabazas, squashes. When I had put them all away, then I fell sick. But I wasn't sick for very long, because I died. By afternoon, just about time for the sun to go down, I was dead.

I was alone in my house. Soon all the important people, the kobanaum, pueplom, sontaum and captains, gathered to attend my funeral. Well, these great people are supposed to be served lots of food at a fiesta or a funeral and there was nothing in my house but squashes, squashes, pure calabazas, nothing more.

They made great fires and began to cook squashes all night long. And the drum kept talking and accusing the people of eating calabazas. It said,

kamak kamak kamak kamak kamak
kamak ka kam kamak ka kam kamak.

This means, "sweet squashes, squashes, squashes; they have squashes, sweet squashes, squashes." All night long the drum kept saying this. And it is absolutely true.
Those people finished every single squash. At dawn there wasn't one squash in the house.

When they were about to bury me, I noticed that there were no more squashes, so I revived. (Castro, trans in Giddings, Anthropological Papers 55; Folk Literature 122-123)

The pahko'ola, "old man of the pahko," or pascola, "old man of the fiesta," is notorious for his satire and absurd antics (Spicer, The Yaquis 92). The pahkola is a ceremonial host who comes from the yo ania, the enchanted world, and through song, dance, music and mime, sermon and story, the pahkola ushers the audience into another realm, a sacred space. He walks the line between the known and the unknown, and with this split perception, he is able to change the ordinary into the absurd, the mundane into the inconceivable. The pahkola is an instrument for "translation between the realms of the living and the dead, between the visible and invisible worlds" (Babcock 120). Through his humor and burlesque, the pahkola eases tension, and the most revered is prey for his mockery. He makes us laugh at ourselves; what seems so overwhelmingly important in the everyday world becomes miniscule through his parody.

"The Calabazas Funeral" mocks the most important people of the pueblo, showing them to be quite piggish. Custom has it that it is "improper to eat rapidly or to show much interest in food; Yaquis pick delicately at their food and
appear to be little interested in it. It is, however, improper to leave any food on the table at a fiesta," or pahko (Spicer, People of Pascua 14), and these "great people" do indeed consume every single squash, even though there is an inordinate amount of calabazas in the house. The hard working farmer is ridiculed for his excess harvest, playing on the Yaqui idea that one can get sick by working too hard (Shutler). Yet the bizarre little story turns back on the teller who mocks himself—what a fool he is; he has worked himself to death, and he assures us that what he is telling us is "absolutely true." The storyteller teases us, promoting and ridiculing the idea that we have consciousness after death, and everyone is made to look a little foolish.

However, though the teller has become ill from his work, he has done what is proper, and, in the end, he is "revived." He has undergone a profound change but the story's humor waylays the terror or sorrow of dying. The speaker's awareness is keen and exists in a different way, beyond his earthly body. The suggestion is that this is what happens when we die; we participate in a cycle of nourishment, degeneration and renewal, and the pahkola revives because more squash must be planted and harvested to help feed everyone. Embedded in the story is a testimony of faith, of viewing the tragic as meaningful, and the story warns us that we all face continual
transformations of the self, yet we are to be wary of taking anything too seriously. The lines between life and death become vague and obscure, and we are aware that we are in the enchanted realm of the pahkola, so nothing can be taken for granted.

In this world, everything speaks, and the drum has authority even over the most "important people." Its incessant voice, onomatopoeic in texture, accuses the yoemem that they are acting improperly. The drum's authority comes directly from the yo ania, the enchanted wilderness; it was a gift to be used properly:

The Yomumuli Twins and the First Fiesta

Yomumuli was a hunter who lived near the pueblo of Juirivis. He was an old man, and he had twin sons who also were called Yomumulim. The old man, walking one day through the monte, heard the beat of a drum. He drew near to where the drum was sounding. Although he made every effort possible to find the musician, he could not see anyone.

In those days, no one yet knew about drums, nor about pascolas. So Yomumuli was hearing the first drum in the land of the Yaquis. The following day he returned to the same spot and the drummer again began to play a very pretty song. Yomumuli, who was enchanted with the music, searched again for the musician but could not find him. He returned
to his hut and chatted about this with the twins-Yomumulim.

These two boys were very obedient. Their father said to them, "Go down to that place where we rested four days ago, near a little mound of spines. There, I don't know just exactly where, can be heard a very beautiful thing which caused my heart to be very happy. Go then, see if you also should hear it. But don't go near those spines."

The Yomumulim twins went into the familiar monte. When they arrived at the place, the drummer was playing the most beautiful of songs. The Yomumulim were listening. The drummer finished, and from beneath the pile of spines which were of cholla, mesquite, and pitahaya, there appeared a toli. This is a kind of rat which is sometimes called bwiya toli because he lives underground beneath a pile of cactus spines and thorns which serve him as a nest.

The toli came out. Greeting the twins, "Dios em chaniabu, uusim, God aid you, children." The twins replied and bwiya toli said, "Come into my house."

"Thank you very much, but we cannot go in there because our father ordered us to come this near to those spines and no nearer."

"And what more did your father tell you?" asked the toli.

"Well, our father sent us here in order that we might hear that sound in your house."

"Aha, well, this is called a drum," said bwiya toli,
showing it to them. "And this is called a flute," he said, showing them a carrizo cane flute.

"Ah, yes, thank you," said the Yomumulim. "Well, now we are going."

When they arrived home they chatted with the old man, Yomumuli, about this.

A few days later our mother Eva arrived at the house of Yomumuli. She said to the old man, "From this time on there shall be religious fiestas. You, from now on, are the moro yaut, who takes care of the pascola and his musicians. Your children shall make cohetes, ritual skyrockets. Tomorrow you must go over to see bwiya toli and tell him that you are going to have a fiesta in honor of Dios, our father, and that he should come to play. After that, go to the Devil and have him come to dance pascola."

Yomumuli did it all. Bwiya toli presented himself with his drum and flute. But old Satan said, "I shall not go to dance. Instead I shall send my son."

The hunter returned to his home. Then the chief Devil spoke to his son. "You must go to the fiesta and be very funny in order that all the Yaquis may laugh. But there is one thing; they are going to give you three cohetes to burn. But I do not want you to light them."

"Very well," said the little devil, and he went to the fiesta. As soon as he arrived they gave him three cohetes.
"I can't light these," he said.

"And why not?" asked the fiestero, who was the host.

"My father does not desire it."

"Well, you are a pascola now, and it is an obligation of all pascolas to burn cohetes.

Cohetes are sacred and burned at the hour of prayer. By burning these, the Devil and the other evil spirits flee far from such saintly things. For this reason, the Devil had said to his son, "Don't burn cohetes."

Well, the Devil had a desire to see his son dance pascola, so he was there, hidden behind some branches. When they gave the young devil the cohetes, he burned one and threw it straight at old Satan. Satan ran fast as a bird. In the early hours of dawn he came back, but again they burned rockets and again he had to run away. From that time on the Devil has not been able to attend fiestas.

Well, this is the way Yomumuli discovered the first drum and flute, those of bwiya toli; and he made the first fiesta. (Castro, trans in Giddings Yaqui Folk Literature 39-40; Anthropological Papers 58-59)

That the first pascola or pahkola dancer is the son of satan creates a center of ambiguity within the story, for the fiesta is sacred and made for Dios, the ultimate deity in Yaqui religion. The story suggests that the dichotomy between good and evil is not as definitive as we might believe. Laughter, dance, song and blessings come
from an image of evil, while death and dramatic change are foretold by Sea Hamut who is endowed with seataka, and associated with the sea ania and flowers, the beautiful and good in all things. As companion pieces, the stories challenge compartmentalized concepts of good and evil, making them complex forces which interchange.

Cultural historian William Irwin Thompson warns us that when we study history we should try to be alert for "enantiodromia, a movement that turns into its opposite." And he cautions us that "it is naive to look always to negative things for the cause of negative behavior; in the enantiodromias of history, we need to understand that even a positive change casts a shadow. We need to understand that the unique excellence of a thing is at the same time its tragic flaw" (131;134). For the Yaqui, then, history might be seen as a series of reversals where good and evil, the enchanted and the ordinary shade into one another. Yaquis say that a witch or moreakame, who is a connoisseur of envy, hatred and jealousy, harms people through dreams, and they also say that a curer or hitebi can heal people through dreams (Shutler 55-56). Both the moreakame and the hitebi draw from the same source; it is how they use their powers that make the difference. Spicer explains that "Yaquis view things as double-edged, as capable of use for either good or evil (Yaqui cigarettes, for example)...The uncertainty about the potential for good or evil seems to
me to provide one of the tensions of Yaqui life. It contributes toward ambivalence about many things and may help to explain some of the apparent contradictions between informants, or even between different statements by the same informant" (qtd in Painter 53).

Yaquis are keenly aware of erim, evil or harmful thoughts, which they believe affect people, and they admonish one another to be "with a good heart" (Painter 97). This takes discipline, and Yaquis teach "children not to expect an easy existence but rather always to be ready to fulfill exacting demands; to prepare for the disciplines of the all-night dancing, the all-night singing, the requirements of fulfilling the rigorous rituals" (Spicer, The Yaquis, 312). The rigorous ritual, the pahko or fiesta, was begun at the bidding of Eva, Eve, who intimately understands the knowledge of good and evil.

Eve, Adam, God, Christ and his apostles are believed by Yaquis to have lived and walked on Yaqui land. "A universal conception is that Jesus," who was born in Been, Belen or Bethlehem, "went from pueblo to pueblo, forded streams, crossed deserts, forced His way through rough foothill country, across mountains, torn and bleeding from thickets and brambles, resting wherever He found Himself as daylight faded. He blessed all people everywhere 'to the far corners of the world.' As a curer, He ministered to and healed the sick" (Painter 75). For Yaquis, Jesucristo,
Jesus Christ is a very real figure, who, in his earthly manifestations has qualities which can be identified with, "such as compassion, love, the gift of healing; also a stern self-discipline during fatigue and moral and physical suffering quite compatible with Yaqui codes of behavior. He is envisioned as a poor man of the people, dressed like a Yaqui in a straw hat and sandals....In sermons and prayers emphasis is placed on generous and compassionate acts, as well as on the pursuit of ritual demands" (Painter 75).

If we take a perspective that is not so rigidly linear, then it does not seem so farfetched to believe with the Yaquis that the "pantheon of the Jesuits" walked Yaqui land before the Jesuits did (Evers and Molina 40). Historian of religion, Mircea Eliade would tell us that the Yaquis participate in an "archaic ontology" that overwhelms time and fragmentation (3). Through their stories, songs, dance and ceremonials, they enter mythic time. A pahkola "dance always imitates an archetypal gesture or commemorates a mythical moment. In a word, it is a repetition, and consequently a reactualization, of illud tempus, 'those days,'" of the batnaataka (29). For Eliade, repetition of a ritual act that originated in mythic times is the cornerstone of an ancient, sacred lifeway. Each time a story is told or a dance performed, we repeat an archetype that was performed during the "timeless past of
all origins" by gods, heroes, or ancestors. As we do this, we consecrate the space we are on, and "through the paradox of rite, every consecrated space coincides with the center of the world, just as the time of any ritual coincides with the mythical time of the 'beginning'" (20).

So if the Yaquis locate the birth, passion, death and resurrection of Christ in Yaqui country, they do so by the "paradox of rite," which makes Yaqui land a true "center of the world." No matter where history places Jesucristo, he lived and cured in Yaqui country, and every time the "Tragedy of the Chapayekas" is performed, Christ lives, walks, dies and is resurrected. Eliade emphasizes that during ritual, imitation becomes a reactualization; "profane time," that is, history, is abolished (53). Consequently, it is of no concern for Eliade "if the myth sometimes followed the rite--the fact in no wise lessens the sacred character of the ritual. The myth is 'late' only as a formulation; but its content is archaic and refers to sacraments--that is, to acts which presuppose an absolute reality, a reality which is extrahuman" (27). So for the Yaquis, the batnaataka is a reality which is extrahuman. "Before the Jesuits" and "after the Jesuits" become an academic "formulation," and "in no wise lessens the sacred character of the ritual," which presupposes an absolute reality. Yaqui stories, etehoim, move beyond classification and take their place as "certain episodes of
the sacred drama of the cosmos" (Eliade 27).

So when Ambrosio Castro told Ruth Giddings the following story, he was neither being factitious nor ridiculous. Rather he was articulating and participating in an ancient understanding that recognizes the necessity between creation and sacrifice:

Lucas, The Bull

Long ago, when Yaquis of the eight pueblos dressed only in short garments of animal skin, and hunted with the bow and arrow, and ate only wild fruits of the monte and meat of wild animals such as deer, coyote, bear, and fish, there was a great junta of all Yaquis. This meeting was held for three days. Its purpose was to ask Dios for more and different kinds of meat. They were tired of only having the meat of the same kinds of animals at their fiestas. The junta took place in Maretabooka, a place near Potam.

To the west and a little south of Potam, not far from Rahum, there lived an Indian named Lucas, with his wife and three children. This place is called Monolimpa'ako and there are many mesquite trees there. As Lucas was working at his house one day after the junta had finished, a man with a big, black beard came up to him. He greeted Lucas. This man was Dios.
Lucas brought out a mesquite stump for him to sit on and they chatted. The man said to Lucas, "It is four days since that junta where the Yaquis asked for different animals from which to get meat, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Lucas.

"Well, I'm going to give the Yaquis steers and cows and bulls to eat if you are willing to help me. I will make you into a bull, your wife into a cow, and your children into calves. Is that all right with you?"

"Yes, as you wish," answered Lucas.

"You will be sacrificed, Lucas," said Dios. Lucas agreed. Then Dios said, "Tomorrow, at about three in the afternoon, six Yaquis will come here to get you." Then Dios went away.

He went to the place of the junta, and he said to the Yaquis there, "I have a new kind of meat for you. Do you know Lucas, who lives over there in the monte?"

"Yes," they said.

"I want you to send six of your strongest and bravest men over there tomorrow afternoon. They will find a bull, a cow, and three calves there. The bull is very huge and has horns. He is very dangerous. You must bring this bull back here and kill it for the fiesta."

So the next day, six of the best young men, not only the strongest, but also the best in character, were sent. They walked along through the thick monte and speculated
about what this bull might look like. When they arrived at
the place of Lucas there was no house to be seen. Instead,
there was a huge corral. Inside of it were Lucas and his
family. They had been converted into cattle. Lucas, the
bull, was angry. He pawed the ground. The six men leapt
over the fence and came at the bull from different
directions.

Then there ensued a great battle. Finally the Yaquis
won, and they tied up the bull. They hung him on a long
pole and carried him to the place where the fiesta was to
be. Here they sacrificed Lucas so that the pascolas and
the maestros and cantoras and all of the people could have
meat at the fiesta. The Yaquis were very happy.

A Yaqui man named Bibi'isi came to the fiesta. This
Bibi'isi was known for his insatiable appetite. He ate
huge amounts of food and was always hungry. They fed him
all night at this fiesta, for he went and sat where they
were cooking the meat. He ate a great deal of meat; but he
left the fiesta very hungry the next morning.

As Bibi'isi walked along that morning south of Potam
at a place called Tosai Nabo where there is much beautiful,
green grass, he encountered Dios. "Diosenchi'ani'abu,"
greeted Dios.

"Diosenchi'okwe," answered Bibi'isi.

"How did you like the fiesta?"

"Oh, fine," replied Bibi'isi. "There was much meat
from a new kind of animal called a bull, and the pascolas were diverting. But those people didn't give me anything to eat. Why, I am so hungry right now that if I could, I would eat the leaves off of that branch right there, or the grass on the ground!"

Dios said to him, "Sit down here." Bibi'isi was a very obedient man, for this was Dios who was addressing him. So he sat down. "Roll over three times," ordered Dios.

Bibi'isi rolled over three times, and after the third time, he arose a horse. So now the horse is always unceasingly and hungrily eating grass. (Giddings, Yagui Folk Literature 82-85)

At a quick glance the story may seem a bit morbid, but the idea is that Lucas willingly gave himself and his family for the continuance of his people. His sacrifice enabled the Yaquis to live a more enriched life. Actually, there is a double transformation played out in the story, for Lucas and his family are changed into cattle, losing their human form and then they are ritually killed for the pahko. The intimacy between man and animal is established; we are kin, and the prescription is that we must care and nourish each other. Life lives on lives. To sacrifice, explains Paula Gunn Allen, is "to make sacred. What is made sacred is empowered. Thus, in the old way, sacrificing meant empowering, which is exactly what it still means to American Indians who adhere to traditional
practice. Blood was and is used in sacrifice because it possesses the power to make something else powerful or, conversely, to weaken or kill it. Pre-contact American Indian women valued their role as vitalizers because they understood that bearing, like bleeding, was a transformative ritual act. Through their own bodies they could bring vital beings into the world—a miraculous power" (27). By sacrificing "their own bodies," then, Lucas and his family are empowered and they bring "vital new beings into the world"; they are engaged in a "transformative ritual act." Through their sacrifice they, paradoxically, become creators. As the Yaqis participate in a rite of killing, they too are empowered and insure the continuance of their people. That is why they sent "the best young men, not only the strongest, but also the best in character." They are on their way to perform a transformative ritual act.

Mircea Eliade holds that all creations come about through sacrifices; "nothing can endure if it is not 'animated,' if it is not, through a sacrifice, endowed with a 'soul'" (20). The Yaquis desire a new meat; they hold a junta or tribunal for three days to ask Dios for a new creation. Through their collective will, they engage their most powerful of entities to help them bring about a new life, so it's only proper that one of their families become a "new" kind of family. Their home in Monolimpa'ako among
a bosque of mesquites ties them to the songs of the singing
tree, where death is defined as a ritual exchange of
nourishment, a communion. The mesquite is also associated
with the Virgin Mary and the cruxifiction; the sorrowing
mother transformed herself into a mesquite cross so that
her son could die in her arms. Thus the cycle from birth
to death to rebirth is reiterated in a constellation of
images that inform Yaqui stories, etehoim.

Every time a bull, who represents the mystery of
incarnation, is killed for a pahko, the Yaquis are
transported into an ancient world, which is both enchanted
and dangerous. Eliade emphasizes that a sacrifice "not
only exactly reproduces the initial sacrifice revealed by a
god ab origine, at the beginning of time, it also takes
place at that same primordial mythical moment; in other
words, every sacrifice repeats the initial sacrifice and
coincides with it. All sacrifices are performed at the same
mythical instant of the the beginning; through the paradox
of rite, profane time and duration are suspended" (35).

The transformation of the insatiable eater, Bibi'isi,
into a horse carries a precaution against desiring
something too much. Not only did Bibi'isi lie to Dios but
he craved the tree leaves and the grass and so became what
he desired--a horse. It is a humorous tag along to the
central story which conveys a tone of serious determination
and obedience. Yaqui audiences would be sensitive to the
undertones of the horse story, since there are many
different versions of a Pahkola story which talks about a
curious transformation of a horse and its rider. Here is
one version that Eward Spicer records from Yaqui poet
Refugio Savala:

_Tesak Pascola's Watermelons_

I was travelling on horseback from Arizona into
Sonora. It was in mid-summer; the heat was terrible. In
about the middle of my journey I discovered that my horse
was badly ulcerated and that I could not keep the saddle on
it. An old lady made a poultice of watermelon seeds and
placed it on the bruised back of the horse and told me to
let the horse wander until it should be healed. I waited
sometime without seeing my horse. Then one day I set out
to look for it in the country where I left it. I found
tracks almost everywhere, but I could not find the horse.
One good thing was that I found watermelons enough to my
full desire.... One day, almost hopeless about finding the
horse, I came on a great melon vine with ripe fruit. I
picked the most beautiful and sat down to enjoy my
selection. I had hardly tasted it when I saw that the
melon vine had begun to grow into my veins and had already
reached to my heels, so that I could hardly move. Finally
I untangled myself and went to investigate. I followed the
vine up and found that my horse was the carrier of the delicious summer fruit. (The Yaquis 109)

The pahkola has license to say whatever he wants, no matter how incredible. With this little story we are reminded of the man who ate too much and became a horse and now the pahkola almost becomes a melon which was growing out of his horse's back. The odd little story brings us full circle in the cycle of eating and transformation and makes us literally see that "we become what we eat" as the narrator feels the melon vine growing into his veins and down around into his heels. We participate in an elaborate feeding of one another which is taken to its absurd length in the story.

Through humor, the pascola warns us to be wary of excess, of indulging in any kind of excess. To desire something too much is dangerous, and Yaquis believe those thoughts will actually harm, ruin and spoil the thing or person desired. This harmful power is called the "mal de ojo," and "many Yaquis, even now, believe in the evil eye. A person with such power usually desires something that he can't have—perhaps a neighbor's blossoming rose bush or a loaf of bread baking at a friend's or he might just admire a plump baby. These unfulfilled desires will cause the plant to wither, the bread to burn or turn out sour, and the baby to become deathly ill" (Kaczkurkin 39).

Through their excesses, the pahkolam show the
absurdity and danger in unfulfilled or even fulfilled indulgences, and their humor is greatly enjoyed. As Dell Hymes points out, "the scholars are sometimes the last to understand that these stories were told and told again, not simply to reflect or express or maintain social structure, interpersonal tensions, or something similar, but because they were great stories, great fun....Even today, for an older person who knew the stories as a child, it is a treat to hear them again" (22). The pahkolam are great fun, and they bridge the gap between the young and old, the metaphorical and real. As tricksters, they are great manipulators of fictions, obscuring certainties and highlighting inconsistencies while making the improbable quite possible. Humor is their way to ease the sharp dichotomies inherent in life. Their exuberance and wit play with paradox until the inconceivable is ordinary. "Clowns are mediators par excellence between all types of cosmic, natural, and social dualities, between inside and outside, self and other, creation and destruction, order and chaos," explains Barbara Babcock (120).

Through his antics the pascola makes us see that we are connected to all things, and he transforms the manageable into the miraculous, teaching us that the world, at times, participates in the shadowy, dangerous yet beautiful realm of the yo ania, the enchanted world. "There it is just like in a dream" (Don Jesus Yoilo'o qtd
in Evers and Molina 63).
CHAPTER III
HUYATA ANIAUMEYOAWA:
THE WILD ANIMALS OF THE WILDERNESS WORLD

The Snake People

Long ago there lived a Yaqui by the name of Habiel Mo’el. He was an orphan but he had many relatives all over the Yaqui country. This man did not enjoy hunting as most young Yaqui men. Instead, he just liked to travel from house to house and from pueblo to pueblo, attending fiestas and eating and chatting with his friends and relatives.

The only weapon that he ever carried was a big, thick club. He lived at the foot of the hill, Mete’etomakame. One day he started out to visit some relatives. At their house he shared a meal of sawam, small wild tubers, and the next day he started for Hekatakari, where there was to be a little fiesta. This place is marked by a little hill.

Habiel Mo’el traveled through the monte, armed only with his walking stick. He arrived at the fiesta, ate there, and talked with the people. Next morning he set out for Buram Teopo, Mule Deer Church, which is so called because there is a natural, tunnel-like cave there which is like a Yaqui church. It is believed that in the olden days large deer used to sleep and live here. Near Mule Deer Church was a huge rancheria where thousands of Yaquis lived.
When Habiel Mo'el arrived there, preparations were being made for the funeral of a Yaqui chief called Koowibi'a, so named for his fat neck. So companies of people came. Some came by way of an arroyo from Tasa'awe'e, others from ko'oko'im pueblo and others from Bata'emoobe'e. That night the pascola, el venado, the deer, the coyote and some matachinis danced. Meat was served.

The next day they buried Koowibi'a.

Habiel Mo'el again took to the trail, planning to go to Chu'umeampa'ako, where he had some relatives. He traveled along, passing near Bacum, where he cut his way through very thick monte. When he came to Maata'ale, the monte became too thick for passage, and he turned around and went to Jori. From Jori, he cut across toward Bataconcica, where an arroyo empties in the Rio Yaqui. Travel was very difficult, for the undergrowth was extremely dense. He crawled on his belly under branches, crawled over them, or pushed past them. He came upon a sort of clearing. A big snake appeared, crawling across his path. Habiel Mo'el hit the snake right in its middle, but it vanished into the underbrush before he could strike it again. So he continued on his path toward the rancheria.

Suddenly, what had been nothing but thick monte stretching before him, became a large Yaqui pueblo with many people in it, moving about their business. Habiel
Mo'el felt very strange. As he walked between the houses, a cabo, corporal, from the guardia came up and greeted him.

He told Habiel Mo'el that his chief would like to see him at the guardia. So the two went over there. Inside, on the front bench was seated the head kobanau, governor. On the next bench, Habiel Mo'el was told to seat himself. The other kobanaum were seated on the other benches. To one side, a young girl was sitting. About her waist was a bandage of leaves.

The head kobanau spoke to Habiel Mo'el, "We have brought you here to ask you why you beat a girl this afternoon as you were traveling along."

Habiel Mo'el was very surprised. He replied that from Jori to this place, he had met no one on his journey. "I did not beat any girl," he said.

"You struck a girl this afternoon, and you are liable to punishment. Why did you do this?" insisted the kobanaum. Habiel Mo'el could not remember having done so, and he repeated this. Then he explained where he had come from and his route, saying that he had seen no girl on the path. He respectfully asked their pardon, but insisted that he had done nothing at all.

The head kobanau turned to the girl, who was seated to one side, and asked her if this were the man who had beaten her.

"Yes," she answered. "And he is still carrying the
stick with which he beat me. That is the man."

Habiel Mo'el said that he had never seen the girl before and that he remembered nothing of it. He again asked their pardon, but disclaimed guilt. The kobanaum considered the matter among themselves.

Then the head kobanau said, "We will pardon you this once, since it is your first offense. But after this, when you are traveling, never harm anyone at all who may cross your path offering you no danger. You may go this time."

Habiel Mo'el thanked them and left the guardia. As he went out, he found himself in the middle of the monte with no sign of a village, nor of the guardia to be seen.

He traveled on toward his destination. It was dark when he finally arrived at the house of his relative. He approached and greeted the little, old man whose name was Wete'époi.

They sat down to a meal of pitahaya and Habiel Mo'el told Wete'époi about his strange experience concerning the startling appearance and disappearance of the large, Yaqui pueblo and his accusation.

The old man listened and then said, "You have done a great wrong. All animals, as well as people, have their authorities and their laws. You hurt a snake which crossed your path, doing you no harm. The authorities of that group took action against you. You must never again do that thing. The chiefs of the snakes met when the girl
complained. Then they turned into people to punish you. I will give you some advice. Never hurt any animal, snake, coyote, or any kind, which is just crossing your path and offering no harm. However, if a coyote is crouching ahead of you on the path, he is going to attack you; so you may kill him then. Also if a snake lies coiled in the path, kill it, for it may harm you. You are defending yourself then. But always kill it completely—never let it get away; or it will complain to its chiefs and they will punish you. (Castro trans in Giddings, Folk Literature 74-76 and South Corner of Time 207-208).

Like most of Ambrosio Castro's stories, this one points to specific places in the Rio Yaqui, connecting the name and a special feature of the land which marks the site. Names are not arbitrary for Castro; rather, they emerge from the quality of the person or the landscape, emphasizing that this happened in Yaqui country. Yaqui words are intertwined with Spanish words throughout the English text, preserving the journey of the story itself as it travels in the 1940s from the Rio Yaqui in Mexico to a research library in Tucson, Arizona. Dell Hymes notes that a "shift into the native language is like crossing a boundary of identity or identification" (139). Here, the identity is clearly Yaqui. Though the story is in English, its quality and texture speak of the places and ways of the Yoeme, whose language, as Refugio Savala points out, "has
never been robbed of its beauty. It still keeps extending to all the margins of any language. The legends have been translated from good old primitive Yaqui. It also adapts to English grammar" (75). Yaqui words in the text remind us that this voice has a distinct identity which flows in and out of Spanish, and a seemingly insignificant point like eating sawan with relatives is imbued with meaning for the Yaqui who knows the value and scarcity of food in the Rio Yaqui, of the importance of proper hospitality for relatives and guests.

Each part of the story is not only connected with specific places in Yaqui country, but the details point to other stories. The meat served at the funeral originally came from a Yaqui man who sacrificed himself and his family for the Yaqui people, so this is an important point as the Chief who has died is being honored with prayers, dance and food, song and ceremony. The funeral of the chief is carried out with the proper "laws" of the people; all the required dancers are present, and "many companies of people came" from all around as custom dictates. The pascola, coyote and deer dancers represent the huya ania, the wilderness world and its animals, the yoawa, that enrich Yaqui lives. The funeral with its customs and authority parallels the village and the guardia of the snake people. Both mirror one another, and each "have their authorities and their laws."
Habiel Mo'el does not seem a bad sort of character, but he doesn't "enjoy hunting," so he does not know the ways and laws of the yoawa. He just goes about chatting and visiting with relatives, eating here and there, and we find he is a bit careless and fearful as he beats the snake for no reason. The little, old man Wete'epoi teaches Habiel Mo'el that Yaquis believe that all animals are to be respected as a people, "Never hurt any animal, snake, coyote, or any kind, which is just crossing your path and offering no harm," advices Wete'epoi, who echoes the words of the snake chief. But "if a coyote is crouching ahead of you on the path, he is going to attack you, so you may kill him then." Wete'epoi is giving Habiel Mo'el a hunter's code of ethics, especially as he points out that if you kill, "always kill completely--never let it get away, or it will complain to its chiefs and they will punish you."

Implicit in Wete'epoi's words is a precise code of behavior which means that one ought not to act arbitrarily or cruelly, but rather with precision and understanding. To injure carelessly and to kill are serious acts, and the chief's funeral and the snake people's tribunal add solemnity to the story; this is no pascola joke. Habiel Mo'el could have been killed by his arbitrary action. As he crawls "on his belly" through dense chaparral, he is equated with the young snake girl, and we are to understand that there exists a balance and identification between
humans and animals.

The snake people are fair and most reasonable in their decision to let Habiel Mo'el leave with only a warning. By transporting him to their pueblo, the snake people show how powerful they are, and they could easily kill him, but they are shown to be just.

Yaquis believe that all animals are endowed with seataka and that they have their own language, yoawa noki. Through their seataka, the yoawa can "communicate with, protect themselves against, and harm humans" (Painter 48). The snake is considered extremely powerful, directly connected with the yo ania, the enchanted wilderness; one who desires knowledge and power must deal with the snake in what the Yaquis call "yo ania visions" (Painter 21).

Yaquis journey to the yo ania to gain knowledge, to learn an art. Whoever has seataka and "an ardent desire for some kind of art, any kind of art" may go to the yo ania, but if the person does not have seataka, he will fail. The "yo ania will not take him." The journey into the wilderness is exceedingly dangerous; only those with "extraordinary courage to survive terrifying ordeals can attain success" (Painter 19). The yo ania has consciousness and is completely aware; some speak of it as a living spirit who chooses to bestow its power. The yo ania can like or dislike a person, and one man explained that it "sees everyone at the fiestas. It is just like a
person. Yoania hiapsita bena; yo ania is a spirit" (Painter 20).

This spirit of the yo ania is everpresent in the yoawa, the wild animals of the wilderness, and to venture into the yo ania, one must enter the wilderness alone and with a strong heart. After three days, the visions begin, and you are challenged to see "how strong you are mentally and physically." The yo ania "scares you in every way it can," making the ordeal impossible to endure. The only way to survive is to remain calm; no matter what you see, hear or feel, you are to remain unafraid. To be afraid is to fail, and you will either go insane or die there, and your spirit will remain lost, roaming the wilderness forever.

The yo ania sends terrifying creatures to you, especially snakes. You will first see an enormous rattlesnake head, so great and fearful that the Yaquis call it a dragon's head. The serpent will open its enormous mouth and you are to enter its enchanted body. At this point many cannot contain their fear, and they become lost in a terrifying enchantment that has no end. Those who enter calmly and unafraid face continual danger. If they endure, they come upon an evanescent little village or a mountain of caves or enchanted houses where there are all kinds of people who excel at specific arts: violinists; harpists; tampaleos, who play both the drum and flute; hunters; gamblers; warriors; fishermen; runners; singers;
pascola and deer dancers; and even thieves. Any quality or art that one can perfect can be found here. To leave this enchanted realm, you find that there is only one path which leads to another horrific serpent's mouth which is continually opening and closing; you must miss the fangs and step onto the tongue, right into the mouth as if you had been swallowed by the giant snake. When the serpent closes its mouth, you will find yourself again in the wilderness but there is no longer any unusual music, singing or dancing. After returning from the journey, you are never the same. An elderly man of Pascua who was brought up in the old ways in Mexico believed that seeking yo ania visions is a "natural way to excellence" (Painter 19-26).

Rattlesnakes live intimately with the earth and sun, continuously moving or sleeping in conjunction with the turning seasons and shifting light. It is not uncommon to see torn and frayed remains of their skins "when the earth is becoming new here" in the desert. They are associated with new life, rain and lightning, the rebirth of the desert after harsh winter months. They are bound to the earth yet their fluidity and motion is precise and incredibly lovely. They remind us of ancient beginnings and ineluctable endings. As creatures of transformation and purveyors of death, they elicit our most primal fears, so it is very appropriate that the snake would guard the
Yaqui entrance to knowledge and excellence. The Hopi and Navajo say that no stories should be told when the snakes are up. If you do so, you run the risk of snakebite. Only when they have gone deep down under to sleep in the earth and the first snow falls is it time to tell stories. It is also said that snakes are profound dreamers, and many Yaquis, especially the pascolas and their musicians dream of snakes.

Like in the yo ania visions you must also conquer your fear of the snake in the dream. If you are afraid of the snake, then you will not be a good dancer or tampaleo. Dreaming is also a natural way for Yaquis to achieve excellence. A tampaleo told Refugio Savala that he acquired his ability to perform in dreaming. "He saw a male king snake on top of the water, and when he picked it up, it turned into a flute, which is the instrument he plays along with a slender drum. One pascola dancer told" Savala "that he first fought a wild male goat and overcame it. Then he stood up and saw two rattlesnakes that came and wound themselves on both his legs, turning into the leg rattles dancers wear" (23). Again and again the pascolas and tampaleos warn that you must not be afraid, even in your dreams, if you want to excel. One tampaleo said that he had been playing for a while, but he was "not strong enough to get the dream." He was terrified by the dream which turned into a nightmare. He said, "he saw a king
snake coming right in the canal of water while he was walking there in his dream. He was having a pretty hard nightmare. Someone had to wake him up, and he was so frightened that he had to stay awake all night. So he could not get the art" (Painter 253). Another pascola dancer emphasized that "the goat fights you in your dream and those snakes try to crawl up. All you have to do is not be afraid." So yo ania visions and dreaming "have the same cluster of meanings—terror, challenge, and reward or failure. An individual who dreams successfully passes with honor through an initiation, by means of a stout heart and endurance, aided by his seataka. He is secure in the knowledge that he was both born with and is qualified for his art and that he has the seataka to be successful" (Painter 247).

The enchanted goat, yochiba'ato, is another of the yoawa that affect the Yaquis. He is especially associated with the pahkolam and is considered their "most important symbol." It is believed that the yochiba'ato comes from the Surem and that the pahkola "dance copies the goat, and that 'everything comes from yochiba'ato'" (Painter 247) In The South Corner of Time (1980), Mrs. Carmen Garcia tells a little tale about this connection between the pahkola dancer and yochiba'ato:

The Enchanted Pascola
Some time ago there was a Pascola who, when he first started out, was a very terrible performer. He was clumsy and unable to dance gracefully. He did not even know how to chat with his audience. The people only kept him on because they pitied him. One day he was requested to dance at another pueblo, so he set out alone, the others having gone ahead.

As he was traveling along, the Pascola heard the most beautiful music coming from the hills. There was a small cave there, and he heard the musicians playing so beautifully, so very beautifully, that he wanted to dance right then and there. Then he said within himself, 'But, what use is that beautiful music to me, I am so ungraceful.' And he stood there, listening, and wishing with heart and soul that he were more graceful.

At this point, a goat came out of the cave, a goat so frisky that it could not stand still. This one went toward the Pascola, who stood and waited for it. The goat stood up on its hind legs leaning its forelegs on the Pascola's chest, and licked the Pascola's face--first on the mouth, then on the ears, and finally on the throat. He stood back and stared at the Pascola; this one waited calmly. The goat zoomed off and, turning very sharply, came charging at the Pascola, but the Pascola, with arms crossed, waited calmly. The animal stopped short, and raising its hind leg,
urinated on him. Then the goat galloped off and disappeared among the rocks, and the music stopped.

The Pascola, wondering over what he had seen, continued his journey. He began to think of many good jokes to entertain the people, and his feet itched to dance right then and there. Thus, he arrived at the Pueblo, where all was in readiness. He dressed and began his entertainment when—cosa rara!—the once ungraceful Pascola danced as no one had ever done before. And he became so popular that to this date, no one has rivaled him. It is said that that goat was an enchanted Pascola. At any rate, the much-loved Pascola loved to dance beautifully at many fiestas. (204)

The story is charming and points to the "beautiful" side of yo ania powers. The ungraceful pascola followed tradition and "with arms crossed, waited calmly." He was neither afraid when the goat charged him nor offended when it urinated on him. The pascola also wished for his art with his whole heart, chikti hiapsimak, displaying a fundamental Yaqui belief that "complete fulfillment of an obligation with consequent divine favor cannot be accomplished without faith, love, and devotion" (Painter 97).

Like all pascola stories, there is an aura of enchantment surrounding them, and we must suspend our disbelief as we inevitably enter another realm whenever we
encounter pascolas. As inevitable is the enchantment that surrounds the pascolas, so is the humor that follows them like the wind. Who would think that a urinating goat would deliver such grace, wit, and style to a poor, "pitied" fellow? Pascola stories always undermine prescribed notions of etiquette, honor, duty, custom, and reverence. Nothing is spared from their mockery.

At the opening of a fiesta or pahko, the pahkola will call out a litany of names belonging to the "little desert animals," turning them into saints. So simultaneously, he sincerely evokes yet pokes fun at his own source of animal powers from the yo ania:

Saint Bullfrog, Santo Kuarepa, I pray to thee. Thou art amphibious, who can stay under water and out of the water as well. Help me.

Saint Horned Toad, Santo Mochokol, thou who has the crown like the Virgin of Guadalupe, help me.

Saint Turtle, Santo Mochik, thou who are known never to be afraid, even if you see your enemy coming to kill you, you always walk slow and never run away, help me.

Oh, Saint Lizard, Santo Wata'akal, thou who can
resist the heat of the summer and bury thyself in the soft dust of the desert, help me.

Thou Holy Cricket, Santo Ki'chul, who is able to stay awake all night and sing for me to sleep. Let me not feel very hard about staying up all night tonight. (Painter 325)

Yaquis tell us that "all the little animals have their virtues" which help the pahkola with his dance, since he "learned the songs from the desert" (Painter 324). The pahkola dancer connects himself intimately with the desert wilderness even as he plays with it. Through his dreams and visions the yoawa, the wild animals, bring him knowledge and teach him the limits of his own endurance. The pascola reminds us of our own limitations and makes us wonder and laugh at our follies, and he teaches us that we live with—not apart from the enchanted animals of the wilderness world. This intimacy between animals and humans is pursued beyond mere identification as "the pascola makes himself to be an animal among the wild beings" (Painter 324). This incarnation into a yoawa is also associated with the deer dancer.

When discussing his mural of the sea ania, the flower world, painted on the south wall of the plaza in Old Pascua, Danny Leon talks about the Yaqui's relationship
with the deer:

The flower world is the legendary home of our little brother who is called saila maso. We Yaquis believe that we are brothers to nature and especially to the deer. The fawn in the mural represents saila maso and his rebirth into human form to give us the deer dancer. (qtd in Evers and Molina 60)

As the Yoeme believe that a Yaqui man was transformed into a bull, so they believe that saila maso, little brother deer can be reborn "into human form to gives us the deer dancer." The human and the deer metamorphosize into one another, and during the dance it is easy to loose track of the human as a good deer dancer is endowed with the deer's seataka; he is the deer. The deer is one of the most beloved of the yoawa, and tradition speaks of him "as being the most favored and, indeed, the most sacred animal," for he "was the most important source of food and skins, the most beloved and the most feared" (Painter 272).

Deer are feared because of their strong seataka which is more powerful than human's; they can enchant, and like all yoawa, they have their own laws and authorities. The deer are ruled by ume maso ya'ut, the deer leader, who governs and protects them. Between maso ya'ut and the deer hunter, masoleo, there is a close and intimate bond made possible by the seataka that each possess. They communicate
through dreams, and if the maso ya'ut offers meat to the hunter, then he knows he has permission to hunt. The hunter, wasoleo, must "have the right dreams in order to hunt," or else the deer leader hides the deer away in the mountains. A legitimate need for food and clothing is necessary. If the hunter kills for sport, it is said that the deer will injure him, sometimes taking away his seataka for life (Painter 274).

The deer live among the thick chaparral, browsing on buia sewan, the earth flowers which they love to eat. They are intimate with the desert, and together they play tricks on the hunter, especially if he is hunting without a good heart, ka tu'i hiapsimak. Sometimes the ocotillo will weave and bend, appearing like a deer in the distance. Or "if you see a deer between trees and shrubbery, you will at the moment think it is an ocotillo. It is also said the deer, when it is being sought by the hunter, will for a moment stand far away and make the hunter think it is an ocotillo. There is a deer song about the ocotillo and its flower, comparing the deer with the flowers of the ocotillo" (Painter 281). The red ribbons on the antlers of the deer dancer are called sewam and are the flowers of the huya ania. Many times the prickly pear cactus also conspires with the deer to trick the hunter. The antlers of a buck will take on the appearance of the nopal, the prickly pear cactus, and no matter how hard you look, you
just don't know if you are seeing a nopal or a buck. Finally, when you are certain that it is the prickly pear, the nopal turns and trots away, flipping its white tail up at you. The Yaquis call the tail sewa or flower.

Sometimes when the sky is exceedingly blue, the deer dance between the prickly pear, fading in and out of the horizon. With a quiet little skirmish and a puff of dust, yochiba'ato, the enchanted goat, skips out from behind a bluff and begins a little two-step, prancing with the deer. Toli darts out from a cholla patch beating his drum, while the wind winds through ocotillos, sounding like a harp. Over the ridge come the matachini dancers, their streamers swaying with the breeze, and the hunter smells mesquite fires cooking wakabaki. With relief he remembers that he's at a pahko, but he just can't remember if he's awake or asleep. The deer are the most enchanted of creatures.

The Wise Deer

In the land of the Yaquis, there once lived a very large deer. He was almost as big as a cow, and he was very strong and wise. So wise was he that when hunters searched for him, wherever he might hide himself, they could never find him. They might pursue him closely, but he, in his wisdom, would hide wherever he chose, between the ocotillos or behind the nopal. The hunters would pass by, close to
him, but never see him.

Thus it went on. There were times when many gathered in a group to hunt him. But he knew when they were surrounding him, and he did not go out from his hiding place. So it was that they could never catch him.

After many years the deer attained a great age. Then, yes, the deer wanted the hunters to kill him, for he was tired of living. So wherever they were, he presented himself to the hunters. But they paid no attention to his presence, saying, "He is now very old."

Many times the poor, old yoawa followed the trails which hunters frequented in hopes that he might encounter a trap in which he might put his head or his feet, but he could not find them.

Dissatisfied, the wise old deer gazed into the gathering dusk, and in weariness he spoke to the twilight, "Now I render myself up. My antlers will fall away." He wished to die, even his antlers were tired, and he simply could live no longer with his years. And so he died. The tale is finished here. (Castro trans in Giddings Folk Literature 78-79; Anthropological Papers 17)

Castro's story turns on the irony of the deer's plight. His incredible wisdom kept him alive too many years, so many that, in the end, he was too tired to carry his age. For the wise old deer, death is a gift, a cessation to the burden of his weariness, and he "renders"
himself up to the twilight. As he gives himself to the gathering darkness, the Yaquis know that the deer's spirit has been taken back into the enchanted wilderness. Through voice and prayer, he enacts his own ending, and we are left feeling that to be killed by the hunter may not be so bad after all. That the deer speaks and understands his plight is assumed by Yaqui people, who acknowledge and identify themselves with the deer and empathize with his death through the image of their deer dancer, the maaso.

For the Yaquis, not only is the fawn, malichi, reborn into the deer dancer, but the maaso "symbolizes the rebirth of the soul after earthly death," and gives them hope and endurance, a way to realize and comprehend death, life and spiritual rebirth (Evers and Molina 129). This celebration of spiritual rebirth is fully realized in the lutu pahko, which is given one year after a relative dies so as "to release the family from their year of mourning and to release the spirit of the departed from its final year of bondage on 'this weeping earth,'" inim buin bwia (Evers and Molina 138). During the lutu pahko ordinary boundaries are suspended, and the animals of the enchanted wilderness and humans share a sacred time and space in which no one voice dominates. Instead, many voices are brought together, and we begin to understand an equation between the living and the dead, the earthly and spiritual, the commonplace and the enchanted. Through sermon, song and dance, the sharing
of food and laughter, we come to comprehend the Yaqui's sense of death as a transformation and continuance, as a sacred exchange with the enchanted wilderness world.

Traditionally, the first music of a pahko is performed by the violinist and the harpist, who play the Kanaria, Canario or Canary, which beckons the people to the pahko rama, the fiesta ramada. One tampaleo explained that this tune "is for the sewa wikit, flower bird," which is associated with the snake. Legend has it that an enchanted great snake crawled into the ramada, swaying in and out between the musicians until it stopped in front of the harpist and stayed right there until the music was over; then it crawled out, and the tampaleo started "playing the beginning piece. The people would stand crowding to see that particular snake that was in the ramada; so it is said that the snake is the one that gathered the people to come in and see it. The name of the dragon was supposed to be Canario" (Painter 321).

Then the pahkolam are escorted in by their manager because they come from the yo ania; they fumble and fall as their antics begin. The pahkolam start with an invocation, beckoning their spirit beings. Cohetes, skyrockets, are burned to call upon San Miguel, the archangel, who gathers their songs and prayers. Erim, bad thoughts, are dispersed by the cohetes, and brujos are reminded that their presence is not welcomed at the pahko. The pahkolam will also bless
the ground and call on their "little desert animals" to help them through the night, before they begin dancing with the deer.

In *Yaqui Deer Songs* (1987), Felipe Molina and Larry Evers discuss the atmosphere of a contemporary pahko and describe the importance of the deer dancer:

The mood of the pahko is festive, as Yaquis, gather to eat and drink, visit and worship. The pace of performances during the pahko is oceanic, ebbing and cresting throughout the long night. Each time the deer dancer explodes out of the swell of the pahkolam's dance into the center of the rama, he carries the pahko to a crest, and it foams with his color, sound, and motion. Dipping delicately as if to drink; erect, curious, then bounding with the pahkolam in their play; or suddenly motionless and coiled with tension, alert to some new movement in the darkness—the dancer's ability to suggest the movements of a deer can be astonishing and mesmerizing. But the dancer can only move to the music of the deer singers. Their water drum is said to represent his heartbeat, their raspers his breathing, their words his voice. Through their song he becomes the real deer person. (73)
During a lutu pahko, very late at night, when the "world turns," the "most extended and rollicking of" pahkola games, yeuame, are performed and deer songs take on special meaning as the maaso becomes "the real dear person." The maaso and the person, the earthly and spiritual, the metaphorical and the real exchange roles as we identify with each of the different personas created by the song words as they describe the hunting and killing, the eating of saila maso, little brother deer.

"When the Yaqui pahkolam clown their exuberant slapsticks, they open the audience with laughter and lift away any hint of sentimentality from the song words of the deer singers. In this way the absurd burlesques of the pahkolam provide a context in which deer-song words can achieve an emotional intensity that is rare in any poetic tradition. At the same time, they mediate the stark dualities inherent in this native drama of life and death" (Evers and Molina 150).

Deer singer Don Jesus Yoilo'i explained to Evers and Molina that during this time, the singer sings his own compositions for the maso me'ewa, killing the deer. Don Jesus' songs are vivid and beautiful portrayals of the animals, the yoawa that hunt and kill the deer, especially the "mad mountain lion," who is "a little deaf" just like Don Jesus himself. His songs display an empathy for all yoawa, even for the carrion eaters, black vulture, turkey
vulture, and even hunama wo'i, big coyote. Each song is sung from a different perspective so we share in vulture's or coyote's, or in mountain lion's need to survive. Through his songs, we hear "many voices in the one." Even the joyous brotherhood experienced by human hunters as they stalk the deer is expressed.

Throughout his songs, Don Jesus displays no prejudice towards any creature. Whether man or yoawa, each is shown to have his place in this enchanted wilderness world; his needs are valid and substantial. So when Don Jesus sings from the deer's point of view as he runs from the hunters, his tragedy becomes a pattern of life and death in which we equally share. The songs build to a climax as the deer frantically flees. As we share his desperation, his song foreshadows our own fate. The reader cannot help but identify almost too closely with the deer's dilemma:

Never again I,
will I on this world,
I, around will I be walking,

Just I, never again I,
will I on this world,
I, around will I be walking.

Just I, never again I,
will I on this world,
I, around will I be walking.
Just I, never again I,
will I on this world,
I, around will I be walking.

Over there I,
in an opening in the flowered-covered grove,
as I am walking,
Just I, Yevuku Yoleme's bow
overpowered me in an enchanted way.
Yevuku Yoleme's bamboo arrow
overpowered me in an enchanted way.
Never again I,
will I on this world,
I, around will I be walking. (166)

The song speaks with finality. There is a suspension of time as the poem gathers the deer's life into this single moment. The intensity of living is affirmed as he dies. There is no pity here--only acceptance. "That is how man is, he is born to die," Don Jesus told Larry and Felipe on several occasions (13). He was an artist who had not been overwhelmed by the tragic, and he made the following comments about this song:

"This is where he falls. 'Never again, I,
will I here, around will I be walking,' it says. The deer himself is going to die. 'Yevuku Yoleme's wooden bow,' it says. It means with a wooden bow I am overpowered in an enchanted way....The deer himself says that like that. He talks like that. As he is going to die, while dying, as he is going to die, he says that like that. Just as all will say 'yes,' while being taken somewhere to a war, they will be walking there to die. As if to say, 'never again are we going to walk about on this earth.'" (166)

In Don Jesus' statement the "I" turns to "we," and the reader, pahko crowd, pahkolam, relatives and guests, the tampaleo, violinist, harpist, the deer singer and dancer, that is, all of us converge in an equation with death; difference evaporates as we identify with the deer. Though repetition is characteristic within deer songs, its consistence creates a steady, solid yet rapid rhythm, and the "I" is, paradoxically, affirmed, made steadfast during the process of dying. In the concluding stanza, the rhythm slows as the "I" is anchored in the act that defines it, the moment of death. The song is a powerful pivot in the "eighteen different moments" of this song set which is sung right after the dawn, and we are reminded of the sea ania, the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn where saila
maso, little brother deer, lives. But in the new birth of the dawn exists the irony of dying. Yet the irony is erased in the last seven songs, as the deer, though dead, continues to speak, and we fully enter Yaqui faith and spiritual conviction.

In the following song the deer wonders why his "hands" cover his "antler crown," and his bewilderment gives way to the hard knowledge of the next song: "killed and taken, killed and taken, /there in the wilderness, I am killed and taken. The next piece shifts point of view as the singers now comment to the hunters: "On branches, you lay/flower-covered person's flower body," and "gather each plant/from the enchanted wilderness world,/On them, you lay/flower-covered person's flower body." The beauty and enchantment of the wilderness surround the deer, and no matter how much the pahkolam irreverently play with the deer's body, it does not touch his spirit.

One of the last and most beautiful of the songs celebrates transformation of the earthly and spiritual, tying them together in an image of communion. Somehow the inconceivable happens, and the voice of the deer's spirit sings while his body is, ironically, "being roasted." But the irony of the situation and the humorous slapstick of the pahkolam antics are subsumed in the beauty of the song and by the deer's double transformation into food and "flower":


My enchanted flower body.
fire, above the fire,
side by side is hung.
My enchanted flower body.
fire, above the fire,
side by side is hung.
My enchanted flower body,
fire, above the fire,
side by side is hung,
My enchanted flower body,
fire, above the fire,
side by side is hung.

My enchanted flower body,
fire, above the fire,
side by side is hung.
My enchanted flower body,
fire, above the fire,
side by side is hung.

Over there, I, in Yevuku Yoleme's
flower-covered, flower patio,
here I am scattered,
I become enchanted,
here I am scattered,
I become flower.
My enchanted flower body,
fire, above the fire,
side by side is hung. (171)

"The deer's spirit stays in the wilderness," explains Don Jesus (171). He has become enchanted; "here I am scattered, /I become flower." The tragic transforms into a sacred ritual of continuance. Yaquis say that "we think of flowers as being something beautiful. So, being beautiful, [they] would always win over something evil" (Painter 104). The "evil" of death is transformed into beauty. With conviction, grief stops, and a communion begins. The flesh of the deer becomes a sacrament, and the fire releases his spirit to the flower, to the sea ania, the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn. As we travel with the deer through death, the enchanted and ordinary, the absurd and the evil, the living and the dead, the flower and the fire coalesce. We move from the darkness to the light, to grace and beauty. The circle completes itself, and life continues.

Larry Evers writes that "this graphic sequence of images of death and rebirth indicates, in the words of Don Jesus, that 'the deer's spirit stays in the wilderness.' Performed on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of a loved one, during the Yaqui ceremony that releases the family from mourning even as it releases the spirit of the
departed from this world, these song words must provide a powerful articulation of the sorrow and the joy of the community" (154).

The community is implicated not only through the antics of the ritual clowns but also in the character of Yevuku Yoleme or Yebu'uku Yoeme. Don Jesus explains that in the song text of maso me'ewe, Yevuku Yoleme, a mythic figure who lives entirely in the wilderness world, represents all of us. "He is a hunter. Yevuku Yoeme is all of us," Don Jesus emphasized, "We are all Yevuku Yoeme, and he is all of us" (Evers and Molina 49).

We are all the hunted and the hunter; the paradox unfolds itself in time, and we take each role depending on circumstance and chance, or perhaps, our fate lies hidden in the song words of a singing tree. The last song Don Jesus sings during the maso me'ewa, killing the deer, leaves us with the image of one stick standing in the wilderness and evokes the story of the singing tree, and we are reminded of Sea Hamut, Flower Women, not only because she too is a hunter but also because she lives in the enchanted wilderness beneath the dawn. In the story of the singing tree, we encounter the young flower woman with a slain stag over her shoulders and her identification with the deer is as provocative as is her role as prophet.

One of Ambrosio Castro's many stories brings together
Yevuku Yoeme and Sea Hamut. As usual, Castro notes that he is just one link in the intricate complexity of Yaqui storytelling, explaining that this etehoi was told to him by Juan Maria Santime'a, "a very old man, leader of the most conservative faction in the pueblo of Potam."

Yebu'uku Yoeme

This is the story of the first Yaqui deer hunter. In Yaqui, he is called Yebu'uku Yoeme. This man, since he was very young, lived alone with his mother in a place called Poobetame'aka'apo.

Well, this Yebu'uku Yoeme was a very good hunter. He had great power over the deer. He dominated them so that they became as tame as burros. The deer were very wild and dangerous like broncos, but Yebu'uku Yoeme could catch up with them and kill them. Sometimes he would tie two together and drive them like a team of horses.

Throughout his youth, he didn't know a single man or another woman except his mother. All he knew were the animals and the desert. He did nothing but bring his mother water from a large lagoon near their house. Then he would go off into the desert.

Well, it happened that one day after running after a big deer to kill it, Yebu'uku Yoeme lay down under a tree and fell profoundly asleep. He was lost in his dreams when
a rabbit and a female deer approached. They came close to him. The rabbit said to the deer, "Look, it's very important that you, and all the deer, know the odor of this creature. If you don't learn to know his smell, he will finish all of you. If you can recognize his odor, then you will notice it from a long distance and you will be able to flee and save yourself. So come over here close." The rabbit lifted a corner of the skin which served as Yebu'uku Yoeme's clothing. Then the rabbit wiped sweat from Yebu'uku Yoeme's body with a piece of the skin and held it to the deer's nose. "Smell it," he said.

"Ah, yes, thank you, very much," said the deer who was very appreciative for what the rabbit had done. And from that time on, the deer run and try to hide when they smell anything associated with man.

Well, after living many years without ever knowing any other woman but his mother, a beautiful young girl appeared. The story does not say where she came from or whose daughter she was--only that she came from the seashore to north. Her name was Seahamut. The old Yaquis say that Seahamut was sent by Dios and came in search of Yebu'uku Yoeme to be his faithful companion.

Before dawn, she arrived at the water hole where Yebu'uku came for water. She had begun to wash her hair when Yebu'uku arrived.
"Good day, woman."

"Good day," answered Seahamut.

"Why do you wash in our drinking water?"

"Why...I don't know," answered Seahamut.

"Well where do you come from?" questioned Yebu'uku Yoeme.

"I don't know that either. I come here lost; I don't know who I am or where I come from. But I came here," said Seahamut, with a smile on her lips. "Where do you live?"

"Over there, not far," answered Yebu'uku Yoeme.

"Have you no mother?" questioned the girl.

"Oh yes I do."

"Well, take me to your home and your mother, and I will live with you," suggested Seahamut.

"And you, don't you have a mother or a father, or a home?" asked Yebu'uku Yoeme.
"Who knows? I don't know about that," replied Seahamut.

"Come with me," said Yebu'uku Yoeme, and he took her to the patio of his house. "Wait here for me a moment; I am going to ask permission of my mother," and he hid Seahamut behind some branches.

Seahamut said to the deer hunter, "Tell your mother that you want very much to get married. Then she will ask you where you are going to find a woman. Tell her that you just found one, and then both of you come here for me."

Yebu'uku Yoeme's mother was sweeping the patio. It was early in the morning.

Yebu'uku Yoeme approached his mother, "Mother, I have a great desire to get married."

"Oh, my dear son, where will I find a girl for you her? There are none, and I don't know where I can find you one!"

"No, my Mother, don't worry. I know where there is a young and very beautiful girl," said Yebu'uku Yoeme.

"Where? Let me see. Take me to her."

They both went to the patio where Seahamut was waiting.
When she saw them coming, she came out to greet them.

The mother said, "Come with us to our house. Look, this patio that I am cleaning, from now on is yours. From today on, you must clean it daily." She led her to the kitchen. "Look, here is the olla full of fresh water. You will tend to this every day--from now on the house is in your charge. This is your husband. He was carrying water because he had no woman, but today that task falls to you. He will go into the desert to bring you food.

Well, they were very happily married until they both died of old age. (Giddings Folk Literature 68-70; Evers and Molina Yaqui Deer Songs 48-49)

At the center of the story of the "first Yaqui deer hunter" is a meeting between the yoawa. Rabbit warns deer to be wary of this creature or else he will "finish all of you." The rabbit and deer establish a bond; they look out for each other and the discrepancy between the wild animal and the human broadens. No longer are we in the unitary world of the batnaataka. These people are Yaquis not Surems, and conflict, death or survival is rabbit's point, so it is most appropriate, then, that Seahumut would now appear.

Seahamut is a mysterious young woman; her birthplace and her parents are unknown. It's as if she sprang suddenly from the wilderness itself, a spirit being born from enchantment and sent by Dios. She comes from the
"seashore to the north," which associates her with Yomumuli, the ancient, primordial goddess who made the Yaquis and in anger burned the talking tree, rolled up her river, tucked it under her arm, and walked away on the clouds to the north. Seahamut's association with the prophet is further enforced by her name and her appearing by the lake in the dawn wind. Seahamut is a mysterious young woman associated with both the wild lands and the enchanted waters of the sea and lake, which tie her to turbulence and transformation, nourishment and growth.

Her past is vague with bits and pieces that point to power. "Who knows," she answers when Yebu'uku asks about her parents. Her disinterest is unusual. She has no concern for her past, her parents or her origins. She doesn't know who she is, but she knows where she is going. Her direction is clear; she is to marry Yebu'uku Yoeme. Through marriage, the domestic and the wild, the mysterious and the commonplace merge, and the obedience to the elder, to fate and Dios inherent in the Yaqui way is established. Seahamut and Yebu'uku Yoeme obey. He may be a powerful deer hunter who tangles and subdues the wildest of the broncos, but he asks his mother's permission to marry, and Seahamut willingly obeys her new mother-in-law's bidding. She assumes her responsibilities as keeper of the house; her role is defined as is Yebu'uku Yoeme's. By obeying, accepting Yaqui way, "well, they were very happily married
until they both died of old age..."

Yaqui stories speak of an enchanted way that extends back through history to the batnaataka, the time of no time, and to their "grandfather Surem," whose legacy the Yaquis continue. In the stories and songs, boundaries are erased and ancestors are evoked, their adventures recounted, their hopes and disappointments measured. All the voices from long ago live again in the words of a story which are only pieces of an ancient narrative that continues to unfold as the Yaquis retell and reinvent their journeys. "There are many journeys in the one," and through their etehoim, the Yoeme remember who they are, where they come from, why they continue as they do, but their fate, like the yoava, lies in the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn hidden somewhere in the song words of a singing tree.
CHAPTER IV
TULEKAI UME BUÍA SEWATA: LOVING THE EARTH FLOWER

No hay mal que por bein no venga.
—an old family saying

Gourd rattles spin, hissing,
heels hit hard
soft dirt
hit faster
harder
Water drum steadies the beat
Antlers sway jerk angle upward stop
twist and turn as they dance deer
up the road at Old Pascua.

"You know, little Micaela, Dog here, used to be the son of San Lazaro," Mosco said as he gently patted Tiger's head. We all had gathered on the lawn in my grandfather's front yard, enjoying the warm evening and cool breeze coming up from the arroyo that runs east of his garden. "San Lazaro lived over on 24th street," said Mosco, pointing with his chin and gesturing with his lips the way all my dad's friends did when they were really into the story. "You know, over there by Chevela's place. Well, he
had a lovely little house there with San Miguelito growing all the way up the side of his ramada like your Tia Betina's. And since San Lazaro kept such a nice house and garden, Jesucristo himself came over for dinner. Hay, Micaela, what a dinner San Lazaro's wife made. She picked fresh chiles and green corn from the garden, and tomatoes, muy rojos, bigger and juicier than even your grandpapa's. She made carne seca and steaming cocido. All the little old ladies in the barrio, las viejitas, came over to help her make fresh hot tortillas for Jesucristo himself. They put the frijoles on early in the morning, and made calabasitas in the evening, your favorite, huh miha. Hay Dios mio, you could smell the roasting chiles all the way over here to your grandmama's house. Everyone was going around with their noses up sniffing the air; that's how your uncle Mocho here chopped the tip off his ear. He was so busy sniffing up all those good smells in the air that he ran right into that olla over there and that old heavy gourd dipper slipped out, hitting his head. Not only did he get all wet, but that dipper sliced a little sliver off his left ear--pobrecito mochoito, cabroncito," Mosco smiled slyly at Mocho and everyone laughed as my dad pulled Mocho's black old battered cowboy hat down over his chewed up ear. Mocho just smiled in that cocky way of his and spit out a bit of his chewing tobacco. I looked up at my mom to see if it was true. She was laughing, and with her
eyes she told me to pay attention. "You know, Michelita," Mosco said to me, "Maybe that dipper was hungry, too. Well, as you may understand, the air was dancing with food, and San Lazaro's little son, he was just about your age, became so hungry that he ran all the way home, and forgetting their company, the boy jumped into his chair right at the table with Jesucristo himself, and San Pedro, San Juan, Adan and Eva, too. They were all sitting there just waiting to start when the little boy jerked up and grabbed a tortilla, gobbling it up. Ay caray caramba, Michel! His parents were so hot with shame at that little boy's bad manners, and Jesucristo turned to the child and said, 'as you act like a dog, so shall you be one.' And right there that little boy jumped off the table and went barking and barking, running around in short little circles, waging his short little tail. But San Lazaro didn't mind for he loved his little boy and so became the father of all the dogs and loved them very much. In fact, every year San Lazaro gave a big fiesta with pascolas and the venado, for all the dogs. So you see that is why all the dogs have their own bowls. And that little Micaela is the story of San Lazaro y Los Perros."

Mosco knew how much I loved the dogs, and he used to help me sneak bologna from my mom's icebox to feed all the strays that slept in the back alley, or he would bring bones from my dad's meat market and we'd help the strays
have their own little fiesta, but they had to behave—no snapping, biting or fighting. Mosco worked for my dad, and they were drinking buddies. He came from the Rio Yaqui, and he was filled with stories, which made him gentle and kind and playful.

As good of a storyteller as he was, Mosco was an even better monster. Somehow, he could get his eyelids to flip up and cover his eyes, making them grotesque and glaring red. Then he would hunch up and come after all the little kids, sending us out into the thick chaparral in front of my grandfather's. He could imitate perfectly the cry of a redtail hawk. With his arms outstretched, he would glide through the yard and when he caught sight of one of us, he would lower his head, flap his wings and screech as he dived for one of the kids. If you were caught, you became his dinner.

Then Mosco would change character and start lecturing us, "So, well, and who is the great hunter among you? Who is going to do away with that terrible big bird? Why, hijos, he could wipe you all out. There's not a good hunter among you anywhere. Well, I'll tell you. When I was a little boy living in Mexico, we lived on the most beautiful river. She was three times wider than the Santa Cruz, and my grandfather was a great hunter; he took me off into the desert and taught me well. We had to be good hunters in those days; that's how we lived—from the land.
Well, there was a big mountain down there, yes, as big as the Catalinas but not so wide. We called it Skeleton Mountain because there was always a great pile of bones at the base. Now, this happened a long time ago when all the Indians lived in little mud huts along the river. There were no towns then. And no one dared to have a fiesta or visit each other because there was a terrible big bird with red eyes and a vicious appetite who fed on the Indian people. No one could stop this menace, and he terrified the people into living like scared little rabbits, afraid of their own shadows.

One day, the horrible big bird flew over the people and snatched up a woman who was just about to have a baby. 'Ay que lastima,' cried the people, and the men armed themselves and went after that terrible bird, following him all the way to his home on Skeleton Mountain, but they were too late. They found a fresh pile of bones and blood, but to their surprise, on top of the bones was a baby boy. So they returned home and gave the boy to his father and grandparents to raise. The boy was just three years old when that big bird struck again; this time taking away his father. Then the boy was alone with his grandparents. As he grew into a fine young man, his grandfather taught him how to hunt, for he was a great deer hunter, and he taught that little boy everything he knew. But one day the boy asked for his mother and father, so his grandparents
told him the sad story and warned him to stay away from Skeleton Mountain. Well, the boy was angry and sorry about his parents, so he vowed to his abuelos, "I'm going to hunt down and kill that big bird." But his grandfather warned him, "He is a very great bird, and he has killed almost all of the best of our hunters. You are young and too small to go after the big bird."

Early the next morning before the sun was up, the young boy was out in the mesquite bosques just below Skeleton Mountain. He hid under the trees and scouted around for the great creature. Soon he heard a terrible cry, and a large black shadow crossed the ground and circled the forest. The boy was frightened and hid in a little hole at the base of an ancient mesquite. The bird flew away, but the boy watched him and followed him around all day until nightfall when the bird flew home to its nest. In this way, the boy learned where the terrible bird lived. He knew his grandparents would be worried, so the boy started home and met his grandfather on the way. 'We have been so worried about you,' scolded his grandfather. 'Where have you been? I hunted up and down the river for you.' 'Forgive me, grandfather,' said the young man, 'I was hunting the big bird, and I have found out where he lives. May I have your permission to kill that great bird?' 'Ay,' the grandfather sighed and was worried, but he saw that the boy burned with determination, so he gave
his blessing and they returned home to prepare the boy for his battle. His grandfather gave him a new bow, which was very large and heavy, and three new arrows which were very sharp. The boy practiced every day for three months, perfecting his skills, and then he was ready.

He left early, before dawn, and arrived at the bird's home on the mountain. He passed new skeletons on the heap of bones, and his heart grew heavy and his steps grew light, but in his heart the boy prayed for courage and success. He hid himself behind a great old oak tree that bordered the terrible bird's nest, and there the boy waited. He rubbed sweet grass into his clothes and along his arms to cover his scent, and marked his face with ashes from an old burnt log, and he waited patiently, alert to every movement, even the wind. Towards sundown, he saw the big bird flying his way. Ay, it was so big, and its cry was an awful thing to hear. The great bird carried another Indian in its beak, and the boy's heart hardened. He steadied himself, waiting for the bird to nest for the evening. The terrible creature flew right at him, and the boy took careful aim, but the bird turned suddenly and the arrow missed. The boy breathed slowly, set his arrow and took aim. The great bird was circling its nest and as he turned toward the old oak, the boy fired. That crafty old bird saw the boy move, and he was angry. Screeching at the boy, the bird lowered his claws and attacked. But, this time,
the young man was ready. With the last arrow his aim was true, piercing into the great bird's neck. Well, that old bird made an awful ruckus as he fell into the forest, knocking over trees and bushes. The young hunter followed the trail of broken trees down to the giant creature. There, he cut off a great many feathers and threw them up in the air. They floated everywhere, turning into the great horned owls. The little feathers changed into the little barn owls. Every kind of desert owl was created from these feathers. Again, he cut many feathers and threw them into the air, and they became the doves, white wing and the little incas—all the different kinds of doves we see in the desert. Every time the boy threw feathers into the sky, new birds would appear and fly away. Red cardinals and yellow canaries—all the many kinds of birds came from the terrible big bird. Finally, the boy cut into the meat, and threw some into the sky, and it turned into puma, the mountain lion—both male and female. Another piece turned into coyotes who howled their thanks to the boy. Then there were snakes and badgers, bears for the mountains, javalinas for the chaparral—all the animals came from the big bird. Nothing was wasted and the boy was glad. He went home to his grandparents, and the people made a great fiesta with pascolas and the venado. They were very happy to know all the new animals. And that, hijos, is only one reason why you all should be good
hunters. You girls, también."

Everyone always got together in the evenings to chatter and gossip, and the stories would fly. They used to tease my sister about her new beau because she was "so fickle just like the moon"; this story was always and only told when the moon was rising over the Rincons. No matter what size or shape it was in, they would start off the story:

"See, there she is again, this time just a sliver of herself." Or, when she was big and round, they would say, "Hay, who'se been feeding her so many beans and tortillas." "No! No! los tontos; this time she is having twin boys."

Then Maria Elias, my mother's best friend, would say to me, "Did you know, Micaela, that the Moon is in love with the Sun, and he is always trying to please her, but she is fickle and sometimes sour. One day the Sun asked her to marry him, and do you know what that lady said." I always answered, "No, Maria. Tell me what did she say?" "Well, mihita, the Moon told the Sun that she wouldn't marry him unless he bought her the most beautiful gown in the world, and it had to fit her just right. Hay Dios, and who can find a gown for the moon that fits her just right? But you know how men are, and the Sun went all around looking for a perfect dress. First he went up to the Santa Catalina Mountains and he said, 'Since you can see all around this valley, tell me Señoras, where can I find a"
beautiful gown for my lover, the moon?' 'Well, Senor Sol, we really can't help you. There is no dress that is now small now big like your lover, the Moon. But, wait, go over to the west, and at the base of A Mountain, there is a little seamstress there; she is a yellow tarantula, and they call her Rosita Amarilla. Maybe she can help you.' 'Muchisimas Gracias,' replied the sun and he walked along the spine of the Catalinas and then jumped over the desert until he landed at the top of A Mountain. There he met roadrunner and asked, 'Tell me Senor Caminera, you who travel all these roadways, where can I find Rosita Amarilla's house?' 'Oh, well, she has a nice little place down by that quarry of rocks, but I don't know how you're going to find her there?' answered the roadrunner. 'Forgive me Senor Caminera, but why do you tell me where Rosita Amarilla lives but then say I will not find her?' Senor Caminera cocked his sharp beak and blinked his little eyes, fluffed up his tail and then slowly replied, 'Because, Senor, Rosita Amarilla and all her kind never wake up until you have gone to bed and your brother Night and sister Stars shine. Rosita Amarilla will not come out of her home if you are here.' 'Oh nooooo,' wailed the Sun, and he thanked Senor Caminera, and went away without a dress for his sweetheart, and to this day, the Sun and Moon have never married, and she is as fickle, inconstante, as ever, always changing her moods, teasing her lover, the
Even after I had heard the story many times, it always seemed the same but different, a fragment or a word, a gesture or sigh was added or another character showed up, depending on who was listening there on the lawn. The story was always for someone, my sister or me, maybe my little grandma Chu or my brothers—whatever was there or whoever was causing trouble or in trouble. Even if it was just for fun, someone we knew was always in the story or could testify to its truth. This time, I knew Maria was going after my sister who was not pleased with any of the wedding dresses she had looked at. I was only five and Barbara was thirteen years older than me, and she was going to marry a gringo from California. My mother wanted her to go to college, but who knows? "¿Quién sabe?" they would say whenever something turned an unexpected way. The first time my mama grande, my mother's mother, saw Barbara's fiancé, he had a big, burly reddish beard, and she turned and exclaimed, "Ay Dios mio, all the same Jesus Christ!"

My grandmother was one of the most devout women I ever knew, but she still had a piece of pascola in her, and she always spoke her mind. They called him a "Beetneek," you know one of those bohemians. In this way I grew up surrounded by Yaqui stories; they were a part of our everyday life.

In the summer, the evenings were long, and Mosco would
linger on the grass, pull out an old leather pouch and coarse brown papers. He would sprinkle bits of tobacco on the paper and slowly, elaborately roll cigarettes for the adults. Then, he would always start in. "You know, everyone knows that tobacco is a woman. Some say she was a beautiful young girl who became ill and grew ugly. Some say she was born the most homely girl in the world. Well, muchachos, I really can't say if she was born that way or became ugly, but the truth of it is, by the time she was a young lady, she was truly the ugliest woman in the world. She was so ugly no one could look at her. Well, you can imagine that she was very miserable. Her parents were dead, and she lived with her brother who was a very good man. He was devoted to her, and he took very good care of his sister, the ugliest woman in the world. But she was very unhappy. She cried all day long, and her brother could not console her. One day, her brother had to go out to the desert to find some food, and the poor young woman wandered out into the arroyo. She sat on an old log, and with all her heart she prayed that her life would end. Before her appeared Dios himself, and he said to her, 'Do not worry and do not be so forsaken. You shall be loved and caressed by all men and women.' Dios took out a little gourd and sprinkled water over the woman's head. As she felt the water, her body was transformed into the long lean stalks of the tobacco plant. Her arms became long green
leaves, and her hair flowers. When her brother returned, he found the most beautiful plant he had ever seen. He didn't quite know why, but he found himself picking the leaves and drying them in the sunshine. Then he rolled up the tobacco in a cornhusk, tying the middle up with a strand of husk like a tamale. He lit his cigarette and found it very pleasing. To this day, everyone loves his sister who was once the ugliest woman in the world."

Mosco's story always led to talk about the latest sighting of a "flying cigarette." My little grandma Chu told us that brujos used these kind of cigarettes to make people ill. There were people who were crazy with envy or jealousy, and they would send off their "flying cigarettes" with orders "to hit" the person. She would always make the sign of the cross and hold her rosary when she talked about the dark ways of the brujos. Evil was very real for her, a palpable presence that could be combated with prayers and offerings to the saints. She never doubted the power of the "dark ways," and she said it was just a product of the times. Her real name was Jesusita and her family were fishermen from Guaymas. She always wore black and she never stopped grieving, even her laughter was laced with sorrow. She was intimate with death, having seen too much of it in Mexico. She told me that death was a very polite, elegantly dressed Spanish gentleman, and she would chat with him in the afternoons while she sat sipping black
coffee under the ramada. Though she was very kind, there was a remoteness about her, as if she was wandering in the weight of her years, remembering something or someone who was far away or almost within reach, and her eyes moved with a vague sadness and a bewilderment, as if she couldn't quite believe all that she had seen. For her and my grandfather, Fransisco, it was the darkest of times.

In 1912, my father's parents fled from their ranch in Altar, Sonora. They crossed the border on foot, and only one son survived the journey through the mountains. But, Jesusita was very stubborn and traditional. She insisted on going back to her homeland every time she was to have a child, but the journey was too arduous for her, and she lost so many children on the way that we lost count. Fed up with death, she had my father and his younger sister here in Tucson. She named the girl, Lourdes, and worried constantly for her health. Finally, she made a manda to the Virgin for the child's good will, and she walked from her home out to San Xavier Mission to light candles, and Lourdes did grow into a healthy young woman.

They lived in and around Tucson, following my grandfather as he travelled with the Southern Pacific railroad as a blacksmith. They always talked about the land they lost; it was a constant refrain, like a steady dull ache. They never recovered, and their sorrow permeated everything they did. Talk of deportation hung in
the air, and it fed their fears. "It was the work of the devil," they'd say, quite pragmatically yet passionately, and they lived on the edge of things, trying to survive.

They had no respect for English and refused to speak it, so my father grew up fluent in Spanish, Yaqui and Papago. The Chinese cook on the Southern Pacific railroad taught him a little Chinese, so when I was a child, my father would change languages like they were hats. He spoke Yaqui with his compadres, Spanish and Papago with his customers and family friends, and Chinese with the little storekeeper on Meyer street. But English eluded him, especially the hard sounds of "ch" which he pronounced "sh," like "sheez" for "cheese" or "sheekn" for "chicken," and so he was tormented by a language that seemed inaccessible and incomprehensible to him. Again and again, my mother witnessed the problems he encountered, so we were brought up to reply in English.

As a child, I heard so many different languages that I came to identify them by sound, not formerly knowing one from the other. Hopi sounded angular and hard-cut while Navajo seemed to swirl. My grandfather, Fransisco, loved to switch into Papago, which sounded like different rhythms of rain. Spanish sounded like a wild young river, romantic, lyrical. As my mother says, "Words are juicier in Spanish." But English seemed cold, hard and foreign, unrelenting in rules that seemed to have no rhyme or
reason, and I came to understand that men who were articulate and dynamic in Spanish or Yaqui seemed ignorant when they spoke in bits and pieces of broken English, and I saw them scorned and too many of my father's friends and relatives were shamed by their circumstances and confounded by a language that had no place for talking trees or dancing deer.

The last time I was at Old Pascua for the ceremonies, I was nine years old and the magic was tarnished by the old men passed out, their grimy, half-empty dark green bottles of Thunderbird slipping out of paper bags. Little drops of sticky red wine ran into the dirt. The men didn't care. "Son borachos," I heard some Mexicans snicker behind me as they nodded towards the old men. I knew then, as I saw an old man disentangle himself from the heap and try to stagger to his feet that we would not, as a family, come back here again.

When we first started going to Old Pascua, I used to love the feel of the soft dirt pounded into a fine earthen floor from years of dancing and walking, working and playing. There had always been something fine and familiar in that piece of land, a dusty quality infused with ceremony and enchantment that created a sense of protection and cohesion, but it was missing the last night we were there. Something was wrong with the ground. My mother said that it had all become "too touristy." I didn't know what
it was, but I felt the dirt, insidious, ruined, creep up my legs. I panicked and then saw the old men, broken and bent, empty like their bottles. I knew too many of them, knew them when they danced deer and told stories. It was a harsh reality that smudged the edges of enchantment.

Yet as the stories tell us and the deer songs teach us--the tragic transforms, and Old Pascua was no different. Out of ruin grows renewal, and new generations grew up loving the land, inspired by the dancing deer and the wild animals of the enchanted wilderness. Strong steps and clear hearts, sermons, songs and stories, dances and ceremonies healed the earth. In 1979, Yaqui artist Danny Leon painted a lovely mural on the south wall of the plaza at Old Pascua. He captured perfectly the wonder and beauty of the enchanted wilderness world beneath the dawn. Danny tells us that "the fawn in the mural represents saila maso and his rebirth into human form to give us the deer dancer" (qtd in Evers and Molina 60). Within the concept of rebirth is a cycle of transformation that includes disintegration and death, a process that inevitably moves into loss yet continues on into reintegration and rebirth. It is a cycle of hope, and the mural at Old Pascua mirrors the beauty and promise of the sacred world of the sea ania, the flower world.

The land at Old Pascua was not only renewed but it was also secured for the Yoeme as their own, and in 1963, 200
acres near Tucson were deeded by Congress to the Pascua Yaqui Tribe; it was called New Pascua, and its growth continues. As Larry Evers emphasizes, "New Pascua has grown from the original 200 acres deeded in the early 60s to over a 1,000 acres deeded to the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in 1990" (Letter to the author. 11 July 1990).

Through disintegration, war and deprivation, the Yaquis have endured and continue to flourish. Even during the darkest times, Yaqui elders continued and sustained their traditions. Edward Spicer holds that it is the collective history of a people that binds them together. He explains that "every people has a historical experience which no other people has undergone. Every people has accumulated experiences which they pass on as traditions from generation to generation. The experiences are associated with specific places, with specific persons, with triumphs and defeats, with sufferings, with friendly alliances, with persecutions and betrayals. These events are known to a given people from the inside as they are told by parents to children and transmitted with the feelings about them that have moved the preceding generations" (The Yaguis 347).

As Spicer points out, it is in the telling and the retelling that a collective identity is shaped and sustained; it is a dynamic process with smooth starts and abrupt endings, moments of victory and sure defeats. And
it is the sharing and experiencing of these collective narratives that make for endurance. The Yaqui elders who told us their stories taught me how cycles move like the shifting seasons, steady and inevitable yet unpredictable. They taught me to abide by beauty, to understand the power inherent in sewam, flowers, which, being beautiful, will always win over something evil. Through their suffering, they taught me to respect evil, to recognize its impending force which seems, at times, to dominate with a totality that is frightening. But through the use of sewam, darkness disintegrates and we move from the dark to the light, to grace and beauty. The circle completes itself, and life continues. So when I was a child, the round of ceremonies and stories enacted these cycles.

Easter, a celebration of renewal and rebirth, was a very special time for us, and my father always donated the meat for the community kitchen out at Old Pascua. He did so because he had so many compadres and comadres out there, but he did it especially for his godmother, Carmen, who was a curandera and a woman of power at Old Pascua. Carmen was by far the most mysterious woman I have ever met. She was already old when I knew her, and she dressed in long brown cotton skirts with a shawl wrapped around her head. Her skin had a strange discoloration so that it was very light in some places then faded into dark brown then pale white and then again into a dull brown. It didn't seem to bother
her at all, and she laughed with the abandonment of a child and her dark eyes sparkled and danced with mischief. She had seen many things and her eyes held mysteries. She could hold you with her eyes; tell you things without saying a word. She used to come over and iron for my mother on long summer afternoons, and I would sit on the step and listen to her chatter. She always nodded and crooned at me, especially if she found a penny or a dime or a hairpin in a shirt pocket. She would show it to me, say a brief word to the coin, then drop it into a little ashtray. She had a greeting for everything, and I would trail after her as she took big brown paper bags from the kitchen and go out into our back yard to gather "weeds." She knew all the plants intimately and she would slowly circle the yard, picking this plant, then another, filling her bags which I carried for her. She moved slowly and steadily with great patience, and I loved the way she gently turned the plants in her old hands, carefully brushing away the dirt from their roots, always patting the ground back into place with a fondness that was evident.

_Vergaladas_ were my father's favorite, so she always left us with a big bag, and she taught me to recognize true _vergaladas_ from pig _vergaladas_ whose thick, round and waxy little leaves were three times bigger than true _vergaladas_ whose small delicate leaves traced the ground like green lace. We would mix the _vergaladas_ with white cheese, and
it was delicious, but pig vergaladas tasted like swine and was to be avoided at all costs. Vergaladas came up after the rains, and where there was one plant, there were many. Thick patches of green mint grew under the leaky water faucets, and they left the air tingling with their sweet smell. Carmen called it "herba buena," the good herb which soothed the stomach and was taken as hot tea.

After we collected all the plants from the yards, we would drop the bulging bags off, and with empty ones, we'd head off for the thick chaparral. This was much harder work as the plants were tough and spiny. Sometimes she borrowed my grandfather's long hooked pole and someone would drive us out to the saguaros and she would hook the ripe fruit from its crown. They would burn off the thorns and the meat was a brilliant red. Sometimes, they made a strong cactus wine called tesquine that fermented for days and smelled thoroughly foul. Carmen gathered all kinds of plants--yucca and sage, devil's claw, cat claw, prickly pear fruit and mesquite beans when they were yellow and hard with blood-red strips running their length. They were chewy and sweet. There was a lovely mahogany red bush called manzanita which was boiled and used in the bath for rheumatism. Carmen would gently caress the leaves as if they were old friends, nodding and chattering under her breath as she picked each one.

One morning when we were out in the desert, we came
upon a little owl with white and black feathers. It was nestled between several rocks. Its eyes were closed, and I was sure it was asleep, but surprised to see it out during the day like this. I just stared at that little owl, but Carmen smiled and her eyes moistened, then she reached down and picked it up whispering, "Ay, tecolita." I couldn't believe that it stayed sleeping in her arms until she made me touch it, and then I knew the tecolita was dead. "How can it be so pretty, Carmen?" I wondered. The little owl was still soft, almost warm. There was no blood, no ants, nothing hard or ugly about it. I guess it must have just died. It was so peaceful and beautiful; she cradled the tecolita and searched for a hard stick. On a little knoll under mesquites and ocotillos, she dug a hole, and we buried the tecolita. Carmen patted the grave and she looked around; her eyes were brilliant and calm as she scanned the desert. She touched gently the tip of my tummy, and she said, "Miha, you know, she gives and she takes away." And Carmen touched the grave and again gazed at the desert. "She?" I thought, and I looked around wondering who "she" was. I saw ocotillos and mesquites and knew better than to question my elders. With simple words, Carmen could invoke mystery and now she summoned some presence; something was here, invisible yet tangible. I couldn't see it, but I felt it. Carmen quietly repeated as if praying, "Si, Mihita, she gives and she takes back. It
is good. It is good. Don't forget the little tecolita. She is a gift from the desert, today." She bent over and picked some delicate yellow flowers that were growing by the grave, and she said, "The deer, Miha, they love to eat these little flowers, and they will come here today and as they eat they will dance for the tecolita. You know, the deer and the owls are good friends. They are both very wise. This flower is used sometimes in love potions," and she cackled loudly over some private joke that I was too young to understand. Later that afternoon when we returned home, I showed the flowers to my father. He looked at Carmen and they started laughing together and started talking rapidly in Yaqui; they had a fine time, and I never did find out what they were saying.

At Old Pascua, during the ceremonies, Carmen was completely different. We always sat at a table near hers, but she was unapproachable, transformed. Dressed in brilliant colors, she was anything but the little old lady that I gathered plants with. I was always shy of her then and would watch her as she was very busy with people, making arrangements and directing events. She was imposing and no one approached her without respect.

The last time I saw Carmen she came to visit my father who was recovering from a serious illness. It had been a nightmare, and Father Stanislaw had given him his last rights, but somehow, he lived through his illness though he
never completely recovered his health. My little grandma Chu was praying in the parlor with some of her comadres as there had been already three deaths in the family—my grandfather Fransisco, my mother's mother, and my uncle had all died suddenly and unexpectedly. On all sides the family was stricken. My grandmother had gone to sleep and didn't wake up. They told me that was the best way to die, and that only a very fine and truly good person dies this way. For three days, a large white dove nested on my grandmother's favorite tree, and my mother always marked it as a special sign, and she said, "No hay mal que por bein no venga; there is nothing so bad that something good doesn't come from it." Carmen agreed with her, and we went in to see my father. I sat on the edge of the bed, and Carmen set up the ironing board and gathered up clothes that no one had had time to deal with. She was truly a healer, and her presence was calming. We started chatting, and my mother brought in a new candle for the saints that were housed in a deep enclave in the wall above and beside the bed. There was a nicho in every bedroom.

Carmen looked at the candle, and her eyes lit up. "Miguel," she said to my father, "Did you know that once there was a man who lived out at Pascua and his name was Miguel, también. But this man, ay, did he have a problem—what a problem! This poor man's wife had just given birth to their thirteenth son. Oh, can you imagine, thirteenth
son! Well, he was a very good father, and he went all over the pueblo searching for a godfather for his son, but there was no one left. And the father was worried, so he went walking out north towards the mountains. He walked and worried and walked, wondering who would be his son's godfather. Suddenly, the sky darkened and a wind swept up, blowing in great circles. Miguel looked up and was startled. Out of the whirlwind stepped a man who was very elegantly dressed, muy suave, and he walked with a confidence and a fancy cane. 'Hello Miguel,' said the man, 'Do not worry, hombre, I will be your son's godfather.'

Well, Miguel was stunned. How did this man know his name? How did he know about his son? 'How do you come to know me? Who are you?' asked Miguel who eyed the stranger. 'Oh, well, I know many things, and I can help you,' replied the stranger. 'But who are you,' Miguel insisted. 'Oh, well, some call me the devil, but you know how people are.'

'Ay chingaso, vete!' swore Miguel, 'you are for the rich.' And the devil disappeared in a swirl of wind. Miguel only sighed and decided to turn east toward the Rincons. He walked on slowly, pondering his fate. Again the sky darkened with clouds, and Miguel looked up and saw a man in the distance. He too was elegantly dressed, but he moved with a silence. 'Dios mio!' said Miguel, and he prepared himself to meet this man. 'Hello Miguel,' the man was solemn and said, 'Yes, Miguel, I will be the godfather for
your son. 'But who are you, Senor?' 'I, Miguel, am death,' answered the dark stranger. 'Oh well, since you take from both the poor and the rich, and you make us equal well, yes, yes, you will be my son's godfather,' said Miguel. 'I will make your son a great curandero. The best there is, and on his thirteenth birthday, I will come for him. Is that understood?' said Death. 'Yes, of course,' answered Miguel, 'as you wish it.' Death disappeared and Miguel turned for home, and his heart was glad.

His little son grew into a fine young man, and on his thirteenth birthday, his godfather Death appeared and took the boy in a swirl of wind off to the enchanted desert beneath the dawn. It was a beautiful place, and there Death taught the little boy, Miguelito, all about the different plants and explained their benefits. He showed him a very special herb and said, 'Miguelito, you must use this plant very carefully. When you enter the sickroom and I am at the head of the bed, then that person may be cured and you may give him the herb. But, if I am at the foot of the bed, then apply no medicine for that person must die. Do you understand, Miguelito? Do you agree to do as I ask?' said Death, his godfather. 'Oh yes, godfather. I will do as you say,' answered the boy. So Death flew them back home, and Miguelito grew into a great curandero, the best there was. He always knew who was to die and who was to live, and so Miguelito grew rich as well as famous.
Well, one day a beautiful young girl came to see Miguelito. Her name was Socorro. Miguelito took one look at the beautiful Socorro, and he was in love, hopelessly in love. Of course it happened that her father was very ill, so Socorro begged the curandero to help her. Her father was a very rich man, and Miguelito was taken to a fine hacienda. There, the old man's servant directed Miguelito to the dying man's room. Before they entered the man said, 'Senor, if you cure my patron, then he will give you his daughter, Socorro, for your wife.' Ay, Miguelito could barely breath he was so excited by this news. He entered the sick man's room, and guess where his godfather was standing? Yes, that's right. At the foot of the bed! Miguelito paused only a minute, and with the thought of Socorro in his head, he looked at his godfather, looked at the sick old man, then he quickly turned the bed around. Oh, his godfather said not a word, nothing, not a sound. He quietly, calmly watched Miguelito give the old man the herb. Miguelito thought, 'Well, what can he do? I am his godson, am I not?' and Miguelito glanced up at his godfather, who still didn't speak.

Surely, in time, the old man recovered, and a big wedding was planned at the Cathedral. There was to be lots of food and drink, even pascolas. And truly the wedding took place; it was a wonderful affair. But as the couple were coming down the steps, Death appeared to his godson.
Quietly, he grabbed him by the arm and whirled him away, back to the enchanted wilderness. This time they went into a large cave, and what a sight they saw. There were rows upon rows of candles. Each candle represented a person's life. Some candles were tall and burning brightly. Some small, almost a puddle of wax, barely flickering. Others were only half-way burned down. Miguelito could hardly believe his eyes. 'Godfather,' he asked, 'Oh, please show me my candle.' 'Why certainly, godson,' said Death. They wound their way through the rows of candles and went deep into the heart of the cave. They came upon a large candle, not even half-way burned down. Its flame was burning brightly. 'Here, godson, here is your candle,' said Death and he pointed to the beautiful candle. Then Death turned looked at his godson, leaned over and blew out the candle."

Carmen ended her story, but I quickly protested, "But, Carmen, what about Socorro?" "Death, miha, is a disciplinarian. The boy gave his word, and that can never be changed," she answered sternly. "Oh," and my voice was small. "Do you know why your grandmother and those ladies come every day to pray?" she asked me. I just looked at her and she asked me, "Do you know what a manda is, miha?" I nodded my head, and she said, "Never make a manda, unless you can fulfill it. If you fail, it is worse than if you hadn't made one at all. It is a promise with your heart and with Dios. If you love someone with all your heart,
then you make a manda, that is the only way. If you have no love in your heart, your promise is no good, your words are empty. You will be punished for it. Keep your words and your heart strong, miha, that is the only way. And remember what your mama said, 'No hay mal que por bein no venga.'

I felt hot with shame, but I wasn't sure why, but her words stayed with me. There was something about all those stories, they stayed with you, worked on you without you knowing it. It was impossible not to believe those stories; they were told with such joy and conviction. Even if you knew they weren't really real, they were still true. They carried there own reality, and at the time they were told, you never doubted their authenticity. They became a piece of the everyday, of the ordinary. There were many more stories with lots of characters who lived with us in the desert, or down the street, or over in the arroyo, up a mesquite tree, under a prickly pear or down a canyon. Animals and humans were always crossing paths, trees talked, ghosts walked, headless horsemen chased our grandmothers, buried treasures were found where spirits wandered, lonely women haunted the rivers, lost babies cried in the night winds, our grandfathers spent long nights in cemeteries playing poker with death, coyotes tricked dumb turtles, and tortoises fed on prickly pear fruit, their mouths stained red from feasting. Owls would
warn us of danger and the deer would dance. Everything had a voice in the desert, so everything had a story. And the voices blended, sometimes in harmony, sometimes in cacaphony, but difference disappeared as we listened to stories. In this way I came to understand Yaqui etehoim, but they were never separated from people or places, and Spanish, English, Yaqui and the rest blended together in a rich tapestry where each colored the other and no strand could be pulled without the whole thing unweaving. And there was no such thing as death without beauty or beauty without death.
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