

Silent Wing Study Guide

Silent Wing by Jose Raul Bernardo

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Introduction

It was with favorable expectations that *Silent Wing* was received in 1998. Coming into the market just two years after *The Secret of the Bulls*, a novel set in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, which won positive attention from the *Los Angeles Times* as one of the best works of first fiction for 1996, could not hurt. Although critics had mixed feeling concerning *Silent Wing*, readers have offered favorable remarks. The most frequent comment concerns their appreciation of Bernardo's writing about Cuba's famous poet patriot, Jose Julian Marti. One reader stated that the book "brought much reflection and analysis of internal conflicts." Another reader remarked that he preferred his history "embedded in a good story." Further comments focus on the relevance of Marti's thoughts and deeds to today's turbulent political situations. Wherever there is inequality there is need for individuals with integrity. Bernardo's novel suggested that many leaders pause to contemplate before taking action. Readers seem to appreciate a protagonist who has many unanswered questions concerning life and making the right decisions.



Author Biography

Born in Havana, Cuba, October 3, 1938, Bernardo is the son of Jose Bernardo and Raquel Perez. He studied at the Havana Conservatory, Cuba, where he received a Bachelors of Music in 1958. He attended Miami University in Florida where he received a Masters in Music in 1969. He received his Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1972. An architect, playwright, composer, and writer, Bernardo was a planner for the Havana City Hall, Cuba, in 1959. After moving to the United States, he was an architect of Harrison and Abramovitz, 1964-1967, the vice-president of Museum Planning Incorporated, 1967-69, and an architect of Joyner/Bernardo, 1969 until the present.

Of his musical accomplishments, he wrote an opera, "La Nina de Guatemala", in 1974, a work based on the poem by the same name of the Cuban poet and patriot Jose Marti. He also wrote "Sonata for Amplified Piano" and "Canciones Negras" in 1973 and published *Poemas Misticos* in 1979. He composed the operas "Something for the Palace" in 1981 and "Unavoidable Consequences" in 1983. Yet, perhaps his most significant work in opera is "The Child" first produced in 1974 and the antecedent for Bernardo's historical novel *Silent Wing*. He was the Composer in Residence at the Cent City Opera, Denver, Colorado, during the summer of 1981. He also wrote "That Night of Love" for the film score for the movie *Fat Chance*. Bernardo received awards in the form of production grants for his work on "The Child" as early as 1974. He is a member of the National Opera Institute and the New York Council on the Arts and American Music Center. He was made Honorary Citizen of Guatemala in 1975.

Perhaps the events in Cuba during 1957-1958, at the time Bernardo was completing his bachelor's degree, made an impact on him. Fidel Castro had emerged as a rebel leader in opposition to the Batista movement. When Castro forces fought Batista's army and took Santiago on January 2, 1959, the war ended. Warcrimes trials followed in which 600 were executed. Whether Bernardo directly felt any of the fear or concern other Cuban citizens experienced is unknown; yet, it is important to remark upon Bernardo's exposure to the rich literary heritage of his homeland. Bernardo learned of the works of Cuba's Jose Marti. Bernardo's historical novel *Silent Wing*, published by Simon [and] Schuster in 1998, is a story of the challenge and passionate times of Marti's life. Cuba was not yet liberated from Spain and its citizens, Marti among them, faced imprisonment and exile for expressing opinions concerning politics and independence.

Bernardo lives in the Catskill Mountains of New York State and is a United States citizen. Bernardo's first novel, *The Secret of the Bulls*, published by Simon [and] Schuster in 1996, was named one of the best works of first fiction by the *Los Angeles Times*. A cassette version of the book published in 1996 and read by actor Lou Diamond Phillips is available through Audioscope. The novel *The Secret of the Bulls* has been translated into five languages including Greek.



Plot Summary

Part 1

Jose Bernardo's *Silent Wing* portrays the life and loves of Cuban poet and revolutionary hero Jose Julian Marti. The novel begins in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in the year 1877 and concludes twentytwo years later in Dos Rios, at the east end of Cuba in the year 1895. This is the story of a man compelled to speak, write, and take action on behalf of freedom, even if that means sacrificing his own true love and life in the process.

The narrative begins with Sol, "a beautiful young woman with dreamy dark eyes and long golden hair." She is seventeen, of marrying age, uninterested in any of the young men she has met. She converses with her nursemaid Xenufla, a Mayan Cakchiquel Indian woman. Xenufla intimates that "men can be a lot of fun." Sol is embarrassed but listens closely to her advice. Following Xenufla's instructions carefully, she visits a church in Jocotenango and speaks to the statue of Santa Rita.

Sol records in her diary the details of the saint's advice:

Then, all of a sudden, I felt a tremor under my feet. I thought we were going through an earthquake, so I looked around me. But not a thing was moving, and yet I was shaking badly. I got so scared. I did not know what to do. It was then I looked up at the Saint again and noticed that her eyes were changing form and color, little by little becoming dark blue instead of brown until they became the dark blue eyes of a handsome man with dark, thick eyebrows.

Sol returns home and describes to Xenufla what has happened. Xenufla is happy for the "wondrous sign." She is convinced that the man has been chosen by the gods "to always be by her nina's side" and that he is "on his way to her. Now all there was to do was to wait for him."

Part 2

Julian is a young man of 26 traveling on board a small steamship named El Futuro heading for Guatemala. Exiled from his homeland of Cuba for nearly nine years, he has constantly moved with "no country" and "no job." He wonders when he will be able to return to his homeland.

Ten years before, he had lived in Mexico City with a job writing political essays for La Revista Universal. After a coup d' tat, he was encouraged to leave and travel to Guatemala. Senor Fermin has written a letter to Professor Saavedra, the principal of the



Escuela Central in Guatemala City on Julian's behalf. He has given Julian money and a letter of introduction to Gualterio Rubios, the new liberal president of Guatemala. Although Julian has few possessions, his books are the most precious:

His books are his friends-the friends who talk to him.
Just as his diaries are his friends-the friends who listen.

Before leaving Mexico City, Julian proposes to Lucia, the daughter of an exiled Cuban lawyer. Her acceptance surprised him, yet, "what was done was done."

Upon his arrival in the small Mayan village of Puerto Dulce, Julian makes his way over the mountains to Guatemala City. The journey is exhausting but Julian enjoys the nights in the jungle. He writes his diary, "I slowly fall asleep, dreaming of love."

Julian arrives in Guatemala City, finds an inexpensive place to stay, and makes plans to contact Professor Saavedra. Julian meets Professor Saavedra and immediately impresses him. Already Saavedra wishes to introduce Julian to Don Manuel, the general who led the Guatemalans to independence.

On his way to his room one evening, Julian meets an organ grinder and a little monkey called Chirilingo. The man tells Julian that the monkey will bring him "a little bit of wisdom about the future." He is given two messages: "When honor and truth are at odds, let truth prevail" and "Don't give up hope. The girl you've been waiting for is just around the corner."

Part 3

Julian and Lucia continue to correspond through letters. Julian is hired as an instructor and requested to examine the new civilian codes for Guatemala. Gabriela, the younger sister of Sol, is one of Julian's pupils. She begs her father to invite Julian to Sol's "coming-of-age" party. Don Manuel agrees. An invitation is sent.

During a local, passionate, and erudite debate in the school's auditorium, Julian has an opportunity to speak on the subject of which is mightier, the pen or the sword? Julian presents a stirring speech in which he concludes, "It is up to each of us to make that world [of peace] come true. Today." Later that evening, his Mayan friend Panoplo remarks cryptically, "It's painful, very painful to be chosen by the gods."

Julian goes with Professor Saavedra to meet Don Manuel. Don Manuel is immediately impressed with Julian and treats him like a son. Later, at Sol's party, Julian keeps to himself. Then he sees Sol, "the most beautiful girl he has ever seen in his life." He is completely swept up by emotion. Sol is equally as swept up. Julian, however, realizes that he will never have a chance to fulfill his dream:

And as Julian weeps for joy, he finds himself also weeping at the devastating realization that, as close as he has been to the woman of his dreams, the woman of



his poems, he must learn to forget her, he must never see her again. His most sacred word of honor has been given to Lucia. And once a Cuban criollo man gives his word of honor, it is never to be broken. Never.

Julian writes a letter to Lucia declaring they will be married and "live the life" of her "dreams." He intends to keep his pledge. During a conversation with Panoplo, Julian learns of a Mayan belief. Julian confesses he has found his love and has lost her. Panoplo explains, "if you really found the woman the gods mean for you to have, then she will always be by your side, no matter what.

Part 4

Julian spends every free moment in the company of Don Manuel and as many "private" moments as he is allowed with Sol. Lucia makes wedding plans and spends Julian's money as quickly as she receives it. Their wedding date is set. Julian plans to leave for Mexico City. Lucia, in the meantime, wonders if she loves Julian. She thinks:

She would like to love him. She wants to. She needs to love him. She needs to let the passionate woman she hides inside to come out and fully experience that kind of love, the kind she has heard so much about, whatever that kind of love is like. All she knows about that kind of love is through her lady friends.

Julian and Sol part.

Part 5

Lucia and Julian, now married, journey to Guatemala where a position of full professor awaits him. They arrive in Guatemala City and meet with Professor Saavedra. Shortly after their arrival, Don Manuel invites them to his home. Julian arrives with Lucia to discover that there are rumors that President Rubios has "gone crazy" and has imprisoned several suspected traitors. They return to their hotel where Julian announces they will be leaving Guatemala. This stuns Lucia. She informs him that she is pregnant and accuses him of not thinking of her.

A doctor visits Sol and finds her feverish. In her mind, she sees Julian in the white gazebo where they used to meet and talk. She runs to him and gives herself to him completely. That same night, Julian goes to the gazebo where he and Sol often met. There he finds Xenufla and learns that Sol has died. He writes in his journal, "Shaded by a silent wing I must write of a love in full bloom."



Part 6

After several years of traveling from Guatemala, Venezuela, Honduras, Mexico, and Florida, Julian, Lucia, and their son Ismaelillo live in Brooklyn, New York. It is the winter of 1883. Julian is unhappy. Lucia is embittered by the life they lead. Lucia confronts Julian about a worn photograph. Julian denies nothing. Less than a week later, Julian returns to an empty apartment. Lucia has left with their five-year-old son. Upon reading Lucia's letter, he vows: "My son will not die in an enslaved Cuba."

It is now May 19, 1895. Julian is in a small encampment in Dos Rios, Cuba with his army at the ready. He receives a report that the enemy is close and gives the order to attack. As he "leads his men in a fearless charge," he is bringing his dreams to fruition. He is shot and killed. His last thoughts are of Sol.

Part 7

The USS Maine is destroyed while anchored in the bay of La Habana. The United States enters into war with Spain. The result of the war is liberation of Cuba on May 20, 1902.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

Silent Wing is Jose Raul Bernardo's novel of a young Cuban patriot, Julian, who is exiled from Cuba in the late 1800's for voicing opinions against the Spanish control of the country. Julian spends his life in pursuit of the cause of freedom, makes huge personal sacrifices for the greater good, and eventually becomes a revered figure among the Cuban people.

As the story begins, a beautiful young woman named Sol sits in her room in Guatemala in 1877 composing her thoughts on what to write in her diary about today's events. Sol's nanny, Xenufla has taken Sol to the place where people beseech Saint Rita for special requests. Xenufla thinks that Sol needs a husband, because the young woman is already eighteen-years-old and well past the time to be married.

Sol's beauty has attracted many young men, but she is uninterested in any of her suitors. Sol is not convinced that intercessions to Saint Rita will bring the intended results, but Sol follows Xenufla's advice and the two women visit the town of Jocotenango where the saint's statue is enshrined. Sol climbs the mountain and approaches the statue with trepidation and before long, Sol begins to shake and thinks there is an earthquake. However, it is not the city which is trembling.

Miraculously, the eyes of the statue transcend into the dark blue eyes of a handsome young man. Sol reports her news to Xenufla who is convinced that this is a sign that Sol's love is on his way to find her.

Prologue Analysis

The author captures the religious fervor of the Guatemalan people with Xenufla's conviction that Saint Rita will provide a husband for Sol. The traditions and culture of Guatemala were heavily influenced by Spanish rule and customs for many years. Whether or not, Sol's episode with the saint's statue is representative of acts of prayer and intercession is not clear, but the incident provides some foreshadowing by the author for the extension of the plot line.



Chirilingo, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Chirilingo, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Summary

A young man, named Julian, awakens at the sound of a steamship's blast. He rises to look over the railing to see land, which he hopes is his destination of Guatemala. Julian, who is only 26-years-old, has lived a hard life since his exile from his native Cuba nine years ago. Julian has been living in different countries all this time, his last home being Mexico City which he left ten weeks ago at the suggestion of a friend.

Julian's passionate writings of individual freedom have caught the attention of the new conservative Mexican regime and Julian's friends fear for his safety should he remain in Mexico City. It had been Julian's outspoken words and writing which had preceded his exile from Cuba years ago. Julian's friend, Senor Fermin, has written to a colleague in Guatemala, Professor Saavedra, about the possibility of a teaching position for Julian in Guatemala City.

Saavedra has responded that a position is available and that it is critical for Julian to arrive in Guatemala City as soon as possible in order to be approved by the minister of public instruction. Fermin provides Julian with some money and a letter of recommendation to help with any introductions in Guatemala City.

Julian is interested in the teaching position and is anxious to become established so that he may send for his fiancée, Lucia, the daughter of a Cuban lawyer also living in exile in Mexico City. Julian does not love Lucia passionately, as he is anxious to be married and has proposed almost on a whim, one night.

Julian debarks from the steamship, El Futuro, in the town of Puerto Dulce, locates a husband and wife team which will transport him via mule train to Guatemala City. As Julian drifts off to sleep in his hammock in the dense Guatemalan jungle, he dreams of Lucia and the promise of a better life.

Eight days later, the mule train party arrives at Guatemala City. Julian secures a room at the home of an old woman, bathes, eats, and lies down to sleep during the afternoon siesta on the first bed he has had for many weeks.

Chirilingo, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 Analysis

The story is based on the life of Cuban poet, Jose Julian Marti, who lived in Spanish-controlled Cuba during his childhood. As a young boy, Marti felt passionately about the inequalities and injustices inflicted by Spanish rule and was eventually evicted and imprisoned at the age of sixteen. The incarceration took its toll on the boy and Marti was eventually moved to a remote area of Cuba and then finally to Spain where he continued to publish his writings about the evils of Spanish rule in Cuba. Marti attained a law degree, moved to France and was able to return to his beloved Cuba under an

assumed French name. Finally, in the year 1877, unable to find employment, Marti moved to Guatemala City where he became a history and literature professor.

The story is told from the third person omniscient point of view, which means the story is told by an unseen or unnamed narrator who also can intuit the emotions and feelings of the main characters. This allows the reader to understand not only the actions of the plot line, but also the motivations that drive those actions.



Chirilingo, Chapters 4, 5, and 6

Chirilingo, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Summary

Julian's meeting with Professor Saavedra is positive, but Julian's hope of a teaching position are temporarily thwarted, because he must be approved by the minister of public instruction, but Julian's diploma has not yet arrived from Spain yet. Saavedra is able to offer Julian some work as a part time teacher and the older man encourages Julian to embrace the people of Guatemala City. Saavedra hopes that Julian will have the fortitude to return to fight for Cuba's freedom and not end up like himself working behind a desk.

Julian is pleased to have the temporary work but had hoped to be able to send for Lucia sooner. Julian consoles himself with the good fortune of meeting Saavedra who is also a dedicated Cuban patriot. Julian hopes, though, that he does not end up like Saavedra who has been away from Cuba for so long that he has lost his intensity, his dreams, and even his Cuban accent.

On his way home, Julian encounters a street performer with a little monkey named Chirilingo who passes out tickets imprinted with fortunes in exchange for a few coins. Julian is unable to pay, because he has spent all his money tonight on some drinks, but the performer tells Chirilingo to give Julian a fortune anyway. Julian is not pleased with the first piece of paper which reads, "When honor and truth are at odds, let truth prevail," so Chirilingo gives Julian a second one which says that the girl of his dreams is just around a corner. Julian is pleased with the second fortune but still disturbed by the first, as he walks back to his rented room.

Chirilingo, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of metaphors in his description of Julian's memory of his beloved Cuba. "...remembers the way La Habana, the city where he was born, looked at night: hundreds of flickering gaslight stars, a necklace of lights outlining the entire edge of the bay, reflecting on the dark deep waters."

The author also establishes Julian as the protagonist in the story and defines his purpose and motivations for the plot line. "Freeing my homeland is my dream. My life's ambition, my life's cause. My destiny. The reason why I think - the reason why I know - God placed me on Earth. To achieve the liberation of my homeland. And if not to achieve it, to work diligently, as hard as I can, incessantly and for as long as need be, to help achieve it."



Earthquake, Chapters 7, 8, and 9

Earthquake, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Summary

Julian adapts to life in Guatemala and sends letters and postcards to Lucia in Mexico City. Lucia is happy to share news of Julian with her family, which is not convinced that Julian will amount to much or that he will return for Lucia. Lucia is twenty-nine-years-old and unmarried, The stigma of being a spinster weighs heavily on her, and she longs to be reunited with Julian.

Julian's appointment as a teacher has still not come through despite several visits with the minister of public instruction. Professor Saavedra knows from his political contacts that this delay can only mean that Guatemalan President Rubios has not been presented with Julian's background check yet.

Julian continues to write articles protesting Spanish rule in Cuba and moves to another room closer to the school. Julian also begins to frequent a local bar where he is befriended by the wise old proprietor, Panoplo. Panoplo calls Julian "Ginebrita" which means Little Gin Boy, because Julian drinks gin after his daily dose of quinine to protect against malaria.

Saavedra introduces Julian to Senor Gostiero, the Attorney General of Guatemala, who shares some new legal codes with Julian. Julian favors the positive changes in the codes and writes a letter to Gostiero, which is then published in *El Progreso*, the newspaper dedicated to the Reform Party.

The publication of the letter hurtles Julian into the spotlight overnight, and he is becoming well known to the government officials and people he encounters on a daily basis. Julian is especially popular with the girl students at the school who are struck by his handsome good looks and intense manner. One girl in particular, Gabriela Manuel, the daughter of famous Guatemalan liberation General, Don Manuel, is particularly taken by Julian and asks her father to include Julian on the guest list for the family party next week.

The General's oldest daughter, Sol, will be having her coming out ball next week and the General sends an invitation to Professor Saavedra asking him to bring any other Cubans to this important evening. Saavedra extends the invitation to Julian who protests that he has to prepare important lesson plans although the real reason is that Julian has no formal wear.

The next night, Saavedra hosts another in a series of public events dedicated to the furtherance of Cuban culture in Guatemala. Tonight's topic is a debate about whether the pen is mightier than the sword. The two men who will debate are Colonel Corrientes who will argue the military point of view and Rabbi Mordecai who will take up the written



word position. Saavedra is pleased that President Rubios and Don Manuel are both in attendance.

Both Corrientes and Mordecai present impassioned points of view, but the evening is brought to a brilliant close by Julian who asks permission to speak for a few minutes. Julian's position of the importance of both military and editorial tools brings the audience to its knees and Julian has formally established himself as a brilliant, passionate speaker for the sake of Cuba.

On his way home that evening, Julian stops in to see Panoplo who both congratulates Julian on his speech and cautions him about the danger of being a messenger of the gods. The next day, Julian's picture accompanies an article about his speech last night and Julian happily sends a copy to Lucia and Senor Fermin in Mexico City.

Lucia does not receive the article as Julian had hoped, because she wants some expressions of love from her fiancy but receives newspaper clippings about Julian's efforts on behalf of Cuba. Lucia wishes Julian would act so passionately on her behalf and is consumed once again with frustration. Ultimately, Lucia's temper cools, and she is able to share the newspaper clipping with her family to show her pride of Julian.

Earthquake, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 Analysis

The most important literary element in this section is foreshadowing through Panoplo's advice to Julian when it is clear that Julian has been chosen by the gods to be a major public figure in Guatemala and that there are both positive and negative aspects to this distinction. Panoplo says, "when one is riding high on Xocomil, the wave of the gods, that wave is taller than the tops of the tallest mountains! Maybe that is why the fall is that much more deeply felt. Prepare for the fall, my friend. But do not ever, ever, let the fear of falling keep you from praying to ride high again atop the wave of the gods."



Earthquake, Chapters 10, 11, and 12

Earthquake, Chapters 10, 11, and 12 Summary

Julian sits in Saavedra's office writing this entry in his diary, "Don't you wish that before something important happens in your life, a sign of some kind, music of some kind - yes, music, anything musical, from the blaring, epic fanfare of a thousand trumpets to the delicate lyric plucking of a single harp string - could be heard, letting you know in advance that something great is about to happen, that something great is about to - "

Saavedra interrupts Julian, because it is time to leave for the ball at Don Manuel's home. Julian accompanies Saavedra and his wife, although he has no formal attire, yet puts his own personal vulnerabilities aside and considers the evening to be dedicated to the good of Cuba. Don Manuel has witnessed Julian's new publicity and is pleased that Julian has come to the party honoring his daughter.

Julian is whisked away to an outside courtyard to the company of the important men at the party where he smokes Cuban cigars and revels in his newfound notoriety. Suddenly it occurs to Julian that the house is filled with beautiful young women, and he is overwhelmed with the urge to dance all night in spite of some rising guilt out of deference to Lucia.

As Julian turns toward the house, his vision is fixed on a young woman descending the main staircase. The girl's long blond hair gives her the impression of being an angel and for a few moments, Julian believes that her white shawl must truly be wings on her shoulders. The girl is Sol, Don Manuel's daughter, and she sees Julian watching her and cannot look away from his arresting face.

Suddenly, a loud sound of harp strings sounds as someone drops the instrument in the orchestra and Julian moves toward Sol who is now at the bottom of the staircase. Don Manuel introduces Julian to Sol and explains that her name is Spanish for sun, which is appropriate for the golden hair that encircles her head. Don Manuel notices that Sol and Julian cannot take their eyes from each other and smiles as Sol tears up her dance card making her free for Julian all evening.

After the ball, Julian returns home but is unable to sleep, because of the vision of Sol waltzing through his mind. Sol is just as restless in her own bedroom and writes in her diary about her magical evening with Julian. Julian still cannot sleep and decides to take a walk for awhile and encounters Panoplo who is happy to hear about Julian's evening and his meeting Sol, the girl for whom he has waited all his life.

Julian cries in front of his friend, because of his joy at finding Sol, but also at the sad fact that he must never see her again, because he must honor his commitment to Lucia.

Later that day, Julian is called from his classroom and notified that he is to appear at the office of the minister of public instruction immediately. Julian fears that the sense of



urgency indicates bad news and asks Saavedra to accompany him. Julian's fears are unfounded as the minister announces that Julian has been awarded a full professorship in philosophy and history both at Saavedra's school as well as the Universidad de Guatemala.

Upon his return to school, Julian immediately writes a letter to Lucia telling her about his wonderful news and that she can begin to prepare her trousseau. Julian sends the letter with a messenger boy and bids him to hurry so Julian will not change his mind about sending it. On his way home, Julian stops in to see Panoplo and shares his dilemma with his friend.

Panoplo sympathizes with Julian in his struggle between wanting to pursue Sol but needing to honor his engagement to Lucia. Panoplo wisely tells Julian that if a man really finds the woman the gods had destined for him, there is nothing that will keep them apart.

Earthquake, Chapters 10, 11, and 12 Analysis

The author again uses foreshadowing in this section which begins with Julian writing about the need for a musical sound preceding an important event. Not too long after, the sound of the harp being dropped at the ball occurs just prior to Julian being formally introduced to Sol. It is interesting to note that the instrument is a harp, normally associated with angels, as are wings such as the ones that Julian imagines sprouting from Sol's delicate shoulders.

The author also uses the metaphor of carrion birds as the two sides of Julian's conscience, as he debates the validity of pursuing Sol or remaining true to Lucia. "words begin to circle inside his head, like carrion birds slowly circling around a wounded animal. 'What have you done, you fool? What have you done?' asks and asks the first bird. 'What are you going to do now?' asks the other."

The title of this section, Earthquake, is significant in that Sol had felt that the earth was quaking when she saw the vision of the handsome eyes at Saint Rita's statue. Julian feels as if the earth is moving, too, when he sees Sol for the first time at the ball.



The Wave of the Gods, Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16

The Wave of the Gods, Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16 Summary

Julian has been approached by the minister of fine arts to write a play for Guatemala's Independence Day on September 15. It had come to the attention of the minister that Julian had written a play entitled *Alcibiades*, the story of a Greek general who dies for Athens' freedom and the Guatemalan government would like to produce a similar one for their own celebration.

One day, Julian is ensconced in reference materials in the library when he is approached by Don Manuel who invites Julian to lunch at his favorite restaurant, El Ateneo. Julian attempts to decline, but Don Manuel informs him that many important people will be in attendance at lunch. The contacts will be good for Julian's career.

Julian enjoys the sumptuous feast and is goaded into a game of chess with Don Manuel after the lunch has ended. To the amazement of all the lunch guests, Julian is able to defeat Don Manuel with relative ease. Don Manuel will not let his reputation for being a master chess player be tainted by this loss and invites Julian to his home for another match soon.

Julian is torn about returning to the home of Don Manuel where he will see Sol, which he desperately wants to do, but knows he should not. Julian ends up keeping his promise to Don Manuel and arrives at the house full of expectations. After the completion of one game of chess, Don Manuel retires to his room and asks Sol to entertain Julian.

Julian is once more enchanted by the radiant Sol and later that night chastises himself not only for breaking his promise never to see her again but also for not telling Sol about his engagement to Lucia.

At the same time, Lucia has received Julian's letter informing her of his appointment as a university professor. This is the moment Lucia has dreamed of for so many years since her family's exile from Cuba and the resulting feelings of insecurity. Lucia had worried that life as the wife of a struggling poet would not be happy. Now that Julian has a secure position, all Lucia's worries have lifted.

Lucia chooses December 20 for a wedding date and plans a honeymoon trip to Chilpancingo and then to Acapulco before heading to Guatemala where she and Julian will live. Lucia anticipates her marriage to Julian with happiness but is not sure that she will be able to match his passionate nature and prays for assistance each night before she goes to sleep.



Against his better judgment, Julian continues to visit the home of Don Manuel so that he can visit with Sol under the guise of playing chess with her father. Dona Rosaura, Don Manuel's wife, sees that her husband is throwing Sol and Julian together for romantic purposes and Dona Rosaura is not happy about the possibility of Sol marrying Julian and leaving Guatemala one day to live in Cuba.

One day, Julian attempts to tell Sol about his engagement to Lucia and says that he has made a commitment somewhere and Sol interprets this to mean that Julian is committed to Cuba. Sol knows that Julian has the same passions for freedom that her father does so if Julian needs to leave for the sake of Cuba Sol vows to understand.

Sol asks Julian to write a poem about their relationship and when he writes about a wish that their friendship were something more, Sol understands intuitively what Julian is trying to say to her.

Two weeks later, Sol and Julian stroll along the river as Sol's nanny, Xenufla, follows closely behind as a chaperone. The two young people discuss poetry and love and suddenly Sol is struck by an inspiration. Grabbing Julian's hand and telling him to close his eyes, Sol leads Julian to the gazebo where she spends so much private time with her dreams and wishes.

Julian is overwhelmed by Sol's brilliance in the late afternoon sun, and he presents her with another poem he has written for her. Sol is moved to tears at the beauty of Julian's words and feels as if she is the most beautiful and happiest woman in the universe.

Back in Mexico City, Lucia's two aunts are working on Lucia's wedding dress as the bride-to-be fidgets on the chair in front of the mirror. The imported satin for the dress has not yet arrived from Paris, so the women have constructed a muslin duplicate to make sure that the style will fit perfectly on Lucia. She has directed that the dress be made in the new style with a bustle in the back instead of the now old fashioned hoop skirt style.

When Lucia looks at her reflection in the mirror, she almost does not recognize herself as the girl who came dangerously close to being a spinster with no hope of a family. Now with Julian, all that has changed. She will soon begin to live the live of her dreams, and she feels like the happiest and most beautiful woman in the world.

The Wave of the Gods, Chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16 Analysis

The significance of the title for this section, *The Wave of the Gods*, is derived from Panoplo's advice to Julian to ride the wave of the gods as long as possible. Julian is at the height of that wave when he is with Sol but also crashes desperately when his shame and guilt about Lucia remind him of his responsibilities. This is the core of the major theme of the story, love, and honor, and it is one source of Julian's conflict as the

protagonist. Of course, Julian's other love over which he is conflicted is Cuba and the novel will progress to demonstrate Julian's brave choices.



The Wave of the Gods, Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20

The Wave of the Gods, Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20 Summary

Three weeks pass and Julian has continued to visit the Manuel household. One afternoon, Don Manuel tells Julian that he has learned from the minister of the arts that Julian has not yet written the freedom day play which is scheduled for production in six weeks. Don Manuel cancels all chess games and visits to the house, until Julian completes the play.

As Julian and Sol take their last walk until after the play is completed, Julian shares his frustrations at simply writing when Cuba needs the strength of swords and strategy. Sol reminds Julian of his speech when he said that the sword is nothing without the value of the pen, because of the power to move people through words. Julian wishes he were as eloquent in his personal life, as he is in his public life and leaves the house without telling Sol about his engagement.

Later that evening Julian adds important dates to his calendar and determines that he must leave for Mexico City on December 10 to insure his arrival in time for the wedding. This means that he must tell Sol by December 9 that he is to be married to Lucia and that their friendship must end.

That night Julian begins work on the play and is inspired by gin and a dream of Sol with her breasts bared as if she were the Greek statue, The Spirit of Guatemala. Julian crafts the play to present the torment of men who must choose between love for their wives and children and love for their country when the time to fight for independence arrives.

Julian's play is presented on schedule and the audience loves the ending when the woman gives up both her husband and son for the fight for freedom. As the living statue of The Spirit of Guatemala breaks her shackles, the audience rises to its feet in ovation. Julian's play receives rave reviews the next day for its ability to present the necessity of both the pen and the sword in order to achieve freedom.

A few weeks later, Julian begins his job as professor and is amazed when he receives back pay for the three summer months before he actually began to teach. Julian sends money to Lucia in Mexico City so that she can buy items for her trousseau, which she completes in just two weeks.

Lucia's friends gather to see all of Lucia's wedding and household items and are happy for her joy. Lucia pretends to join in their enthusiasm but secretly she harbors apprehension about the wedding night to come but puts her fears aside as she remembers that Julian has chosen her and will be returning in just three weeks.



It is now December 9 and Julian is at the home of Don Manuel where he tells Sol that he is leaving tomorrow. Sol will not let Julian finish his thoughts, telling him that she has something for him, and she leaves the room. Sol returns with a photograph of herself and a white rose, which she pulls from beneath her breasts so that he can carry these things with him to Cuba. Sol asks Julian to always remember her. He tries to explain the purpose of his trip, but she silences him and returns to her room. She watches his face the entire time she climbs the steps.

Don Manuel and Dona Rosaura enter the room and greet Julian whom they are surprised to see. Julian is finally able to tell Sol's parents what he has not been able to tell her, that he is leaving tomorrow to be married. Don Manuel and Dona Rosaura are temporarily surprised but recover and tell Julian that he must bring his new bride to meet them when he returns to Guatemala.

By the next morning, Sol has learned about the real reason for Julian's departure. She is in shock and refuses to believe that he does not love her. Sol relives all the moments she has shared with Julian and cannot grasp the fact that he belongs to another.

Julian has also spent a sleepless night and momentarily considers returning to Sol and even writes a letter of regret to Lucia but immediately crumples the letter in disgust with himself at the idea of abandoning Lucia. Julian wonders if Sol is the ultimate sacrifice he must make for the good of Cuba, and he remembers her words to him "Don't let anything get in the way of those dreams of yours, Julian. Bringing the joy of freedom to your homeland is what you must do, what God placed you on Earth for. Always let the love of freedom guide your life, Julian. Nothing else is important."

Julian smiles to himself and turns to face the sun, confident in his decision.

The Wave of the Gods, Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20 Analysis

A secondary theme in the novel is the argument about which is mightier, the sword or the pen. Julian's play is based on this conflict, as was his initial speech at the beginning of the story. Ultimately, Julian realizes that both elements are critical, because it is only with a strategy integrating both is full freedom achieved and maintained.

The author uses irony at the end of this section when he writes that Julian "forces himself to smile as he faces the sun." Julian would prefer to stay in Guatemala and be with Sol, whose name means "sun," but ironically, he must return to Lucia who is symbolized in the sun of this day designated for Julian's return to her. Julian must force himself to smile and to accept his integrity and commitment and realize that Lucia, not Sol, is his sun now.



Eruption, Chapters 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25

Eruption, Chapters 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 Summary

Lucia takes a last look around the elegant hotel room where she and Julian have spent the last several nights of their honeymoon. Soon, the carriage will be here to take her and her new husband to the ship bound for Guatemala. Lucia is pleased that her professor husband can provide such luxurious accommodations, and she knows that her family will recognize the couple's good fortune by the expensive stationery on which Lucia has posted a letter back home.

Julian reenters the room to tell Lucia it is time to go and both of them stand to look out at the ocean one last time, Lucia thinking that her life is just beginning, and Julian thinking just the opposite. Julian does not touch his wife and imagines that there is already a glass wall between them but he vows never to let Lucia suffer for his mistake.

A week and a half later, Julian and Lucia are met in Guatemala City by Saavedra and his wife. Lucia is anxious to meet wives of other important men in the city and is appreciative when Saavedra's wife locates some housing options for the newlyweds. Lucia takes Saavedra's wife into her confidence and tells the older woman that although she and Julian have been married for only a little over a month, she is already pregnant.

During their visit, Saavedra pulls Julian aside to tell him of a crisis in the city involving the Clerical Party consisting of religious zealots who accuse President Rubios of having commandeered religious buildings for state purposes when he took office. The Clericals have been accused of planning a plot to assassinate Rubios and were taken prisoner when Rubios barged in on what he thought was one of their meetings last night.

Julian promises to seek Don Manuel's help in the situation and will make arrangements to visit Don Manuel under the pretense of introducing his wife, the perfect excuse of visiting Don Manuel without arousing any political suspicion. The next day, Julian sends a note asking to visit Don Manuel and receives a reply that Don Manuel and Dona Rosaura will be pleased to meet Julian and his bride later this afternoon.

Julian is filled with anxiety, as he and Lucia approach Don Manuel's home. He is torn between wanting to see Sol and not wanting to risk meeting her. Don Manuel and Dona Rosaura are very gracious to Lucia who is impressed by the simple grandeur of their mansion. Julian and Don Manuel find time to talk privately about the matter involving the Clericals and President Rubios.

Don Manuel shares with Julian a note received yesterday from Rubios claiming that treason will not be tolerated in Guatemala and that the time has come for Guatemala to show force on the issue. Don Manuel and Julian agree that Rubios has temporarily lost his mind forgetting all the new legal codes he has just established.



Don Manuel advises Julian to concentrate on his new marriage while he tends to this matter. As the two men leave the room to rejoin their wives, Julian's vision lights on Sol who watches from the second floor landing. As their eyes lock, Julian realizes that Sol understands why Julian left to marry Lucia, that Julian's word of honor means more to him than his personal happiness.

Sol retreats to her room and Julian follows Don Manuel onto the patio where the ladies are immersed in conversation about the malaria which had claimed Dona Rosaura's young son many years ago as well as the cold which has inflicted her oldest daughter, Sol, at the moment.

An urgent message delivered to Don Manuel states that the Clericals had been executed at dawn this morning. Julian and Don Manuel recoil in horror at the brutal act that denied these men a trial to defend themselves. Don Manuel feels completely defeated, because the Guatemala he fought so hard to liberate has fallen to Rubio's treachery. Dona Rosaura reminds her husband that Guatemala City had been destroyed twice before, by volcano and earthquake, and with Don Manuel's help, the city will be rebuilt a third time.

The next day, Julian returns to his office at the school to find that Saavedra is packing his personal items and is leaving the school. Apparently, Don Manuel has written a letter to President Rubios decrying the horrific action of executing the Clericals without the benefit of a trial and the letter was published in today's newspaper. Rubios was so infuriated by the letter that he ordered the arrest of other men he considers suspects including Rabbi Mordecai.

Saavedra had been summoned to Rubios' office after that where Rubios reveals that he knows Mordecai had asked for Saavedra's help in the matter. Rubios demands that Saavedra leave Guatemala immediately, because Rubios will not tolerate any more Cubans living in his country.

Julian is outraged at the inequity of the situation and proffers his own resignation in alliance with Saavedra who has tried to dissuade Julian but to no avail.

Julian returns to the hotel where he and Lucia have been staying, and he tells her the news that they must leave Guatemala immediately. Lucia is angry, because the life she thought she was going to lead as a professor's wife has been obliterated. Lucia's pregnancy and thoughts of her security had never entered Julian's mind when he submitted his resignation and that fact hurts Lucia more than anything.

Later that night, the doctor visits the home of Don Manuel to tend to Sol whose fever has suddenly spiked. Sol refuses to heed the doctor's advice to stay in bed and leaves the house, dressed only in her nightgown, and heads toward the gazebo where she and Julian had spent so many happy hours. As Sol runs through the night, she feels her body searing with heat, and she sees Julian waiting for her in the gazebo. With her body on fire, Sol gives herself passionately to Julian in an outburst of light and waves of powerful forces ending in a prolonged moan of ecstasy.



The next morning, Lucia vows to be sweeter to Julian in the hopes that she can reverse the course of their lives with a more pleasant demeanor and attitude. As she reads the morning paper, Lucia comments to Julian about some unhappy news regarding Don Manuel's daughter, Sol, who has died from malaria. Julian is stunned into silence and soon rushes to the back room to vomit.

That night, Julian visits the gazebo and swears that he can sense Sol's presence there in the breezes and a wonderful warm feeling that envelops him. Julian remembers the first time that Sol brought him here, declaring it to be her favorite place in the world. As the sun begins to rise with the dawn, Julian can almost hear Sol telling him that he will always be able to find her here.

Julian feels the need to capture his feelings in a poem and begins to write, "Shaded by a silent wing, I must write of a love in full bloom...." Julian reads the words and erupts in a painful cry calling out Sol's name as a sunbeam flashes on his skin warming his whole essence. Julian realizes that he will never be alone again.

Eruption, Chapters 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 Analysis

The author uses symbolism to portray the lack of connection between Julian and Lucia when he describes the glass wall that divides them as they gaze at the ocean before leaving the hotel in Acapulco. Julian has vowed that Lucia will never be hurt by his lack of courage to tell her the truth about Sol and to end the engagement. Julian and Lucia had been separated for a year and it is now apparent that they do not share the same goals in life, which adds to their separation. Julian is passionately committed to freedom for all Cubans while Lucia strives for her own personal wealth and comfort.

Lucia has adjusted to the physical intimacy in her marriage to Julian but is not moved to any passionate heights as her married friends had told her about. In contrast, Sol reaches orgasmic ecstasy with Julian in a feverish hallucination in the last throes of the malaria which will claim her life. This is another poignant use of irony in Julian's life that the woman he marries does not have a drop of the passion as the women he loses now to death.

The significance of the novel's title is explained in the poem Julian writes for Sol after her death, ""Shaded by a silent wing, I must write of a love in full bloom...." Julian refers to the angel wings he had always imagined perched on Sol's shoulders, which have now been silenced in her death.

The full symbolism of Sol's name is complete now too as the sun rises on Julian and his grief and his arm is touched by a well-placed sunbeam reminding him of Sol's presence now through the fiery celestial body for which she was named.



The Sun, Chapters 26 and 27

The Sun, Chapters 26 and 27 Summary

Five years have passed and Julian, Lucia, and their son, Ismaelillo now live in a two-room tenement house in New York City after spending years moving from Guatemala to other Latin countries. Saavedra and his wife also live in New York and Julian is glad to see his old friend, but the young family is struggling in their first cold winter in a strange city.

The relationship between Julian and Lucia is almost as frigid as the weather outside as the marriage broke down when Julian made the decision to leave Guatemala without consulting Lucia. Five-year-old Ismaelillo is the only comfort either of his parents have.

One day, a faded picture of Sol falls out of a book when Lucia is cleaning the apartment and when she confronts Julian about it he confesses everything about his love for Sol to Lucia. This is the last betrayal for Lucia who leaves the next week with Ismaelillo on a boat bound for Cuba with the full realization that Julian will never be granted entry into that country again. Julian is unable to see Ismaelillo before he leaves, as he Julian vows that his son will not die in an enslaved Cuba.

Twelve years later, Julian keeps the vow to his son and sits in a tent in Cuba preparing to go into battle with the Spanish for control of the country. Julian has successfully raised the funds to raise and equip an army and the men are passionately loyal to Julian, who is now called El Comandante, because he is a man of his word.

Julian's aide announces that the time to attack has come so Julian finishes a letter to Ismaelillo, looks once more at the picture of Sol, and steps outside to mount his horse. Julian leads the men in a charge up a hill but does not realize that he is fatally wounded, seeing only a brilliant flash of the sun before time stops forever.

Today, a statue commemorating the moment of Julian's death stands near Central Park in New York City. Both Lucia and Ismaelillo declined an invitation to attend the statue's unveiling.

The Sun, Chapters 26 and 27 Analysis

Julian has remained true to his code of honor all his life despite the personal pain and loss of those he has loved. The author makes the point that there are some people who make personal sacrifices for the greater good and are able to make history in spite of overwhelming personal losses. When Julian makes the silent vow for Ismaelillo's future to live in a free country, he makes that vow for all Cubans. Julian honors that vow just like the pledge he honored with Lucia, both with devastating personal consequences. The only consolation is that with Julian's last look into the sun at the moment of his death he was again able to see his personal sun, Sol.



Characters

Anacleto

Anacleto is one of the muleteers Julian hires to take him through the jungle to Guatemala City. He is half-Mayan and half-white.

Cholito

Cholito is the half-white, half-Latino barber in Guatemala City who dresses in white and takes pride in his light, white-man's skin.

Colonel Corrientes

Colonel Corrientes is a tall, impressive man who has a thick black mustache and a pointed goatee. He appears at the debate in full dress uniform with a chest filled with medals and gleaming sword. He is as stunning a speaker as his appearance implies.

Doña Rosaura

Doña Rosaura is the loving wife of Don Manuel. She presents herself with dignity and social grace. She has tried to raise her three daughters in kind. However, she is often at odds with her middle daughter Gabriela who obviously has Don Manuel wrapped around her finger. She will stand behind her husband and loves him deeply. Upon meeting her husband, she fell deeply in love with him, not unlike Sol's response to Julian. She is a person who Don Manuel will always be able to rely upon. She is steadfast.

Don Manuel

Don Manuel is a man who married late in life for love. His wife Doña Rosaura is twelve years younger. He is fifty-seven years old. He has a short, gray beard and is balding. He carries the scars of battle caused by arrows, bullets, and knives. He is a survivor who is much more interested in petitions of peace than in fighting wars. He is proud, however, of his accomplishment. He has been instrumental in beginning and ending the war for Guatemalan independence. Yet, he has a weakness. Although he has been a man who has "controlled armies of rebellious men, subjugated armies of enemies, and fought armies of bureaucrats," he cannot say "no" to his middle daughter Gabriela. He is taken by Julian and secretly hopes that he will marry his daughter Sol. He had once had a son who died at the age of three of Galloping Malaria. It has been something that haunts him. Only when he met Julian did he begin to believe that he could have another "son" in his life.



Señor Fermín

Señor Fermín is a Guatemalan man who befriended Julian in Mexico City and teaches him the proper means of introduction. He is Julian's connection to Professor Saavedra. He gives Julian money for the journey as well as a letter of introduction. He claims to be a former schoolmate and personal friend of Gualterio Rubios. His advice: "Being in the right political circles can never hurt a young man."

Gabriela

Gabriela is the nearly fourteen-year-old daughter of Don Manuel. She is pushy, rude, spoiled, and has the favor of her father. She is a hopeless romantic who discovers some of Julian's poetry as well as introduces her father to the idea of inviting him to their home. Without her insistence Julian would not have Sol.

Ixhula

Ixhula is Anacleto's Mayan wife who is as cruel a taskmaster as she is beautiful. She travels with her husband and takes Julian to Guatemala City.

Julián

Julian is twenty-six years old at the time the novel begins. Born in Cuba, he was exiled at the age of seventeen after serving some years at hard labor for writing political essays for *La Revista Universal*, an "ultra liberal" publication. He has dark, unruly, curly hair with dark blue eyes. During his exile from Cuba he wrote a booklet entitled "Life of a Political Prisoner in Cuba." During his nine years of exile, he has traveled to Isla de Pinos, Madrid, Zaragoza, Paris, London, Progreso, Ciudad Mexico, Veracruz, Contoy, Isla Mujeres, Belize, and Guatemala. He is a teacher and writer whose father is a former Spanish army Lieutenant living on an army pension. Strong, muscular, broad-shouldered, his body chiseled by hard labor, he is enroute to a promised job in Guatemala City. He is leaving behind in Mexico City his fiancée Lucia, the daughter of a well-to-do Cuban lawyer. Julian is journeying to Guatemala hopeful to acquire work that will make him a good and successful husband to Lucia. He vows not to return to her until he has found success. He travels with only a very few items, scholarly books and his personal diaries. He writes his observations, feelings, speeches, and poems within the pages of those journals. He is never without them.

Julian is haunted by his experiences in Cuba as a political prisoner and dreams of one day making a difference and freeing his homeland and its people from the tyranny of the Spanish crown. While in Guatemala City Julian meets Sol, the eldest daughter of Don Manuel and faces yet another personal challenge. He falls in love with the young woman and fights with himself to choose honor over love. He is betrothed to Lucia and will not break his promise of marriage to her. He considers this betrayal no less heinous



than allowing tyranny to exist in Cuba. For Julian nothing is simple. He is torn by his love of country and his passionate, deep love for Sol who seems to feel as he does. He discovers through his conversations with her that she is just as passionate toward the welfare of the Cuban people as Julian.

Julian is a man on the verge of greatness. In an open debate at the town hall in Guatemala City he is the third person to speak after two distinguished men have argued whether the pen or the sword is mightier. It is during Julian's remarks that one sees his potential to be a dynamic, powerful leader. This does not go unnoticed by members of the audience. Forever torn between his love of Sol and his love of country, Julian faces his deepest fears and changes the history of Cuba.

Lucía

Lucia is a twenty-nine-year-old spinster at the beginning of the novel. She has glossy black hair, hazel eyes, a distinguished nose, elegant thin lips, a trim body, and a flawless complexion. She is a stunning beauty who does not see herself as beautiful. The daughter of a successful exiled Cuban lawyer, she has lived for a number of years in Mexico City. She has had the tutelage of two spinster aunts while living there. She has felt left out of the best of society because of her father's exile. She hates her life in Mexico City and yearns to marry a man who will give her the station she so desperately needs. She is as shallow as she is beautiful. She does not share her father or Julian's love of her homeland. She has no interest in politics unless it might serve to improve her standing in social circles. Upon hearing that Julian had been appointed a full professor in Guatemala City, she builds her trousseau, spending nearly all of the money Julian sends to her. Once married she grows to resent Julian's passion and patriotism. This will eventually lead her to leave him and take their child with her.

Organ Grinder

The organ grinder and his monkey Chirilingo offer Julian two statements of wisdom on two different colored pieces of paper.

Panoplo

Panopla is a wrinkled old Mayan bartender at the Ultimo Adios. He tells Julian about the Mayan gods called the "Chacs" who are the four great dogs of the coast which is where Panoplo's home is located. He teaches Julian about food, drinking, and politics. He is deeply concerned about the plight of Indians and wonders how the current political situation will affect them.



Rabbi Mordecai

Rabbi Mordecai is thin and short and has a full white beard. He dresses for the debate in a simple frock coat with a black silk yarmulke on his head. He is an eloquent and impassioned speaker and is every bit a match for Colonel Corrientes. He is marked to be one of the president's political "victims."

Gualterio Rubios

President Rubios is a secretive man who stays removed from the public eye except in auspicious occasions such as the public debate. It is at the debate that he is first seen in the novel. He has come as "a citizen" and not "president." He wears no uniform during the event and sits with his family in a back row. Yet, he is the man who can wield terrible power with a moment's notice. He claims to be of a liberal mind but becomes suspicious of the existence of subversive efforts. He declares his own form of Marshall Law and has several people arrested. He has them executed without accusation and trial. It is at this juncture that Julian realizes that he has not truly escaped the tyranny he knew so well in Cuba. It is cause for despair and for gathering one's conviction and going forward with altruistic plans. President Rubios much to everyone's surprise does not arrest Julian.

Professor Saavedra

Professor Saavedra is an exiled "old" Cuban professor who is the principal of the Escuela Central, an exclusive girls school in Guatemala City. It is to Professor Saavedra that Señor Fermin who is a personal friend of the president of Guatemala directs Julian. Professor Saavedra is enthusiastic, encouraging, and genuinely friendly. Julian quickly impresses him and dreams that one day Julian will be able to "free" Cuba. He is instrumental in arranging public debates at the school and prides himself on his liberal mind and sincere love for his homeland.

Soledad

Sol is the eldest daughter of Don Manuel, the general who began the Guatemalan revolution and succeeded. She has golden blond hair, is slender, has a long neck and a creamy complexion. As the novel begins, she is seventeen. During a conversation with her nursemaid Xenufla, Sol is directed to journey to a small church in Jocotenango named after Santa Rita to ask the saint for guidance in choosing a husband. Sol follows Xenufla's precise instructions and has a vision of a dark-haired man with dark blue eyes. She returns to Xenufla and is told the Mayan saying, "Souls woven together by the gods can never be unraveled." With youthful exuberance Sol shares her nursemaid's apparent joy over the vision she has had. It will be months before she meets the man of her vision. That man is Julian.



Sol is an well-educated young woman, an exception for her time. It is under her father's guidance that she has learned the violent past of her homeland of Cuba. Her general father who loves all his children and his wife has told her of war and brutality. When Sol meets Julian, there is more to their relationship than the chemistry of attraction. She truly seems his "soul-mate." Despite her youth she acts much older and wiser than her years. When Julian leaves to honor his promise, she believes he has left to help Cuba become free. Even after learning of Julian's obvious betrayal of her love, she is not angry. She has only sympathy for him for she knows he lives a lie every day of his life. She will endure because he does. She will go to her death with the purest love intact.

Doña Lucrecia Suárez-Villegas

Doña Lucrecia is a tight-lipped, skinny old woman who wears the tightest corset to show how straight and strict a life she leads. She is a malicious, gossipy old lady who has the "ear" of President Rubios. She is "respected" and feared by many in the city. At the public debates she sits in "her chair" and views the event. She is instrumental in turning the president against the populous of Guatemala City, particularly Colonel Corrientes and Rabbi Mordecai, the two gentlemen who debated the might of sword versus pen.

Xenufla

Xenufla is an older Mayan Cakchiquel Indian woman who "raised" Sol, so named by her when she was born. She informs Sol of the Indian custom of a maid going to the church of Jocotenango to visit Santa Rita and seek a "sign" concerning who she might marry.

Yubirio

Yubirio is an older Cuban sailor who works on the steamship El Futuro that takes Julian closer to Guatemala. He teaches Julian the "power of music" as they work.



Themes

Love and Honor

A central theme of the novel centers on affairs of the heart. Questions constantly arise for Julian as he searches for justice and peace of mind. It is love of his country that has caused him to be exiled. He journeys to Guatemala in hopes that he can do the honorable thing and become successful so that he can marry Lucia. However, everywhere he travels he meets people who have been affected by dishonorable acts, people who are victims like he is. People exiled for expressing their thoughts concerning honor. Julian wrestles with love as well. Should he choose to share his life with Sol who loves him deeply and completely? Or, should he keep his promise to Lucia and do the honorable thing even though he is sentencing himself to a lifetime of misery? On the evening that Julian realizes that he has met the woman of his dreams, he "weeps for joy." Yet, "he finds himself also weeping at the devastating realization that, as close as he has been to the woman of his dreams, the woman of his poems, he must learn to forget her." He knows now the truth of the dilemma: "His most sacred word has been given to Lucia. And once a Cuban criollo man gives his word of honor, it is never to be broken. Never."

The Pen and the Sword

Closely connected to honor is the question: which is mightier, the pen or the sword? Julian speaks at the debate and discovers a means to bridge the gap between two compelling sides. He says, "Separately. . .either pen. . .or sword. . .can help us conquer the world." He adds, "But united. . .pen and sword, checking and balancing each other, like mind and heart, like body and soul. . .United. . .pen and sword make each of us into that ideal poetwarrior the ancient Greeks dreamed about." The sword changes circumstance swiftly, such as in a revolution. Yet, does not the pen carry action into law? A few words spoken can move hundreds. Can a sword be used in as constructive a fashion? Julian concludes, "It is up to each of us to make that world of tomorrow come true. Today."

Freedom and Slavery

Don Manuel had hoped to affect further change, to free all who inhabit Guatemala but there is a division of class between people of Indian descent and of Spanish descent. Even within the boundlessness of Freedom there seem to be restrictions. Panoplo, the old Mayan bartender listens to Julian's observations about the debate. He listens and nods and all the while he is thinking. As the narrator emphasizes, "He [Panoplo], like Julian, also fervently dreams of liberty, not only for his own people, but for himself as well. What would it be like to be free, he asks himself, free to speak again in his own language, free to practice his own religion, free to be proud again of being who he is, a



Mayan man living on Mayan land?" The question is raised: how free are a people if part of their population is still enslaved? On a whim the president of Guatemala arrests individuals and has them executed without benefit of trial. Assumed freedom is a fragile as glass. It can shatter under the blow of tyranny.

Sacrifice for the Greater Good

Several characters in the novel face the choice of sacrifice over personal gain and choose sacrifice. Julian chooses to keep his word and marry Lucia even though it means that he will not have Sol in his life. Sol "gives away" Julian, choosing to acknowledge that he is a man who must keep his word and therefore his integrity. In the future he will be able to keep a greater promise, that of freeing Cuba from the oppressive force of Spanish rule. Rabbi Mordecai goes to prison rather than apologize for his views and the free expression of them. His choice seals his fate, ends his life.



Style

Point of View

The point of view in *Silent Wing* is that of thirdperson omniscient, the all-knowing narrator. The reader is given information concerning the innermost workings of the heart. The reader learns not only of Julian's journey to Guatemala but of his first stirring impressions of Guatemala City. The use of present tense "calls, sees, talks," invites intimacy. It is as if the reader is listening to a close friend relating the story. When Julian approaches Guatemala City, he sees strange objects breaking out of the oppressive heat of the jungle and encounters what seems to be a vision: "The valley is shrouded by a thick, pale gray mist that hovers over it, moving very languidly. . .piercing through that mist there appear to be dozens of tall, white, pointing spires, almost obelisks. Julian shakes his head." Traveling nearer, he sees more of the city "lying on a high plateau, up in the mountains, close to the clouds; a magnificently beautiful place where spring is said to be perennial." Through the omniscient narrator, the reader learns what is thought and felt and rarely spoken.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a detail in a story that hints at the eventual outcome of events and helps create mood or sustain a tone. In the novel Julian has a moment of intense clarity after meeting with Professor Saavedra. He thinks of the Cuban cigar that Saavedra offered and equates it with the struggle for freedom. Julian is thinking he does not want to sit behind a desk and have a comfortable life. The narrator informs the reader of Julian's thoughts: "If it is true that only the blood of martyrs feeds dreams, well then, Lord, please, let me feed dreams, even if that means that I'd have to become a martyr myself." Several years later, in the midst of one of the first battles for Cuban independence Julian will be killed. Shortly after this scene, Julian joins a celebration and is asked by an organ grinder whether he wishes to have a "bit of wisdom." The first message is, "When honor and truth are at odds, let truth prevail," and the second is "Don't give up hope. The girl you've been waiting for is just around the corner." Both pieces of advice apply to Julian's life yet it is the next event that serves as another foreshadowing. Julian tucks the notes inside his pocket but one falls to the ground, the note that speaks of honor and truth: "But as he does, the first piece of paper. . .the pale cream one, falls out of his pocket without him realizing it. . .that tiny piece of paper now lies on the surface of the sidewalk next to dozens of trampled pale cream petals of the wonderfully scented magnolia flowers. Unnoticed. Totally unnoticed. Forgotten." It is shortly after this scene that Julian meets Sol and his life changes in ways he could not have imagined.



Symbolism

Silent Wing is a novel that contains numerous objects and places that offer more than their literal meaning. The towers of Guatemala City are white and seem to pierce the canopy of the jungle. Julian reacts as if he has seen something akin to a vision. He has heard that Guatemala City is eternally Spring. The color white repeats with the description of the gazebo near Sol's home. The gazebo is a place where Sol feels safe with her deepest emotions. It is near the gazebo that she enters the river to be renewed. Within the confines of the cemetery there is a statue of an angel, a white marble angel. White often means purity of thought, word and deed. White can also symbolize renewal or cleansing. In this novel white means all those things as well as its opposite. No matter how hard either Sol or Julian tries to hide their feelings for each other, they cannot conceal them. Although few words are spoken between the two of them, so much is communicated. The most significant symbol, however, are the angels. In the cemetery "everywhere inside are white marble angels, frozen in time and space, some of them kneeling, some of them standing, atop elaborate marble crypts, looking up with hopeful eyes toward the sky above them, now dark blue, while their silent wings, lit by the nascent moon, cast long dark blue shadows on the surface of the Earth." "Silent wings" become those thoughts, prayers, hopes, dreams left unspoken. This novel is a story of unspoken, unrequited dreams and love. Angels, intending to lighten a mortal's burden, cannot, after all, help others for they cannot help themselves, mute as they are standing motionless and silent in the graveyard.

Historical Context

The Castro Movement

Although the Castro Movement did not occur until seventy years after the setting of *Silent Wing*, José Raúl Bernardo was living in Havana, Cuba and attending university during one of that country's most turbulent times. During the late 1950s Fidel Castro fought against overwhelming odds to oust the dictator Batista who had been in power since the 1930s. During 1957 and 1958 Castro gained more support from the public and in January 1959 defeated Batista and took Santiago. It was during this upheaval that Bernardo was completing his degree in music. Perhaps one might argue that a writer is the sum of his or her experiences. Significant political events can impact our lives and make lasting impressions.

The Life of Jose Marti

Considered one of the greatest writers of the Hispanic world, Marti devoted his life's work to ending Spanish rule of his homeland Cuba. Bernardo in his historical novel *Silent Wing* offers fictionalized glimpses of the private struggles of Marti. Born in Havana in 1853, he was exiled to Spain at the age of seventeen. While there he published a pamphlet exposing the horror of imprisonment at a political figure in Cuba, something he experienced himself. Bernardo incorporates Marti's life experiences in the text of his novel. By 1895 he was actively leading opposition efforts to overthrow Spanish rule. He died during one of the first battles of that war, another historical item that is included in the novel.

Literary Heritage

Cuba is a country whose literary heritage revolves around a rich legacy of song, poetry, and storytelling. Descendants from Spanish, African, and Native American populations and cultures, Cubans enjoy a deep and passionate interest in music, dance, and theater. Cuba has a national system of libraries, a chain of theaters, a movie industry, a jazz orchestra, touring ballet companies, and folk music groups. In Cuba there is a National Council of Culture and The Book Institute. Writers of the Americas is a conference held in Cuba at which thirty-five emerging American writers are given the opportunity to engage in an intensive cultural, literary, and intellectual exchange with Cuban counterparts. Bernardo studied at the Havana Conservatory receiving a Bachelors of Music in 1958. Bernardo writes about a part of the life of Jose Marti, the national poet of Cuba, in his historical novel *Silent Wing* . Song, poetry, and music add to the literary texture of that novel.



Critical Overview

The historical romance *Silent Wing* is author José Raúl Bernardo's second novel. Upon publication it was well-received, especially by those readers who have an appreciation for the depth and complexity of the life of Jose Julian Marti. Concerned with such themes as Honor and Truth, Freedom and Tyranny, Love and Promises Made, Bernardo views a story hardly removed by time. The political questions raised could be applied today in several parts of the world, including modern Cuba. Yet, Bernardo does not limit his narrative to such compelling themes. He touches upon passion and desire as well. Brad Hooper, a contributor in *Booklist* called it a "greatly atmospheric historical novel" which "opens with a heartwarming scene." That is the brief scene in which Sol is instructed to go to the small church and implore a vision of her future love. Hooper recommended the novel, describing it as "compelling" from the first to last page. Although a contributor in *Publishers Weekly* considered Marti's life "more dramatic and eventful" than Bernardo's novel, a contributor in *Library Journal* noted its "sentimental romance" qualities. The latter contributor also pointed out that the novel was published during the "centenary year of Cuban sovereignty." Thomas Curwen, a contributor in the *Los Angeles Times* emphasized Bernardo's focus on a "moment in Marti's life" has "turned a political life into a love story, making it clear that only a thin line separates the two. One leads to misery, the other to an early grave." Curwen summed up the tone of Bernardo's novel when he stated, "More than the life of Jose Marti, we get a glimpse of his poetry and a touch of his anguished soul."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4



Critical Essay #1

Thompson has a M. A. degree and is a part-time English instructor at Jefferson Community College, Watertown, New York. In the following essay, she explores the significance of the imagery and foreshadowing of Silent Wing and how they communicate the novel's theme of love and honor.

Affairs of the heart are the central focus of this historical fiction based on the true life of Jose Julian Marti, Cuba's national poet and revolutionary hero. Heroes, by definition, may seem larger than life and nearly perfect. They may appear to be fearless, confident, self-satisfied, never filled with self-doubt. Julian is a "hero" plagued by self-doubt, fear, and a never-ending list of questions. These questions revolve around ideals such as keeping one's word, honoring promises and pledges made, and being true to one's dreams no matter the personal cost.

Despite being exiled from his homeland of Cuba, Julian endeavors to "get a job, to marry Lucia and start a family". Yet, Julian quickly realizes that he has a more important dream: "Freeing my homeland is my dream. My life's ambition, my life's cause. My destiny". It is that dream that has brought him to Guatemala City. The city in the jungle upon first encounter seems to draw him in: "The valley is shrouded by a thick, pale gray mist that hovers over it, moving very languidly. And piercing through that mist there appear to be dozens of tall, white, pointing spires, almost obelisks". He soon discovers they are bell towers, dozens of them. He feels at once that this is the place for him to renew his dreams. He has traveled through the jungle and has acquired an appreciation for Guatemala and its people. He does not cease thinking about his homeland but the poet/writer in him is enticed by the beauty that he sees all around him to languish for a brief time.

Enroute to the haven of Guatemala City, he had stopped for a time in Puerto Dulce, arriving on Good Friday afternoon. Mayan Indians had gathered for their yearly procession through the village streets. It was said that the display was to "pacify two gods they fear most: the god who spurts tongues of fire from the mountaintops and the god who shakes the earth". Julian watched three life-sized statues be carried past. There were two white women statues with "pale blue glass eyes and long curly wigs of real blond hair" that were "kneeling down, their polychromed wooden faces weeping carved tears". But it was the third statue that had caught Julian's attention. It was a "standing figure of a tired white man with a long curly beard and with the saddest eyes Julian had ever seen". There was "something" about the statue that did not "look right." Julian did not figure this out until after he arrived in Guatemala City and was meeting Professor Saavedra for the first time.

Julian was thinking about how complacent Professor Saavedra, a fellow Cuban exile, seemed as he smoked his Cuban cigar and explained the responsibilities of an instructor to Julian. Julian's thoughts drifted to questions. He wondered if that was how he was "going to end." He thought about having been born a "doer." Then he thought about dreams: "But dreams have to be made into reality, at whatever the cost. At



whatever the sacrifice. Or else they remain nothing but dreams. I am not going to dry up, if it is true that only the blood of martyrs feeds dreams, well then, Lord, please, let me feed dreams, even if that means that I'd have to become a martyr myself. There is a saying that one should be careful what one wishes for. This is the case with Julian. He is destined to be a "doer." He will be instrumental in gathering an army that he will lead on Cuban soil to fight and die for the cause of freedom. It is at this moment that he discovers what he had thought "wrong" about the statue in the Good Friday procession: "His eyes. That was what was wrong with the image of that man. His eyes—the eyes of the man carrying the cross would not *could not* have been the saddest eyes in the world, but on the contrary, they would have been the most exultant eyes in the world, enraptured with joy. Because, by his action, that man was feeding dreams. And by feeding dreams, he was making his own dreams come true and fulfilling his own destiny".

On his way home from his visit with Professor Saavedra, Julian walks next to an outer wall of the cemetery of Guatemala. It is a "large complex partly hidden behind high, white, stuccoed walls; everywhere inside are white marble angels, frozen in time and space, some of them kneeling, some of them standing, atop elaborate marble crypts, while their silent wings, lit by the nascent moon, cast long dark blue shadows on the surface of the Earth". Again, Julian thinks of sadness as he enters a cantina. His sadness is that of his "last good-bye" to Cuba. The good-bye he hopes will not be his last. But there is more he will lament before he leaves Guatemala to pursue his pledges. He has not counted on meeting the "love of his life" that will give him pause and challenge both his sense of honor and his depth of commitment.

This struggle is foreshadowed in the unlikeliest of places. Julian encounters an organ grinder and his monkey entertaining a local crowd. He stops to watch and listen. The organ grinder suggests that his monkey, his Chirilingo can tell Julian "a little bit of wisdom about the future". This "wisdom" is two fold. The first message is "When honor and truth are at odds, let truth prevail" and the other is "Don't give up hope. The girl you've been waiting for is just around the corner". Julian smiles and ignores the significance of the two "truths". Yet, they will foreshadow both his triumph and his downfall. The monkey, though colorfully dressed, is wearing a white shirt and pants. Again the color white is mentioned. White may represent purity, innocence, integrity, and clarity of mind. Julian will soon meet someone who will test all of his moral fortitude and cause him to question promises made.

Sol is a young woman who follows the suggestion of her Mayan nursemaid and seeks a vision from Santa Rita concerning the "right man" who will come into her life and "always stay by her side". This man has dark hair and dark blue eyes. This man is Julian. Though she has not met him yet, she fervently believes in the vision. It is not by accident that Julian attends her "coming-of-age" party. It seems the gods have plans for both of them. When Julian first sees Sol, he is mesmerized by her golden hair that is "decorated with the tiniest of white flowers" and where it falls on her "white as alabaster" shoulders. Julian thinks he sees wings on her shoulders like those "beautifully carved white wings of the white marble angels" in the cemetery. Sol needs no further proof that



Santa Rita is watching over her. She now knows she has met the man of her "vision". Julian is the "man the gods mean for her to have always by her side".

This meeting is a foreshadowing of Julian's fall from honor. He speaks with Panoplo and tells him that he has met the woman of his dreams. Julian begins to weep, first "for joy", then because of the "devastating realization that, as close as he has been to the woman of his dreams, the woman of his poems, he must learn to forget her, he must not ever see her again. His most sacred word of honor has been given to Lucia. And once a Cuban criollo man gives his word of honor, it is never to be broken. Never". But however profound the "wave" of elation and joy the Mayan gods may send to someone, there is a price to be paid. Julian "breaks" his promise and spends as much time as he can with Sol. When he meets her and sees her before him, he cannot do anything but "ride the wave of the gods as high and for as long as the gods will let him" (137). This "wave of joy" will crest and crash. Julian and Sol will not cease loving each other; but Julian will keep his word and marry Lucia. He will say good-bye to the one woman he truly loves not matter the heartbreak. Sol will send him away with the wish that he remain true to his pledge to free his homeland and its people.

The most potent of the many "white" symbols in this novel is the gazebo on Sol's property: "a small white gazebo by the river, a tiny pavilion the family calls El Mirador, The Lookout, because the views from it are outstanding". This is Sol's "place of power," her "katok," a Mayan word meaning a "magical place that allows the soul to travel ahead and move forward". Before Julian leaves for Mexico City and his life with his fiancée Lucia, he recognizes that it is Sol who represents the Spirit of Guatemala and not the "cold white marble statues" of the cemetery. After Julian departs Guatemala, Sol falls ill with malaria. In her mind and heart she travels to the gazebo and there she experiences a "joining" with Julian on the "soul-level". Once completed, she dies. Upon his return to Guatemala, Julian feels compelled to visit Sol in the middle of the night and hurries to the gazebo. It is here that he discovers Sol has died. He cries out for her believing that this is where her spirit remains. Words of encouragement come to mind: Sol had told him before his departure to "always let the love of freedom guide your life".

Years later, after moving to Brooklyn, New York, and living in a loveless marriage with Lucia, he tells his wife the truth. She leaves him, taking their son with her. It is several years later when Julian has his "day in the sun". He is leading an attack on Spanish forces on his homeland and there dies in battle. Not only had he lived the dream, his dying thoughts were filled with the only other *true* love in his life, Sol.

Source: Christine Thompson, in an essay for *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*, Gale, 2000.



Critical Essay #2

In the following review, Thomas Curwen describes Silent Wing as a torrid love story on its surface, but with moving echoes of Cuban poet Jose Marti's life.

As Cuba edges toward the great unknown—life after Castro, that is—everyone, it seems, wants a piece of the 19th century poet and patriot Jose Marti. The pope quoted him in his January sermons to the Cuban people, and Castro puts him before Marx and Lenin in his revolutionary pantheon. Some ideologies make strange bedfellows and even stranger novels.

At first blush, "Silent Wing" is a torrid love story based on Marti's life, so filled with troubled sighs and quiet yearnings that you have to wonder what Jose Raul Bernardo is up to. His new novel comes as close to bodice-ripping as you can without popping buttons or tripping over cliches.

When we first meet Marti, here renamed Julian, the year is 1877. He is 25. The "burning passion of individual freedom" runs wildly through his veins, but it is a passion incompatible with a world shaking from a century of revolution. Already he has endured two years of hard labor in a stone quarry and six years in exile.

Engaged to a Cuban woman in Mexico City, he plans to marry once he gets settled in his new home, Guatemala, but then he meets Soledad, oldest daughter of the country's most famous general. They fall in love, and Julian is racked by duty to his fiancée, his love for Sol and his desire to free Cuba from Spanish tyranny.

By focusing on this moment in Marti's life, inspired by the autobiographical poem "La Niña de Guatemala," Bernardo has turned a political life into a love story, making it clear that only a thin line separates the two. One leads to misery, the other to an early grave.

Marti was 42 when he was killed in a skirmish with Spanish soldiers in Cuba in 1895, seven years before the country won its independence. He had spent the previous 15 years raising money to defeat the Spanish, working as a journalist in New York City and, most important for Bernardo, enduring a loveless marriage that lasted until his wife left him, returning to Cuba with their son, knowing he would never follow.

Tormented by a life he dreamed of but never knew, Marti neither reunited with his son nor saw his country free. He did, however, return with a band of rebels. Leading a charge atop a white horse at Dos Rios and getting fatally clipped by a bullet might have been an accident of fate, or it might have been the wish of a man unable to live with disappointment, the greatest of which, according to Bernardo, was a love he lost.

"She has the shiniest hair," thinks Julian when he first sees Sol, "golden hair that frames her head as if it were a resplendent halo that in the light of the myriads of flickering candles surrounding her, seems to glimmer. . . . On her shoulders, are those wings? White wings?"



Credit Bernardo, who was widely praised for his first novel, "The Secret of the Bulls," for keeping some distance from the lovers, even mocking Julian in his rapture. Yet the sentimentality of the novel, the poetic conceits and even the title come from Marti himself, the poet who wrote without any irony:

On the darkest nights I've seen
Rays of the purest splendor
Raining upon my head
From heavenly beauty.
I've seen wings sprout
From handsomest women's
shoulders,
Seen butterflies fly out
Of rubbish heaps.

"Silent Wing" is written as if in tribute to the man some believe to be Latin America's greatest writer with lush and indiscriminate colors. Guatemala City is "dotted by dozens, hundreds of bell towers, proudly standing erect, their bronze bells singing softly in the faraway distance, scintillating like sparkingly bronze stars whenever they catch and reflect the light of the setting sun," and Julian's torment is exquisitely rendered.

At the moment of truth, alone in a riverside gazebo with Sol, he must turn away. "To survive. To avoid rushing to her and grabbing her in his arms, then kissing her feet, her hands, her entire body, every single strand of her glorious hair, her eyes, her mouth."

Even though the melodrama overtakes the story and the political gets lost in a sea of sentiment, the writing is assured, and the themes are grand. The revolutionary battles the bourgeois, the radical fights the status quo, and the plight of love, caught in the middle, makes for high, if not histrionic, drama.

At second blush, "Silent Wing" is a minor but altogether likable cousin to such 19th century novels as "The Red and the Black" and "The Sentimental Education." Let Marti and Julian's tragedy be portrayed in rather potboiled terms—reckless choice and brash honor—but Bernardo still makes us care about him. "Silent Wing" is a lovely story, doing what historical fiction does best. More than the life of Jose Marti, we get a glimpse of his poetry and a touch of his anguished soul.

Source: Thomas Curwen, "Silent Wing," (book review) in *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 1998, p. 5.



Critical Essay #3

In the following review, Brad Hooper gives a brief description of Jose Raul Bernardo's novel Silent Wing, calling it a "delicious romance" that follows a young hero's struggles between duty and desire.

This greatly atmospheric historical novel opens with a heartwarming scene. In late-nineteenth-century Guatemala, Soledad, the lovely young daughter of the national liberator, hears from her old Indian nanny that "the man meant by the gods to be always by her side . . . was on his way to her." And, sure enough, he appears—in the form of Julian, a handsome young Cuban writer exiled from his homeland because of his liberal views concerning Cuban independence from Spain. Julian has come to Guatemala to assume a teaching position. He is engaged to a young lady back in Mexico, where he has lived, and he plans to earn sufficient funds to send for her. But when he meets Soledad ("How does one describe the sun?"), his heart is torn between duty and desire. Duty wills out, yet it is Soledad who is on his mind on the day several years later when he gives his life for Cuban independence. Deliciously romantic as well as resonantly political, Bernardo's novel is compelling from first page to last.

Source: Brad Hooper, "Silent Wing," (book review) in *Booklist*, Vol. 94, No. 21, July, 1998, p. 1856.



Critical Essay #4

In the following brief review, Bernardo's Silent Wing is negatively compared with historical, manner-bound novels of the 19th century.

Following on the heels of last year's much praised *The Secret of the Bulls* Bernardo returns to colonial Cuba in a disappointing, fictionalized version of the life of Jose Marti, here depicted as the poet and revolutionary Julian. Just before setting out to seek his fortune as a writer, teacher and activist in Guatemala, idealistic Julian proposes marriage to Lucia, a frivolous Cuban woman who desires a trousseau more than political freedom for her country. A man of his word, Julian feels he must honor his vow even after he meets the girl of his dreams in Guatemala; the woman who shares his passion for freedom is clearly the counterpart to Marti's "Nina de Guatemala." The choice to portray Marti's life as fiction seems a lamentable error, since the patriot's real life was more dramatic and eventful than this conventional historical novel conveys. And Bernardo's attempt to sketch a 19th-century society bound by manners, a la James or Wharton, but simultaneously stressed by the tumultuous and violent political situation, is thwarted by a text that reads like a screenplay filled out with stage directions. This rushed, awkwardly written work does not do justice to the complexities of Marti's life. Readers would do better with one of many biographies dealing with the Cuban hero.

Source: "Silent Wing," (book review) in *Publisher's Weekly*, Vol. 245, No. 22, June 1, 1998, p. 47.



Topics for Further Study

Research the life of Cuban patriot and poet Jose Julian Marti and compare events in his life with events in the novel.

Compare and contrast Julian's and Lucia's impressions of Guatemala City.

Investigate the revolutionary history of Cuba since the early 1800s until the present day. Decide if there are common elements or events shared by both eras.

Translate one of Jose Marti's poems from Spanish to English.

Describe the nineteenth-century "coming-of-age" party. Explain how this custom did or did not change during the twentieth century.

Define the meaning of the following Spanish words and relate them to events in the story: "criollo," "habanero," "ninas," "chirilingo."

Further Study

Bernardo, Jose Raul, *The Secret of the Bulls*, Scribner: 1997.

Sweeping family chronicle set in Cuba from the turn of the century to the mid-1930s, emphasizing Cuban machismo, family struggles and passions.

Ripoll, Carlos, *Jose Marti Thoughts*, Endowment for Cuban American Studies: 1994.

Anthology of writings and thoughts on American society from Cuban writer Jose Marti, posing the central question, how to achieve a functional accomodation of truth, self-interst and reason.

Stendahl, Ann Jefferson, editor, *The Red and the Black*, Everyman Paperback Classics: 1997.

A young man nurtures dreams of glory in a post-Revolutionary world. Stendhal, one of France's greatest novelists, fashions this story with riveting psychological accuracy and a passionate awareness of political exigency.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literature of Developing Nations for Students (LDNfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, LDNfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and

undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on “classic” novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LDNfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LDNfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of “classic” novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members “educational professionals” helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in LDNfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by LDNfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LDNfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literature of Developing Nations for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LDNfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LDNfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literature of Developing Nations for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literature of Developing Nations for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LDNfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LDNfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LDNfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literature of Developing Nations for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of LDNfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literature of Developing Nations for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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