ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE PROSE WORKS OF

N. SCOTT MOMADAY

By

MARGARET F. NELSON

Bachelor of Arts
Northwestern Oklahoma State University
Alva, Oklahoma
1969

Master of Arts
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1971

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
December, 1979

ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE PROSE WORKS OF

N. SCOTT MOMADAY

Thesis Approved:

Thesis Adviser

Dean of the Graduate College

PREFACE

This study is concerned with a definition of the American Indian world view. This world view is described through the observations of various anthropologists, folklorists, and others interested in American Indian cultures. The perspective described is supported by comments made by American Indians about their own culture. That N. Scott Momaday understands and accepts this world view is demonstrated through comments made by him in various publications and interviews. That he writes from this world view and that it shapes and controls his prose is illustrated through a careful analysis of his three major prose works, House Made of Dawn, The Way to Rainy Mountain, and The Names.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the members of my committee, Dr. Peter Rollins, Dr. James Howard, and Dr. Judson Milburn, for their scholarly guidance in preparing the final manuscript. Particular appreciation is extended to my major advisor, Dr. Gordon Weaver, without whose encouragement and moral support the work could not have been completed.

I am most grateful for the continuing love and understanding of my family: my children, John, Diana, Mary, Bill, and Bette, but especially my immensely tolerant and supportive husband, Ellis. I would never have begun this study without their encouragement, nor have been able to complete it without their cooperation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

N. Scott Momaday first came to national attention when the Pulitzer Prize for 1969 was awarded to him for his novel, House Made of Dawn.[1] It is a novel which deals with the alienation of a Pueblo Indian man and the trauma induced by incarceration, alcoholism, and loss of identity. It is an interesting novel not only because it is representative of many Indians in similar situations, but also because of the insights provided by the Kiowa Indian author. The novel is complex and is sometimes dismissed as lacking cohesion or a central theme. Quite the contrary is true, but the interrelation of the novel's parts, the principle of organization, is not immediately apparent.

House Made of Dawn has multiple meanings and it must be appreciated as a whole, for only if the reader looks at the entire pattern can he comprehend the significance of the parts. Analysis and dissection of particular passages do not here provide understanding, and may indeed lead to a sense of confusion. The novel, like poetry, must be comprehended in its totality for Momaday's novel is an example of the Indian's belief in the interrelation of all things. It is the author's ethnic identity that shapes the novel.

N. Scott Momaday is a Kiowa Indian. He was reared in Indian communities, taught by Indian elders, and the perspective from which he writes is typically Indian. Perhaps because of the influence of the Indian world view, poetry comes most naturally to Momaday. Not only is his use

of language lyrical, but the organizations and structures of his prose works are poetic in form. There is a conciseness, a use of suggestion rather than detail, a juxtapositioning of parts, and a layering of meanings that is most commonly found in poetry. Like much poetry, his novel is puzzling in its brevity of statement and the obscurity of its allusions. The complexity of the layering of meanings requires the same careful reading as does good poetry. A symbol is introduced then hidden from view for a time only to reappear later in a different and more revealing context. The reader must deliberately assemble those before a pattern can be discerned. Although Momaday has published several volumes of poetry and has numerous poems published individually, his poetry has never had the widespread audience his prose has. This dissertation will consider only his prose works since they are the most frequency anthologized and are often misunderstood because of their ethnocentrism.

Abel, the protagonist in House Made of Dawn, is suffering an emotional trauma. While this is not an uncommon situation, Momaday's method of telling his story presents problems for the uninformed reader. Momaday uses stream of consciousness and flashback techniques which made the plot and narrative line difficult to follow. Unlike most modern authors, Momaday has chosen to employ methods of the oral tradition, a narrative technique which links him to Indian sources of inspiration. Momaday does not waste time completely describing a situation. He mentions only what is relevant to the immediate circumstance. For example, in House Made of Dawn, the reader is told little of the main character's background. Only the three or four instances that Abel retains in his conscious memory are recalled for the reader. His relationships with other members of the pueblo are unknown. His relationship with his grandfather is established,

but beyond that, one is given only glimpses. It is not until he returns from the war to the pueblo that the reader is allowed to briefly observe his daily activities. The several subsequent years spent in prison are almost completely ignored and it is only after his release and relocation in Los Angeles that his life is again described. Thus, there are large gaps in Abel's story that the reader is expected to fill based on his experience and knowledge of Indian culture. For the reader unfamiliar with Indian lifestyles this may be difficult if not impossible. This dissertaion considers those gaps in the novel.

In his second book, The Way to Rainy Mountain,[2] Momaday is concerned with tracing the Kiowa historical and cultural journey from the traditional way of life to the modern ethnic experience. In researching and then retracing the actual physical journey from the Kiowa's tribal homeland in western Montana to the area reserved for Kiowas near Rainy Mountain in Oklahoma, Momaday recounts meaningful myths, tribal experiences, beliefs, and events from the Kiowa past. Momaday is recreating a series of traditions with which he can identify. Although in many ways it could be considered the record of an author's personal search for his ethnic traditions, in addition, The Way to Rainy Mountain is interesting in its unique format and the almost mystical tone it conveys to the reader. It is an outstanding example of Indian literature, in part because of Momaday's careful selection of materials and their juxtapositions in the book. This dissertation will consider those aspects which make it uniquely Indian literature.

Momaday's most recent book, The Names,[3] is the remembering of those people and names which have been most meaningful to him. He has selected materials and placed them in a particular sequence to provide a picture

of his intellectual and emotional development. A criticism has been made that the reader knows more about Momaday's family after reading the book than the reader knows about Momaday.[4] But, that is precisely Momaday's point. Momaday is here conveying the typical Indian attitude that an individual is not complete and separate within himself, but is rather a result of all that has gone before him; he is a living example of ancestral contributions. The text is interesting for its biographical account of Momaday, but more importantly here, for the particular events and people he chose to include. This dissertation will examine the ethnic identity Momaday describes.

To understand Momaday's prose, it is first necessary for the reader to consider the uniqueness of the Indian world view. This world view has been the biggest hindrance to Indian-white acculturation, since both groups are reluctant to alter their value systems. As William Brandon has said, "The Indian world was, and is, a world immensely alien to European tradition, a world more alien, really than we can even yet quite realize."[5] Momaday directly confronts this issue in House Made of Dawn, for, although all of the major chatacters are of Indian descent, some are more "Indian" than others. It is here necessary to define "Indian."

For purposes of establishing eligibility for benefits and services, the United States government has defined Indian on the basis of blood quantum. Anyone who can demonstrate proof of at least one-fourth Indian blood by tracing his ancestry to documented tribal rolls is entitled to federal benefits and services. However, the Bureau of the Census considers an Indian to be any "person of mixed blood and Indian blood . . . if enrolled in an Indian agency or reservation roll, or if not so enrolled, if the proportion of Indian blood is one-fourth or more, or if

the person is regarded as an Indian in the community where he lives."[6] The Bureau of Indian Affairs keeps records of Indians eligible for enrollment in the tribes but they have no standard definition of "Indian" since tribal roll eligibility varies with the tribes. For example, some tribes accept anyone who considers himself to be a member of that group; thus, attitude is more significant for them than blood quantum. Professor Sol Tax and his colleagues working through the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago defined a "societal" Indian as one who lives in an Indian community and identifies himself as Indian.[7] Louisa Shotwell concluded that an Indian is someone of Indian descent who thinks of himself as an Indian and is regarded by the community as such.[8] Thus, attitude and community perception may be as significant a determinant as the immediacy of tribal ancestry. There are those who are predominantly Indian by blood quantum but who have adopted white standards, values, attitudes, and who would be considered "apple"[9] Indians and therefore less Indian by their ethnic group, and there are also those of less Indian blood who embrace Indian values and attitudes and are therefore more accepted by the Indian community. World view is obviously of primary importance in the definition both for legal and attitudinal considerations. Unfortunately, criticism of Momaday's prose has largely ignored these traditional Indian attitudes. Thus, an exhaustive examination of the criticism of Momaday's three lengthy prose works reveals frequent misunderstandings and inaccuracies.

Although there are several worthy, brief criticisms of one or another of the works, Momaday's prose is more often dismissed as complex, ambiguous, and unresolved. An in-depth scholarly evaluation of the corpus has been slow in appearing. The current interest in Indian

rights and the numerous Native American literature courses and Native American Area Studies programs demand a clearer understanding of not only the themes but particularly the Indian perspectives from which they are written. Perhaps the most careful evaluation of Momaday and his work is by Martha Scott Trimble. She introduces her examination with the remarks, "A person should first question his own attitude toward the American Indian. He should study Indian culture and should develop an open mind. Only by means of such endeavor can he expect to understand writers like Momaday."[10] Knowledge of Indian practices and attitudes is a prerequisite for understanding.

A brief review of some of the criticism will reveal several problems encountered by those who have not approached this author with his Indianness in mind. House Made of Dawn is Momaday's first major work of fiction. Although it was a Pulitzer Prize winner, reviewers were vague and general or at worst unduly harsh and critical because they were at a loss as to how to interpret Momaday's style. William James Smith complained that there was "something broken-backed about that title to begin with."[11] The title is a line from the Navajo Night Chant, a healing ceremony; Smith's barb reveals ignorance of this allusion. Smith was no more insightful about the special style employed by Momaday, ". . . it makes you itch for a blue pencil to knock out all the interstitial words that maintain the soporific flow. It is a style that gets in the way of the content."[12] The passage which interested Smith includes the book's title:

> There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with many different-colored clays and sands. Red and blue and spotted horses grazed in the plain, and there was a dark wilderness

> on the mountains beyond. The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around.[13]

Momaday's inclusion of the Southwest Indian values of pollen, rain, land, and the traditional color symbolism is an integral part of not only his style but also his message. One suspects a criticism so revealing of the critic's lack of understanding of the author's purpose as being superficial; House Made of Dawn does not easily reveal itself to the hasty reader. Perhaps Smith failed to observe the shifts in style that Momaday employs in various sections which illustrate the differences in characters' points of view and provide major insights. H. Fuhe observed that Momaday's novel

> . . . rests on the sort of romantic assumptions about being primitive which permeate the work of Hemingway and Lawrence. . . . It is a pity that a book with such unusual subject, through lack of proper self-consiousness, through easy acceptance of convention, turn out to be mere lifeless artifice.[14]

Inability to see how Momaday had blended stream of consciousness techniques with Indian thought patterns led Mary Borg to confuse the style with superficiality of content. "Sentimentality and a mixture of turgid stylizing and transparent intent mar N. Scott Momaday's first novel which, I see, has won the Pulitzer Prize, presumably for its social conscience."[15] A reviewer for the New York Times Literary Supplement judged that

> It [House Made of Dawn] is written in self-conscious prose, which can be as regularly rhythmical as Hiawatha and has some of the sentimental primitivism of that poem. . . . Yet the rhetoric is a bit too facile, smacks somewhat of campus creative writing, and on occasion creates a nebulosity opaque enough to count as self parody.[16]

While Fuhe criticized that it lacks proper self-consciousness, the Times

critic found it too conscious of self. Marian Hylton had a better understanding of the theme:

> Momaday describes the tragic odyssey of a man forcibly removed from his psychic environment and placed within a culture light years away from the attitudes, values and goals of his former life. His anguished ordeal, heightened by his encounter with a white woman, endows him at last with courage and wisdom; he comes to know who he is and what he must do to maintain that identity.[17]

While the plot is not a unique one, many of the techniques used by Momaday and the selection of incidents are unusual since they are typically Indian; this makes the novel difficult for a Western reader.

Some of the critics were unintentionally amusing; for example, Phoebe Adams who said, "Mr. Momaday is a Kiowa, and the portion (about two thirds) of this novel which deals with Kiowa tradition and the Indian's eye-and-action view of the world is unusual and good."[18] This observation is wide of the mark because the book is about New Mexico's and Arizona's Pueblo and Navajo Indians and their reservation cultures; the only reference to the Kiowas is Tosamah's brief memory of his visit to his old grandmother in Oklahoma. The Kiowas are not reservation Indians and they live now in Oklahoma. Ms. Adams' comments reveal a lack of knowledge of Indian life.

Some discerning reviewers also had comments to make about the novel. Anna Lee Stensland judged that "It is a beautiful book. Because of its indefinite plot line it is a book for discriminating readers. Its great strengths are in the development of the main character and the imagery and detail especially from the natural world."[19] And, Rupert Costo appreciated that the "special beauty of this small book is not particularly in its story line. It is rather in the mood, the haunting

language, the acutely intimate knowledge of personal reaction, with which its pages are filled."[20] Jay L. Halio believed Momaday ". . . successfully dramatizes the conflict of someone caught between two worlds, the ancient and the modern, unable to recapture the one, and effectively cut off from more than a tangential relationship with the other."[21] Halio accurately described Abel's situation and the conflict that resulted. An entirely different perspective, however, was voiced in Carole Oleson's review, "The Remembered Earth: Momaday's House Made of Dawn."[22] Ms. Oleson revealed a sensitivity to Indian values and an appreciation of Momaday's complexities: "The landscape is of central importance, holy in itself, and closely associated with Momaday's theme in House Made of Dawn. . . . One must look for a long time to appreciate the subtleties of its form."[23] House Made of Dawn rewards the careful reader but it is confusing to those who lack an understanding of Indian values and traditions.

Momaday's second book, The Way to Rainy Mountain, is a book like no other. It is brief, a mere ninety pages, but it generates a distinct aura. It was published about the time Momaday received the Pulitzer Prize for his novel and it received very positive reviews. It is composed of three distinct voices distinguished by three different kinds of print. Each narrative is brief, often a single paragraph, but they reflect, through Kiowa myths, historical accounts, and contemporary experiences, much that is meaningful in Kiowa tradition.

> The Kiowa tales which are contained in The Way to Rainy Mountain constitute a kind of literary chronicle. In a sense they are the milestones of that old migration in which the Kiowas journeyed from the Yellowstone to the Washita. They recorded a transformation of the tribal mind, as it encounters for the first time the landscape of the Great Plains; they evoke the

> sense of search and discovery. Many of the tales are very old, and they have not until now been set down in writing.[24]

These Kiowa tales are arranged to indicate the chronological and geographic development of the Kiowa migration south.

Kenneth Fields commented that, "What he [Momaday] is dealing with is an intensely felt experience something on the order of racial memory, an inheritance that he feels in his blood."[25] Fields judged it "far and away his best book."[26] Barre Toelken adds that, "It is the particular Indian orientation of Momaday's remarks that makes this book so extremely valuable to anyone who wants an avenue of approach to Indian thought."[27] And, John R. Milton agreed that "the story itself is impelling but it is Momaday's method of presentation that makes it meaningful."[28] The critics agree that the book is unique in its content and format, and that Momaday has the true storyteller's perception. Barbara Strelke enthused that "The Way to Rainy Mountain is a multi-voiced response to the question of personal and cultural creation through imagination and language."[29] One of the few negative criticisms is voiced in a review in The New Yorker: "The tribal material is fascinating, and is beautifully illustrated by the author's father, Al Momaday, a well-known Kiowa painter, but the reminiscences tend to fall into sentimentality and a kind of Fenimore Cooper nostalgia."[30] That there is a nostalgic tone is undeniable. Momaday recalls with fervor and perhaps some sentimentality a golden age of the Kiowas. It is generally agreed that the prose is beautifully composed, however, and of poetic quality. Its sensitivity to language and rhythms has been noted by several critics. J. Golden Taylor sums up, "The book is a memorable evocation of one's heritage, and it is written in some of the best prose I have read in many years.

. . . It is an outstanding Indian literary achievement."[31] This slim volume deserves wider recognition.

The Way to Rainy Mountain, unlike House Made of Dawn, is unambiguous and each vignette is distinct and complete. The variety is stimulating and the lyrical rhythms pleasant. The three voices are those of a traditional storyteller; they have much in common with the oral tradition. Momaday explained his purpose:

> Some three or four years ago, I became interested in the matter of 'oral tradition' as that term is used to designate a rich body of preliterate storytelling in and among the indigenous cultures of North America. Specifically, I began to wonder about the way in which myths, legends and lore evolve into that mature condition of expression which we call 'literature.' For indeed literature is, I believe, the end-product of an evolutionary process, a stage that is indispensable and perhaps original as well. I set out to find a traditional material that should be at once oral only, unified and broadly representative of cultural values.[32]

His intention, then, was to employ oral techniques to provide the reader with a comprehensive history of the Kiowas through a retelling of their progression from mythology to history to current conditions. He was successful. The Way to Rainy Mountain encapsulates what is vital to a proud Indian tribe.

Momaday's latest book, The Names, is a personal reminiscence; it is a recall of the memorable events in Momaday's early life. Unlike many Indians of mixed blood, Scott Momaday is apparently not torn by a conflict of loyalties to separate codes nor by the dilemma of choosing between different cultures. He prefers to think of himself as all Indian, and by an act of the imagination creates himself within that role. It is not so much that he rejects his Scottish heritage as that he acknowledges it, then ignores it as irrevelant and insignificant. Again, most

critics speak of his poetic prose, and Edward Abbey called The Names an elegiac autobiography. He says, "There is little nostalgia in this book, certainly no sentimentality, but the tone of the whole, intended or not, becomes, at least for this reader, as I have said, inescapably elegiac."[33] This is not a book about historic injustices done to Indians, it is a celebration of a way of life; it is the careful enumeration of Indian attitudes and values and the embracing of them. The Names focuses on Momaday and his family rather than on tribal folklore. It is a narrowing of the reader's perspective from the tribal accounts in The Way to Rainy Mountain to the personal accounts in The Names; it is a revelation of Momaday's sensibilities.

A covert hunger for Indian identity exhibits itself in the autobiography. Mick McAllister observed that N. Scott Momaday is "one of the premier writers of American Indian literature. . . . he is one of our most polished writers."[34] But, McAllister felt a disappointment in reading The Names. He acknowledged the skill and control in Momaday's writing, but he believed his method to be "obtrusively evasive."[35] He objected that Momaday deftly evaded the implications of his mixed heritage and that ". . . there is a conscious, retrospective shaping of the story that makes the book seem less a memoir and more - perhaps I should say more honestly, since all autobiography partakes of this - an act, like Joyce's novel, of personal mythopoesis."[36] It is Momaday's Indian perspective of the events of his life that gives the book this lopsided quality. He briefly relates family histories and events of his non-Indian ancestors, but the tone is quite different in that first section of the narrative. It is an accurate though dispassionate account, whereas his portrait of himself as a Kiowa Indian is treated with special

attention. He recognizes the value of this heritage and has said, "Notions of the past and future are essentially notions of the present. In the way an idea of one's ancestry and posterity is really an idea of the self."[37] Momaday's search for his identity is selective. In typical Indian fashion he recognizes other things outside his immediate interest, but he chooses to ignore their significance. It is that Indian perspective in his works which has been largely ignored. His view of what is typically Indian is important to his self image as well as to an understanding of his works.

Momaday has distinguished the Indian in detail in several places, and for my purposes his definition of the characteristics most distinct from other groups and most central to Indians as a whole will be examined thoroughly. In addition to a consideration of the Indian perspective from which Momaday's works are conceived, the scholar must also take into account this writer's particular style and the sources of it. Since any artist's style is the way he solves structural problems, the way he arranges the parts to create meaning, that style may not be immediately apparent. Momaday's style is a unique blend of varying influences that result in a form closer to the oral than the print tradition.

Momaday's quiet, controlled language, his acute sensory perceptions, his subtle rhythms and concentration of meanings, his careful selection and positioning of details, make a formalistic approach to his prose difficult, for it resists the separation into component parts for analysis. Without the reader's clear understanding of Indian thought patterns, which include a concept of the relatedness of all things, his works lose much of their cohesiveness.

Since Momaday's writings are highly autobiographical and personal, their appeal is primarily for those interested in Indian culture. His work as a teacher may be his vocation, but his writing is obviously a rewarding and self-fulfilling avocation. That he will continue to write is evident in his comment, "I'm not sure that one can set out to be a writer. Decision has very little to do with it, as far as I can see. It seems more a matter of necessity. One writes because he can or must, and not because he chooses to do so."[38] The ultimate test of Momaday's skill will come when he moves beyond the limiting self-indulgence of personal accounts and tribal memories.

The influences of Momaday's family, especially his parents, his Kiowa grandmother Aho and grandfather Mammedaty, the Indian environments in which he was reared, the influences of his education and particular teachers, his literary skill and techniques, combine with his vast regard for his tribal values and attitudes to create his prose. Thus, the writings of N. Scott Momaday cannot be understood without a clear understanding of his ethnic identity, the traditional Indian world view, the importance of nature as place, the enduring Indian beliefs and practices, and the concept of the sacredness of language. The way in which these aspects shape his works is the subject of this dissertation.

ENDNOTES

[1]N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966). Subsequently referred to as House . . . since this edition will be used throughout this dissertation.

[2]N. Scott Momaday, The Way to Rainy Mountain (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969). Subsequently referred to as The Way . . .

[3]N. Scott Momaday, The Names (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969).

[4]Christopher Vecsey, "Notices," Parabola, 2, No. 2 (Spring 1977), 110.

[5]William Brandon, "American Indian Literature," The Indian Historian, 4 (Summer 1971), 53.

[6]Cited by Ernest Schusky, The Right to Be Indian (San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, Inc., 1970), p. 8.

[7]Sol Tax, Robert Thomas and Samuel Stanley, 1950 Distribution of the Aboriginal Population of Alaska, Canada, and the United States (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 39.

[8]Louisa Shotwell, "Who Are the American Indians?" American Indians, Walter Danield, ed. (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1957), p. 11.

[9]The term "apple" is used to designate those Indians who have adopted Anglo values; i.e., they are red on the outside but white on the inside.

[10]Martha Scott Trimble, N. Scott Momaday, Western Writers Series No. 10 (Boise, Idaho: Boise State College, 1973), p. 9.

[11]William James Smith, "Review of House Made of Dawn," Commonweal, 10 September 1968, p. 636.

[12]Smith.

[13]N. Scott Momaday, House . . ., p. 1.

[14]H. Fuhe, "Review of House Made of Dawn," The Spectator, 23 May 1969, p. 688.

[15]Mary Borg, "Victims," review of House Made of Dawn, New Statesman, 16 May 1969, p. 696.

[16]New York Times Literary Supplement, 22 May 1969, p. 7.

[17]Marian Willard Hylton, "On a Trail of Pollen," Critique, 14, No. 2 (1972), 60.

[18]Phoebe Adams, "Short Reviews: Books," The Atlantic Monthly, 61 (1968), 106.

[19]Anna Lee Stensland, Literature By and About the American Indians (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973), p. 66.

[20]Rupert Costo, "Momaday Novel Wins Pulitzer Prize," The Indian Historian (Summer 1969), p. 38.

[21]Jay L. Halio, "Fantasy and Fiction," The Southern Review (Spring 1971), p. 642.

[22]Carole Oleson, "The Remembered Earth: Momaday's House Made of Dawn," South Dakota Review (Spring 1973), pp. 59-78.

[23]Oleson, p. 9.

[24]N. Scott Momaday, "The Man Made of Words," The Remembered Earth, Geary Hobson, ed. (Albuquerque: Red Earth Press, 1979), pp. 170-71.

[25]Kenneth Fields, "More Than Language Means: A Review of N. Scott Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain," The Southern Review (Winter 1970), p. 199.

[26]Fields.

[27]Barre Toelken, "The Native American: A Review Article," Western Folklore, 650 (October 1970), 269-78.

[28]John R. Milton, "Minorities," Saturday Review, 21 June 1969, p. 51.

[29]Barbara Strelke, "N. Scott Momaday: Racial Memory and Individual Inagination," Literature of the American Indian, Abraham Chapman, ed. (New York: New American Library, 1975), p. 352.

[30]"Briefly Noted," The New Yorker, 45, No. 2 (17 May 1969), 150.

[31]J. Golden Taylor, "The Editor's Essay Review," Western American Literature, 5, No. 2 (1970), 167.

[32]"The Man Made of Words," p. 169.

[33]Edward Abbey, "Memories of an Indian Childhood," Harpers Magazine, 254 (February 1977), 94.

[34]Mick McAllister, "The Names," Southern Review, 14 (April 1978), 387.

[35]McAllister.

[36]McAllister.

[37]N. Scott Momaday, personal interview with Charles L. Woodard, 19 November 1974, at Stanford University, cited in "The Concept of the Creative Word in the Writings of N. Scott Momaday," Diss. University of Oklahoma, 1975.

[38]"Does One Write by Necessity or by Choice?" New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 3 September 1972, p. 6.

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY AS STYLE AND CONTENT

Momaday's style is a blend of influences from his family, his environments, and his education. It is a deliberate attempt to combine significant elements of both the oral tradition of his people and techniques of contemporary literature with his personal experiences. It will be useful to delineate those influences and literary techniques for a clearer understanding of Momaday's creativity.

Among the most important influences on his life have been those of his parents. Momaday's mother, Natachee, is one-sixteenth Cherokee and his father, Al, is a full-blood Kiowa. Natachee Scott Momaday is an artist, a teacher, and an author of children's books. Momaday says of her that when she left Haskell Institute at Lawrence, Kansas, "she wanted to be a writer. . . . and she wanted most of all to write about Indians."[1] In 1932, while attending Haskell Indian School, she was introduced by her Kiowa roommate, Lela Ware, to Lela's cousin, Alfred Morris Momaday, "a tall good looking reckless man."[2] After a brief courtship, Natachee and Alfred were married in 1933.

Momaday places a high value on his parents and their lifestyle. He says of his mother:

> In 1929 my mother was a Southern belle; she was about to embark upon an extraordinary life. It was about this time that she began to see herself as an Indian. That dim native heritage became a fascination and a cause for her, inasmuch, perhaps, as

> it enabled her to assume an attitude of defiance, an attitude which she assumed with particular style and satisfaction; it became her. She imagined who she was. This act of the imagination was I believe, among the most important events of my mother's early life, as later the same essential act was to be among the most important of my own.[3]

Momaday has considered the importance of imagination in self-image several times. "We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. Our best destiny is to imagine, at least, completely, who and what, and that we are. The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined."[4] And, although Momaday is approximately only half-Indian, he has "imagined" that he is completely Indian and totally Kiowa.[5] His complete acceptance of that self-image has been very important, not only in the selection of his materials, but in the way he writes about them. Momaday's concern with his Kiowa ancestry is somewhere included in everything he writes. It is a Romantic, nostalgic attitude that shapes his works.

Scott's father, Al Momaday, is also a teacher and a distinguished Indian artist. He is a man of considerable charm, for Momaday says of him, "I would grow up learning of his magnetism; he was born with a large talent for being liked and admired."[6] Al Momaday is well known and respected in the Indian Art community. He is responsible for the illustrations in The Way to Rainy Mountain. His influence on his son has been different than that of Scott's mother. Natachee and Scott were emotionally very close; Al and Scott are more intellectually similar. Scott has recently begun to paint and exhibit his art and he demonstrates a similar sense of concern for Indian affairs. Momaday recognized his father's sense of responsibility for his family and for the Indian community.

> My father looked after the endless paper work that came down from the many levels of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In innumerable ways he worked with the people of the village [Jemez Pueblo] and was their principal contact with the Government of the United States. But first of all he was the man of the family. It was he who got up before daylight and went out to get wood and coal for the fires on winter mornings; it was he who dealt with the emergencies, great and small, of those years; and it was he who taught me such responsibilities as I learned then. One of these was to myself, and it was to dream.[7]

This habit of introspection, "dreaming," provided fertile ground for the source of Momaday's creativity.

It was during his formative years that Scott developed a deep respect and love for his mother.

> My mother has been the inspiration of many people. Certainly she has been mine, and certainly she was mine at Jemez, when inspiration was the nourishment I needed most. I was at that age in which a boy flounders. I had not much sense of where I must go or of what I must do and be in my life, and there were for me moments of great, growing urgency, in which I felt that I was imprisoned in the narrow quarters of my time and place. I wanted, needed to conceive of what my destiny might be, and my mother allowed me to believe that it might be worthwhile. We were so close, she and I, when I was growing up that even now I cannot express the feelings between us.[8]

Natachee Momaday was a powerful influence on her son's development and the formation of his self-image.

Momaday's parents provided a climate of appreciation for the esthetic, a love of literature, and an identification with Indian traditions. The atmosphere of his home was relaxed and he enjoyed considerable personal freedom. He used that opportunity to roam the countryside on his pony and he became familiar with the natural environment there in an intimate way. He has said:

> If you have ever been to the hogans in Canyon de Chelly, or to a squaw dance near Lukachukai - if you have ever heard the

> riding songs in the dusk, or the music of the Yei bichai - you will never come away entirely, but a part of you will remain there always; you will have found an old home of the spirit.[9]

The pueblo at Jemez and the surrounding countryside are especially treasured in Momaday's memories of "the bright legend" of his youth. This regard for place has been a primary influence on Momaday's psyche, and, as a result, on his literature.

The several environments in which Momaday lived as a child and adolescent have been extremely important to his works. He is a Kiowa-Cherokee who was born in the Kiowa-Comanche Indian Hospital at Lawton, Oklahoma, February 27, 1934. The family lived at Mountain View, Oklahoma, for a time with his paternal grandmother, Aho Mammedaty, and an uncle, James Mammedaty.[10] Momaday describes in his autobiography, The Names, what must have been a trying time for his parents and their new baby:

> My parents were married in 1933. They had no money and no prospects of having money. It was necessary for them to live at Mountain View with my father's family. The Mammedatys were often cruel to my mother. As far as they were concerned, she was an outsider who had insinuated herself into their midst, and they set out to make her life miserable. . . . It came soon to be known in the neighborhood that a domestic war was being waged at the house above Rainy Mountain Creek . . . I had nothing to say about all this at the time, of course, but there were those who feared for my safety as well as my mother's.[11]

This early environment must have had lasting influences on both Momaday and his parents. Apparently Aho reconciled her antagonistic feelings toward her grandson, however, for Momaday has written several accounts of his length summer visits to her home in Oklahoma where he was apparently warmly welcomed.

Momaday next moved with his parents to Hobbs, New Mexico. In the years between 1936 and 1943, the family moved on the Navajo reservation

at Shiprock, New Mexico, and at Tuba City, then at Chinle, Arizona. The family made several trips during those years to Oklahoma, to Kentucky, and even to Louisiana where an aunt, Ethel, lived. For several months Scott and his mother lived on the San Carlos Apache reservation in the southeastern quadrant of Arizona while his father waited futilely in Oklahoma to be drafted into the army. But as Momaday says:

> 'home' was particularly the Navajo country, Dine bikeyah. My earliest playmates and schoolmates were the Navajo children. Just at the time I was learning to talk, I heard the Navajo language spoken all around me. And just as I was coming alive to the wide world, the vast and beautiful landscape of Dine bikeyah was my world, all of it that I could perceive.[12]

The family moved to the Jemez Pueblo on the Navajo reservation in 1946, where his parents taught in the Jemez Day School for more than a quarter of a century. Momaday lived there from the time he was twelve years old. He attended the mission school in the pueblo, then attended high school thirty miles away at Bernillo, in Albuquerque. His last year of high school was spent at Augusta Military Academy in Virginia. His parents were much concerned that he have adequate educational opportunities.

His adolescent years at Jemez Pueblo were a special time for Momaday, a time when his purpose in life and his values came into focus.

> There was at Jemez a climate of the mind in which we, my parents and I, realized ourselves, understood who we were, not perfectly, it may be, but well enough. It was not our native world, but we appropriated it, as it were, to ourselves; we invested much of our lives in it, and in the end it was the remembered place of our hopes, our dreams, and our deep love.[13]

The influence of his parents and of the environment was significant. When asked who had been the greatest influence on his life, Momaday

unhesitatingly answered, "my parents."[14] And, he has frequently written with warmth and obvious affection of the Navajo country and people, and Jemez Pueblo in particular.

Although Momaday was not without friends, he was a lonely boy. After all, he was an outsider, a half-breed in a pueblo of full-bloods, a Kiowa in a group who traditionally viewed anyone not a tribal member as the enemy. Momaday did not even look Indian like his companions, he says, but looked Asian or vaguely oriental.[15] His youth was a time for relying on his own entertainment, for developing inner resources, and for living in his fantasies.

> I was much alone. I had no brothers or sisters, and as it happened in my childhood, much of it, my peers were at removes from me, across cultures and languages. I had to create my society in my mind. And for a child this kind of creation is accomplished easily enough. I imagined much.[16]

This early reliance on his own imaginative skills developed habits of creativity that perhaps sparked his literary commitment. "When I turn my mind to my early life, it is the imaginative part of it that comes first and irresistibly into reach, and of that part I take hold. This is one way to tell a story. In this instance it is my way, and it is the way of my people."[17] Scott lived in an enchanted world of his own devising.

The trips Momaday made with his father to Oklahoma to visit his Kiowa relatives during this time also had a lasting effect. He was especially moved by the stories told by the old people in the tribe and by the attitudes of his grandmother, Aho.

> Now that I can have her only in memory, I see my grandmother in the several postures that were peculiar to her: standing at the wood stove on a winter morning and turning meat in a

> great iron skillet; sitting at the south window, bent above her beadwork and afterward, when her vision failed, looking down for a time into the fold of her hands; going out upon a cane, very slowly as she did when the weight of age came upon her; praying. . . . The last time I saw her, she prayed standing by the side of her bed at night, naked to the waist, the light of a kerosene lamp moving upon her dark skin. Her long black hair, always drawn and braided in the day, lay upon her shoulders and against her breasts like a shawl. I did not always understand her prayers; I believe they were made of an older language than that of ordinary speech.[18]

Momaday's great love for Aho is apparent in his tender descriptions. It was in an attempt to identify with her history and that of his grandfather Mammedaty that he made the journey to Wyoming and as a result wrote The Way to Rainy Mountain.

Although Momaday never knew his grandfather, Mammedaty, stories about him had a profound impact on the young man. Momaday says that he often thought of his grandfather and imagined his life. He felt the shadow of his presence when someone remembered and mentioned him, and he has said that he is proud to bear his name. Mammedaty was a vivid presence in Scott's dreams and fantasies. Momaday has retold in several places the story of the time when his grandfather was honored by the Kiowas. It grips his imagination; it seems to satisfy an atavistic need.

> There was a giveaway ceremony, a rite of sharing that occurred in varying ways in tribal cultures across the land. A prominent family of eight or ten members entered the circle. They carried baskets of rich things to give away, beautiful yard goods. They called out the names of well known and highly respected people, those who were most worthy of honors and renown.
>
> Mammedaty's name was called out, and he arose and stepped forward. At the same moment a boy came running into the circle, leading a big, black horse. There was suddenly a murmur on the crowd, a wave of sheer excitement and delight. The horse shone like shale; it was dancing, blowing, its flesh rippling; it was perfectly beautiful and full of life. There was white at its eyes; there were bright ribbons and eagle feathers in its mane, and there was a beautiful new blanket spread upon its back.

> The horse was presented to Mammedaty, and he graciously returned his thanks, shaking hands with each member of the family. There were nods of approval all around the crowd, and some of the women emitted the shrill, tremolo cries of delight which are peculiar to them. But for all of its color and commotion, it was a moment of great meaning and propriety. All was intact and in place, as it ought to be.[19]

The Kiowas were a horse-loving nation and possessed vast herds at the time of their conquest.[20] The beautiful horse which was given to Momaday's grandfather became for his grandson much more than an honor bestowed; it became the symbol of a vanished way of life made vivid through his imagination. The influences of these family recollections and tales, and the tribal recollections that he heard from others such as Pohd-lohk and Ko-Sahn were the materials from which Momaday created his own world and later his literature.

The importance of education was stressed by Momaday's parents, and he graduated from the University of New Mexico in 1958 with a BA degree in political science. He then taught for a year at the Jicarilla-Apache Reservation in northern New Mexico before returning to graduate school to earn his Masters and Doctor of Philosophy degrees at Stanford in English and Comparative Literature. He says that he has always thought of himself as a creative writer since he was very young, but he began his formal writing career while a student at Stanford studying under a Creative Writing Fellowship. In 1966 he was granted a Guggenheim Scholarship and spent the year in Amherst, Massachusetts, studying the poetry of Emily Dickinson. In 1969 he joined the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley; he left in 1972 to return to Stanford as Professor of English and Comparative Literature.

While he was still a student at Stanford, he met Yvor Winters who became his good friend and teacher and another powerful influence. They

met in the summer of 1959 when Momaday visited Winters in his home in Los Altos, California. Winters became both Momaday's teacher and advisor at Stanford and a warm friendship developed. Momaday says of him,

> Yvor Winters was one of the truly great men of his time, I believe. Until I met him I had only a vague motion-picture idea of greatness. Winters more than any man I have ever known had the strength of his convictions. I could not have imagined such moral and intellectual integrity. . . . He loved learning absolutely. His respect for intellectual history and tradition was profound.[21]

Winters' concern with structure and carefully controlled associations greatly influenced Momaday's writings. Indeed, Momaday has said, "I had no traditional frame of reference when I first came to Stanford. I had written some things, but I had no real technique. . . . The training I received under Winters was invaluable."[22] Momaday considers Winters "something of a father figure," and states that they were emotionally very close. Winters' influence was both personal and professional.

Yvor Winters influenced the materials and methods Momaday uses in his fiction was well as in his poetry. Winters has frequently deplored the shifts in modern literary techniques. He noted the lack of significantly great and universal subject matter and the emphasis on momentarily interesting trivialities which did not contribute to the overall effect. He was equally critical of vague narrative techniques and lack of precision in language. He regretted the fragmentary thoughts common in modern literature and the abundant usage of cliches.[23] Winters regarded the modern novel as no longer vital and said:

> For the fact of the matter is, as most intelligent critics and even some novelists are aware, that the novel in our time is nearly dead. Unless there is a serious reconsideration of materials and methods, not merely in the interests of what may

> seem to the uninstructed to be novelty, but in the interests of intelligent achievement, the next generation will see the novel as dead as the drama is now.[24]

It is apparent that Momaday has taken Winters' criticism seriously, and has tightly structured his novel House Made of Dawn and written it in a fresh, narrative language with a strongly lyrical tone. He has experimented with forms and structures in The Way to Rainy Mountain and combined several narrative techniques in The Names. That his efforts were well received by his mentor is evident in Winters' evaluation, "To my regret, Momaday has devoted most of his energy to prose in the past three or four years; there is solace in the fact that the prose is distinguished."[25]

Others, however, have described Momaday's style as "turgid," "ambiguous," "obscure," "nebulous," and "unintelligible." Thomas Sanders commented,

> If the resultant prose seems 'hazy,' it is probably due to the same causes that make passages from D. H. Lawrence's The Fox or Eudora Welty's short stories so frustrating to some reviewers, so rewarding for others. Momaday is still too close to his heritage of belief in the power of the word to mechanize his writing into the 'lucid' line of expository arbitrariness that characterizes much transplant American literature.[26]

The critics' problem in understanding Momaday's prose is frequently the result of an unfamiliarity with Indian thought patterns, attitudes, and values.

These personal and environmental influences have been most important in shaping the perspective from which Momaday writes. Momaday's parents, his early experiences growing up in Arizona and New Mexico with long vacations in Oklahoma with his Kiowa kin, and his educational training are all important to his works. Nothing seems to have been lost to him,

for he includes personal experiences in all of his writing. Momaday weaves these threads of memories and influences expertly into his narratives. Not only is the content of his prose a result of his biography but so is the style, since he incorporates many of the oral traditions of the Kiowas he learned from the old Kiowa storyteller Pohd-lohk into his writing. This is a deliberate stylistic device and an innovative technique which has distinguished N. Scott Momaday as an American Indian author.

ENDNOTES

[1]The Names, p. 38. In 1969 Natachee Momaday was awarded the New Mexico Women's ZIA Award as an outstanding woman writer of New Mexico.

[2]The Names, p. 36.

[3]The Names, pp. 23, 25.

[4]"The Man Made of Words," p. 167.

[5]Momaday has listed himself on Kiowa tribal rolls as seven-eighths Kiowa; his roll number is 2035. His paternal great-grandmother Kau-Au-Ointy was a Mexican captive of the Kiowas who later married into the tribe and was adopted by them. His maternal great-grandmother, Natachee, was Cherokee and his other maternal ancestors were predominantly Scotch and French. Mathematically, he is one-half Kiowa, one-sixteenth Cherokee, and seven-sixteenths Scotch and French.

[6]The Names, p. 36.

[7]The Names, p. 152.

[8]The Names, p. 153.

[9]The Names, p. 120.

[10]The Anglicization of the surname Mammedaty to Momaday was begun by Momaday's father, Alfred Morris Momaday, about 1932.

[11]The Names, p. 38.

[12]The Names, p. 61.

[13]The Names, p. 152.

[14]Question and answer period following his presentation "The Man Made of Words," 7th Annual Symposium of the American Indian, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, April 6, 1979.

[15]The Names, p. 85-6.

[16]The Names, p. 59.

[17]The Names, frontspiece, no page.

[18]House . . ., p. 133.

[19]"I Am Alive," The World of the American Indian, Melville Bell Grasvenor et al., eds. (Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 1974), pp. 13, 14.

[20]Around 1830 at the peak of the Plains Indian culture, the Kiowas owned more horses per capita than any other tribe on the Great Plains. When the last of the Kiowa surrendered and came into Fort Sill, Oklahoma, from the Palo Duro Canyon, some 800 of their horses were taken to a field outside the fort and destroyed in an attempt to crush the Kiowa spirit.

[21]"The Man Who Took Literature Seriously," New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 2 September 1973, p. 8.

[22]"The Man Who Took Literature Seriously."

[23]See In Defense of Reason (New York: Swallow Press, 1947), Uncollected Essays (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1973), Forms of Discovery (Denver: Alan Swallow Press, 1967), and The Function of Criticism (Denver: Alan Swallow Press, 1967).

[24]The Function of Criticism (Denver: Alan Swallow Press, 1967).

[25]The Function of Criticism, p. 368.

[26]Literature of the American Indian (New York: Glencoe Press, 1973), p. 224.

CHAPTER III

AN INDIAN LENS

World view, the manner in which a culture sees and expresses its relationship to the world around it, is a selective process which determines the nature of its reality. A member of that group or culture sees the world in his own way, through a lens he cannot easily alter. In all communities, the most basic concepts are not so much objective facts to be discovered as they are cultural perspectives. These cultural patterns are not biologically inherent; they are learned, and they are learned at an early age. The beliefs and values become so basic to the psyche, however, that they serve in much the same way as something that is biologically inherited. It is an integral part of the individual.

One of the biggest problems in Indian acculturation into the Caucasion society has been the vast differences between their world views. There is no single Indian point of view or life-style; there are many. But, although there was an estimated two thousand or more Indian tribes at the time of European invasion and many of these tribes were and are very different in life-style and basic philosophies, still, it is possible to make some general comments about Indian world view. The Indian point of view is so alien to the European tradition that general statements can be meaningful. That the two cultures live in similar geographic environments is incidental. They do not interpret those environments in the same way. A brief discussion of the most obvious

differences in their value systems is necessary since N. Scott Momaday writes from an Indian world view which many of his readers fail to understand because they read from a Western world view.

A reason Momaday may be difficult to understand is that he "thinks like an Indian." This may be a deliberate attempt to introduce the reader to an alien configuration or simply the natural result of his ethnic heritage. Momaday is typically Indian in his refusal to explain. In spite of his education and apparent acculturation, his Indian philogophy dominates. Complete comprehension by the average reader is not the issue; it is the overall impression that is vital, and that is the result of Momaday's own psyche. House Made of Dawn, The Way to Rainy Mountain, and The Names are works that could only have been written by an Indian, and that Indian could only have been N. Scott Momaday. Indeed, they are each pictures of some aspect of N. Scott Momaday. Thus, it is essential that the readers of his works be acquainted with an overview of Momaday's personal influences and with the Indian traditions and value systems he embraces in order to appreciate Momaday's selection of materials and the emphases he places on them.

N. Scott Momaday's understanding of this world view comes from being a part of it. After hundreds of years of being written about, the Indian is here writing back in an attempt to provide if not understanding and appreciation at least some first-hand knowledge of the Indian world view. He says:

> The American Indian is distinguished by certain things, certain perceptions of himself in relation to the world around him. This is to say that the American Indian - or indeed any man - is someone who thinks of himself in a certain way; he is precisely equal to his own idea of himself. In the case of the American Indian the idea of the self is based upon a number

> of equations. They constitute a philosophy, a world view that is peculiarly native, indeed definitive. . . .[1]

Momaday believes that it is not the Indian who is culturally deprived today, it is the non-Indian, because he believes that the Indian has a highly developed sense of who he is.

The Western world view emphasizes the material, the scientific, the empirical. Since the time of Francis Bacon, the Western world has increasingly believed in only those realitites which can be proved in its laboratories. Thus, philosophical idealism and religion have suffered from a diminishing importance as scientific achievements have flourished. The Indian, however, considers conscious data often erroneous and illusory. He disregards the exterior configuration in a probe for essences; he reserves judgment until worth is established.[2] In the Western world, reality rests on the human ability to master things, to conquer objects, to subdue nature to the human will. In the Indian world, reality is found in the spiritual domain; the "inner" world is apt to dominate over the "outer" world. Indian thought draws no sharp distinction between animate and inanimate, natural and supernatural, material and mental, conscious and unconscious.

> In his view of the world, the Indian sees deep into the nature and potential of his human being. His best idea of himself is, after all, an idea of all men, an idea of humanity. And this ideal he holds always before him, in all that he thinks and does and is. Perhaps this is the most pervasive and intangible of the equations that I [Momaday] have enumerated, for it is indivisible with, and indistinguishable from, them in large measure. Notwithstanding, it is a cardinal principle of life in the Indian world, and a sacred trust.[3]

The Indian attempts to assimilate rather than separate and tends to

regard himself as a small though necessary and vital part of a much larger whole.

The Indian attempts to live in harmony with all of life and in fact views illness as the result of disharmony rather than the invasion of the body by germs. Illness is a more spiritual than a physical matter and an indication of an imbalance within the individual. "Nature is not seen as something outside the people which must be related to in any kind of practical approach to survival within it, but, rather, it represents a ritual circumstance in which man moves as carefully as in any other ritual occurrance. The principal parts are always related to each other."[14] Since a harmonious life is the most important goal, the Indian community dislikes violence and thinks quarreling is childish. There is generally a lack of competition both personally and as a group in the Indian community. The Western world is built on competition and personal success; a sense of individualism is elemental in the concept. Such a striving for personal recognition is very suspect in the Indian community. It has been frequently observed that "individuals are integrated and interdependent with other individuals in the culture, and are not encouraged or expected to be totally independent agents. While individuality is allowed, and expected, it is always tailored to the larger ritual expectations of the group."[5] This situation produces problems for Indian students who are told to strive for grades and degrees in white schools. This conflict accounts in part for a high drop-out rate. Momaday examines this predicament of opposing values in House Made of Dawn.

Anyone who is acquainted with Indians is familiar with "Indian time," and that concept is the source for many jokes as well as frustrations. The fact is that the Western and Indian concepts of time are different.

The European sees things, time included, in linear sequential categories each separate and unique. The Indian sees things, time included, as a part of a cyclic, rhythmical system, each part of which is unalterably interrelated. The Indian sees that "there is a right time for human activitiy just as there is a right time for the seasons and all of nature, an appropriate time."[6] For the Indian, things are brought together rather than separated and he does not intend to force the process. While Westerners think of time as a sequence of units, Indians are surrounded by a sense of time as a duration where past, present and future fuse into an expanded present time-space concept.[7] Hence, the Indian concept of time is episodic and relative to incident; it is a storing up of power that affects later events. As Momaday has said, "One does not pass through time, but time enters upon him, in his place."[8] The frequently noted Indian passivity and patience, the "long outwaiting" is an aspect of their attitude that if they do not accomplish a goal in their lifetime, someone else will do so in his when the "time is right." Most Native American people do not understand their life as a sequence of goals, such as getting an education, securing a job, getting married, and raising a family at the end of which is a sense of completion; for them, such events happen in their own time. Every day is complete and the immediate present, not the future, is the Indian's concern.

Alfonso Ortiz has commented on the differences between the time schemes:

> There is no Indian language of which I am aware that has abstract terms for the notions of space and time. Space is only meaningful as the distance between two points. Time is only meaningful as the interval between events. . . . Again, the general American view seems to be that if it [time] is empty, it must be filled with activity, even if it is just busy work, or even if it becomes compulsive or neurotic. We

> seem to have lost--and I am afraid I include myself in this indictment--the ability to just be. This orientation, as you know, this attitude towards time has been one of the most enduring sources of misunderstanding between Indians and non-Indians in this country from the beginning. Even doctors have long believed that Indians are more impervious to pain, because Indian children just sit and look straight ahead when they are being vaccinated, or when they undergo other painful treatment. The question is, why jump up and down and scream about it? Sure it hurts, but yelling is not going to make it feel better. Indians recognize this, but those who would presume to understand Indians attribute it all too often to racial differences.[9]

Such cultural differences are obvious but, nevertheless, baffling in their implications. Time is merely one example. J. T. Fraser observed, "Tell me what you think of time, and I shall know what to think of you."[10] The philosophical implications are exclusive. Man's cultural or ethnic perceptions are self determining.

Frank Waters has noted that the "Indian is capable of letting himself sink into mindless torpor. He shows not only patience and the blind acceptance of conditions imposed upon him. He accepts it as a gestation period for a renewal of strength. It is a complete surrender of mind, soul, and body to the invisible forces."[11] What to others appears to be an incredible lack of motivation appears to the Indian as the only sensible approach to events or forces beyond his control. When things are "together," when the time is "right," it will happen. This attitude toward time gives it a different value for the Indian who is rarely "progress" oriented, a fact difficult for the non-Indian to comprehend.

Another significant difference is in the attitudes toward the land. The Indian, spiritual, intuitive, and passive, feels himself to be a part of the land which exerts a physical and psychological influence on him. Momaday explains his view of this important concept.

> The first of these relationships [which defines the Indian] is a perception of the landscape. From the time the Indian first set foot upon this continent, he has centered his life in the natural world. He is deeply invested in the earth, committed to it both in his consciousness and in his instinct. In him the sense of place is paramount. Only in reference to the earth can he persist in his true identity. In his view the earth is sacred, then, inasmuch as it is pervasive in its influence upon him and because it is informed with life. It is a living entity, in which living entities have origin and destiny. By means of his involvement in the natural world does the Indian insure his own well being.[12]

This is a reciprocal relationship in which the Indian cares for nature precisely as he is nourished by her. There is a mystical preoccupation with the land, a sense of oneness. The Indians' respect for the land is deep and intimate.

A nineteenth century Sioux, Luther Standing Bear, explains the traditional point of view:

> We [Indians] do not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth as 'wild'! Only to the white man was nature a 'wilderness' and only to him was the land 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were sourrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the East came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families we loved was it 'wild' for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the 'Wild West' began.[13]

It might be assumed that this attitude is more to be associated with the past than with the present, but that is inaccurate. Frank Waters, well-known authority on the Indians of the Southwest, affirms this continuing relationship, "When they first encountered the Trinity of the Christian church they noticed immediately what was missing - Mother Earth. They've been waiting for us to catch on."[14] Scientists have agreed, "symbiosis is the fundamental mechanism that makes the system viable. Without it,

the place [nature] could never work. . . . Every living form is engaged in feeding other living forms. There is a kind of mutual responsibility at work, holding all the parts together."[15] Waters also points out that Indians have always accepted what is now a growing, modern, scientific belief that nothing in nature is inanimate. Current atomic concepts have redefined the Western view of the animation of matter.[16]

American colonists first of all sought to conquer the land, to be its lord and master, to harness its powers to man's will. It was seen as an object, a tangible property to be owned, divided, and developed. But, Vine Deloria says:

> The tribal communal way of life, devoid of economic competition, views land as the most vital part of man's existence. It is THEIRS. It supports them, tells them where they live, and defines for them HOW they live. Land does not have that simple sentimentality of purple mountains majesty or the artificial coloring of slides taken by tourists. It is more than a passing fancy to be visited on a vacation and forgotten. Rather it provides a center of the universe for the group that lives on it. As such, the people who hold land in this way always have a home to go to. Their identity is secure. They live with it and do not abstract themselves from it and live off it.[17]

The Indian knows his environment and feels for it as few white men do.

> This native vision, this gift of seeing truly, with wonder and delight, into the natural world, is informed by a certain attitude of reverence and self-respect. It is a matter of extra-sensory as well as sensory perception, I believe. In addition to the eye, it involves the intelligence, the instinct, and the imagination. It is the perception not only of objects and forms but also of essences and ideals.[18]

Momaday thus further expands on this concept. This value for nature or the environment is simply one more conception in a comprehensive world view where each part is interrelated.

American Indians live in an elaborately symbolic universe where traditionally fixed associations have long been established; reality rests on the relationships between one human being and another, between each person and his environment, and between him and the supernatural world and even between life and death. Momaday regards this acceptance of relationships as the result of early childhood perceptions.

> There is a remarkable esthetic perception which marks the Indian world, a sense of beauty, of proportion and design. Perhaps this quality is most obvious in children, where it seems especially precocious.
>
> An Indian child, by virture of his whole experience, hereditary as well as environmental, sees the world according to this esthetic sense, I believe. His view is sure to be incisive and composed; he perceives an order in the objects of his sight, an arrangement that his native intelligence superimposes upon the world - as in astronomy we superimpose line drawings upon the stars. He sees with both his physical eye and the eye of his mind; he sees what is really there to be seen including the effect of his own observations upon the scene. It is the kind of vision that is developed in poets and painters and photographers, often over a span of many years.[19]

The Indians' sensitivity to nature's order and arrangement and to man's place in the overall scheme is basic to his world view.

As Barre Toelken has said in discussing differences in world views,

> To complicate matters further Western technological culture thinks of this as the <u>real</u> world, the one that can be seen and touched easily. To many Native Americans the world that is real is the one we reach through special religious means, the one we are taught to 'see' and experience via ritual and sacred patterning. Instead of demanding proof of the Otherworld, as the scientific mind does, many Native Americans are likely to counter by demanding proof that <u>this</u> one exists in any real way, since, by itself, it is not ritualized.[20]

John Lame Deer, a Sioux medicine man and author, agrees that the Indian world is "magic." "What to you seems commonplace to us appears wondrous

through symbolism. This is funny, because we don't even have a word for symbolism, yet we are all wrapped up in it. You have the word but that is all."[21] Most Indian tribes have no word for "religion" either, since such a philosophy or theology is not seen as something separate but as the normal attitude toward every aspect of daily life since they perceive spirits and deities to be ever present in human affairs. There is a mystical bond between the natural and the supernatural worlds for the Indian. Frank Waters has recognized the scepticism with which the Western world tends to evaluate such attitudes, and he has remarked:

> Mysticism is a negative word and I wish there were something we could use instead. But, I have found that it is impossible to understand the Indian view of life without accepting the validity of mysticism and its nonrational approach to life. . . . so-called mysticism is anathema to most of us excessively rational Americans. But if you know anything about Indians, you have to accept it as a natural part of Indian nature. They believe in the intangible as strongly as we believe in the tangible. I wish there was another name for it, but it's just a fact of existence you can't ignore.[22]

This difference in attitudes makes it difficult for many readers to evaluate with understanding American Indian literature.

In order to understand Momaday's prose, it is necessary to understand this Indian attitude as he perceives it.

> The second perception of himself which serves to define the Indian is religious in kind; it is essentially a sense of the sacred, and it is everywhere in his tradition. His most deliberate words and deeds revolve upon religions considerations. I have never known an Indian who had not a highly developed sense of the sacred and who did not understand clearly that his view of himself and the world was preeminently a religious view.
>
> The Indian exerts his spirit upon the world by means of religious activity, and he transcends himself in a sense; he expands his awareness to include all of creation. And in this he is restored as a man and as a race. Nothing in his universe is exclusive of him, but he is part of all that is and forever was and will be.[23]

Whether this is the reader's view of reality or not is totally irrelevant; it is Momaday's view, and the one from which he writes. The reader's sympathy or agreement may not be essential, but condescension is fatal to understanding.

Another of the most striking differences between Anglo-Indian world views is in the attitudes toward family. The modern Western concept is of a nuclear family: parents and children. The Indian concept of family is still of the extended family that includes not only grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, but also all clan members within the tribe. This sense of family is extremely important and provides a strong sense of belonging to a particular group and a strong sense of separation and isolation from others. American Indian culture is based on a warm, stable, cohesive social unit. The whole emphasis of child-rearing is to teach them a deep-rooted feeling of belonging. Alfonso Ortiz explained one Indian child-rearing philosophy:

> In the Pueblos where I grew up, there is very little need for parents to say 'Don't!' And there is very little need for children to ask, 'May I?' In every Pueblo language, these words are irrelevant. They have no point, because all Pueblo people have, to the best of my knowledge, the Indian belief that freedom is not theirs to give. There is also a striking passage in the writings of Standing Bear, a Sioux, to the effect that when he was eleven years old, recruiters came to his reservation from the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania. He decided to apply. He went by himself without telling anyone and without asking anyone. The recruiter, of course, would not accept his application because he didn't get permission from his parents. So they called his father, and his father said, 'Permission is not for me to give. He is an individual. If he wants to go, he can go.' It didn't matter that he was only eleven years old. This is the sort of thing I mean. In contemporary America, non-Indian America, these cherished notions such as freedom, responsibility, autonomy, seem to have encrusted through centuries of misuse.[24]

Indian child-rearing practices have received considerable scholarly attention.

The sense of community is the Indian basis for a meaningful life. Two Indians upon meeting for the first time will not ask the typical Western question, "What do you do?" but rather, "Who are your kin?" Mutual acceptance and regard is dependent upon the recognition of where one fits into the tribal relationships. Establishing relationships is necessary for Indians. It is traditional to walk away if one is not heard or accepted in any group. Black Elk, a holy man of the Oglala Sioux, explains:

> The sacredness of relationship is one of the most important aspects of Siouan culture; for since the whole of creation is essentially One, all parts within the whole are related. Thus the Sioux refer to each other not by their particular names, but by a term expressing their relationship; which is determined by age levels rather than by blood ties. A young man thus always addresses an older man or woman as 'Ate' (Father), or 'Ina' (Mother), or if they are much older by: 'Tunkashila' (Grandfather), or 'Unchi' (Grandmother); and in turn the older address the younger as 'Son' or 'Daughter,' 'Grandson' or 'Granddaughter.'[25]

There is no question of blood relationships, but rather of an age relationship and a caring based on a different perspective.

Vine Deloria, Jr., in discussing the importance of the tribe to the individual, points out that many tribes hold their lands and assets in common and that being a tribal member is the equivalent of membership in a cooperative.[26] In We Talk, You Listen, Deloria describes a situation all too familiar to those involved in the Indian Relocation Program:

> Tribal society is of such a nature that one must experience it from the inside. It is holistic, and logical analysis will only return you to your starting premise none the wiser for the trip. Being inside a tribal universe is so comfortable

> and reasonable that it acts like a narcotic. When you are forced outside the tribal context you become alienated, irritable, and lonely. In desperation you long to return to the tribe if only to preserve your sanity.[27]

In spite of often severely impoverished conditions, the modern Indian prefers life on the reservation or among his own tribe to the often lonely though economically more attractive life of the city.

Tribal life centers in common blood, a shared heritage, a communal place, a mutual past and present. "It is indeed true that the Navajo home life, in the immediate family, is extremely warm and supportive. There, relationships are at their most informal and deep interactions are expressed with an emotional power that would surprise most outsiders."[28] The Indian values of sharing and reciprocity extend beyond the immediate family to the extended family, the clan, and the tribe. Control of individual behavior rests in the tribe not in any single authority or group. Discipline is exercised through group rejection and shaming and not through physical punishment. The most severe penalty for unacceptable actions is expulsion from the group or tribe or being pointedly ignored by family and friends. Social control is perhaps too fluid, informal, and vague to be readily understood by others. The sense of security generated by belonging to and being accepted by the group is all important for the individual. For the Indian, to be "poor" is to be without family.

Perhaps because of Momaday's education and training in literature and his awareness of the significance of language as an aspect of both the oral and print traditions, he is especially sensitive to its use. However, the average Indian also has a view of language that is different from that of the average Westerner. It will be useful here to

examine the Indian attitude toward language to become aware of those differences.

The American Indian attitude toward language is frequently noted and almost as often misunderstood. The mute, staid, uncommunicative red-man who is solemn-faced and silent is judged as one who lacks oral skills and thus is ignorant or stupid. But, oratory was a skill practiced in all Indian tribes, and because of the Indian value of autonomy was the means of persuasion most frequently used. Consensus was reached only after every adult was given an opportunity to express himself before the councils. Thus, oral skills were practiced and highly developed. An examination of some of the current collection of Indian orations reveals an often remarkable eloquence.[29] Since Indian silence is not the result of a lack of skill in oral communication, it must be interpreted as a deliberate behavior based on a different attitude toward language. This attitude holds both the spoken word and silence in a special regard.

Numerous anthropologists and psychologists have discussed the significance of language to specific groups and to man in general. Many pages of Freud's writings are concerned with the theory of language and communication and their relationships to man's unconscious. Benjamin Lee Whorf, as a result of studying the Hopi language and culture, hypothesized that if one does not have a word for an object he will not see it; that is, one cannot describe what he cannot identify.[30] Levi-Strauss observed and discussed the culture and language of South American Indians. His particular concern has been to devise a logical method for the analysis of myth, and he made use of a linguistic approach to the structure of language for this purpose.[31] Franz Boas, who also studied American Indian languages, concluded that rather than being examples of

mere primitive thought, they were exemplifications of different patterns of thinking. He suggested that Indians organize physical and conceptual matter in different categories than those of Western culture, and therefore their languages should be evaluated by other than Western standards.[32] Boas expressed a sympathy for those different ways of relating to the world and suggested that the Western world might profit from discovering relationships with nature that had been forgotten or displayed by an emphasis on scientific experimentation.[33]

The research and resulting theories of the function of language of these and many other scholars provide broad considerations for those interested in language; while interesting, they are only incidental to this study.[34] This dissertation stresses not a scientific analysis of language, nor a theoretical postulate for its use, but rather, the value of the spoken word as regarded by the American Indian. It is a subjective, attitudinal consideration that influences their behaviors and is a matter which influences both the style and content of Momaday's works. We will here examine the use of language from the Indian point of view.

The Indian concept of language is that it is power. This is a frequent consideration for Momaday who values the Indian attitude toward language.

> Perhaps this quality of abstraction, this understanding of order and spatial relationships, proportion and design, is most fully realized in language. The oral tradition of the Indian, even more than his plastic arts, is vast and various. His stories and songs, his legends and lore and prayers, are exceptionally rich and imaginative. They reflect an understanding of, and belief in, the power and beauty of language that is very nearly lost upon us who have, by and large, only the experience of a written tradition.[35]

This sense of the potency of the oral tradition is an important quality in shaping Momaday's prose.

The Indian is rarely good at social small-talk, since he seldom speaks unless he has something meaningful to say. He interprets casual conversation as an abuse of the power of words to direct and shape reality. For the Indian, silence is meaningful and a reservoir of strength; he believes that only the right word can improve upon silence. This mystical, almost "magical" use of language is an effort to bring about change in himself, in his relationships with others, or in nature. He believes that he is responsible for the deliberate thoughts which precede the words and considerable care is taken in his word choices because of their potency. The Indian does not use words carelessly. N. Scott Momaday devotes a large part of Chapter Two in House Made of Dawn to a consideration of the differences between the Indian and Western concepts of language. That material will be examined in detail in Chapter VI of this dissertation, "The Magic Word."

Since most Indians historically were not literate, their oral tradition assumes an important position. Great emphasis was placed on the observation of details since it was often necessary to remember events, times, and places accurately. Various mnemonic devices such as wampum belts were employed to aid the memory, but, because of their belief in the power of the word, great care was taken to memorize songs or myths exactly; misstatement would destroy the effectiveness of the power.[36]

Momaday is extremely conscious of the power of language; it is a frequent subject in his lectures and in his works.[37] He admires and uses techniques of oral traditions, especially in The Way to Rainy Mountain. He recognizes their importance, "From the time I was a small child I have

heard stories from Kiowa tradition, and now so have my children, for I have seen to it. The stories are wonderful, engaging the imagination closely. They have a vitality that is peculiar to the spoken word; it does not exist in writing or it does not exist to the same degree."[38] It is because of Momaday's mythic ordering of materials and his use of symbols to convey reality that The Way to Rainy Mountain defies logical explication. As Carl Jung has insisted, myth is "a reality in its own right, a psychic reality - no less real than physical reality."[39] However, the logical, scientific, technologically trained individual may have difficulty in understanding the mythopoeic vision. Paula Gunn Allen accurately observed, "Myth acts as a lens through which we can discover the reality that exists beyond the limits of simple linear perception; it is an Image, a verbal construct, which allows truth to emerge into direct consciousness."[40] Momaday's narratives reveal a particular regard for the oral traditions and a value in the metaphysical experience which transcends the ordinary consciousness.

Indian literature does not exist merely as a means of self expression. Momaday comments about the central myth in The Way to Rainy Mountain, "The Tai-Me myth is not entertainment but emotional reaction to the elemental experience of being alive."[41] The use of myth to reveal a reality that exists beyond a simple linear perception is a means employed by many cultures. It is one especially useful for the American Indian.

Such basic attitudes as those described are exceedingly slow to change particularly when the tribes have not observed a more meaningful replacement. As D'Arcy McNickle, a Flathead Indian, said, "While Indians have changed their dress, their economies, their housing, their speech, even somewhat their ritual life, still they are Indians."[42] Apparently

many traditional Indian attitudes and religious beliefs are alive and well in the twentieth century. This is a belief that Momaday personally accepts and shares with his readers.

This brief general description of world views will be of some assistance to the reader of Indian literature; since we are here concerned with particular differences, it is necessary to be especially aware of Momaday's perception of the Indian world view:

> I believe that the American Indian is possessed of a vision that is unique, a perception of the human condition that distinguishes him as a man and as a race. I have tried to suggest some aspects of this perception which seem to me definitive. In terms of these considerations - the sense of place, of the sacred, of the beautiful, of humanity - the Indian has had and continues to have a singular and vital role in the story of man on this planet. There, at the center, he stands in good relation to all points in the wide circle of the world.[43]

It is from his understanding and acceptance of the Indian value system and world view, the Indian lens, that Momaday writes. An understanding of the Indian world view as accepted by Momaday is a valuable tool that can be used to discover why he is saying what he is saying in the three major works to be discussed.

ENDNOTES

[1]"I Am Alive," p. 14.

[2]Lewis Thomas, professor of pathology and medicine at Cornell University Medical College, has clearly voiced the culture conflict in "The Strangeness of Nature," Human Nature, 1, No. 10 (October 1978).

> The Westerners' attachments to materialism and to the intellect, and to its blindness or indifference to the reality of non-ordinary reality should not predispose us to negate those values. The Indian may conversely equate reality with the non-material and dismiss the physical world as illusion. Both world views are limiting. The conscious is real, so is the physical nervous system which provides unconscious data. Both are necessary and important and the ideal is a balance rather than an exclusion.

[3]"I Am Alive," p. 26.

[4]Barre Toelken, "The Demands of Harmony," Parabola, 2, Issue 4 (1977), p. 79.

[5]Toelken, "The Demands of Harmony," p. 81.

[6]Momaday, "A Prayer for Peace," Christmas Heritage, Television broadcast, Sunday, 24 December 1978, 7:00 p.m., OETA, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

[7]"Four Types of Personality and Four Ways of Perceiving Time," Psychology Today, December 1972, p. 76. This article discusses four ways of thinking about time and the kinds of personalities which conceive of time in each of these ways. It classifies the Indian in a "feeling type" group and says, "For the feeling type, time is circular; the emotional past is all important . . . time past becomes time present, and thus immediately returns to the past as memory." Barre Toelken has explained the Indian concept of time as similar to the Europoean concept of space. The Indian does not see time as a pathway along which one moves but a context in which things come to pass. (The Dynamics of Folklore, p. 236.)

[8]The Names, p. 57.

[9]Alfonso Ortiz, "American Indian Philosophy and its Relation to the Modern World," Indian Voices (San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1970), p. 19.

[10]Cited by Harriet Mann, Miriam Siegler and Humphrey Osmond, "Four Types of Personalities and Four Ways of Perceiving Time," Psychology Today, December 1972, p. 76.

[11]Frank Waters, Masked Gods (New York: Ballantine Books, 1950), p. 233.

[12]"I Am Alive," p. 14.

[13]Luther Standing Bear, My People the Sioux, E. A. Brininstool, ed. (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 38.

[14]John A. Milton, ed., Conversations with Frank Waters (Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1971), p. 47.

[15]Lewis Thomas, "The Strangeness of Nature," Human Nature, 1, No. 10 (1978), p. 61.

[16]Modern scientific discoveries have reduced matter to smaller and smaller units--from molecules to atoms to electrons and protons. It is currently hypothesized that physical matter does not exist but is simply a tension between polarities of energy. This is similar to the Indian concept of animate matter imbued with life and energy.

[17]Vine Deloria, Jr., We Talk You Listen (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970), p. 175.

[18]Momaday, "A Vision Beyond Time and Place," Life, 2 July 1971, p. 67.

[19]"I Am Alive," p. 25.

[20]Barre Toelken, "How Many Sheep Will It Hold?" Seeing With a Native Eye (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 24.

[21]John Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, Lame Deer Seeker of Visions (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 24.

[22]Frank Waters, Conversations With Frank Waters, John R. Milton, ed. (Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1971), p. 16.

[23]"I Am Alive," p. 23.

[24]Indian Voices (San Francisco: Indian Historian Press, 1970), p. 12. For first-hand accounts of Indian childrearing practices see Charles Eastman, Indian Boyhood (reprint N. Y.: Dover Publications, 1971); John G. Neihardt, ed., Black Elk Speaks (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1961); Frank B. Linderman, ed., Plenty Coups (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1962); Luther Standing Bear, My People the Sioux, reprint (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1975); numerous general discussions provide insights into Indian children's socialization. Some of these are Alvin Josephy, Jr., The Indian Heritage of America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); Ruth M. Underhill, Red Man's America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1965); George Catlin, North American Indians, Vol. 1 and 2, reprint (New York: Dover Publications, 1973); George Bird Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, Vol. 2, reprint (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1972); Alice G. Fletcher and Francis LaFlesche, The Omaha Tribe, Vols. 1 and 2, reprint (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1972); Harold E.

Driver, Indians of North America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961); scholarly articles have explored particular aspects in depth. For example, Harold E. Driver, "Girls' Puberty Rites and Matrilocal Residence," American Anthropologist, 71 (1969), 905-8; Inez M. Hilger, Chippeway Child Life and Its Cultural Background, Bulletin 146, Washington, D.C., Bureau of Indian Ethnology; Irma Honigmann and John Honigmann, "Child Rearing Patterns Among the Great Whale River Eskimo," Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska, 2 (1946), 31-50; Alice Schlegel, "The Socialization of the Hopi Girl," Ethnology 12 (1973), 449-62, among many others. Nina and Daniel Freedman have made a comparative study in a San Francisco hospital of 24 Chinese and 24 Caucasian infants and found that "Caucasian babies cried more easily, and once started were harder to control." Later they tested 36 Navajo newborn babies and "the results paralleled the stereotype of the stoical, impassive American Indian. These babies outdid the Chinese, showing even more calmness and adaptability than we found among Oriental babies." (Ethnic Differences in Babies, Human Nature, January 1979, p. 39.) This study supports the concept of biological differences which account in part for ethnic differences in perceptions and responses and reopens questions of whether these attitudes and behaviors are learned or inherent.

[25]The Sacred Pipe, Joseph E. Brown, ed. (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p. 15.

[26]We Talk You Listen (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970), p. 94.

[27]We Talk You Listen , p. 95.

[28]Barre Toelken, "The Demands of Harmony," p. 77.

[29]See I Have Spoken, Virginia Irving Armstrong, Comp. (Swallow Press, Inc., 1971) and Indian Oratory, W. C. Vanderwerth, Comp. (Univ. of Okla. Press, 1971) for specific details.

[30]Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf, John B. Carroll, ed. (Cambridge, Mass,: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1970).

[31]Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," Journal of American Folklore, 68, No. 270 (1955), p. 428.

[32]It has been determined by a UCLA research team using brainwave analysis that Indian children use the right hemisphere when speaking and hearing their native language [Hopi] and the left hemisphere for English. They concluded that this scientific data supports the concept that perceptions may be determined by languages and may differ significantly. "The point here is that each culture has a distinctive way of thinking that it passes on to its young." (B. Toelken, "Folklore and Cultural World View," The Dynamics of Folklore, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1979, p. 226.) Dorothy Lee ("Codifications of Reality: Lineal and Non-Lineal," Alan Dundes, Every Man His Way, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968, p. 329) has pointed out that these perceptive codes are so deeply represented in language that they become the only way people

of that culture can understand anything. Edward T. Hall (The Hidden Dimension, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969, p. 37) points out that "significant evidence that people brought up in different cultures live in different perceptual worlds is to be found in their manner of orienting themselves in space, how they get around and move from one place to the next." Robert E. Ornstein (The Psychology of Consciousness, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977, p. 39) noted, "What is new now is a recognition that these modes [of consciousness] operate biologically as well as mentally and culturally." The right brain hemisphere which according to several studies appears to be used predominately by Indians has attributes of tacit, timelessness, Gestalt, non-lineal diffuse, intuitive and spatial concepts. It is more holistic and relational, and more simultaneous in its mode of operation" (Ornstein, p. 21). The left hemisphere is more analytic and sequential in its operation. This scientific evidence may make it easier for some to accept the cultural differences which have long been evident to anthropologists and field workers among the Indians.

[33]Franz Boas, The Mind of Primitive Man, Revised ed. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1938).

[34]See Peter C. Rollins, "The Whorf Hypothesis as a Critique of Western Technology," American Quarterly, 24, No. 4 (December 1972), pp. 563-83, for an informative discussion on cultural concepts.

[35]"I Am Alive," p. 26.

[36]Scholarly interest in the religions, myths, and languages of American Indians was begun in the late nineteenth century. Prominent American anthropologists such as Franz Boas (1858-1942) and Paul Radin (1883-1959) stimulated interest in the study and contributed valuable research. See especially Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought and Reality (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1956); Edward Sapir, Selected Writings of Edward Sapir on Language Culture and Personality, Mandelbaum, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Franz Boas, The Mind of Primitive Man (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1938, reprint); Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); and The Raw and the Cooked (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), From Honey to Ashes (New York: Harper and Row, 1973) John and Doreen Weightman, trans.; Bronislow Malinowski, "Myth in Primitive Psychology," Magic Science and Religion (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954); Paul Radin, The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology (London: Routledge and Paul, 1956); Franz Boas, Kwakuitl Tales (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910); and James Mooney, Myths of the Cherokees (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970).

[37]See "The Man Made of Words," and the story of "The Arrowmaker," which he says is about language, for example.

[38]"To the Singing to the Drums," Natural History, 84, No. 2 (Fall 1975), 41.

[39]Carl Jung, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, R. F. C. Hull, trans., Vol. 9, Part I (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959).

[40]Paula Gunn Allen, "The Mythopaeic Visions in Native American Literature," American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 1, No. 1 (1974), 11.

[41]N. Scott Momaday, "The American Indian in the Conflict of Tribalism and Modern Society," Lecture (now on tape), Student Center, 13 January 1971, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colorado.

[42]D'Arcy McNickle, "The Clash of Cultures," The World of the American Indian, M. B. Grosvenor, ed. et al. (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1974), p. 352.

[43]"I Am Alive," p. 26.

CHAPTER IV

AN ANGLE OF VISION

The point of view or angle of vision is the position or vantage point from which something is considered. It is an author's first consideration since it determines the total effect. Since the point of view determines the amount and kind of information given to the reader, it is important in deciding relationships within the work and the narrator's credibility as a witness and participant. The whole intricate question of method in the craft of fiction is a question of the point of view. What is significant is the relation in which the narrator stands to the story. He tells it as he sees it. The reader understands precisely as much or as little as the author chooses to share from his vantage point. The author selects the style that best expresses his theme and provides the desired tone.

N. Scott Momaday in his three prose books uses a variety of points of view to achieve his several purposes. Through them he evokes sympathetic understanding, reveals hidden meanings, intensifies experiences, and informs the reader of both the Kiowa exterior and interior worlds. An examination of the diversity of Momaday's perspectives will make evident the skill he has used in his choices; his emphasis is always on the angle of vision.

In Momaday's second book, The Way to Rainy Mountain, he predominately uses a third person point of view, but also includes a number of

first person accounts. He combines accounts of the ancient myths from Kiowa oral tradition with historic tribal events and personal accounts from his own past. It is that identification with the Kiowa roots that Momaday seeks both as an author and as a person. He has remarked that myths can be valuable sources of insight and he uses them to provide a beginning for each of his accounts. Myths personify aspects of the personality that lead to identification and Momaday incorporates them to tie himself and his readers to the Kiowa point of view.

The American Indian point of view, which is basically an Oriental one, seeks an inner perfection of being rather than simply a physically comfortable one. In this Momaday concurs. He uses The Way to Rainy Mountain to shape and hone these attitudes through an assimilation of Kiowa beliefs and practices. For, although the point of view shifts from the third person to the first person and back again, it is always the Indian's and Momaday's perspective that is being expressed. N. Scott Momaday is a modern, university-trained and employed educator; he is cognizant of the scientific tradition and at home in a technological society. But, he is first and formeost a Kiowa Indian whose values include a respect for the past and an almost religious regard for Kiowa traditions. He conveys this respect and admiration through the use of varying points of view in The Way to Rainy Mountain; they become fused into one: Momaday's.

In its accounts of tribal history, The Way to Rainy Mountain starts at the beginning of both the tribal and Momaday's personal creation. Momaday recounts the origin of the tribe.

> You know, everything had to begin, and this is how it was: the Kiowas came one by one into the world through a hollow log. They were many more than now, but not all of them got out.

> There was a woman whose body was swollen up with child, and she got stuck in the log. After that, no one could get through, and that is why the Kiowas are a small tribe in number. They looked all around and saw the world. It made them glad to see so many things. They called themselves Kwuda, 'coming out'.[1]

Here Momaday uses the third person point of view to give a simple account of the tribe's mythic origins. He maintains that voice and objectivity to next provide a brief historic account, he then ties it through the meaning of the tribal name to the origin of myth.

> They called themselves Kwuda and later Tepda, both of which mean 'coming out.' And later still they took the name Gaigwa, a name which can be taken to indicate something of which the two halves differ from each other in appearance. It was once a custom among Kiowa warriors that they cut their hair on the right side of the head only and on a line level with the lobe of the ear, while on the left they let the hair grow long and wore it in a thick braid wrapped in otter skin. 'Kiowa' is thought to derive from the softened Comanche form of Gaigwu.[2]

The historic account joined with the mythic one are both explained matter-of-factly. The further significance of names as determinants of being is emphasized in his book by that title: The Names.

Momaday then shifts to first person to tell of his first impressions on his journey from Montana to Oklahoma over the route traveled many years before by the Kiowa tribe in their migration south. Again, he uses the stylistic device of the repetition of the phrase "coming out" to tie together the three accounts. "I remember coming out upon the northern Great Plains in the late spring."[3] He emerged into a different world as did the mythic Kiowas in their "coming out." Momaday further identifies with the myth through the idea that, "they looked all around and saw the world. It made them glad to see so many things,"[4] and his personal experience, "Yes, I thought, now I see the earth as it really is; never again will I see things as I saw them yesterday or the day before."[5]

The same sense of wonder and awe was experienced by both Momaday and the tribe. This point of view establishes Kiowa continuity of beliefs and behaviors by an acceptance of a similar recognition of values. Momaday spontaneously perceived the "coming out" experience and recognized the tribal response of awe for the birth-like experience.

Although the juxtapositioning of the mythic, historic, and personal accounts is regularized throughout the book, the alternating third and first person accounts is not a consistent pattern. Momaday selects the voice most appropriate to the particular account. In Section Three of "The Setting Out," Momaday uses a dog motif to associate the three sketches; he uses the third person point of view for the first two accounts then personalizes the Third Section.

> Before there were horses the Kiowas had need of dogs. That was a long time ago, when dogs could talk . . . The principal warrior society of the Kiowas was the Ka-itsenko, 'Real Dogs,' and it was made up of ten men only, the ten most brave . . . There were always dogs about my grandmother's house. Some of them were nameless and lived a life of their own. They belonged there in a sense that the word 'ownership' does not include.[6]

The importance of this animal to the Kiowa culture is described as a continuing relationship through the references in each of the three modes. The use of third person provides a perspective which makes the reader aware that there is a literal account to be read objectively. It is a statement of fact that dogs have always been important to the tribe. The shift to first person emphasizes the continuing relationship.

At other times, Momaday again alternates the voice. He tells of the mythic origin of the sacred Tai-Me medicine doll. "The thing standing before him had the feet of a deer, and its body was covered with feathers. The man answered that the Kiowas were hungry. 'Take me with you,' the

voice said, 'and I will give you whatever you want.' From that day Tai-Me has belonged to the Kiowas."[7] Momaday then presents an outsider's point of view about the fetish:

> This is a small image, less than two feet in length, representing a human figure dressed in a robe of white feathers, with a headdress consisting of a single upright feather and pendants of ermine skin, with numerous strands of blue beads around its neck, and painted upon the face, and back with designs symbolic of the sun and moon. The image itself is of dark-green stone, in form rudely resembling a human head.[8]

This is an 1888 account by James Mooney which Momaday includes to establish validity. Momaday then gives a first person account of an experience with the medicine bundle containing the image.

> Once I went with my father and grandmother to see the Tai-me bundle. It was suspended by means of a strip of ticking from the bark of a small ceremonial tree. I made an offering of bright red cloth, and my grandmother prayed aloud. It seemed a long time that we were there. I had never come into the presence of Tai-me before--nor have I since. There was a great holiness all about in the room, as if an old person had died there or a child had been born.[9]

This shifting point of view has the effect of providing a sacred tone for the mythic origin of the existence and use of the Tai-me. It then establishes through the objective voice of an anthropologist that such an object actually did exist and was used in sacred ceremonies. Finally, the reader is made to feel that it continues to exist and that the Tai-me is simply the material configuration of an idea or belief and its symbolic ritual use is still a sacred and holy one.

Momaday talks about the tribe and its intimate relationship to the violence of storms. He uses the third person to relate the Kiowa myth which explains tornadic storms.

> Even now, when they see the storm clouds gathering, the Kiowas know what it is: that a strange wild animal roams on the sky. It has the head of a horse and the tail of a great fish. Lightning comes from its mouth, and the tail, whipping and thrashing on the air, makes the high, hot wind of the tornado. But they speak to it, saying 'Pass over me.' They are not afraid of Man-ka-ih, for it understands their language.[10]

The Kiowas were and are exposed to numerous examples of such violence on the plains of Oklahoma and Momaday gives a third person account of those storms to generalize the myth as a tribal concept and to illustrate a mutual respect and understanding. Momaday moves by the use of first person to an even more direct experience in the next paragraph when he describes a storm cellar in his grandmother's back yard. "I have seen the wind drive the rain so hard that a grown man could not open the door against it, and once, descending into that place, I saw the whole land at night become visible and blue and phosphorescent in the flash of lightning."[11] Once again he uses a shifting perspective to provide first a general tribal philosophy or belief through the use of the third person, then a narrowing concept through the use of first person to state his point of view. It is an identifying device used to bind himself to the past and to demonstrate this acceptance and embrace of traditional philosophies expressed through the oral tradition. It is an effective means that illustrates the continuity of tribal attitudes through the flow of time and serves to make him, as a representative Kiowa, a vital part of tribal history.

In The Names the point of view provides the reader with several perspectives in immediate sequence, but there is, nevertheless, an autobiographical unity. While the narrator sometimes uses an objective and sometimes a subjective point of view, the reader recognizes the thought, memories, and philosophies as being Momaday's. He begins the book by

explaining the significance of names, and how the Indian names hold a particular fascination for him in their rhythmical sounds and unique meanings. He sets apart the names of his Scots ancestors by printing the paragraph concerning them in italics and briefly defining the perimeters of their experience, "blooded horses and tobacco and corn whiskey,"[12] a world of materials things. The tone is matter-of-fact and descriptive. But the world of his Indian ancestors, he suggests, is closely attuned to natural events. He changes the type to emphasize the difference but retains the perspective. He sets a warm tone by picturing in impressionistic terms the landscape at Rainy Mountain at the end of summer:

> The light there is of a certain kind. In the mornings and evenings it is soft and pervasive, and the earth seems to absorb it, to become enlarged with light. About the noons there are edges and angles - and a brightness that is hard and thin like a glaze. There is something strange and powerful in it. . . . At times the air is thick and languid, and you imagine that the world has grown very old and tired. At other times the air is full of motion and commotion. Always a hard weather impends upon the plains.[13]

He then shifts to a personal point of view and describes the psychic effects of the violent summer storms so typical of that area: "But at times as I look back I see the fear in my mother's face, a hard vigilance in the attitude of her whole body, for hail is beating down upon the door, and the roar of the wind is deafening; the earth and sky are at odds, and God shudders."[14] He fondly recalls his first environment at his grandparents' home:

> What I shall come to know as time is now an imperceptible succession of colors, of dawns and dusks, mornings and afternoons, a concentration of days into one day, or it is simply the inside of eternity, the hollow of a great wing. These are the

> things I know: the slow, summer motion of the air, the shadows that gather upon the walls, birds criss-crossing at the screen, the rhythms within me.[15]

He shifts the voice to provide an accurate description of place and his role in this intimate memory.

The Names is told in fragments precisely as the human mind responds. Momday begins with an idea--the significance of names--which suggests to him his grandparents and their home--which recalls his mother as a young bride in that home. This chain of thoughts causes him to consider her background and ancestors and Chapter 3 is devoted to a telling of what he knows of them. As he says, "Some of my mother's memories have become my own. This is the real burden of the blood; this is immortality."[16] Those ancestors' influences are felt only through his mother's accounts and a remembrance of brief visits he made to some of their ancestral graves. He devotes a brief 18 pages of the book to this maternal birthright. The remaining 150 pages tell of what he remembers of his own childhood and the influences of his Kiowa heritage. The tones are different in each. The third person account of matrilineal influences is objectively stated; the first person narrative of the remainder is consciously intimate.

The Names is divided into four major chapters, each of which is subdivided into several smaller units. The point of view in Section One is historical; it has to do primarily with things that Momaday has been told about his ancestors. It is a kind of foundation upon which he builds his life and his story. In the later chapters he shifts to a first person perspective as he retells the events of his formative years.

One notable exception is in Chapter 2, Unit 2, where he tells of a time when he was visiting his Kiowa grandmothers, Aho, and his beloved,

alcoholic, uncle James. This portion is told from an external point of view as though it is the uncle observing and telling of the situation: "James thought of the boy, his nephew. It was his concession to the boy that he had seen him through the day, had led him around the empty spaces of time in the morning and afternoon, especially the late afternoon, when the shadows stood still."[17] Here Momaday does not say, "I" but refers to himself as "the boy."

> The boy, whose first home this was, was homesick. He suffered intensely, knowing that his grandmother and his uncle were watching him. They did not want him to cry. He thought it over; he wanted to cry. A loneliness had grown up in him, and he could no longer keep it all to himself. But at the same time he was ashamed to cry, and so he cried in spite of himself, blinking the tears hard from his eyes, giving no more voice to his crying than he could help.[18]

This is an interesting shift in point of view which provides a glimpse of the small boy as others might see him.

Momaday moves to first person in that same unit without comment. He recalls the way he played, the kinds of imaginative characters and situations he invented. He arranges this portion using a stream of consciousness technique without pause or punctuation. The reader feels that he intimately knows the small boy:

> Well anyway I have this gun this real-looking gun black and brown smooth and hard a carbine tomorrow I will shoot an Indian down by the creek he will see me but I will see him first and I will wait until he sees me it has to be that way of course he is surprised his eyes are big and his mouth is open and he is <u>ugly</u> of course he has a knife it is a great big knife and it gleams and flashes in the sunlight it was stolen of course oh I know that good knife it was stolen from my Grandfather one night when he left it outside by the arbor where he liked to cut meat he talked about it of course he meant to give it to my father and my father meant to give it to me it is really my knife the ugly Indian sees me and I am looking right at him and I have been looking right at him for

> a long long time he recognizes me of course it has to be that way he has been afraid of me all these years running and hiding from me and now it has come to this. . . .[19]

This is an imaginative internal dialogue which others could not observe as they did the crying episode. Momaday shares this childhood world with his readers by using a first person account.

Another portion of this unit is given over to James' account of the day. He describes how he had taken care of the boy until his bedtime and had then struggled with the need to become drunk, had surrendered to that necessity, and, later, walked home in the moonlight. Here the narrator becomes omniscient and we share James' thoughts and frustrations. The narrator does not comment; he merely portrays James' adversity with understanding and compassion.

Much of The Names is written using an interior monologue technique. This accurately conveys the way the young boy thinks and the way the adult, N. Scott Momaday, remembers. The free association of ideas and events provides a credibility and understanding of the boy's world and of his physical and emotional development. Other portions are told from a less subjective perspective. These sections tend to be a more sequential account of where he lived and with whom, and of general descriptions of his environments. The various points of view provide an added dimension to the reader's understanding of the description of N. Scott Momaday's maturation.

The shifting points of view that Momaday uses in his works are central to a consideration of them. He speaks most often in the first person in The Names since it is primarily autobiographical. However, in The Way to Rainy Mountain, Momaday tells the tribal myths and gives the historical accounts in a storyteller's third person account; for the

autobiographical portions he, of course, uses his own voice and perspective. But, it is in his novel, House Made of Dawn, that he employs a greater intermingling of points of view and we are shown the main character, Abel, from several perspectives. In addition, we are given several views of Indians in typical, current situations, and the resulting problems.

A separate section of House Made of Dawn is given to each of four viewpoints, and each is titled by the name of the narrator or focus from which Abel's story is told. One point of view is that of the Longhair, Abel's grandfather Francisco; another is that of Tosamah, Abel's acquaintance in Los Angeles; a third is that of Ben Benally, his friend in Los Angeles; and a final short section is both Francisco's and Abel's own. The third person accounts are rarely omniscient, and we seldom know what Abel's reactions are except through his behavior. His evaluation of various incidents in his life is unknown; we are aware of his thoughts only when he is remembering events from his past. For example, the reader is told very little about Abel's childhood. All that is known are the fragments Abel recalls when he is recovering from an extended period of excessive drinking. If he had friends, if he attended school, if he participated in tribal ceremonials, the reader can only speculate. The impression is that he was lonely and isolated as a child, but whether from choice or necessity is uncertain. Certainly, Indians of mixed blood are less socially acceptable in most Indian communities than are full-bloods. But, Momaday suggests rather than details.

Momaday uses point of view to tell us what he thinks is important about Abel's story. What is important are not the incidents of his life, his war experiences, his prison term, his inability to hold a job in

Los Angeles, but rather, his inescapable roots, his traditions, his Indian world view. It is not what happens to Abel that is significant, but his attitude toward it. That is Momaday's angle of vision. A careful examination of the four divisions of House Made of Dawn will reveal Momaday's use of this shifting point of view, the attitudes of each of the narrators and their perceptions of the protagonist Abel. Attention will be given to the variations in Momaday's style which serve to reveal the character and attitude of each of the narrators since they serve to expose one aspect of Abel's conflict.

The first section of House Made of Dawn is called "The Longhair." This is the longest section of the novel. It is the most significant because it provides the foundation not only for the plot but for the world view which has shaped Abel and to which he must return for nourishment and even survival. It is subtitled "Walatowa, Canon de San Diego, 1945."[20] The reader is left to determine where that is. It is in New Mexico. Scattered clues reveal that the locale is the Jemez pueblo, the home of Momaday's youth.[21] Each chapter is dated with the month and day which are almost the only references to time. Momaday sets the tone for this section with a rhythmical, lyrical style appropriate to the oral tradition. This is the foundation, the beginning, the roots of Abel. It is told from his grandfather's point of view; he is the Longhair, the traditionalist.

Francisco's close observation and appreciation of nature are evident in the first paragraph:

> The river lies in a valley of hills and fields. The north end of the valley is narrow, and the river runs down from the mountains through a canyon. The sun strikes the canyon floor only a few hours each day, and in winter the snow remains for a long time in the crevices of the walls. . . . Now and then in

> winter, great angles of geese fly through the valley, and then the sky and the geese are the same color and the air is hard and damp and smoke rises from the houses of the town. The seasons lie hard upon the land. In summer the valley is hot, and birds come to the tamarack on the river.[22]

The old man, Francisco, lives close to the land; he is a part of it; the rhythm of the seasons regulate his life.

> The townsmen work all summer in the fields. When the moon is full they work at night with ancient, handmade plows and hoes, and if the weather is good and the water plentiful they take a good harvest from the fields. . . . The harvest, like the deer in the mountains, is the gift of God.[23]

Francisco's concepts are simple, his faith complete. There are no doubts or questions, no splits in his personality. He knows who he is and where he belongs.

When Abel slays the albino, for the first time in his life, Francisco stays away from the tribal dances and goes to the fields to hoe. His sense of isolation is complete. In an attempt to embrace the memory of Abel, he whispers Abel's full name, "Abelito" as he did when he awaited his return from the war. It is a supplication, and at the same time a recognition of the inevitable. The first section begins and ends with Francisco. In the beginning, on his way to bring Abel home, Francisco had stopped to examine and to set his bird trap which he used to obtain feathers for his prayer sticks. He looks again for the reed trap at the close of this section only to find it sprung. It is a symbol for his emptiness. Francisco has come full circle from being alone to again being alone. This cyclic time encloses Momaday's presentation of the traditional culture, that of the "Longhair." It is Francisco's world view that Momaday allows us to see.

Tosamah presents the second point of view; he is called "The Priest of the Sun" and that is the title of the second section. This is a totally different perspective. Tosamah illustrates a type of Indian common in many urban areas today: Tosamah is a relocated Indian who lives in Los Angeles. He lives on the first floor above the church which he calls "Holiness Pan-Indian Rescue Mission." He preaches there on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings a curious medley of religious dogmas. The church is a dark, cold, ill-equipped blend of white and Indian concepts; it is the worst of both worlds. It is a symbol for Tosamah.

The reader is made subtlely aware of white influences through the description of the bare 40-watt light bulbs on either side of a makeshift dais; the screen of faded, threadbare purple drapery; the pews of dilapidated chairs and empty crates; and the closed, stale atmosphere of the grimy basement room. An attempt to retain some remnant of Indian tradition is evident in the crescent-shaped altar and in the red and yellow symbols of the moon painted on the lectern which are the only decorations. Tosamah is known as "The Right Reverend John Big Bluff Tosamah"; his name is apt.

The importance of world view and traditions are emphasized when several pages of the novel are devoted to Tosamah's account of his visits to his grandmother, an old Kiowa Indian in Oklahoma. The section is clearly an autobiographical account of Momaday's experience and one on which he elaborates in The Way to Rainy Mountain. Here it is used to illustrate Tosamah's split personality. He is un urban Indian skilled in the white man's ways and rhetoric and conscious of the need to accept them while he lives in that world. But, simultaneously, there is a subconscious reservoir of tribal traditions from which he cannot free

himself and to which he periodically returns with longing. This is clearly exemplified in the two parts of his sermon on the Word and in the two very different religious ceremonies for which he is the leader. Tosamah is a symbol representative of many Indians who live between two worlds and are never completely a part of either. Tosamah is an "apple" Indian: red on the outside but white on the inside. His understanding of Abel is in direct contrast to Ben's, and while it tells us something about Abel, it tells us much more about Tosamah. Tosamah sarcastically discusses Abel's history:

> They gave him every advantage. They gave him a pair of shoes and told him to go to school. They deloused him and gave him a lot of free haircuts and let him fight on their side. But was he grateful? Hell, no, man. He was too damn dumb to be civilized. So what happened? They let him alone at last. They thought he was harmless. They thought he was going to plant some beans, man, and live off the fat of the land. Oh, he was going to make his way all right. He would get some fat little squaw all knocked up, and they would lie around all day and get drunk and raise a lot of little government wards. They would make some pottery, man, and boost the economy. But it didn't turn out that way. He turned out to be a real primitive sonavabitch, and the first time he got hold of a knife he killed a man. That must have embarrassed the hell out of them.[24]

There is an ironic tone to Tosamah's description that questions his words. His attitude is the one he knows he should have, the one that would be the most acceptable in the white world in which he must live. For, as Ben Benally points out,

> Tosamah doesn't understand either. He talks pretty big all the time, and he's educated, but he doesn't understand. . . . I got to thinking about it, though, anyway. About him [Abel]; about him being afraid of that man [Martinez] out there, so afraid he didn't know what to do. That, you know, being so scared of something like that--that's what Tosamah doesn't understand. He's educated, and he doesn't believe in being scared like that. But he doesn't come from the reservation.[25]

Tosamah's point of view is furthest from that of the longhair, and the sections are juxtaposed to emphasize the differences and to demonstrate Abel's traditions and then the point in time, seven years later, at which he is furthest from them. The sequence of events in Los Angeles of which Tosamah is a part is midway in the cycle of Abel's return to his roots.

The title of this second chapter, "The Priest of the Sun," clearly defines the cleavage in Tosamah. He is a "priest," a white man's word for a spiritual leader. But, he is also identified with the sun. The Kiowas are a Plains Indian people and they have a special regard for the sun. As Momaday explains,

> The sun is at home on the plains. Precisely there does it have the certain holy regard which now is all but gone out of mankind. There was a wariness in her [Aho], and an ancient awe. She was a Christian in her later years, but she had come a long way about, and she never forgot her birthright.[26]

Tosamah understandably wants to make this identification with his tribe's ancient reverence through his self-chosen title. It clearly tells the reader that Tosamah wants to be Indian but recognizes the necessity to act white. His point of view is fragmented. In many ways, Tosamah is Momaday.

The third point of view is in Section Three of House Made of Dawn. The section is called "The Night Chanter." It refers to Ben Benally, Abel's best friend while he was in Los Angeles. Benally literally means "Grandson of." This is a common Navajo designation mistakenly understood by whites to be a family surname. Navajos have several names, but each is used in particular circumstances or only by certain people. The use of Begay (son of) or Benally as a last name is a useful device for

dealing with whites since as Barre Toelken has pointed out, "their formal relations with the Anglos require them to have a name; they cannot say their war name, usually will not say their descriptive name, and have no reason to use a relational appellation."[27] The choice of this name for Ben by Momaday serves to identify Ben with the traditional Navajo way.

His is the third point of view in the novel and again there is a corresponding shift in the language, sentence structure, and tone. The sentences are shorter and word choices are more ordinary; the tone is conversational. Ben tells of his friend's departure:

> He left today. It was raining, and I gave him my coat. You know, I hated to give it up; it was the only one I had. We stood outside on the platform. He was looking down, and I was trying to think of something to say. . . . He looked pretty bad. His hands were still bandaged, and he couldn't use them very well. It took us a long time to get there. He couldn't walk very fast. It was a good coat, gray gabardine, but it was old and it hadn't been cleaned in a long time. I don't remember where I got it. I got it secondhand, and there was a big hole in the right pocket.[28]

Ben is an average man who speaks in common English and he gives his perception of Abel as he muses on the events which took place while Abel was in Los Angeles.

Several pages are devoted to Ben's reminiscences about his early experiences on the Navajo reservation. It is a vignette, a slice of Navajo life; Momaday uses it to emphasize the contrast between a slow, relaxed, warm, understood, sharing way of life on the reservation and the hurried, tense, cold, unfamiliar, selfish way of life Ben experiences in the city. This is also a device for establishing Ben's credibility as an example of the transplanted traditional Indian and the resulting problems. The two life styles are a contrast Ben can bear to think about only occasionally.

Ben is lonely and he is protective of Abel. After they are introduced at work by the Relocation Officer, Ben shows Abel how to do the job, how to ignore the jibes about "firewater" and the taunt of "chief." He offers to share his lunch and later his room. From the beginning he shares his concern. He tries to help Abel understand what he has learned.

> You have to get used to everything, you know; it's like starting out someplace where you've never been before, and you don't know where you're going or why or when you have to get there, and everybody's looking at you. . . . You wonder how you can get yourself into the swing of it, you know? And you don't know how, but you've got to do it because you can see how good it is. It's better than anything you've ever had; it's money and clothes and having plans and going someplace fast. You can see what it's like, but you don't know how to get into it. . . .[29]

Ben has been able to rationalize his presence in the big city; Abel never can. He simple cannot adjust to this new environment. And, as Ben later says, nobody but he and Milly, the lonely white social worker, really gave a damn about Abel anyway. Ben recalls Abel's departure and is concerned that he is no longer able to help him. He imagines his being sick and all alone on the train. Abel's hands and his nose are broken and because he "looks so bad" Ben is afraid no one will be willing to help him. Ben buys a bottle of cheap wine and takes it home to drink alone and remember.

Rationally, Ben knows he is doing the right thing by living in the city and holding a regular job, but emotionally he dislikes his life, questions the value, and longs to be back on the reservation. He doesn't talk about the reservation much, but he can't keep from thinking about it; he tries to put it out of his mind. He thinks about going home a lot, but he knows it's no use, since, ". . . you know that if you went home

there would be nothing there, just the empty land and a lot of old people, going no place and dying off."[30] But, his empty room is lonely and he plans with Abel for a day when they will meet again on the reservation.

Ben makes a plan for the future, a plan for a time when he can return to the reservation and join Abel. His plan is a goal which gives him something to dream about. It is a plan which gives Abel a sense of stability in the unreal world of his pain and disorientation. It is Ben who provides the impetus for Abel's return to the reservation and to a sense of surety about his identity. Ben remembers their plan:

> We were going to meet someplace, maybe in a year or two, maybe more. He was going home, and he was going to be all right again. And someday I was going home, too, and we were going to meet someplace out there on the reservation. . . . We were going out into the hills on horses and alone. It was going to be early in the morning, and we were going to see the sun coming up. . . . It was going to be good again, you know? We were going to get drunk for the last time, and we were going to sing the old songs. We were going to sing about the way it used to be, how there was nothing all around but the hills and the sunrise and the clouds.[31]

This is Ben's favorite fantasy and as important to his survival as it is to Abel's.

It is Ben, the reservation Indian, who is closest among Abel's friends to the traditions; he remembers, and he teaches Abel as one would a child. He tells him about the old ways, the stories and the "sings." He sings the songs for him and tells him what they mean. Since Abel grew up in a pueblo rather than on a reservation his experiences and traditions have been different than Ben's although there would have been some similarities in life styles. The reader must also be aware that Abel was only partially Pueblo Indian and that he was probably never completely

accepted in the pueblo. Who his father was was not known, although it was speculated that he might have been Navajo or Isleta. No doubt, Abel was to some extent ostracized. He may not have known some of the traditions and customs from personal experience. Thus, Ben's explanations gave Abel a sense of belonging.

Ben's point of view is that of a good friend; he sees Abel's weaknesses and tries to compensate for them. The tone of this section is warm and filled with understanding. The reader learns what happened to Abel in Los Angeles, but he also learns the kind of person Ben is. Momaday holds Ben up as an example of a reservation Indian relocated in a metropolitan area, aware that he must conform to the Anglo expectations but lonely for home and incomplete in his isolation.

Section Four is titled "The Dawn Runner," and refers to both Francisco and Abel. It takes place a week after Ben's reminiscences in the third section. Abel has returned home and is recovering from several days' intoxication. He mutely attends his grandfather's bedside as Francisco lays dying. The chapter contains primarily Francisco's thoughts in his semi-conscious state. It begins with a vivid account of the season and the environment; it is winter and the land is silent and barren. It is a time for completion, for pause before a new beginning. It is an appropriate time for Francisco's death, for the end of the novel, and for the suggestion of a new beginning for Abel.

It is significant that the novel begins and ends with Francisco. The structure is deliberately cyclic to reflect the Indian concept of time, for the story has no beginning and no end. Abel continues where his grandfather stops. The arrangement suggests a hope for Abel's future, a new beginning, one with meaning, perhaps. For each of the six days Abel

sits by Francisco's bed, Francisco revives in the dawn only to sink into a coma in the afternoon. "He revived in the dawn,and he knew who Abel was, and he talked and sang. . . . The voice had failed each day, only to rise up again in the dawn. The old man had spoken six times in the dawn, and the voice of his memory was whole and clear and growing like the dawn."[32] His last illness takes on the same sequence as does a day or a season or a year, and thus reflects nature's calendar and the Indian concept of the interrelationship between all things.

Francisco dreams of the time when he took Vidal and Abel, his grandsons, to observe the race at dawn and how he gave them instructions about the significance of the positions of the sun.

> They were old enough then, and he took his grandsons out at first light to the old Campo Santo, south and west of the Middle. He made them stand just there, above the point of the low white rock, facing east. They could see the black mesa looming on the first light, and he told them there was the house of the sun. They must learn the whole contour of the black mesa. They must know it as they knew the shape of their hands, always and by heart. The sun rose up on the black mesa at a different place each day. It began there, at a point on the central slope, standing still for the solstice, and ranged all the days southward across the rise and fall of the long plateau, drawing closer by the measure of mornings and moons to the lee, and back again. They must know the long journey of the sun on the black mesa, how it rode in the seasons and the years, and they must live according to the sun appearing, for only then could they reckon where they were, where all things were, in time. There, at the rounder knoll, it was time to plant corn; and there, where the highest plane fell away, that was the day of the rooster race, six days ahead of the black bull running and the little horse dancing, seven ahead of the Pecos immigration; and there, and there, the secret dances, every four days of fasting in the kiva, the moon good for hoeing and the time for harvest,the rabbit and witch hunts, all the proper days of the clans and societies; and just there at the saddle, where the sky was lower and brighter than elsewhere on the high black land, the clearing of the ditches in advance of the spring rains and the long race of the black men at dawn.[33]

Francisco's understanding of his proper place in relationship to his

environment is essential to his sense of identity. He wants to help Vidal and Abel recognize their places in the pueblo scheme of things.

For the traditional Indian, nothing is ever lost. It may change form or be absorbed into something else, but the essence remains as it does in the room in which Abel sits waiting for his grandfather's death. "It was the room in which he was born, in which his mother and his brother died. Just then, and for moments and hours and days, he had no memory of being outside of it."[34] That room in his home in the pueblo is the center of Francisco's entire world. This is Francisco's point of view; it is beginning to be Abel's point of view. It is the point of view of the traditionalist, and Momaday begins and ends his novel with the values of that perspective.

The variety of points of view in Momaday's prose works makes possible the reader's multiple responses to the novel. His innovative uses of varying perspectives provide glimpses of what for most readers is an unfamiliar world. It is this ethnic perspective that enriches Momaday's prose. The relationship between the storyteller and his audience is a dynamic one. It is the interaction of Momaday's personality and the circumstances he describes that enable the reader to respond with leisurely insights.

ENDNOTES

[1]_The Way . . ._, p. 16.

[2]_The Way . . ._, p. 17.

[3]_The Way . . . ._.

[4]_The Way . . ._, p. 16.

[5]_The Way . . ._, p. 17.

[6]_The Way . . ._, pp. 21-22.

[7]_The Way . . ._, p. 36.

[8]_The Way . . ._, p. 37.

[9]_The Way . . . ._.

[10]_The Way . . ._, p. 48.

[11]_The Way . . ._, p. 49.

[12]_The Names_, p. 5.

[13]_The Names_, pp. 4-5.

[14]_The Names_, p. 6.

[15]_The Names_.

[16]_The Names_, p. 22.

[17]_The Names_, p. 77.

[18]_The Names_, pp. 72-73.

[19]The Names, pp. 75-76.

[20]House . . ., p. 3.

[21]Jemez Pueblo has a population of approximately 1,500. It is located 44 miles north of Albuquerque, New Mexico, out in the narrow canyon of San Diego. Momaday describes this pueblo in an article "Revisiting the Family Home," The New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 16 July 1972, p. 2.

[22]House . . ., p. 5.

[23]House . . ., p. 6.

[24]House . . ., pp. 148-49.

[25]House . . ., p. 150.

[26]House . . ., p. 132.

[27]Barre Toelken, "The Demands of Harmony," p. 76.

[28]House . . ., p. 139.

[29]House . . ., p. 158.

[30]House . . ., p. 159.

[31]House . . ., p. 145.

[32]House . . ., p. 195.

[33]House . . ., pp. 197-98.

[34]House . . ., p. 196.

CHAPTER V

THE SENSE OF PLACE[1]

For the non-Indian the stereotype of an intimate relationship between the Indian and his natural environment has become merely a cliche. For the Indian, his relationship to a land that is very old and everlasting is real and meaningful. While the Indian enjoys and aesthetically appreciates nature, he also recognizes in a very practical way that man is simply a part of this larger whole and he cannot exist without its contributions and cooperation. "Ecology is perhaps the most important subject of our time. I can't think of an issue in which the Indian has more authority or a greater stake. If there is one thing that truly distinguishes him, it is surely his regard of and for the natural world."[2] The current awareness of how the United States has polluted its environment has become a major concern. The rivers, streams, soil, even the air, are less and less life sustaining. The quality of the natural resources has diminished at an alarming rate that is only just now being realized. This carelessness was perhaps a result of the vastness of the area and a belief that the resources were apparently limitless. Indians have long been aware, however, that they exist in a mutually supportive system and their appreciation of nature's benefits inspire a sincere regard and caretaking. N. Scott Momaday is representative of this Indian attitude. The sense of place is more than a simple appreciation for him; it is a matter of survival.

> One effect of the Technological Revolution has been to uproot us from the soil. We have become disoriented, I believe; we have suffered a kind of psychic dislocation of ourselves in time and space. We may be perfectly sure of where we are in relation to the supermarket and the next coffee break, but I doubt that any of us knows where he is in relation to the stars and to the solstices. Our sense of the natural order has become dull and unreliable. Like the wilderness itself, our sphere of instinct has diminished in proportion as we have failed to imagine truly what it is. And yet I believe that it is possible to formulate an ethical idea of the land --a notion of what it is and must be in our daily lives--and I believe moreover that it is absolutely necessary to do so.[3]

His education and extensive travels have made Momaday aware of how critical the current ecological situation is:

> In Ko-sahn [an old Kiowa woman] and in her people we have always had the example of a deep, ethical regard for the land. We had better learn from it. Surely that ethic is merely latent in ourselves. It must now be activated, I believe. We Americans must come again to a moral comprehension of the earth and air. We must live according to the principle of a land ethic. The alternative is that we shall not live at all.[4]

A moral-ethical regard for the land and the sense of place is one of Momaday's major concerns.

Momaday has pointed out that the Indian has always held the natural world in respect and reverence and that it is an extrasensory as well as a sensory perception of not only objects and forms but also of essences and ideals:

> Man understands himself in relation to the tree over there and the mountain over here and the river and naturally operates out of that environment, operates immediately out of it. . . . And I think that this is basically a moral kind of relationship. In the Indian world it is almost irrefutable. Man understands that he is obligated in certain ways to the landscape, that he is responsible for it, that he shares in the spirit of place.[5]

Momaday makes the distinction in attitudes clear between those who simply

enjoy the beauty of a landscape and those who consider it an extension of themselves or themselves an extension of it. He believes that the Indian attitude toward the land is of a different and more comprehensive kind. It is not as though the Indian analyzes nature or examines it from a distance, but simply that he sees it as a part of himself, the intimate element in which he exists. Momaday accepts the Indian's attitude as essential to the establishment of proper relationships.[6] Momaday tells his university students ". . . that the American Indian has a unique investment in the American landscape. It is an investment that represents perhaps thirty thousand years of habitation. . . . The Indian has been here a long time; he is at home here. That simple and obvious truth is one of the most important realities of the Indian world, and it is integral in the Indian mind and spirit."[7] Such a respect for the land has been acquired over a long period of many generations. It is a comfortable, enduring relationship in which man accepts his role as reciprocal rather than predatory.

Such a reciprocity is one in which the individual invests a vital part of himself in the natural environment and at the same time assimilates it into his own nature where it remains a permanent part of his psyche. Such an embrace may be the result of both conscious and unconscious efforts. There are places which remain forever a part of one's memories because of the intensity of the life experienced there. This results in an unconscious assimilation of place dependent upon the quality of life experienced. Other places have a special significance because of conscious effort. Momaday encourages this recognition of the importance of place.

> Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind. He ought to recollect the glare of noon and all the colors of the dawn and dusk.[8]

The value that comes from such a close observation is felt in the security of familiarity. Anyone who gives himself to such a leisurely contemplation achieves equal results, but the average American does not easily spare the necessary time. The Indian, because of the different values he places on time, arranges the time needed for what to him is an important part of his understanding. It is simply a matter of priorities.

Identification with place is often felt and expressed by Momaday in his writings. "The sense of place as I think of it, is an equation in which man and the landscape are related. My own writing, much of it, is focused upon that relationship. It is an equation that interests me particularly, and I believe that it is important."[9] And, writing from Stanford about the ceremony honoring San Diego, the patron saint of Jemez Pueblo, "I long to be on the plaza at Jemez: an intense longing it is, which involves my whole being. . . and I want to look into the faces of the old men among the singers, to see how they raise their heads high and close their eyes, how they consist wholly in their voices, in their songs, which are indivisible with the earth and sky."[10] It is not individuals Momaday longs for, or the participation in an event, but the sense of identification, the security of being "at home" that the particular place provides. This is an associative process, a concept much like Wordsworth's "spots of time."

> Landscapes tend to stand out in my memory. When I think back to a particular time in my life, I tend to see it in terms of its setting, the background in which it achieves for me a certain relief. Or, to put it another way, I am inclined closely to associate events with the physical dimensions in which they take place. Perhaps this is true of most of us, but, as for me, I have become in recent years more and more conscious of this associative process and of its implications. . . . I exist in a landscape, and my existence is indivisible with the land.[11]

The acceptance of this concept of Indian identification with the land is one that is basic to an understanding of Momaday's works. He recognizes that although his is certainly not a unique experience, it is especially poignant for the Indian because of his concept of a nurturing land, a Mother Earth. For him the earth is alive; it is animate with everything that exists on it. The trees, the animal life, the living rocks, the great mountains, the plant life as well as man all are alive and are sustained through their Mother Earth. Even the twentieth century Indian accepts this concept completely.

The significance of landscape is recognized by Abel in House Made of Dawn when he views the Valle Grande from the rim of the volcanic crater.

> Of all the places that he knew, this valley alone could reflect the great spatial majesty of the sky. . . . Just here, it seemed, a strange and brilliant light lay upon the world, and all the objects in the landscape were washed clean and set away in the distance. . . . Such vastness makes for illusion, a kind of illusion that comprehends reality, and where it exists there is always wonder and exhilaration.[12]

Momaday uses this description to indicate Abel's sense of awe and wonder and the knowledge that he belongs here through his long intimacy with the scene. It has been his favorite place for contemplation during all of his growing-up years. Although he is unable to articulate it, he feels the valley's powerful influence.

Such a regard for place Momaday personally values as almost holy. "To look upon that landscape [Wichita mountains in Oklahoma] in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun."[13] In House Made of Dawn Tosamah voices Momaday's convictions. "There are things in nature which engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devils Tower is one of them. Man must account for it. He must never fail to explain such a thing to himself, or else he is estranged forever from the universe."[14] Such awe inspiring natural phenomenon requires serious contemplation. It diminishes man's role and humbles him. It causes him to consider his position in the scheme of things.

Many of the essays Momaday has written speak to the relationship between man and nature and reflect not only his personal perceptions but Indian attitudes in general.

> First, he [the Indian] has always had a deep, ethical regard for the earth and sky, a reverence for the natural world that is diametrically opposed to that strange tenet of Western Civilization which seemingly requires that Man must destroy his environment. It is this Indian ethic, I believe, that must inform all of our efforts to preserve life on this planet.
>
> Second, he had always known who and what he is. His integrity as a man and as a race has never been rent by generational or ideological divisions. And he has never betrayed his own best idea of himself. Often against great odds, he has held on to his identity, his dignity, and his trust.[15]

Such an attitude may seem a mere sentimentality to those unfamiliar with Indian values and may be difficult to understand across the void of ethnocentricism, but it is a major aspect of Momaday's world view. He has further said,

> I am interested in the way that a man looks at a given landscape and takes possession of it in his blood and brain. For

> this happens, I am certain, in the ordinary motion of life. None of us lives apart from the land entirely; such an isolation in unimaginable. We have sooner or later to come to terms with the world around us--and I mean especially the physical world, not only as it is revealed to us immediately through our senses, but also as it is perceived more truly in the long turn of seasons and of years. And we must come to moral terms. There is no alternative, I believe, if we are to realize and maintain our humanity; for our humanity must consist in part in the ethical as well as the practical ideal of preservation. And particularly here and now is that true. We Americans need now more than ever before--and indeed more than we know--to image who and what we are with respect to the earth and sky. I am talking about an act of the imagination essentially, and the concept of an American land ethic.[16]

An understanding of this almost mystical Indian attitude toward the land is important not only to appreciate cultural differences but primarily here to contribute to an understanding of Momaday's works. It is a matter of such importance for him that many pages of his writings are given to detailed, colorful descriptions of the land and its inhabitants. "I like to write descriptions, and a lot of my writing is descriptive in kind. I'm also a kind of amateur naturalist, and I deal with nature in my writing--landscapes, creatures, wild creatures, things of the kind. If I had to pick one word to characterize my prose, it would be 'descriptive'."[17] Since he considers himself primarily a descriptive-naturalist writer, the land and the subtle interlocking relationships between it and all that exists on it is clearly one of his major concerns.

A place of particular significance for Momaday and one which holds a central place in House Made of Dawn is the "saddle" of the mesa at Jemez Pueblo. Momaday grew up observing the cacique or chief of the Jemez Pueblo maintain the tribal calendar by his observance of the sun's progress over that mesa. Each morning the old man stood on a particular spot near the center of the plaza and waited for the first appearance of

the sun. His daily observations of this solar calendar set the times for ceremonies, for planting, for harvesting, and other communal affairs. When the sun appeared at a particular place in relationship to a geographic feature, it was the proper time for certain tribal activities. The importance of man in relationship to place was something that Francisco intuitively knew and a lesson he attempted to teach Vidal and Abel.

> They were old enough then, and he took his grandsons out at first light to the old Campo Santo, south and west of the Middle. He made them stand just there, above the point of the low white rock, facing east. They could see the black mesa looming on the first light, and he told them there was the house of the sun. They must learn the whole contour of the black mesa. They must know it as they knew the shape of their hands, always and by heart. The sun rose up on the black mesa at a different place each day. It began there, at a point on the central slope, standing still for the solstice, and ranged all the days southward across the rise and fall of the lang plateau, drawing closer by the measure of mornings and moons to the lee, and back again. They must know the long journey of the sun on the black mesa, how it rode in the seasons and the years, and they must live according to the sun appearing, for only then could they reckon where they were, where all things were in time.[18]

The progressive journey of the sun across the mesa on the horizon regulates not only the Pueblo's activities but identifies man's place within a larger framework. It was only when Abel returned to the pueblo and took part in the solstice ceremony that he began to reenter the Indian world.

Separation from particular places often results in loss of identity. The displaced and relocated Indians in House Made of Dawn suffered that loss. They sought some anchor to hold on to, some landscape with which to identify in a rapidly changing, often puzzling new lifestyle. In an awkward attempt to restore body and mind they made use of the natural

environment of the California mountains to reassure themselves that they still had identity. As often as possible Ben Benally and the other Indians in Los Angeles slipped away to the mountains and tried to recapture the spirit of the traditional way of life. When a group of them went to the mountains they took along a couple of drums and maybe a flute. Someone started to chant and to sing the old songs; they built a fire, and after a while someone started to dance. Mercedes Tenorio had some turtle shell rattles and sometimes she started a stomp dance and one by one the others joined the circle. Because it was so isolated and quiet, it almost seemed like they were back home at a squaw dance or at a sing. Everybody kept drinking until he was good and drunk and happy remembering. The sense of place was their placebo; it reminded them of home; it reaffirmed their identity. They were for a few minutes able to relate to the elements and no longer in danger of being emotionally suffocated within the walls of the city. Even those Indians most acculturated and seemingly at home in the white culture needed that escape and release. In fact, it was Tosamah, the most assimulated of the California group who was the peyote priest. It was Tosamah who conducted the service of the Native American Church in a remote area on the mountain.

In the first section of House Made of Dawn, Momaday specifically considered the significance of place. He describes Canyon de San Diego. "It is a remote place, and divided from the rest of the world by a great forked range of mountains on the north and west; by wasteland on the south and east, a region of dunes and thorns and burning columns of air; and more than these by time and silence."[19] He describes the creatures that are at home there: the roadrunners, the quail, the white and russet hawks, the languid rattlesnakes, the "old council of clowns,"[20] the coyotes. He

unites all of these things through the vision of the golden eagles that nest among the outcropping of rocks on the mountain peaks. "The eagle ranges far and wide over the land, farther than any other creature, and all things there are related simply by having existence in the perfect vision of a bird."[21] These things have tenure on this land and so does the Indian. ". . . he dwelt upon the land twenty-five thousand years ago, and his gods before him."[22] This description of place and the relationship between it and its inhabitants is a separate part of the first section. By this arrangement of the passage, Momaday emphasized the importance of place, that it is timeless and all encompassing. He feels that the Pueblo Indian belongs on this particular land by virtue of his long inhabitance there. He and the land understand each other. Abel shared this feeling with his grandfather and with Momaday.

> He quit the pavement where it rose and wound upon a hill. . . . He followed with his eyes the converging parallel rims of the canyon walls, deepening in the color of distance until they gave way to the wooded mountains looming on the sky. . . . He was alone, and he wanted to make a song out of the colored canyon, the way the women of Torreon made songs upon their looms out of colored yarn, but he had not got the right words together. It would have been a creation song; he would have sung lowly of the first world, of fire and flood, and of the emergence of dawn from the hills.[23]

Abel had been unable to talk to his grandfather, he had lost his ability to communicate, but he instinctively sought the canyon rim, the special place of his youth from which he could see the pueblo and all that surrounded it. Perhaps here he could regain his perspective and find his way back to his proper place in this world.

Millie, the white social worker in House Made of Dawn, shared more with Abel than their terrible loneliness. She came from a rural

environment too, but Momaday makes the distinction in attitudes clear. Abel loved the land, he longed for his return to it; Millie distrusted and feared the land and never wanted to go back. Her father had been a poor farmer where the earth was "hard and dry and brick red."[24] He was alienated from the land and ". . . at last Daddy began to hate the land, began to think of it as some kind of enemy, his own very personal and deadly enemy. I remember he came in from the fields at evening, having been beaten by the land, and he said nothing. He never said anything; he just sat down and though about his enemy."[25] Millie's father had carefully saved his coins so that he could help Millie escape to a better life in the city. She had no desire to return. But, it is the one life-sustaining desire of Ben and Abel to return to the land and escape from the city. It is not that Jemez Pueblo sat in a fertile land and Millie's home did not. Both were desolate, semi-barren areas.[25] But the Indians respected and loved the land which provided for and protected them. They tended it carefully. Millie's father distrusted the land and sought only to take from it. He hated the land and attempted to conquer it, and it rejected him. Momaday uses this contrast as an example of Indian, non-Indian attitudes and their differences toward a sense of place.

Momaday describes this same location in New Mexico and his experience there when he was a boy.

> In New Mexico the land is made of many colors. When I was a boy I rode out over the red and yellow and purple earth to the west of Jemez Pueblo. My horse was a small red roan, fast and easy-riding. I rode among the dunes, along the bases of mesas and cliffs, into canyons and arroyos. I came to know that country, not in the way a traveler knows the landmarks he sees in the distance, but more truly and intimately, in every season, from a thousand points of view.[27]

It is the value in this sense of intimacy with the land that Momaday emphasizes and reemphasizes throughout his works.

Alfonso Ortiz speaking before the first Convocation of American Indian Scholars emphasized the Indian's feeling of oneness with the environment: "If you want to understand Indian philosophy in a nutshell, so to speak, we have the belief that we are in a family with the world, in a family with the earth. There is a sky father and the earth mother, and we are all children of that."[28] Ortiz explained that that philosophy still exists in almost every tribe across the United States and is still a vital part of their daily lives. Momaday agrees that the Indian has always centered his life in the natural world and for him the sense of place is paramount; he identifies himself in reference to the earth. This is his natural element and the only dimension in which life is possible.[29]

The pueblo at Jemez has special meaning for Momaday. He understands that something of it is always with him and he will always remain a part of it.

> The events of one's life take place, take place. How often have I used this expression, and how often have I stopped to think what it means? Events do indeed take place; they have meaning in relation to the things around them. And a part of my life happened to take place at Jemez. I existed in that landscape, and then my existence was indivisible with it. I placed my shadow there in the hills, my voice in the wind that ran there, in those old mornings and afternoons and evenings.[30]

The earth and the Indian spirit are bound together.

Momaday accepts and incorporates that belief in much that he writes; it is closely associated with the central themes in The Way to Rainy Mountain, House Made of Dawn, and The Names. It is a concern that he returns

to, no matter how briefly, again and again. He suggests that not only does such a personal philosophy separate the Indian from most alienated non-Indians, but it is what will allow him to endure and to even ultimately triumph.

ENDNOTES

[1]"The Sense of Place," title taken from The New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 10 December 1972, p. 2.

[2]"The Man Made of Words," p. 167.

[3]"The Man Made of Words," p. 166.

[4]"The Man Made of Words," p. 167.

[5]Larry Evers, "A Conversation With N. Scott Momaday," Sun Tracks, 2, No. 2 (Spring, 1976), p. 19.

[6]"Native American Attitudes to the Environment," Seeing With a Native Eye, ed. W. H. Capps (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1976), p. 84.

[7]"A First American Views His Land," National Geographic, 150, No. 1 (1976), 15.

[8]The Way . . ., p. 83.

[9]"Three Personalities, One Landscape," The New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 18 November 1973, p. 18.

[10]"Thoughts on Jemez and Billy the Kid," The New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 28 July 1972, p. 2.

[11]"What Will Happen to the Land?", The New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 28 July 1972, p. 2.

[12]House . . ., pp. 16-17.

[13]House . . ., p. 127.

[14]House . . ., p. 131.

[15]"Learning From the Indian," The New Mexican, the Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 9 July 1972, p. 2.

[16]"The Man Made of Words," p. 166.

[17]T. Basford, "An Interview With N. Scott Momaday," Puerto Del Sol, 12 (1973), 30.

[18]House . . ., pp. 197-98.

[19]House . . ., p. 55.

[20]House . . ., p. 56.

[21]House . . ., p. 57.

[22]House . . ., p. 59.

[23]House . . ., p. 59.

[24]House . . ., p. 122.

[25]House . . ., p. 123.

[26]The Jemez Pueblo is a community of about 1,500 persons. It is situated north of Albuquerque on the Jemez River in Sandoval County in New Mexico.

[27]The Way . . ., p. 67.

[28]Alfonso Ortiz, "American Indian Philosophy: Its Relation to the Modern World," Indian Voices (San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1970), p. 19.

[29]"I Am Alive," pp. 23-24.

[30]The Names, p. 142.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAGIC WORD

Until the twentieth century, the literature of the American Indian was an oral tradition carried on primarily by the older people in the tribes. While various mnemonic devices such as wampum belts and totem poles were employed to refresh memories, the spoken word was central to an accurate account of the individual's or tribe's history. The narration of a recent event was verifiable since it would have been witnessed by the storyteller or vouched for by someone who had; more remote events were recounted frequently to keep the telling as accurate as possible and particular people were chosen and trained to memorize exactly. To give an inaccurate account was dishonorable and brought immediate disgrace to the narrator. Many twentieth century Indians retain that value for the spoken word.

Benjamin L. Whorf has hypothesized that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which he understands his environment. This concept of the shaping of perceptions through language is significant, but the Indian has a different regard for language: he understands words to be directing agencies that forcefully determine reality, not merely his understanding of it. He believes completely that "it is the thought and the word that stand face to face with the conscience of the native, not the deed."[1] Thus, an Indian is traditionally careful

in his use of language and selective in his word choice for he perceives words to have a magic quality. N. Scott Momaday has said:

> Magic and the idea of magic, is very highly developed in oral tradition as you probably know. It is everywhere. One of the things that distinguishes oral tradition from writing tends to be [that it is] much more consistently aware of the magic in language. He [the Indian] understands that by exerting the force of language on the physical world, he can bring about actual change.[2]

The power of words or even the thought to produce real effects is a strong native belief.

> We believe that everything originates in thought. That the power of thought is real, for good or evil, and that good thoughts, pure thoughts, thoughts pure as corn pollen, pure as dewdrops, will maintain harmony, health and happiness. When evil thought, fear, envy, hate, enter our minds--even thoughts of things that may have happened a long time before, that have caused the mind and the body to be out of balance--prayers and ceremonies are given to restore thinking to a straight and harmonious path and well being is restored.[3]

Ultimate being results from language.

The use of rituals, ceremonies, chants, and incantations is widespread in the Indian community where it is commonly understood that the use of special causal words determines particular effects. Momaday says of his own experience, "My name is Tsoai-talee. I am, therefore, Tsoai-talee; therefore I am. The storyteller Pahd-lohk gave me the name Tsoai-talee. He believed that a man's life proceeds from his name, in the way that a river proceeds from its source."[4] Language is regarded as a potent creative force.

Indian people believe that a spoken word contains a life all of its own, an endless life. Linked to their belief in the immortality of words is the need to use the precise word best able to express the idea. Their

practice is to use as few words as possible to convey a specific thought. The easy ambiguities, the fluidities of English speech are foreign to most Indians who tend to speak precisely and interpret literally.

N. Scott Momaday is particularly conscious of the uses of language. In "The Man Made of Words," he states, "It seems to me that in a certain sense we are all made of words; that our most essential being consists in language. It is an element in which we think and dream and act, in which we live our daily lives."[5] He believes, as most other Indians do, that the word is sacred, that it has power in and of itself. Their concept is that words are simply the aural effects of thoughts and the power of the mind to determine reality is a vital force. This is a summation of not only Momaday's philosophy, but also of the almost mystical value Indians place on language.

Momaday expresses in The Names his fascination with and curiosity about words which grows into an overwhelming fear of the loss of language resulting in an inability to select the one perfectly expressive sound. He tells of a recurring, terrifying dream:

> There is a room full of light and space. The walls are bare, there are no windows or doors of which I am aware. I am inside and alone. Then gradually I become aware of another presence in the room. There is an object, something not extraordinary at first, something of the room itself--but what I cannot tell. The object does not matter at first, something of the room itself--but at some point--after a moment? an hour?--it moves, and I am unsettled. I am not yet frightened; rather I am somewhat surprised, vaguely anxious, fascinated, perhaps. The object grows; it expands farther and farther beyond definition. It is no longer an object but a mass. It is so large now that I am dwarfed by it, reduced almost to nothing. And now I am afraid, nearly terrified, and yet I have no will to resist; I remain attentive, strangely curious in proportion as I am afraid. The huge, shapeless mass is displacing all of the air, all of the space in the room. It swells against me. It is soft and supple and resilient, like a great bag of water. At last I am desperate,

> desperately afraid of being suffocated, lost in some dimple or fold of this vague, enormous thing. I try to cry out, but I have no voice. Restore my voice for me.
>
> How many times has this memory been nearly recovered, the definition almost realized! Again and again I have come to that awful edge, that one word, perhaps, that I cannot bring from my mouth. I sometimes think that it is surely a name, the name of someone or something, that if only I could utter it, the terrific mass would snap away into focus, and I should see and recognize what it is at once; I should have it then, once and for all, in my possession.[6]

Momaday vividly conveys his horror at the inability to realize the perfect phrase or word which is forever beyond his grasp. It is a writer's nightmare.

Momaday has been much impressed with the tribal storytellers' use of language and the dynamic relationship between the storytellers and their audience. He explains the value of the oral tradition, "It is a collection of vocal expressions which are particularly informed with beauty and meaning which proceed from a belief in the efficacy of language."[7] The fundamental assumption underlying this tradition is that words possess power, that the speaker recognizes this power and stands in awe of it and that he understands and employs the creativity of language. It is this respect for words, this investment of the self in language that lies at the center of the Indian perception of the magic word. Momaday has defined the oral tradition as the word of mouth process by which the individual and tribe formulates, communicates and preserves all that is meaningful. In several instances he has sought to employ elements of the oral tradition in his writings, particularly in The Way to Rainy Mountain.

Of primary importance in the Indian oral tradition are the tribal mythologies. Joseph Campbell has pointed out that one man's mythology is another man's religion. What to one person is merely an interesting

fictionalization of the deeds of supernatural heroes and deities of another culture is to members of that culture not an imaginative description or even a symbolic representation but a literal account upon which their religious convictions are based. They accept their myths not so much as etiological explanation but rather as acts of faith. Myth then becomes the basis for religious ritual as well as a teaching device for morality and traditions. Myths help to organize the world and make it understandable; they reassure man of his place in the scheme of things. "Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard working active force; it is not an intellectual explanation on an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom."[8] While myths may not be factual, they are nevertheless true. Momaday recognizes this value and employs it; he uses Kiowa mythology in The Way to Rainy Mountain as the predecessor of Kiowa history. He selects particular myths which have a historically comparable theme or motif and juxtaposes them on the pages with historical accounts to emphasize the continuity of Kiowa traditions. It is as though the language of the myths causes the historical accounts to come into being.

Momaday also uses the Kiowa mythic accounts to illustrate their central position and continuing importance in Kiowa culture where they serve the metaphysical function of linking regular waking consciousness with visionary images. He tells a Kiowa myth:

> There was a man and his wife. They had a beautiful child, a little girl whom they would not allow to go out of their sight. But one day a friend of the family came and asked if she might take the child outside to play. The mother guessed that would be alright, but she told the friend to leave the child in its cradle in a tree. While the child was in the

> tree, a redbird came among the branches. It was not like any bird that you have seen; it was very beautiful, and it did not fly away. It kept still upon a limb, close to the child. After a while the child got out of its cradle and began to grow taller, and the child was borne up into the sky. She was then a woman, and she found herself in a strange place. Instead of a redbird, there was a young man standing before her. The man spoke to her and said: 'I have been watching you for a long time, and I knew that I would find a way to bring you here. I have brought you here to be my wife.' The woman looked all around; she saw that he was the sun.[9]

On the opposite page Momaday includes a historical and then a personal account of the symbolic unions of the physical and the cosmic powers. "There the land itself ascends into the sky. These mountains lie at the top of the continent, and they cast a long rain shadow on the sea of grasses to the wilderness, and they have wilderness names: Wasatch, Bitteroot, Bighorn, Wind River."[10] Momaday is illustrating here the oneness of nature. In the myth the child at maturation achieves union with a beneficent and powerful natural force, the sun. In the historical account the land and the sky are joined. Neither the young woman who represents mankind and its union with the life giving power of the sun nor the land and the sky can be separated. There is a necessary and permanent union. Momaday picks up on the motif of the strange and beautiful bird resting in a tree in his personal account. He ties the three narratives together with the union of the tree and sky. Again it is the inseparability of the material and the spiritual that he is demonstrating.

> I have walked in a mountain meadow bright with Indian paintbrush, lupine, and wild buckwheat, and I have seen high in the branches of a lodgepole pine the grosbeak, round and rose-colored, its dark striped wings nearly invisible in the soft, mottled light. And the uppermost branches of the tree seemed very slowly to ride across the blue sky.[11]

Here Momaday also makes use of traditional Indian poetic devices such as

thought and phrase repetition. Kiowa myths may present problems for the excessively rational, analytical reader since they rely primarily on symbol as a means of expression. However, Momaday uses them extensively in The Way to Rainy Mountain as a means of incorporating Kiowa oral traditions and to demonstrate how the power of language incorporates the mythic, cultural and personal levels.

In a section of House Made of Dawn, Momaday causes Ben Benally to recall his grandfather's telling him of Esdza shash nadle and the myth which is the basis for the Beauty Way ceremony that is significant in Abel's story and from which the novel takes its title:

> Grandson, it was here, here at Kin tqel that they killed two of the cave people. There were twelve brothers and two sisters. It was time for the sisters to marry. And there were two old men, the Bear and the Snake. They went to the top of a mountain and bathed themselves. They put on fine clothes and were changed into men; they became young men, strong and good-looking. They smoked pipes, and the smoke was sweet, and it rolled down the mountain. The sisters came upon the trail of sweet smoke and were enchanted, and they climbed after it to the source. 'Where do you come from?' the elder sister asked. 'I came from the mountain,' said the Bear. 'And I came from the plain,' said the Snake. The sisters drew smoke from the pipes and fell asleep. And when they awoke they knew that they had lain with a bear and a snake, and they were afraid. They ran away, the elder sister to the summit and the younger to the plain. The elder sister came at last to the great kiva of the Yei bichai. Four holy men and four holy women came out to greet her. The women bathed and anointed her; they touched her with corn meal and pollen, and she was beautiful. She bore a female child. There were tufts of hair in back of its ears and down on its arms and legs. And then the Yei told the people to sing the Mountain chant, and from that time on the elder sister was called the Bear Maiden.[12]

By including this myth in the narrative, Momaday illustrates not only the survival of mythology in Indian traditions but its continuing influences. Abel is identified with the bear and it is a part of the mountain chant that Ben sings for him.

Difficulties in conveying nuances of the oral tradition to the printed page seem clear. Marshall McLuhan claims that printed language has alienated modern man from the world of direct experience since it provides only a one-way communication.[13] His comment is pertinent since the traditional storyteller's art was not simply the telling of an ancient story; it was a dramatic performance in which the audience participated. The storyteller's intonations, gestures, dramatic pauses, and facial expressions involved his listeners. These storytelling events required a proper time and setting and served both a social and cultural role. Momaday can only provide on the printed page the lyrical quality and the opportunity to understand the human experience through examples. The reader must understand that the specific mythic pattern is used to explain the present and the past as well as predict the future. As Momaday uses it, it is continuous and cyclic.

Momaday specifically demonstrates the potency of words in The Way to Rainy Mountain when he recounts another Kiowa myth.

> Then the twins remembered something that the grandmother spider had told them: 'If ever you get caught in the cave, say to yourselves the word thain-mom "above my eyes".' When the giant began to set fires around, the twins repeated the word thain-mom over and over to themselves, and the smoke remained above their eyes.[14]

Language as used here is magic. On the opposite page of The Way to Rainy Mountain, Momaday demonstrates the continuing acceptance of that belief.

> When Aho [Momaday's grandmother] saw or heard or thought of something bad, she said the word zei-dl-bei, 'frightful'. It was the one word with which she confronted evil and the incomprehensible. I liked her to say it, for she screwed up her face in the wonderful look of displeasure and clicked her tongue. It was not an exclamation so much, I think, as it was a warding off, an exertion of language upon ignorance and disorder.[15]

And on that same page Momaday comments, "A word has power in and of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning; it gives origin to all things. By means of words can a man deal with the world on equal terms. And the word is sacred."[16] Indians do not think of language simply as a form of communication but as power.

In House Made of Dawn, Momaday demonstrates the Indian concept of language through the sermon of Tosamah, Priest of the Sun. Tosamah's sermon is announced as "The Gospel According to Saint John" but it is about the sacredness of the word. He described how in the beginning there was no physical matter only a sound, a word, a thought from which developed the world in its entirety. The thought which structured the word was omnipotent.[17] Tosamah spoke this message in the voice of a great dog. But when he began to talk of the Bible and the Protestant interpretation of it, "his voice, which had been low and resonant, suddenly became harsh and flat; his shoulders sagged and his stomach protruded."[18] His manner became casual, even callous; he was someone else. His language also changed and became coarse with the use of slang. He became a caricature. But, his sermon exemplifies the Indian value of the word. The passage is an explicit contrast in Indian and non-Indian values of language. Tosamah said:

> 'In the beginning was the Word. . . .' Now what do you suppose old John meant by that? That cat was a preacher, and, well, you know how it is with preachers; he had something big on his mind. Oh my, it was big; it was the Truth, and it was heavy, and old John hurried to set it down. And in his hurry he said too much. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' It was the truth, all right, but was more than the Truth. The Truth was overgrown with fat, and the fat was God. The fat was John's God, and God stood between John and the Truth. . . . And he said, 'In the beginning was the Word. . . .' And, man, right then and there he should have stopped. There was nothing more to

> say, but he went on. . . . But he went on, old John, because he was a preacher. Don't you see? Old John had to go on. That cat had a whole lot at stake. He couldn't let the Truth alone. He couldn't see that he had come to the end of the Truth, and he went on. He tried to make it bigger and better than it was, but instead he only demeaned and encumbered it. He made it soft, and big with fat. He was a preacher, and he made a complex sentence of the Truth, two sentences, three, a paragraph. He made a sermon and theology of the Truth. He imposed his idea of God upon the everlasting Truth![19]

Tosamah's sermon then explained the Indian observation of the white man's use of language. The Indian is contemptuous of the seeming necessity to fill a silence with meaningless reiteration and explanation.

> . . . the white man has his ways. Oh gracious me, he has his ways. He talks about the Word, he talks through it and around it. He builds upon it with syllables, with prefixes and suffixes and hyphens and accents. He adds and divides and multiplies the Word. And in all of this he subtracts the Truth. . . . The white man takes such things as words and literatures for granted, as indeed he must, for nothing in his world is so commonplace. On every side of him there are words by the millions, an unending succession of pamphlets and papers, letters and books, bills and bulletins, commentaries and conversations. He has diluted and multiplied the Word, and words have begun to close in upon him. He is sated and insensitive; his regard for language--for the Word itself--as an instrument of creation has diminished nearly to the point of no return. It may be that he will perish by the Word.[20]

By contrast, Tosamah described his old Kiowa grandmother who was a storyteller and who understood the power of language.

> She never learned to read and write, but somehow she knew the good of reading and writing; she had learned how to listen and delight. She had learned that in words and in language, and there only she could have whole and consummate being. . . . You see for her words were medicine; they were magic and invisible. They came from nothing into sound and meaning. They were beyond price; they could neither be bought nor sold. And she never threw words away.[21]

After establishing the Indian value of language, Momaday, through Tosamah, reiterates the gulf between the attitudes.

Tosamah is a beautifully satiric voice for Momaday's perception of the differences between the ethnic groups in language values and usages. Momaday believes it is the oral tradition which has made the word sacred to the Indians. Since it was not written down, it was always in danger of being lost and this made it cherished and revered. He believes that Western culture is too far from oral traditions and as a result has lost the feeling of awe and respect for language that the Indian still experiences.

Abel had been away from the pueblo several years: he first served in World War II, then was incarcerated for murder, then was briefly a part of a rehabilitation program in Los Angeles. While away from the Pueblo, he was attempting to exist in an alien environment organized on scientific and technological principles and values. Upon his return to the pueblo he was disoriented; suspended between two worlds and a part of neither. He sought to reenter the pueblo world he had sublimated, but he had forgotten the language key. "He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; he tried to pray, to sing, to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it. And yet it was there still, like memory."[22] Abel was incapable of immediately reestablishing an awareness of the Indian consciousness. He had too recently been exposed to the urban white culture and he could not easily reenter the Indian world. This loss of language was Abel's major problem for it was an indication of his loss of identity.

Momaday in discussing the signficance of language to the general human condition commented:

> Our mind registers some kind of perception of what has happened, but until it becomes language in the mind it is of no use, it is not something we can deal with in ourselves, and it is not something we can communicate. So there's no getting away from it, we are imprisoned in language. We cannot function without it. We express ourselves in language because that's all we have. And when you think about it in those terms you see how really all inclusive it is. Language is an element in which we live. This is something I am fond of saying to my students. It is like the air we breathe. It's like water to fishes. We exist in that element, and it is impossible for us to exist beyond that element.[23]

Abel had lost the ability to function in that element, but at the end of the novel, Abel had made the beginning of a return; his mind had recorded a language and he had assimilated it; he began to recall it. His continuing existence was now a possibility.

The novel ends on a hopeful note for Abel had begun to find involvement. And, although he was not yet communicating with other men, he was communicating with his spiritual world. "He was running, and under his breath he began to sing. There was no sound, and he had no voice, he had only the words of a song. And he went running on the rise of the song. House made of pollen, house made of dawn. Qtsedabe."[24] This chant, a part of the Navajo Night Chant of which Beauty Way is a specialized portion, is a prayer for restoration and indicates, at last, Abel's sincere desire for a reentry into the pueblo world. Another part of the Navajo Night Chant is a plea to "restore my voice for me." Momaday has remarked, "And that seems particularly appropriate to Abel to me."[25] The articulation of the pueblo language has a potency that starts Abel on the way to a healing process. The emphasis on language in House Made of Dawn clearly demonstrates the Indians' and Momaday's concept of the magic word.

ENDNOTES

[1]Margot Astrov, "The Power of the Word," American Indian Prose and Poetry (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962), p. 19.

[2]Larry Evers, "A Conversation With N. Scott Momaday," p. 20.

[3]Carl N. Gorman, "Navajo Vision of Earth and Man," The Indian Historian, 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1973), pp. 19-22.

[4]The Names, Frontspiece, no page number.

[5]"The Man Made of Words," Literature of the American Indian, Abraham Chapman, ed. (New York: New American Library, 1975), p. 96.

[6]The Names, p. 63.

[7]"The Man Made of Words," p. 107.

[8]Joseph Campbell, "Living Myths," Parabola, I, Issue 2 (Spring, 1976), 74.

[9]The Way . . ., p. 22.

[10]The Way . . ., p. 23.

[11]The Way . . . .

[12]House . . ., p. 188.

[13]See The Medium Is the Message (New York: Bantam Books, 1967) for a complete discussion of McLuhan's hypothesis of the shaping influences exerted by different modes of communication.

[14]The Way . . ., p. 32.

[15]The Way . . ., p. 33.

[16]The Way . . . .

[17]House . . ., pp. 93-98.

[18]House . . ., p. 91.

[19]House . . ., p. 92.

[20]House . . ., p. 94.

[21]House . . ., pp. 94, 96.

[22]House . . ., p. 58.

[24]House . . ., p. 212.

[25]Evers, p. 20.

CHAPTER VII

TRADITIONS ARE IDENTITY

Traditions are an important part of any culture and, indeed, Eric Fromm judges that that is modern man's basic problem: he has lost his sense of the traditional, and, therefore, no longer knows who he is.[1] The Indian way of life is slow to change and the retention of his traditions has often been considered by others to be a stumbling block to Indian progress. Perhaps the willingness or not to retain traditional ways is merely a matter of differences in goals. For example, Vine Deloria, Jr. has pointed out the difference between the Black and Red Power movements. He notes that the Black person's goal is to achieve a white status and lifestyle whereas the Indian's goal is to be left alone by the non-Indian.[2] The Indian does not seek change for he places a high priority on his traditional ways and beliefs.

Traditions are a meaning making force in a culture. Traditions are not ornamental but organic. They are a blend of the sacred and the profane, the mythic and the historic. They are what identifies the group. All of us within a given culture share a set of unconscious assumptions given to him by the organization of that culture. Since these are often not understood by those outside the group, explication is necessary. It is the thesis of this dissertation that Momaday's House Made of Dawn is poorly understood because the average reader is not aware of the Indian traditions that are the warp and woof of the narrative fabric.

At the beginning of the novel, Francisco was waiting for the return of his grandson from World War II. Francisco lived alone; he lived often in his memories of the past and of his only living relative, his grandson Abel, who was returning to the reservation. Francisco's strong feelings of concern and affection are shown by his wearing of a new shirt for the homecoming and by his repeating of his grandson's full name, "Abelito, Abelito"[3] under his breath as softly as a caress as he waited. This was unusual since a personal name is rarely spoken by the Indian: it may cause undue attention of the spirits to that individual and evil may result. But, Francisco was so lonely and so anxious for his grandson's return that he quietly murmurs his name. Momaday indicates the individual Indian's reluctance to publicly display affection through Francisco's show of indifference, "He heard the sharp wheeze of the brakes as the big bus rolled to a stop in front of the gas pump, and only then did he give attention to it, as if it had taken him by surprise."[4] Francisco also demonstrated Indian pride and restraint when he saw that Abel was so drunk that he did not even recognize his grandfather, and "tears came to his [Francisco's] eyes, and he knew only that he must laugh and turn away from the faces in the window of the bus."[5] He would not publicly betray his hurt. The Indian is traditionally stoic before non-Indians.

The next chapter of the novel covers the next day, July 21. In it several symbols which will reoccur are established. When Abel awakened that morning, he went instinctively to the nearby mountain where he could sit and observe the town far below. He remained there for a day and a night and the reader is taken back with Abel in memory to past happenings. He learns that Abel had always been an outsider in his own pueblo because his father was unknown, "Navajo perhaps or a Sia or an Isleta, an outsider

anyway,"[6] which makes Abel "foreign and strange." The reader is made subtly aware that Indians are very tribe and clan oriented and identity is established by one's position in the extended family structure. Abel did not completely belong, but he was tolerated.

There are a series of flashbacks that provide the information that Abel's mother had died of tuberculosis when he was five years old. Abel also demonstrates the Indian attitude concerning the sacredness of an individual's name, which is rarely spoken aloud. He remembers that "his grandfather left him there alone, and he looked at his brother's face. It was terribly thin and colorless, but all the pain was gone from it. Then under his breath and because he was alone, he spoke his brother's name."[7] There is no intrusive comment by the author explaining. One is expected to know that this is special and unusual behavior.

Momaday uses Abel's isolation on the mountain top to reveal what is necessary in his past to understand his present. Abel's remembrances were chronological from his earliest memories to his most recent; Momaday treats them briefly and they are very selective. Only significant memories are recalled. Momaday gives the reader a glimpse of an event that made a lasting impression on Abel, but Momaday does not elaborate on its importance. Abel merely recalls the event; Momaday picks up that motif later in the story to show the continuing relationship. This time of reminiscing provides an important framework for later actions. Only later reexamination will reveal what Abel's day and night on the mountain have meant. In the dawn of the second day, "he stood without thinking, nor did he move; only his eyes roved after something . . . something."[8] The reader knows only that Abel is desperately searching for some unknown. Not until later does one realize that Abel is searching for a way back to

a place where he belongs. "He had lost his place. He had long ago been at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the edge of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void."[9] Abel had lost the means for reentry into the Pueblo world. He no longer lived its traditions.

Abel remembered his first sexual experience and the fact that he was drunk at the time. It was a sexual encounter without meaning. He remembered most vividly Medina's daughter's laughter, and an unconscious association between his sexual partner, her laughter, and his incomplete satisfaction was established. It was a pattern to be repeated, as was the one introduced by his observance of two eagles' mating.

Abel's mind returned to something he had seen when he was a young man. It was an "awful, holy sight, full of magic and meaning."[10] It was an eagle flying with its talons closed upon a snake. Then he saw that there were two of them, golden eagles, in their mating flight and he watched fascinated as the female offered her invitation to have it then accepted by the male. It was a symbolic sequence that foreshadowed Abel's own experiences.

> They were cavorting, spinning and spiraling on the cold clear columns of air, and they were beautiful. They swooped, and hovered, leaning on the air, and swung close together, feinting and screaming with delight. The female was fullgrown, and the span of her broad wings was greater than any man's height. . . . She carried a rattlesnake; it hung shining from her feet, limp and curving out in the trail of her flight. Suddenly her wings and tail fanned, catching full on the wind, and for an instant she was still, widespread and spectral in the blue, while her mate flared past and away, turning around in the distance to look for her. Then she began to beat upward at an angle from the rim until she was small in the sky, and she let go of the snake. It fell slowly, writhing and rolling, floating out like a bit of silver thread against the wide back drop of the land. She held still above, buoyed up on the cold current, her crop and hackles gleaming like copper in the sun. The male swerved and sailed. He was younger than

> she and a little more than half as large. He was quicker, tighter in his moves. He let the carrion drift by; then suddenly he gathered himself and swooped, sliding down in a blur of motion to the strike. He hit the snake in the head, with not the slightest deflection of his course or speed, cracking its long body like a whip. Then he rolled and swung upward in a great pendulum arc, riding out his momentum. At the top of his glide he let go of the snake in turn, but the female did not go for it. Instead she soared out over the plain, nearly out of sight, like a mote receding into the haze of the far mountain. The male followed, and Abel watched them go, straining to see, saw them veer once, dip and disappear.[11]

An Indian seeing such an event of nature would know absolutely that it was a message intended for him from the gods. He would recognize that such a sight held special powers. It is significant that the female eagle was older, that it was she who initiated the encounter, and it was she who set the pattern of flight and pursuit. Abel's later sexual encounters with Angela and Milly were of a similar kind. His vision established the pattern.

A visitor to the Jemez village, Mrs. Martin St. John, is painted deftly. Angela is a lovely, pale, young woman with long very dark hair, married to a doctor who is too busy to vacation with her. She employs Abel to chop wood for her and they assume the roles of the eagles he has seen. Momaday, soon after their meeting, employs sexual symbolism to establish their relationship.

> She watched, full of wonder, taking his motion apart. . . . There was an instant in which the coil of his body was set and all his strength was poised in the breach of time, then the infinite letting go. He leaned into the swing and drove; the blade flashed and struck and the wood gaped open. Angela caught her breath and said, 'I see' . . . . He was there rearing above the wood . . . there was a vague heat upon her."[12]

Angela felt the need to be in control and she resented Abel's reserve and apparent indifference to her, she dwelt on the way he looked at

her, his face cold and expressionless and he became a challenge to her; she had to discover the secret of his composure. Angela, too, was seeking some unknown, vague sense of completion. She waited for days for Abel to return to her house for his payment for chopping wood. When he did, there was mutual recognition and acknowledgment; as with the eagles, there was her invitation and his acceptance.

> 'Abel,' she said after a moment, 'do you think that I am beautiful?'. . . 'No, not beautiful,' he said. 'Would you like to make love to me?' 'Yes.' She looked evenly at him, no longer musing. 'You really would, wouldn't you? Yes. God, I've seen the way you look at me sometimes.' There was no reaction from him. 'And do you imagine,' she went on, 'that I would like it too?' 'I don't know,' he answered, 'but I imagine you would.' Angela caught her breath and after a long moment, she came to him.[13]

Abel was a skillful lover. There was something primitive, natural, purely physical about him that reminded her of a great blue-black bear she had once seen. Momaday here established the bear as a symbol for Abel. It is a thread that he will again introduce in Angela's creation of the myth that she tells her son, but Momaday never exposes the motif clearly to the reader, who is left to fill in the details as best he can.

Later, Momaday reintroduces the pattern of Abel's sexual relationships. Through the relocation center's efforts to assist him, Abel became acquainted with Milly, a social worker. Milly was the second lonely white woman who sought solace in Abel. With Milly he repeated the sexual pattern established in his relationship with Angela St. John and prefigured by the image of the mating eagles. Milly pursued him, she was aggressive and in control; Abel responded physically and instinctively. She cared deeply; he could not, although, at times he sought the security of mutual affection. Momaday makes it clear that although Abel was

attracted to her, he could not accept her fully because "she had looked him squarely in the eye, had spoken up and laughed--she was always laughing--from the very first. Easy laughter was wrong in a woman, dangerous and wrong."[14] His traditions, his Indian world view, prohibited his complete commitment to someone he perceived as behaving non-traditionally.

Another thread is introduced when Momaday uses several pages to describe the capture of an eagle for ceremonial purposes, Abel's remembrance is of its grandeur and power in flight, and his shame and disgust at its capture. It was a free thing which did not deserve to be imprisoned, and he mercifully strangled it. This serves to set the tone for Abel's own later imprisonment, the restriction of his freedom which crushed his spirit.

The traditional Indian concept of freedom is absolute. It includes but exceeds mere physical freedom. It is the freedom to do as one judges proper and appropriate in any situation without censure or coercion. Vine Deloria has noted:

> One of the chief weaknesses of the Indian community has been its aboslute freedom. . . . Indian people were free to participate according to their own sense of responsibility. In massing to prevent an invasion of rights, Indians were often able to come up with a very meager fighting force because the cause was not attractive enough. No individual was forced to participate in any course of action since he was freed from allegiance to abstractions.[15]

Abel was unable to exercise any choices while he was in prison. When he was relocated in Los Angeles at the end of his imprisonment he tried to respond as expected by the social workers but he could not. None of the choices were his; it was all arranged for him. This was alien to his traditions and the adjustment was beyond his ability to accept.

When he was challenged by the sadistic policeman, Martinez, Abel was unable to react physically because of the social and legal barriers, so he instinctively responded by "dropping out" of the situation. He stopped working, brooded about the insult, and lost himself in alcohol. This provided the opportunity Martinez needed to severely beat Abel and discard his body on the beach. No clear description of the beating is ever given, but Ben Benally remembered Abel's sullen drinking, his inability to keep a job, his quarreling with both Ben and Milly, and his determination to even the score with Martinez, who had hit him earlier with his night stick. Three nights later Ben awakened to hear Abel on the stairs suffering from the worst beating Ben had ever seen. Abel had regained consciousness on the beach and crawled and stumbled back to the room he shared with Ben. The concept of revenge is traditional in most tribes and the assumption is that Abel, in seeking vengeance for the earlier confrontation, was himself beaten instead.

A tradition included in both House Made of Dawn and The Names is a description of the "chicken pull" held every June at Jemez. Momaday recounts the myth of Santiago, the patron of the village, and establishes the purpose of the ceremony which takes place five days after Abel's return from the war. Because simple peasants in a gesture of generosity and hospitality had given Santiago their only possession of value, a rooster, "Santiago tore the bird apart with his bare hands and scattered the remains all about on the ground. The blood and feathers of the bird became cultivated plants and domestic animals, enough for all of the Pueblo people."[16] The ceremony which reenacts the sacrifice of the rooster thus became a fertility rite to insure good crops and a prosperous year for the pueblo. The chicken pull requires expert horsemanship and

skill. A rooster is brought to the center of the plaza and buried to its neck in sand. One by one the horsemen ride galloping by, leaning from their saddles to grasp the chicken's head and neck and pull it from the sand. The successful rider then holds the chicken aloft and riding among the other contestants selects a mounted opponent and begins to beat him about the head and shoulders with the rooster. His opponent must try to catch the rooster under his arm or with his bridle reins. The adversaries then pull the chicken apart and allow the pieces to fall to the ground.

Abel took part in the ceremony but he was out of practice and too rigid in the saddle to grasp the chicken's neck. His successful opponent was:

> large, lithe, and white skinned. He wore little round colored glasses and rode a fine black horse of good blood. . . . He was large and thickset, powerful and deliberate in his movements. . . . Angela saw that under his hat the pale yellow hair was thin and cut close to the scalp; the tight skin of the head was visible and pale and pink. The face was huge and mottled white and pink and the thick, open lips were blue and violet. There were no brows, and the small, round black glasses lay like pennies close together and flat against the enormous face.[17]

The albino is obscene and hideous. He chose Abel on which to flail the bird in its ritual sacrifice until the entrails were scattered about on the ground in the culmination of the fertility rite. The time of the afternoon was called the "sacrificial hour" and the "glasses like pennies" recall pagan burial practices.[18] The albino, as representative of Saint Sebastian in the ceremony, is established as a religious symbol which Momaday later reemphasizes. It has been suggested that this is a humiliating experience for Abel and the motivation for his murder of the

albino. I disagree with that interpretation; since the ritual is an annual one, Abel had no doubt seen it many times. There is no suggestion of disdain for the victim of the rooster beating. He is simply a part of the representation of the mythological drama. It is an established role without stigma, and there is no indication that Abel felt humiliated, although he was perhaps somewhat embarrassed at his poor horsemanship.

Momaday includes several traditional Jemez Pueblo ceremonies in his novel. Some are Pecos ceremonies that were incorporated into the Jemez traditions when eighteen or twenty survivors of a plague in Pecos sought shelter in Jemez about 1840 and were taken in there. They became a part of the community and many of their ceremonies were adopted. One of these was the feast of Our Lady of the Angels, Porcingula,[19] observed on August 2 of each year. Momaday describes the ceremony in The Names as he observed it as a boy and includes it as Angela St. John observed it in House Made of Dawn.

Francisco had participated in the ritual many times as both a kiva member and as sacristan of the church, for the ceremony is a curious meld of pagan and Catholic rites. The Indian medicine men blessed with corn pollen and prayer plumes the little likeness of the black Arabian horse of the Moors that is the chief character in the drama, but, also, adjacent to the kiva and near the center of the plaza, was a shrine for Our Lady of the Angels. And, "after Mass the lovely Lady would be borne in procession from the church, and the little horse would come to greet her in the aisle."[20] Francisco has even taken the role of the Pecos bull on several occasions in the ceremony and loped around and hooked the air with wooden horns before the blackfaced children who portrayed the Moorish invaders.

It is the enactment of an ancient drama: a myth, perhaps of conquest, that no one now remembers. Superimposed over this pagan ritual are Christian practices and attitudes:

> The Lady would stand all day in her shrine, and the governor and his officials would sit in attendance at her feet, and one by one the dancers of the squash and turquoise clans would appear on top of the kiva, coming out upon the sky in their rich ceremonial dress, descend the high ladder to the earth, and kneel before her.[21]

This ancient ceremony, described in House Made of Dawn, is still observed annually. Although its significance has been lost, the celebration with its fixed characters and roles is a traditional rite.

Momaday has been concerned with the effects of Christianity on native traditions in several of his writings. In his novel he describes a peyote ceremony typical of those of the Native American Church.[22] Momaday explains in detail the paraphernalia used, the sequence of the ritual, the roles of the participants, and the effects of the service. Tosamah, who conducted the "Gospel According to John" service, also conducted the peyote ceremony. Where before Tosamah was clothed in "black like a cleric," now the "part in his hair was a bright yellow line; there were vertical red lines on either side of his face; and there were yellow half moons under his eyes. He was a holy, sinister sight."[23] Momaday contrasts not only Tosamah's appearance, but also his attitude, which was now sincere and solemn where before it had been callous. He also contrasts the attitudes of the congregation. Where before they were simply passive observers and listeners, now they were active participants:

> The Priest of the Sun sprinkled dry rubbed cedar on the fire, then made four circular motions toward the flames, holding in his hand the bag of peyote buttons. Having done this,

> he removed four of the buttons and passed the remainder to his left. Kneeling, he bruised a tuft of sage between his palms, inhaling deeply of the scent, and rubbed his hands on his head and chest, shoulders and arms and thighs. The others imitated him, first holding out their hands to receive the blessing of the incense, then rubbing themselves.
>
> Then all of the celebrants ate of the peyote buttons, spitting out the woolly centers. From then on until dawn there were songs, prayers, the sound of the rattle and the drum.[24]

They each prayed sincerely and spontaneously in broken, uneducated English. There was a sense of euphoria and satisfaction in the vivid sensory experiences that resulted from the chewing of the peyote. Momaday's contrast between the two services is obvious. The Indian is more fulfilled through his own symbols and rituals; his aping of white ceremonies is little more than a halfhearted parody.

Momaday makes a point with his portrait of Father Olguin, the Catholic priest at Jemez, who is almost a stereotype. He is a troubled and insecure Catholic priest who recognized and came to reluctantly acknowledge the Pueblo's merely surface acceptance of his religious teachings. He came to understand even while he condemned the villager's superficial involvement with Catholic ritual and dogma. For them, it was an expedient cover for their real beliefs and practices. Frank Waters has noted, "They have found it merely expedient to wear a Christian mask for practical, secular purposes while still preserving their mythological faith in the forces of life itself."[25] It is simply easier to go through the motions of devotion to the church while at the same time maintaining their ancient kiva rituals or combining both beliefs as they did while dancing the tribal dances commemorating the Pecos bull before the image of a Catholic saint in the plaza.

The Journal of Father Nicolas, Father Olguin's predecessor, is used

by Momaday to show how little the Pueblo people have changed during the past seventy-one years. Current observers agree, "Yet after four and a half centuries, white domination is still a surface veneer."[26] Their apparently conforming passivity conceals a core of implacable resistance. The Journal, which was often read by Father Olguin, stated:

> Tomacita Frague died this late morning and again I was not called to it. But the son-in-law Diego came in the afternoon and gave me leave to make the burial. I saw they had finished with her according to their dark custom and there was blue and yellow corn meal about on the floor.[27]

Over one hundred years later, Abel performed similar burial rites for his grandfather Francisco according to traditional Pueblo custom. Only then did Abel go to the priest and say "'My grandfather is dead'. . . . 'You must bury him.'"[28] Father Olguin shouted after Abel was gone, "'I can understand!' he said, 'I understand, do you hear?' And he began to shout. 'I understand!--I understand!'"[29] Father Olguin had reached the same reconciliation as had his predecessor Fray Nicolas, who after the Pueblo's Catholic celebration of Christ's nativity, noted, "Now the chanting and the drums and I have no part of it and I am by myself and tired."[30] There is a retention of traditions that the priests are simply forced to accept in spite of their efforts to change them.

Francisco had been brought up in the Catholic church, and as a boy he was the bell ringer and served as an acolyte. At the time of his death he had been the sacristan for many years, but Fray Nicolas' Journal records "he is one of them and goes often to the kiva and puts on their horns and hides and does worhsip that Serpent which even is the One our most ancient enemy."[31] So, at the same time that Francisco had an important role in the Catholic ritual, he was a Pueblo snake priest. The

overlay posed no problems for Francisco nor for most Indians, but it was difficult for the priests to accept. Momaday suggests, however, that time and continual exposure to Indian customs finally resulted in the priest's resignation:

> He was content. He had at last begun to sense the rhythm of life in the ancient town, and how it was that his own pulse should eventually conform to it. And this in itself was a grave satisfaction to him. He had always been on the lookout for reverences, and here was a holiness more intrinsic than any he could ever have imagined--a slow, druidic procession of seasons in the narrow streets.[32]

The form of worship is not the same, but at least there is a similar sense of homage.

The narrator intrudes to make clear the typical Indian position:

> The people of the town have little need. They do not hanker after progress and have never changed their essential way of life. Their invaders were a long time in conquering them, and now, after four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky and make their living from the things that are and have always been within their reach; while in the discrimination of pride they acquire from their conquerors only the luxury of example. They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, and have held on to their own, secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting.[32]

The author's intrusion, also, reveals other Indian beliefs; for example, the animals like humans have rituals, "It is said that hawks, when they have nothing to fear in the open land, dance upon the warm carnage of their kills."[34] And, that they have rational powers:

> They [coyotes] have the gift of being seldom seen; they keep to the edge of vision and beyond, loping in and out of cover on the plains and highlands. And at night, when the whole world belongs to them, they parley at the river with the dogs, their higher, sharper voices full of authority and rebuke. They are an old council of clowns, and they are listened to.[35]

The Indian belief in animism is still strong. "It is said, 'Once there were wolves in the mountains and the old hunters of the town remember them. It is said that they were many, and they came to the hunters' fires at night and sat around in the dark timber like old men wanting to smoke."[36] Momaday includes these traditional beliefs to provide the background for an understanding of the actions to come, particularly Abel's slaying of the albino.

Other traditional beliefs are woven into the story. In his delirium after the beating by Martinez, Abel called out for Angela St. John, whom he had recognized at a distance one day on a Los Angeles street. Ben located her and she visited Abel in the hospital and told him the story she had invented about a young Indian brave born of a bear and a maiden who grew up to save his people. She told Abel that she always thought of him when she told the story. Here Momaday recalls the motif of the bear image Angela associated with Abel the first time she saw him. The bear has a special significance for both Pueblo and Navajo tribes.[37]

Ben, who was present at the meeting, heard Angela's story about the bear, and recalled the story told to him as a child by his old Navajo grandfather. The story was about the ancient belief in the sacredness of the bear which was their clan symbol. It was the curious story about two sisters, the youngest of whom married a snake, the eldest a bear. The reintroduction through this story of the bear symbol associated with Abel, and the snake symbol associated with the albino he killed is puzzling. The bear is apparently sacred since the woman who married him ran away to the mountains and was welcomed and accepted there by the Yei bichai, the Navajo ancestral gods. Mountains are frequently associated with spiritual qualities in comparative mythologies and the four mountains

which surround the Navajo nation are its most holy sanctuaries. They are the homes of their gods. By contrast, the barren plains where the youngest sister ran are often associated with evil or distance from spiritual values. The mountains are the abode of the bears, the plains that of the snakes. The bear is generally believed to be a symbol for healing among the Navajo and many tales are told of their abilities to remedy illness.

The snake is a more puzzling symbol since in contrast to Christian theology where the snake is a symbol of evil, in Indian mythology it is often beneficial and the bringer of rain.[38] A central Indian belief, however, is that even the finest person combines within him some of the spirit of evil as do even their gods. Frank Waters has noted that, "Navajo ceremonialism also notably accentuates man's relationship to the animal kingdom. In the great ceremony, Mountain Way, held always within its 'dark circle of boughs' so aptly named, the mythical hero embodies the bear. Beauty Way symbolically emphasizes snakes."[39] Perhaps this ancient Navajo myth is one more illustration of the necessity, as he understood it, for Abel to kill the albino. The associations of Abel and the albino with these symbols are explicit. But the complete significance is obscure.

Traditional belief in the healing powers of nature is evident throughout the novel. When Angela came to the valley it was because she had a soreness in her back and her physician husband had sent her to take the mineral baths and to rest and vacation. This separation at the time of her early pregnancy produced feelings of isolation and alienation in her, but the environment gradually brought her tranquility. "It was no longer the chance place of her visitation, or the tenth day, but now

the dominion of her next day and the day after, as far ahead as she cared to see."[40] After her affair with Abel, when Angela went to Father Olguin for confession, she had a craving for the rain as though nature could cleanse her and wash away her sins as it did later with the knife Abel had used in the murder. "Abel threw down the knife and the rain fell upon it and made it clean."[41] Abel sought this same kind of restoration through nature when he first went to the mountain top and remained for a day and a night. Momaday describes in detail the natural environment, but Abel was not ready for its healing properties; he did not find the peace he sought. Later, when he went again to the mountain:

> There were huge clouds flaring out and sailing low with water above the Valle Grande. And, stopping once to drink from the river, he turned around and saw the valley below, a great pool of the sunlit sky, and red and purple hills; and here and upward from this height to the top of the continent the air was distilled to the essence of summer and noon, and nothing lay between the object and the eye. He began almost to be at peace.[42]

It is only at the end of the novel and of Abel's ordeal, as he ran through the valley at the break of day, that "he could see at last, see without having to think."[43] The natural environment had begun to heal and restore him.

There is a continuing belief in the power of a "Sing" or ceremonial chant as a healing agent. Momaday incorporates this in his novel. The traditional belief is that one is ill as a result of disharmony with nature, society, and the world of the supernatural. If a person lives harmoniously he will be healthy. Health is not the mere absence of disease but an indication that the person is living harmoniously with his family, his neighbors, his God and himself. This concept has much

in common with modern psychiatry.[44] "The whole Navajo system of curing clearly takes it for granted that you cannot treat a man's 'body' without treating his 'mind' and vice versa."[45] "His illness, whatever it may be, is never regarded as being solely organic; that is only its effect."[46] Ben Benally is a Navajo; he is Abel's best friend, and he serves as best he can as a traditional medicine man to restore Abel's balance. Sings are a powerful therapeutic activity accepted in the Indian mind as a symbol of the mystical and supernatural worlds.

Abel may be half Navajo, also, and he has been contaminated by exposure to enemies during the war, to the albino witch that he killed, and to the cruel policeman who beat him. Any non-Navajo is considered anaa, "one's enemy." Such contacts can be the source of bad dreams, illness, even death. A ceremony is necessary to exorcise the evil spirit and cleanse the Indian. Exorcising the evil influence is not alone sufficient however. The empty space must be filled with positive forces. Ben sang a portion of the Mountain Chant to Abel when they were alone on the mountain, but it was not until Abel participated in the Pueblo race that he was fully on the way to recovery. It is interesting that Beauty Way, the portion of the chant that Ben sang, is a ceremony that removes bad effects caused by snakes. Through this chant the reader is introduced to the source for the title of the novel.

TSEGIH.
House made of dawn,
House made of evening light,
House made of dark cloud,
House made of male rain,
House made of dark mist,
House made of female rain,
House made of pollen,
House made of grasshoppers,
Dark cloud is at the door.

The trail out of it is dark cloud.
The zigzag lightning stands high upon it.
Male deity!
Your offering I make.
I have prepared a smoke for you.
Restore my feet for me.
Restore my legs for me.
Restore my body for me.
Restore my mind for me.
Restore my voice for me.
This very day take out your spell for me.
Your spell remove for me.
You have taken it away for me;
Far off it has gone.
Happily I recover.
Happily my interior becomes cool.
Happily I go forth.
My interior feeling cool, may I walk.
No longer sore, may I walk.
Impervious to rain, may I walk.
With lively feelings, may I walk.
As it used to be long ago, may I walk.
Happily may I walk.
Happily, with abundant dark clouds, may I walk.
Happily, with abundant showers, may I walk.
Happily, with abundant plants, may I walk.
Happily, on a trail of pollen, may I walk.
Happily may I walk.
Being as it used to be long ago, may I walk.
May it be beautiful before me,
May it be beautiful behind me,
May it be beautiful below me,
May it be beautiful above me,
May it be beautiful all around me.
In beauty it is finished.[47]

The House Made of Dawn is a spiritual home filled with all of the elements necessary for a good life.[48] The rain is abundant, which is so necessary for life in the desert region where the Navajo live. The chant is a prayer for wholeness, and for harmony and balance within man and his environment, and within himself. The lines are repetitious and incremental as is customary in Indian oral tradition. Ben sang only a small portion of the ceremonial which usually takes seven nights to complete. The words are not a plea, but a request, a reciprocal argument: I have made

an offering and a smoke for you, now you do this for me: heal me. Since the chant is a petition for wholeness, for restoration not only of each physical part of the body named, but also for the fruitfulness of the environment and for the perception of beauty which comes from a spiritual well-being, it is the appropriate "medicine" for Abel's physical and psychic illness. Perhaps even this brief excerpt of the chant sung by an untrained friend in lieu of a traditional Navajo singer or Hatal served to start Abel on a path of healing which could only be completed after his return to the Pueblo.

Ben had recognized Abel's lack of harmony earlier, ". . . everything had gone too far with him, you know, and he was already sick inside. Maybe he was sick a long time, always, and nobody knew it, and it was just coming out for the first time and you could see it."[49] This suggestion poses a question for the reader about the origin of Abel's imbalance, for, certainly, he had always felt alienated and when he returned from the war he seemed cut off from his roots. He could not even communicate with his grandfather, his only relative. He had apparently lived a lonely childhood after his mother's and brother's deaths and he seemed unable to reenter the traditional way of life again after his time in the army. Certainly a major cause of his disharmony was his belief that the albino he killed was a witch.

Belief in witches is common in Indian communities. The significance of this traditional Indian belief in witchcraft is the single most important concept in House Made of Dawn. Momaday establishes Abel's belief in and fear of witches in his remembrance of his early life and a particular experience.

A strange encounter with an old woman when he was a child had impressed itself indelibly on Abel's mind. Nicolas was a drunken hunchbacked woman whom Abel encountered while he was herding sheep as a boy and who was believed by the community to be a witch. Even Abel's dog sensed Nicolas' evil and they were both aware of a peculiar sound when they encountered her on the lonely road. Abel knew rationally that it was only the wind sucking through the hole in a rock, but it was so eerie that his dog quivered and laid back its ears and Abel was also afraid. "The moan of the wind grew loud and it filled him with dread. For the rest of his life it would be for him the particular sound of anguish."[50] Momaday introduces here a recurrent motif, Abel's psychological association of a peculiar high-pitched sound with the presence of evil. Momaday does not elaborate on the Indians' almost pathological fear of witchcraft which is a pervasive part of the culture. He assumes the reader's knowledge, but this assumption may be unjustified. This is a dominant part of Abel's world view and one that will have serious repercussions for him, but Momaday uses only one concise paragraph to establish the relationship.

The same kind of eerie sound triggered a severe reaction in Abel when he was serving in the war.

> He didn't know where he was, and he was alone. No, there were men about, the bodies of men. . . . But here was sound: something low and incessant, almost distant, full of slow, steady motion and approach. It was above and behind him, across the spine of the hill, coming. It moved into the wide wake of silence, taking hold of the silence and swelling huge inside of it, coming. . . . He didn't know where he was, could not remember having been there and gone to sleep . . . but now there was nothing but silence and the strange insinuation of the machine upon it. There was only the dark rim of the hill and the trees edge with light. The sound of the machine brimmed at the ridge, held, and ran over, not intricate now, but

> whole and deafening. His mouth fell upon the cold, wet leaves, and he began to shake violently. He reached for something, but he had no notion of what it was; his hand closed upon earth and the cold, wet leaves.[51]

This was all Abel remembered of the war from which he had returned, but it was a memory etched on his brain. It was the evil sound which filled him with terror, with irrational and uncontrollable fear. It was like the sound he had heard when as a child he saw the witch; he knew the machine was evil too, not because the army had taught him that tanks are destructive, but because he intuitively associated the sound of the machine, the rising wind, and his earlier knowledge of evil. He knew in his bones it was an evil spirit.

Momaday uses the owl as another symbol to indicate Abel's complete identification with Indian beliefs. After the brutal beating by Martinez, Abel lay on the beach in a state of delirium. His pain-racked body was close to death when he saw an owl hovering above him:

> He peered into the night: all around the black land against the star-bright, moonbright sky. So far had his vision reached that the owl, when he saw it, seemed to fly in his face and break apart, torrential, ghostly, silently as a dream. He was delirious now and gasping for breath; he hurried on in his mind, holding the owl away in the corner of his eye.[52]

The owl is an almost universal Indian symbol for death.[53] The precise belief differs with the tribe but the association between the owl and death is widespread.

Many events exist for Abel in a strange semi-conscious awareness. He experienced them, he knew they existed, but they were without meaning for him. Such was Abel's recall of the trial for the murder of the albino. Although he realized his future would be decided by it, he also

knew it was something over which he had no control. He believed completely that he did what he had to do, though the white men could not understand this. The consequences were not his concern, for the deed was inevitable and he knew he would do it again. "But he could remember very little about the trial. There were charges, questions and answers; it was ceremonial, orderly, civilized, and it had almost nothing to do with him."[54] It is the reappearance of the concept Momaday introduced earlier when Abel was able to recall only one event of the war. He remembers only traumatic experiences and only those directly affecting him.

One of the most difficult events to comprehend in House Made of Dawn is Abel's killing of the albino, Juan Reyes Fragua.[55] It has been variously interpreted but rarely understood. That the white courts did not understand Abel's motivation and the necessity for the killing is a puzzlement to Abel. Differences between the white and Indian world views are emphasized in Abel's perspective of his killing of the albino. Abel had killed the albino six years before he found himself in Los Angeles in the congregation of Tosamah's church and he had spent much of the intervening time in prison. Momaday uses a flashback technique to illustrate Abel's remembrance of the surrounding events and his concept of them. As Abel remembered:

> He had killed the white man. It was not a complicated thing, after all; it was very simple. It was the most natural thing in the world. Surely they could see that, these men who meant to dispose of him in words. They must know that he would kill the white man again, if he had the chance, that there could be no hesitation whatsoever. For he would know what the white man was, and he would kill him if he could. A man kills such an enemy if he can.[56]

Another point of view is voiced, however, by the acculturated Tosamah.

> And do you know what he said? I mean, do you have any idea what that cat said? A snake, he said. He killed a goddam snake! The corpus delicti, see, he threatened to turn himself into a snake, for chrissake, and rattle around a little bit. Now ain't that something, though? Can you imagine what went on at that trial? There was this longhair, see, cold sober, of sound mind, and the goddam judge looking on, and the prosecutor trying to talk sense to that poor degenerate Indian: 'Tell us about it, man. Give it to us straight.' 'Well, your honors, it was this way, see? I cut me up a little snake meat out there in the sand.' Christ, man, that must have been our finest hour, better than Little Bighorn. That little no-count cat must have had the whole Jesus scheme right in the palm of his hand. Think of it! What's-His-Name vs. United States. I mean, where's the legal precedent, man? When you stop to think about it, due process is a hell of a remedy for snakebite.[57]

Tosamah was the most sophisticated of the Indians, the most knowledgeable of white ways, the most educated. He recognized the difference in world views. There is an enormous gap between the New Testament "love thy enemy" concept and the conception of a participation of good and evil in all of life and the struggle to maintain a balance between the two.

But, at the trial, Father Olguin alone understood:

> 'I mean,' said Father Olguin, 'that in his own mind it was not a man he killed. It was something else.' 'An evil spirit?' 'Something like that, yes.'. . . 'We are dealing with a psychology about which we know very little. I see the manisfestations of it every day, but I have no real sense of it--not any longer. I relinquished my claim to the psychology of witchcraft when I left home and became a priest.'. . . I believe this man was moved to do what he did by an act of the imagination so compelling as to be inconceivable to us.'[58]

It was for the Indian an attempt to eradicate evil. He perceived the albino as a witch, and for the Pueblo man, who was perhaps part Navajo, witchcraft was the ultimate evil to be feared completely and destroyed if possible. Momaday skillfully suggests the Southwest Indian's concept of the pervasive presence of this evil. This is a dominant belief even today.

The belief in witches is a very old one that has been handled historically in traditional ways. As John M. Hurdy explains, "In the old days witches were dragged to death by four wild horses. Now that the people must submit to white customs execution usually takes the form of personal violence."[59] In 1969, Frank Waters observed that a ". . . growing host of witches and sorcerors are the Powaqa--also know as Two Hearts because they have both human and animal hearts."[60] This was precisely Abel's perception of the albino/snake creature.

The belief in witches is still a pervasive and powerful one. Clyde Kluckhohn, the widely recognized authority on Southwest Indian culture, says,

> Belief in witches is universal and these are deep fears, [the source of] much gossip and countless and widely current anecdotes.[61]. . . Navajo and Pueblo--both cultures believe in the existence of witches.[62]. . . Every daily act is colored by their conception of supernatural forces, ever present and ever threatening.[63]. . . Witchcraft belief is extraordinarily persistent. Navajos who seem to be completely 'emancipated' from other aspects of their religion will show tremendous fear of witches, once a situation takes on a certain coloring.[64]

Hurdy tells of an incident where a man believed to be a witch had killed two small children. Their father split open the witch's head with his axe. When the father was arrested and jailed, he tried to explain the logic and the necessity of his actions. He tried to make the jury understand that he had performed a service for the good of the entire community.[65] However, like the jury at Abel's trial, the jury was less than sympathetic about his point of view. With Indians all power has the same source. The distinction is in the way it is used.

> There is another kind of power which may be possessed by a number of people; it is a negative power exercised for malevolent

> ends. Witches and Two-Hearts have such a power. They and their power are transitory, first in that they may take the form of an animal to conceal their evil work, and second, they may possess their prey.[66]

The Indian believes that few things are wholly bad. Nearly everything can be brought under control and the evil effect eliminated through proper traditional rituals.

That this is currently a little discussed but nevertheless constant concern of Indians today is evident in Don Wilkerson's remarks. He says:

> Among ourselves we are not afraid to admit that we still believe in ghosts and witches, and the things of this nature because we know that we are not going to be laughed at. . . . I know that some people might say we are old-fashioned, but that doesn't bother us too much. I would be reticent to tell a lot of people that ghosts and witches are very much a part of our everyday life. We have good witches and bad witches, and although you won't find too many Indian people admitting to this in the cities, you will find it very much a part of life at home on the reservation.[67]

This is another traditional belief which Momaday personally accepts.

> There are witches at Jemez Pueblo, and when I lived there I knew of them, sure enough. . . . On another occasion I heard breathing in the room where I was sleeping; indeed I was awakened by it. It was an awful heaving, as if someone had run himself completely out of breath. I was immediately and wide awake, staring into the corner of the room from which the sound had come. There was nothing to be seen or heard, only a blackness like pitch behind a wide band of moonlight on the floor. There was nothing, and yet I have never been so certain of the presence of something in my life.[68]

Abel's intense reaction and behavior is more understandable to the reader in light of evidence of this aspect of the Indian world view. For Abel accepts without question his people's belief in witchcraft and their traditional pursuit of that evil. There is a ceremony used to control evil; it is a race run by the old men of the tribe.

> . . . the old men running after evil, their white leggings holding in motion like smoke above the ground. They passed in the night, full of tranquility, certitude. There was no sound of breathing or sign of effort about them. They ran as water runs. . . . They ran with great dignity and calm, not in the hope of anything, but hopelessly; neither in fear nor hatred nor despair of evil, but simply in recognition and with respect. Evil was. Evil was abroad in the night; they must venture out to the confrontation; they must reckon dues and divide the world.[69]

This description in the novel is one of a sight Momaday remembers from his childhood in Jemez. It is another of the biographical incidents he incorporates in his works. "There, at that window one night, I saw a group of old men on the moonlit road, running in ceremonial garb after witches. It is a vision I shall carry in my mind as long as I live."[70] In another account Momaday again refers to the old men running after evil and his belief in their purpose: "And in summer nights of the full moon I saw the old men in their ceremonial garb running after witches--and sometimes I thought I saw the witches themselves in the forms of bats and cats and owls on fenceposts."[71] Momaday uses these incidents in his own experience to indicate Abel's complete acceptance of the Pueblo concept of evil. Abel knew, for him, his actions had been inevitable if misunderstood.

The relationship between Abel and the albino Juan is culminated in a brief three pages of the novel. There is a certain inevitability about the scene. It is as though it was by mutual agreement that the killing took place. Abel and Juan talked together paying no attention to the other patrons in the bar.

> Now and then the white man laughed, and each time it carried too high on the scale and ended in a strange, inhuman cry--as of pain. . . . It issued only from the tongue and teeth of the great evil mouth. . . . And throughout Abel smiled; he

> nodded and grew silent at length; and the smile was thin and instinctive, a hard, transparent mask upon his mouth and eyes. . . . And then they were ready, the two of them. . . . They went out into the darkness and the rain. They crossed the highway and walked out among the dunes. . . . When they were midway between the river and the road, they stopped. . . . Abel waited.[72]

There is no evidence of impending violence but an attitude of curious acceptance of the inevitable.

Another thread is introduced with the curious sexual relationship between the albino and Abel; the horse Abel rode in the chicken pull was a "gentle mare" and the albino mounted a high-spirited black horse which "stood its ground, cutting off every line of retreat pressing upon the terrified mare."[73] It has been suggested that Abel murdered the albino because of a homosexual relationship, but the evidence does not support this contention. However, the albino's sexuality is emphasized when Angela observed the celebration of Saint Sebastian and was aware of a "strange exhaustion. . . . She was bone weary."[74] She compared her reaction to her first sexual experience; Angela intuits the sensual confrontation between the two men. There are also several sexual images at their last encounter.

> Then he closed his hands upon Abel and drew him close. Abel heard the strange excitement of the white man's breath, and the quick, uneven blowing at his ear, and felt the blue shivering lips upon him, felt even the scales of the lips and the hot slippery point of the tongue, writhing. He [Abel] was sick with terror and revulsion, and he tried to fling himself away, but the white man held him close. The white immensity of flesh lay over and smothered him.[75]

The sexual images combined with the snake imagery reinforces the supernatural milieu.

Another curious aspect of their final encounter is the inclusion of several religious allusions in the description. There are references to their partaking of wine together, to lights that shine on the scene "like candle flames";[76] to the cross-like wound carved by the knife when "he [Abel] drove the blade up under the bones of the breast and across";[77] to Juan's hands that "lay upon him as if in benediction";[78] and to the expression on Juan's face, "the vague distortion of sorrow."[79] Also, there is mention of Abel's "wonder and regard," his kneeling down and observing the "white, hairless arm [that] shone like the underside of a fish, and the dark nails of the hand [that] seemed a string of black beads."[80] The Christian symbolism and Juan's seemingly willing, almost loving, sacrifice suggest a Christ-like figure, but he is also described as being serpent-like, with scales on his lips and the point of his tongue "writhing." One suspects that Momaday is commenting further on the intrusion of the Catholic faith upon the traditional Pueblo beliefs, and references to only the "white man" rather than to his name, Juan, connotes a cultural, racial bias. The serpent imagery which for the Christian is a symbol of sin and for the Indian is an intermediary who carries a prayer for rain to his gods is a paradox.

A curious relationship also seemed to exist between Juan Reyes, the albino, and Abel's grandfather, Francisco. Juan was born in 1875, according to the priest's Journal when Francisco was perhaps six or seven years old. They have lived in the same small village of Jemez all of their lives and are obviously well acquainted, but as the old man, Francisco, hoed his corn after the ceremony for Saint Sebastian, he had a premonition of evil. Something subconscious alerted him:

> Something there stuck beneath the level of his weariness, struck and took hold in his hearing like the cry of a small creature--a field mouse or a young rabbit . . . some alien presence close at hand. And he knew as suddenly, too, that it had been there a long time, . . . He was too old to be afraid. His acknowledgement of the unknown was nothing more than a dull, intrinsic sadness, a vague desire to weep, for evil had long since found him out and knew who he was.[81]

As Francisco left the field, it became evident that it was Juan Reyes who had been watching him, "the breathing resumed, rapid and uneven with excitement. Above the open mouth, the nearly sightless eyes followed the old man out of the cornfield, and the barren lids fluttered helplessly behind the colored glass."[82] When Juan is later described in serpent-like terms, the reader also knows that Francisco was a snake priest who according to Fray Nicolas "does worship that Serpent which even is the One our most ancient enemy."[83] The reader knows that Juan had been established as a religious symbol through his role as Saint Sebastian in the chicken pull and that Francisco is devout, but their relationship is never made explicit. It is clear only that Francisco sensed evil in Juan's presence.

Abel's grandfather had likewise suffered an unreasoning fear of witches. He had loved a beautiful young girl, Procingula, who was the daughter of old Nicolas and whom he greatly feared because everyone believed she was a witch. When Francisco's and Procingula's child was stillborn, Francisco became afraid and their affair was over. Like Abel, his fear of witchcraft was dominant over his reason and even over his love.

That this belief in witches continues to exist is certain, and that it is a powerful motivating force is equally clear. It is the paradox of the concept of Juan as being a witch and evil and the Christian religious

symbolism associated with him that causes confusion. Does Momaday intend his death to be a symbol for the triumph of Indian traditional beliefs and practices over Christian beliefs? The obvious association of Juan with the snake and Abel with the bear and the inclusion in the novel of the myth associated with them does not clarify the concept. Momaday no doubt means to convey a message; unfortunately it is blurred. This lack of clarity is a weakness in the novel.

In the last section of House Made of Dawn, as Francisco lays dying, he returned in vivid memory to his coming of age: the time when alone with only his colt he tracked and killed a bear. It was a climactic experience which was formalized by ritual and his awarenesss of the sacredness of the occasion. He was as one with the animals in the mountains who seemed to understand the necessity of his mission, ". . . he saw the dark shapes sauntering among the trees, and then the others, sitting all around motionless, the short pointed ears and the soft shining eyes, almost kindly and discreet, the gaze of the gray heads bidding only welcome and wild good will."[84] The bear knew that he was being tracked, and was as aware of Francisco as he was of the bear:

> The bear knew he was coming, knew better than he how close he was, was even now watching him from the wood, waiting, but still he must make no sound of hurry. . . . And when at last he looked up, the timber stood around a pool of light, and the bear was standing still and small at the far side of the brake, careless, unheeding. He brought the rifle up, and the bear raised and turned its head and made no sign of fear. It was small and black in the deep shade and dappled with light, its body turned three-quarters away and standing perfectly still, and the flat head and the small black eyes that were fixed upon him hung around upon the shoulder and under the hump of the spine. . . . The bullet slammed into the flesh and jarred the whole black body once, but the bear remained motionless and the eyes level upon him. . . . He took out his pouch of pollen and made yellow streaks above the bear's eyes.[85]

Francisco stalked his first bear in a ceremonial fashion; it was all done particularly and without haste in the traditional manner. There was an acknowledgment and acceptance of their respective roles:

> And he did not want to break the stillness of the night, for it was holy and profound; it was rest and restoration, the hunter's offering of death and the sad watch of the hunted, waiting somewhere away in the cold darkness and breathing easily of its life, brooding around at last to forgiveness and consent; the silence was essential to them both and it lay out like a bond between them, ancient and inviolable.[86]

This passage reflects not only the Indian belief that everything must be done according to ancient practice and ritual, but also the belief that animals are rational and understand man's purpose. Momaday illustrates the Indian belief that an animal hunted in the proper manner sacrifices itself knowingly and willingly to the hunter to provide his sustenance and the hunter reciprocates by ritually accepting the sacrifice.

Francisco included his colt in this initiation experience when he smeared the colt's muzzle with the bear's bloody liver, then rode the colt back to the pueblo to receive tribal recognition. "He and the colt had come of age."[87] Thus the bear became a part of each of them and continued to have existence through them. This was a symbolic ceremonial recognition of the proper relationships of each part to every other and to the whole traditional enactment of a sacred trust.

When Francisco died just before the dawn of the seventh day, Abel was with him and prepared his body according to the ancient custom:

> He drew the old man's head erect and laid water to the hair. He fashioned the long white hair in a queue and wound it around with yarn. He dressed the body in bright ceremonial colors: the old man's wine velveteen shirt, white trousers, and low moccasins, soft and white with kaolin. From the rafters he took down the pouches of pollen and of meal, the

> sacred feathers and the ledger book. These, together with ears of colored corn, he placed at his grandfather's side after he had sprinkled meal in the four directions. He wrapped the body in a blanket.[88]

That he had been an acolyte and a sacristan in the church are of little importance. He was first and most importantly a Pueblo Indian and his body must be traditionally prepared for burial.

After his grandfather's death, Abel walked to the edge of the Pueblo where he removed his shirt. Pausing before an oven, he reached inside and got ashes with which he rubbed his arms and chest. He hurried south of town in the darkness until he saw in the faint pre-dawn light the bodies of the runners standing in the distance. He came among them as they waited, until in the saddle of the mesa, ". . . the deep hanging rim ran with fire and the sudden cold flare of the dawn struck upon the arc, and the runners sprang away."[89] This is an instinctive tribute to his grandfather's memory, a reenactment of the races in which his grandfather participated.

The novel ends with Abel's participation in the dawn ritual, running with a group in the traditional manner:

> They run not to win from one another, but to extend all their strength to the sun for his daily and seasonal journey. . . . For they know that man cannot obtain the energies of life without returning some of it to its source. . . . It is a race of the individual against the limits of his own flesh.[90]

It was a spontaneous acceptance of ritual that suggests Abel's spiritual return to the traditions of his people. "He was running and there was no reason to run but the running itself and the land and the dawn appearing."[91]

Abel pushed himself to the limit of his physical endurance and beyond. He was behind the other runners and thus alone, but, nevertheless, a part of the ceremony. For the first time in a long time he gave himself completely.

Abel was throughout the novel inarticulate, unable to communicate on other than a surface level, and sometimes not even that. When he returned from the war, though he wanted to, he could not speak to his grandfather. He had forgotten the old ways, what was of importance. He was unable to express his emotions and feelings to Milly, although, again, he seemed to be groping for understanding and acceptance. He listened to others in Los Angeles, Tosamah, Milly, and Ben, but he seemed unable to respond. Momaday has seen Abel's inability to communicate as his greatest problem. "One of the most tragic things about Abel, as I think of him, is his inability to express himself. He is in some ways a man without a voice. And in his situation--in the context of the Indian world--that is a particular tragedy."[92]

The novel ends on the positive note of Abel's participation in the dawn race. What the traditional "longhair" Francisco has always known, Abel may now be ready to accept. The reader is left hopeful of his gradual reawakening to an understanding of the traditional Pueblo world view and his role within it.

ENDNOTES

[1]"Freedom a Psychological Problem," Escape From Freedom (New York: Avon Books, 1965), pp. 1-17.

[2]"Others," We Talk You Listen (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 85-99.

[3]The name, Abel, immediately suggests a biblical allusion to the reader of House Made of Dawn. Abel is to some extent a victim of his exposure to "white society" and thus could be compared with the biblical account of the first murder victim. However, beyond the fact that they are both victims of circumstances beyond their control, there seems little similarity. Momaday told Charles Woodard in an interview in November, 1974, that the model for his character was a neighbor by the same name at Jemez (Ph.D. unpublished dissertation, "The Concept of the Creative Word in the Writings of N. Scott Momaday," University of Oklahoma, 1975). Momaday explained that the character is a composite of several people from that Pueblo and that he was not consciously thinking of the biblical Abel. Alan R. Belie presented a paper on this topic, "Cain and Abel in N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn," at a colloquium in the Oklahoma State University Student Union Theater, December 16, 1976. Abelito is also much like the affectionate term for grandfather, Abuelito. This association supports the cyclic structure and content of the novel that identifies Abel as a continuation of his grandfather's traditions.

[4]House . . ., p. 9.

[5]House . . . .

[6]House . . ., p. 11.

[7]House . . ., p. 13.

[8]House . . ., p. 26.

[9]House . . ., p. 104.

[10]House . . ., p. 15.

[11]House . . ., pp. 17-18.

[12]House . . ., pp. 31-33.

[13]House . . ., pp. 62-63.

[14]House . . ., p. 107.

[15]Vine Deloria, p. 125.

[16]House . . ., p. 39.

[17]House . . ., pp. 42-44.

[18]"It is an ill omen if its [corpse's] eyes are found open: it was said to be looking for someone to join it in the grave. So, in many places, the eyes were held shut magically, as well as practically, by means of coins placed on them. . ." (Magic and Superstition, p. 85).

[19]Maria de los Angeles / Porcingula is the patroness of the imigrants from the Tanoan city of Bahkyush.

[20]House . . ., p. 77.

[21]House . . . .

[22]The use of peyote buttons as a sacrament was begun in Mexico in pre-Columbian times by the Aztecs. Quanah Parker, a half-blood Comanche Indian, brought the religious use of peyote to western Oklahoma via Texas in the late 1870s. James Mooney, an ethnologist of the Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution, studied this Indian form of worship after coming to Oklahoma in 1891. He was instrumental in formally establishing the religion in 1918 and signed the charter for the Native American Church issued by the State of Oklahoma. The religion spread from western Oklahoma westward to the Navajo, and to the Sac and Fox, Kickapoo, Shawnee, and Iowa tribes in eastern Oklahoma. From there it spread rapidly to tribes all over the United States. The Native American Church is currently active in many Indian communities and the use of the hallucinogen peyote for religious purposes is legal in Oklahoma. For additional information the reader may consult: David F. Aberle, The Peyote Religion Among the Navajo (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1966); Weston Le Barre, The Peyote Cult (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1964); Carol K. Rachlin, "The Native American Church," The Chronicles of Oklahoma (Autumn, 1964); J. S. Slotkins, The Peyote Religion; Peyote and the Native American Church of the United States, Indian Affairs Newsletter, April, 1961; and Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin, Peyote (New York: Crowell, 1971), among others.

[23]House . . ., p. 110.

[24]House . . ., p. 111.

[25]Frank Waters, Pumpkin Seed Point (Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1969), p. 99.

[26]Pumpkin Seed Point, p. 107.

[27]House . . ., p. 48.

[28]House . . ., p. 210.

[29]House . . . .

[30]House . . ., p. 49.

[31]House . . ., p. 51.

[32]House . . ., p. 68.

[33]House . . ., p. 58.

[34]House . . ., p. 56.

[35]House . . . .

[36]House . . ., p. 57.

[37]The Mountain-Top Way ceremony symbolically emphasizes bears. The mythical hero of the ceremonial, Dsily 'Neyani, is synonymous in meaning and function with the bear. His name means Reared Within the Mountains and it was he who brought to his people the ceremonies to cure diseases. (Frank Waters, Masked Gods [New York: Ballantine Books, 1950], p. 246). References to beliefs about bears among Southwestern tribes can be found in Morris E. Opler, The Character and Derivation of the Jicarilla Holiness Rite (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1943); Father Berard Haile, Navajo Sacrificial Figurines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947); and Gladys Richard, Navajo Religion: A Study of Symbolism (New York: Princeton University Press, 1974).

[38]The serpent symbolism associated with the albino raises questions. In conjunction with the Christian symbols used and the Christian concept of the serpent as synonymous with evil, and with Abel's belief that Juan is a witch, he can be seen as the personification of evil. At the chicken pull, despite his advanced age, he was portrayed as vital, powerful and athletic. After his murder, his body "seemed just then to wither

and grow old," and it "sank slowly to the ground as if the bones were dissolving within it." (House Made of Dawn, p. 83.) This seems to substantiate Abel's fears since witches are commonly believed to remain young as long as they can take life from others, and they revert to their true age at their death. However, beliefs concerning serpents are ambiguous. The serpent has been regarded by nearly all nations with superstitious feelings. It was used as an emblem both of immortality and of death in the East. In some places in ancient Egypt small serpents were even kept in the temples and fed on honey and flour; and it was considered a mark of divine favor to be bitten by any of this species. (Ellen Russell Emerson, Indian Myths (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1962), p. 45. The snake is also used as are other reptiles, to refer to the primordial--the most primitive form of life. Alchemists saw in the serpent an illustration of the "feminine in men." H. B. Alexander calls the snake a "Cosmic Lord of Salvation," and remarks that there is a clear connection between the snake and the feminine principle (The World's Rim [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953], p. 273). Ruth Benedict states that "snakes are often reverenced, and occasionally their holiness makes them dangerous, as anything may be that is sacred or manitou." (Patterns of Culture [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934], p. 95.) The serpent is seen in North American Indian mythology as a power that rules life as well as death and which has powers of the underworld and destruction. It is believed that while snakes may be beneficial they also have a greater potentiality for evil than other beings. (Leland C. Wyman, Mountainway of the Navajo [Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975], pp. 5, 9.) Many animals are conceived as capable of assuming human form at will and the snake is considered especially powerful in this regard. Gladys Richard says that "Bear and Big-snake-men are a pair often found together, belief about them being very mixed. In sandpaintings they seem to be animals yet at Changing Woman's home [myth of] they act like persons. . . . The bear and the snake were also pets given the people by Changing Woman." (Navajo Religion [New York: Princeton University Press, 1974], p. 384-85.) John Bierhorst sums up the attitudes by observing that "the serpent symbolizes acquisition of knowledge in many North American Indian myths. It is sometimes beneficent and sometimes malign." (The Red Swan [New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1976], p. 190.) Since Indian attitudes about snakes are mixed and since Momaday employs both Indian and Christian symbols associated with Juan Reyes, it is difficult to determine exactly how he intends the albino/snake to be interpreted. It is clear, however, that Abel perceives him as a witch capable of assuming animal form and characteristics and overwhelmingly evil.

[39]Waters, p. 121.

[40]House . . ., p. 54.

[41]House . . ., p. 83.

[42]House . . ., p. 59.

[43]House . . ., p. 212.

[44]Donald Sandner is a Jungian analyst in San Francisco. He has been there for 13 years, but has spent 6 summers with the Navajo around Lukachukai, Arizona, interviewing medicine men and attending sings. He says,

> There are at least two kinds of healing: scientific healing based on anatomy and physiology, and symbolic healing that focuses on the cultural being and the symbolic universe that pervades human consciousness. . . . Symbolic healing strives to bring the patient into harmony with his own social and cultural environment, and because symbols vary from one society to the next it cannot be transferred from one culture to another. . . . The aim of symbolic healing, to create a sense of harmony, is in certain respects what I strive for as a psychiatrist, and I became interested in Navajo medicine because it seemed to have many elements in common with contemporary psychiatry. Both the Navajo medicine man and the psychiatrist manipulate cultural symbols to return the patient to his mythic origins, manage the evil within him, and bring about a transformation, a rebirth.

("Navajo Medicine," Human Nature, July, 1978, pp. 54-62.)

[45]Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, The Navajo (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962), p. 309.

[46]Waters, Masked Gods, p. 259.

[47]House . . ., pp. 146-47.

[48]The Pueblo ruin called House Made of Dawn is in some way analagous to the dwelling place of the sun. It is a shrine in the canyon of Tsegihi. (John Bierhorst, The Red Swan, p. 325.)

[49]House . . ., p. 166.

[50]House . . ., p. 12.

[51]House . . ., p. 24.

[52]House . . ., p. 103.

[53]Margaret Craven has demonstrated this belief in her novel, I Heard the Owl Call My Name, when the old Kwakwala Indian woman Marta recognizes the priest's approaching death and associated it with the owl. "How long had it been there--that look on his face she had seen many times in her long life and knew well? It was not the hard winter that had placed it there. It was death reaching out his hand, touching the face gently even

before the owl had called the name." (p. 149) In Momaday's poem, "Earth and I Give You Turquoise," he alludes to the Indian concept of a relationship between the owl and illness or death: "You grew ill when the owl cried." Enoch (Kelly) Haney, a Seminole Indian artist, has said that he does not believe in the supernatural but has heard the stories told by old Indian women about owls and has personally experienced some strange and unexplainable happenings in connection with owls. It is commonly believed in the Indian community that an owl sitting on a house's roof or near a home at night portends a death in the family.

[54]_House_ . . ., p. 53.

[55]Elsie Clews Parsons described an albino named Juan Reyes Fragua who lived in the Jemez Pueblo. The character Juan Reyes in _House Made of Dawn_ may be based in part on this man. (_The Pueblo Indians of Jemez_.) White animals or albinos are generally considered wakan or sacred among American Indians. They are usually the animals selected for special ceremonies or sacrifices such as the white buffalos among the Plains Indians or the white dogs among the Seneca and other tribes. White or albino deerskins are highly prized and a special dance among the California Yurok Indians is held in which these treasures are displayed. However, since white animals are believed to have supernatural powers, they are often feared as well as honored and sought after.

[56]_House_ . . ., p. 102.

[57]_House_ . . ., p. 149.

[58]_House_ . . ., p. 101.

[59]John Major Hurdy, _American Indian Religions_ (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, Inc., 1970), p. 157.

[60]Waters, _Pumpkin Seed Point_, p. 119.

[61]Clyde Kluckhohn, _Navajo Witchcraft_ (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944), p. 241.

[62]_Navajo Witchcraft_, p. 5.

[63]_Navajo Witchcraft_, p. 179.

[64]_Navajo Witchcraft_, p. 188.

[65]_Navajo Witchcraft_, p. 157.

[66]Hamilton A. Tyler, Pueblo Gods and Myths (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 258.

[67]Cited by Brad Steiger, Medicine Power (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1974), p. 113. Don Wilkerson is Director of the Arizona Indian Culture Center.

[68]The New Mexican, Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 24 September 1972, p. 2.

[69]House . . ., p. 103.

[70]The Names, p. 136.

[71]The New Mexican, Sunday Supplement, "Viva," 25 June 1972, p. 2.

[72]House . . ., p. 81.

[73]House . . ., pp. 44-45.

[74]House . . ., p. 45.

[75]House . . ., p. 82.

[76]House . . . .

[77]House . . . .

[78]House . . ., p. 83.

[79]House . . . .

[80]House . . ., p. 84.

[81]House . . ., pp. 65-66.

[82]House . . ., p. 67.

[83]House . . ., p. 51.

[84]House . . ., p. 200.

[85]House . . ., p. 202.

[86]House . . ., p. 201.

[87]House . . ., p. 204.

[88]House . . ., p. 209.

[89]House . . ., p. 211.

[90]Waters, Masked Gods, p. 198.

[91]House . . ., p. 211.

[92]Evers, "A Conversation With N. Scott Momaday," p. 19.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

In N. Scott Momaday's search for the sublimity of the past, he seems to have had a personal, compelling reason to describe his Kiowa heritage as much for himself as for his readers. He synthesizes myths, historical accounts, and his personal experiences to create a framework within which he defines and identifies himself. The tone of these accounts is nostalgic and intimate; they are poetic in structure and language, essentially impressionistic paintings in prose. They are a journey through time, a return to personal and tribal origins. Mircea Eliade has said, "Every microcosm, every inhabited region, has what may be called a 'center'; that is to say, a place that is sacred above all. . . ."[1] Every human being tends, even unconsciously, toward the center, and towards his own center, where he can find integral reality--sacredness."[2] Momaday uses his writings to find himself and place himself at the heart of his reality, at the center of the Indian world.

Momaday's novel, House Made of Dawn, is filled with the narrative and dramatic cliches of a typical "Indian" novel. It concerns a bewildered Indian man physically separated from his tribal environment, trying to understand and live in an alien white world, participating in their war, returning to the tribe only to find himself now spiritually separated from it, having a love affair with a beautiful, white woman, committing a crime and being incarcerated, and, finally, putting his

understand the other. Peaceful coexistence is a goal he sincerely desires, and he has often written and spoken about its importance. It is because he hopes for a blending of the best of both cultures for the good of all that he exposes to the Western reader what is valuable and even sacred to him in the Indian world.

Three previous dissertations have been written considering some aspect of the writings of N. Scott Momaday. Peter G. Kousaleos wrote of Momaday's style, "the conscious literary craft,"[3] the form and language he uses. Kousaleos' emphasis was on Momaday's handling of literary elements in his fiction. Charles Lowell Woodard considered the "artistic theory and expression of N. Scott Momaday."[4] Woodard discussed Momaday's poetic language and structure through an explication of House Made of Dawn and The Way to Rainy Mountain. Woodard's emphasis was on the poetic effect Momaday achieves in both works. Rose Marie Smith pointed out the extensive use Momaday has made of Indian subject matter and themes. She considered the blending of two literary styles in Momaday's writing, the Indian oral traditions and the Western "post-symbolic precepts evident in his poetry."[5] Smith theorized that because Momaday writes from an understanding of both the Indian and Western world views, his writings provide an opportunity for intercultural communication. I agree that such an opportunity exists, but I believe it cannot be realized without the reader's understanding of Indian perceptions. Theirs is a world view alien to Western thought and to simply know that it exists is not sufficient for understanding.

This dissertation, Ethnic Identity in the Prose Works of N. Scott Momaday, demonstrates the Indian world view from which Momaday writes. It shows that there is a distinct Indian perception of time, events,

broken life back together with the tribe and its traditions at the center. This is a familiar tragic pattern, the alienation theme of modern fiction.

Momaday's novel, however, clearly transcends the stereotype, and it does so because of the author's intimate knowledge of the Indian world. Momaday writes from his own careful observations of the traditional Indian ways of life and his personal experience of them. It is not simply that we have here an Indian author, or that the author is writing about Indian subjects. It is not simply that Momaday often writes about particular landscapes or about his own Indian experiences. Rather, what is significant in the prose writings of N. Scott Momaday is the perspective from which he writes. It is not that he exists in another environment than do his readers, as would be true for French or Russian authors, for example, therefore making an understanding of their writings more difficult. Momaday shares the same world as do most of his readers, but his interpretation or view of it is different.

While various aspects of Indian philosophy are shared by many ethnic groups, they are, nevertheless, synthesized in Indian traditions. The importance of the extended family, the sacredness of language, the reverence for the land, the beliefs in the supernatural and a separate reality are still very common in Indian communities. This perception of the world is one understood and shared by Momaday. It is the superstructure on which all of his writings are constructed. It is this quality of ethnic identity in his works, particularly in the intricately structured House Made of Dawn, that makes them an authentic expression of Indian perceptions and a unique contribution to modern American literature.

A major concern of Momaday has been the differences between the Western and Indian points of view, and the necessity for each to

and social structures, that Momaday understands this Indian world view and personally accepts it, and that consequently he writes from that point of view and it is that perception that not only determines the content of his works but also shapes their structures. They are a result of Indian thought patterns. The way in which Indians interpret their environment and the set of values that are ethnically determined has not previously been considered as the perspective from which N. Scott Momaday writes. This ethnic identity is the impetus for his creativity, and the subject of this dissertation.

Without the reader's knowledge of the Indian world view, an understanding of N. Scott Momaday's writings will be incomplete and their rich contribution poorly appreciated. This dissertation hopes to provide the background information concerning that Indian philosophy necessary to read with a fuller comprehension the prose writings of the Kiowa Indian author N. Scott Momaday.

ENDNOTES

[1]Mircea Elaide, "Nostalgia for Paradise," Parabola, 1, No. 1 (Winter, 1976), p. 15.

[2]Elaide, p. 13.

[3]"A Study of the Language, Structure and Symbolism in Jean Toomer's Cane and N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn," Diss. Ohio University 1973.

[4]"The Concept of the Creative Word in the Writings of N. Scott Momaday," Diss. University of Oklahoma 1975.

[5]"A Critical Study of the Literature of N. Scott Momaday as Intercultural Communcation," Diss. University of Southern California 1975.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CONSULTED

Abbey, Edward. "Memories of an Indian Childhood." Harpers, 254 (February 1977), 94-95.

Adams, Phoebe. "Short Reviews: House Made of Dawn." The Atlantic Monthly, 223 (June 1969), 117.

Akoun, Andre et al. "The Father of Structural Anthropology Takes a Misanthropic View of Lawless Humanism: A Converstation with Levi-Strauss." Psychology Today. May 1972, pp. 37-39, 74-82.

Allen, Paula Gunn. "The Mythopaeic Vision in Native American Literature." The American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 1 (1974), 3-13.

Allen, Paula. "Symbol and Structure in Native American Literature." College Composition and Communication, October 1973, pp. 267-70.

Alexander, Hartley Burr. The World's Rim. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1953.

Astrov, Margot. American Indian Prose and Poetry. New York: Capricorn Books, Inc., 1962.

Bascom, William. "The Myth-Ritual Theory." Journal of American Folklore, 70, No. 275 (January-March 1957), 103-14.

Basford, T. "An Interview with N. Scott Momaday." Puerto Del Sol, 12, (1973), 21-38.

Basso, Kenneth H. "To Give Up on Words: Silence in Western Apache Culture." Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, 26, No. 3 (Autumn 1970), 213-30.

Benedict, Ruth. Patterns of Culture. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934.

Bennett, John. "Reviews: House Made of Dawn." Western American Literature, 5, No. 1 (Spring 1970), 69.

Bevis, William. "American Indian Verse Translations." College English, 34, No. 4 (March, 1973), 693-703.

Bierhorst, John, ed. and trans. Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1974.

Bierhorst, John, ed. The Red Swan: Myths and Tales of the American Indians. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1976.

Billard, Jules, B., ed. The World of the American Indian. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, Publishers, 1974.

Blackburn, Sara. "Book Marks." The Nation, 207 (5 August 1968), 91.

Black Elk. Black Elk Speaks. John G. Neihardt, ed. recorder. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961.

Black Elk. The Sacred Pipe. Joseph Epes Brown, ed. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971.

Boas, Franz. Kwakiutl Tales. New York: Columbia University. Contributions to Anthropology, 26, Pts. 1 and 2 (1935-43).

Boas, Franz. The Mind of Primitive Man. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1938.

Borg, Mary. "Victims." New Statesman, 16 May 1969, p. 696.

Brandon, William. "American Indian Literature." The Indian Historian, Summer 1971, pp. 53-55.

Brandon, William. The American Heritage Book of Indians. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964.

Brandon, William. The Magic World. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1971.

"Briefly Noted." The New Yorker, 45, Pt. 2 (17 May 1964), 150.

Brinton, Daniel G. The Myths of the New World. New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1968.

Burland, Cottie. North American Indian Mythology. New York: Hamlyn Publishing Group, Ltd., 1965.

Capps, Walter Holden, ed. Seeing With a Native Eye. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Campbell, Joseph. "Living Myths: A Conversation with Joseph Campbell." Parabola, 1, Issue 2 (Spring 1976), 70-81.

Campbell, Joseph. "Man and Myth." A conversation with Joseph Campbell by Sam Keen in Psychology Today, 5, No. 2 (July, 1971), 35-39, 86-95.

Chapman, Abraham, ed. Literature of the American Indians. New York: American Library, 1975.

Cirlot, J. E. A Dictionary of Symbols. Trans. from Spanish by Jack Sage. New York: Philosophical Library, 1962.

Collier, John. On the Gleaming Way. Chicago: Sage Books, 1949.

Cook, Elizabeth. "Propulsives in Native American Literature." College Composition and Communication, October, 1973, pp. 271-74.

Costo, Rupert, ed. Indian Voices. San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1970.

Costo, Rupert. "Momaday Novel Wins Pulitzer Award." The Indian Historian, Summer, 1969, p. 38.

Craven, Margaret. I Heard the Owl Call My Name. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1973.

Cronyn, George W. American Indian Poetry. New York: Liveright, 1934.

Curtis, Natalie. The Indian's Book: Songs and Legends of the American Indian. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968.

Davis, Jack L. "The Whorf Hypothesis and Native American Literature." South Dakota Review, 14, No. 2 (Summer 1976), 59-72.

Day, Grove. The Sky Clears: Poetry of the American Indian. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1951.

Deloria, Vine, Jr., "From Wounded Knee to Wounded Knee." The World of the American Indian. M. B. Grosvenor, ed. et al. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 1974, pp. 335-382.

Deloria, Vine, Jr. We Talk You Listen. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970.

Dickey, Roland F. "Review of The Way to Rainy Mountain." The Western Humanities Review, 24 (Summer 1970), 291.

Dickinson-Brown, Roger. "The Art and Importance of N. Scott Momaday." The Southern Review, 14 (January 1978), 30.

Elaide, Mircea. "A Conversation with Mircea Elaide." Parabola, 1, Issue 3 (Summer 1976), 75-80.

Elaide, Mircea. "Nostalgia for Paradise." Parabola, 1, Issue 1 (Winter 1976), 5-15.

Emerson, Ellen Russell. Indian Myths: or Legends, Traditions and Symbols of the Aborigines of America. Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1965.

Evers, Larry. "A Conversation with N. Scott Momaday." Sun Tracks, 2, No. 2 (Spring 1976), 18-21.

Evers, Lawrence J. "Words and Place: A Reading of House Made of Dawn." Western American Literature, 2, No. 4 (February 1977), 297-320.

"Exhibition." New York Times Library Supplement, 22 May 1969.

Fieldman, Susan, ed. The Storytelling Stone: Myths and Tales of the American Indian. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1965.

Fields, Kenneth. "More Than Language Means." The Southern Review, Winter 1970, pp. 196-204.

Fontana, Bernard L. "Book Reviews," a review of The Way to Rainy Mountain. Arizona Quarterly, 50 (Winter 1969), 377-78.

Freedman, Daniel G. "Ethnic Differences in Babies." Human Nature, January 1979, pp. 36-43.

Freud, Sigmund. Totem and Taboo. A. A. Brill, trans. New York: A. Knopf, Inc., 1918.

Fromm, Eric. Escape from Freedom. New York: Avon Books, 1965.

Fuhe, H. "House Made of Dawn," a review. The Spectator, 23 May 1969, p. 688.

Garrett, Roland. "The Notion of Language in Some Kiowa Folktales." Indian Historian, 5 (Summer 1972) 33.

Gill, Sam D. "Review." The Parabola Guide, 1, Issue 1 (Spring 1977), 4.

Gorman, Carl. "Navajo Vision of Earth and Man." The Indian Historian, 6, No. 1 (Winter 1973), 20-21.

Halio, Jay L. "Fantasy and Fiction." The Southern Review, Spring 1971, pp. 635-47.

Henry, Jeannette, ed. The American Indian Reader. San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1973.

Hill, Douglas. Magic and Superstition. Landau: The Hamlyn Publishers Group, Ltd., 1968.

Hoffman, Frederick J. "Science and the Precious Object." The Twenties. New York: The Viking Press, 1940.

Hurdy, John Major. American Indian Religions. Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, Inc., 1970.

Hylton, Marion W. "On a Trail of Pollen: Momaday's House Made of Dawn." Critique, 14 (1972), 60-69.

Jahoda, Gustav. The Psychology of Superstition. Baltimore: Penquin Books, Inc., 1968.

Josephy, Alvin M., Jr. The Indian Heritage of America. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1968.

Jung, Carl. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, R. F. C. Hull, trans. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959.

Kluckhohn, Clyde and Dorothea Leighton. The Navajo. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1962.

Lame Deer, John. Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions. New York: Touchstone Books, 1972.

Leach, Edmund. Claude Levi-Strauss. New York: The Viking Press, 1970.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology. John and Doreen Weightman, trans. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1969.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Structural Study of Myth." Journal of American Folklore, 68, No. 270 (October-December 1955), 428-44.

Lincoln, Kenneth R. "Tribal Poetics of Native America." American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 1, No. 4 (1976), 14-21.

Lopez, Barry. "The American Indian Mind." Quest, September-October 1978, pp. 109-24.

Lowie, Robert H. Indians of the Plains. Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1963.

McAllister, Harold S. "Incarnate Grace and the Paths of Salvation in House Made of Dawn." South Dakota Review, 12, No. 4 (1974), 115-25.

McAllister, H. S. "Be a Man, Be a Woman: Androgyny in House Made of Dawn." American Indian Quarterly, Spring 1975, pp. 14-22.

McAllister, Mick. "The Names." Southern Review, 14 (April 1978), 387.

McLuhan, T. C. Touch the Earth. New York: Promontory Press, 1971.

McNickle: D'Arcy. "The Clash of Cultures." The World of the American Indian. M. B. Grosvenor, ed. et al. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 1974, pp. 311-55.

Malinowski, Bronislow. Magic, Science, and Religion. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1954.

Mann, Harriet et al. "Four Types of Personalities and Four Ways of Perceiving Time." Psychology Today, 6, No. 7 (December 1972), 76-84.

Matthews, Washington. The Night Chant, a Navajo Ceremony. Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History. Vol 6, Publications of the Hyde Southwestern Expedition, May 1902.

Miles, Elton. "Reviews," a review of The Names. Western American Literature, 12 (May 1977), 86-87.

Miller, George A. "Reconsiderations of Language, Thought and Reality." Human Nature, June 1978, pp. 92-96.

Miller, James E., Jr., ed. Myth and Method: Modern Theories of Fiction. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960.

Milton, John R., ed. Conversations with Frank Waters. Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1971.

Milton, John. "Minorities." Review of The Way to Rainy Mountains. Saturday Review, 52 (21 June 1969), 51.

Momaday, Natachee Scott. American Indian Authors. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972.

Momaday, N. Scott. "An American Land Ethic." Sierra Club Bulletin 55, February 1970, pp. 8-11.

Momaday, N. Scott. "A First American Views His Land." National Geographic, 150, No. 1 (1976), 13-18.

Momaday, N. Scott. Angle of Geese. Boston, Mass.: David R. Godine, Pub., 1974.

Momaday, N. Scott. "A Prayer for Peace." Christmas Heritage. Television Broadcast. PBS Sunday, 24 December 1978, 7:00 p.m.

Momaday, N. Scott. "A Vision Beyond Time and Place." Life, 2 (July 1971), 67.

Momaday, N. Scott. Colorado. New York: Rand McNally and Co., 1973.

Momaday, N. Scott. House Made of Dawn. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966.

Momaday, N. Scott. "I Am Alive." The World of the American Indian. Melville B. Grosvenor, ed. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic Society, 1974, pp. 11-15, 23-27.

Momaday, N. Scott. "Native American Attitudes to the Environment." Seeing with a Native Eye. Walter H. Capps, ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Momaday, N. Scott. "Prologue." Sun Tracks, 1, No. 3 (Winter 71-72), 1.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The American Indian in the Conflict of Tribalism and Modern Society," lecture tape. Given January 31, 1971, at Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, Colorado.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Bear and the Colt." American Indian Authors, Natachee Scott Momaday, ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972, pp. 119-24.

Momaday, N. Scott, ed. The Complete Poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Momaday, N. Scott. The Gourd Dancer. New York: Harper and Row, 1934.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Heretical Cricket." The Southern Review, 3 (Winter 1967), 43-50.

Momaday, N. Scott. The Journey of Tai-Me. Santa Barbara, California: Privately printed, 1967.

Momaday, N. Scott. "Kiowa Legends from The Journey of Tai-Me." Sun Tracks, 3, No. 1 (Fall 1976), 6-8.

Momaday, N. Scott. Lecture at UCLA, May 1970. Now available on cassette tape.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Man Made of Words." The Remembered Earth. Geary Hobson, ed. Albuquerque: Red Earth Press, 1979.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Man Made of Words." Literature of the American Indians. Abraham Chapman, ed. New York: New American Library, 1975.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Man Made of Words." Indian Voices: The First Convocation of American Indian Scholars. Rupert Custo, ed. San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1970, pp. 49-85.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Man Made of Words." Presentation at Symposium on the American Indian. Tahlequah, Oklahoma, 6 April 1979.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Morality of Indian Hating." Ramparts, 3 (Summer 1964), 29-40.

Momaday, N. Scott. The Names. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1976.

Momaday, N. Scott. "The Story of the Arrowmaker." New York Times Book Review, 4 May 1969, pp. 2-3.

Momaday, N. Scott. No title, passage from The Way to Rainy Mountain in Touch the Earth, T. C. McLuhan, Comp. New York: Promontory Press, 1971, p. 21.

Momaday, N. Scott. The Way to Rainy Mountain. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969.

Momaday, N. Scott. "Three Sketches from House Made of Dawn." The Southern Review, October 1966, pp. 933-45.

Momaday, N. Scott. "To the Singing to the Drums." Natural History, 84, No. 2 (Fall 1975), 38-45.

Momaday, N. Scott. "Two Sketches from House Made of Dawn." New Mexico Quarterly, Summer 1967, pp. 101-11.

Momaday, N. Scott. "Viva." Sunday Supplement in New Mexican. 1972-1973.

Moon, Sheila. A Magic Dwells. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1970.

Oleson, Carole. "The Remembered Earth: Momaday's House Made of Dawn." South Dakota Review (Spring 1973), 59-78.

Ornstein, Robert E. The Psychology of Consciousness. Second ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1977.

Ortiz, Alfonso. "American Indian Philosophy and its Relation to the Modern World." Indian Voices. San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1970, pp. 9-49.

Parsons, Elsie Clews. The Pueblo Indians of Jemez. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925.

Pearce, Roy Harvey. Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian Mind and the American Mind. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965.

Peterson, James R. "Eyes Have They But They See Not." Interview of Rudolf Arnheim. Psychology Today, June 1972, pp. 55-58, 92-96.

Porter, Mark. "Mysticism of the Land and the Western Novel." South Dakota Review, Spring 1973, pp. 79-91.

Radin, Paul. Primitive Religion: Its Nature and Origin. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1937.

Radin, Paul. The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology. New York: Schocken Books, 1976.

Reichard, Gladys A. Navajo Religion: A Study of Symbolism. New York: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Rollins, Peter Cushing. "Benjamin Lee Whorf: Transcendental Linguist." Diss. Harvard University 1972.

Rollins, Peter. "The Whorf Hypothesis as a Critique of Western Science and Technology." American Quarterly, 24, No. 5 (December 1972), 563-83.

Rosen, Kenneth, ed. Voices of the Rainbow. New York: The Viking Press, 1975.

Rothenberg, Jerome, ed. Shaking the Pumpkin. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1972.

Russell, Norman H. Indian Thoughts: The Children of God. Pamphlet No. 2, Native American Series. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1975.

Sanders, Thomas E., and Walter Peek. Literature of the American Indian. New York: Glencoe Press, 1973.

Sanders, Thomas E. "Tribal Literature: Individual Identity and the Collective Unconscious." College Composition and Communication. October 1973, pp. 256-66.

Sapir, Edward. Culture, Language, and Personality: Selected Essays. David Mandelbaum, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

Schusky, Ernest. The Right to be Indian. San Francisco, California: The Indian Historian Press, 1970.

Shotwell, Louisa. "Who Are the American Indians?" American Indians. Walter Daniels, ed. New York: H. W. Wilson, Co., 1957, p. 11.

Smith, Rose Marie. "A Critical Study of the Literature of N. Scott Momaday as Intercultural Communication." Diss. University of Southern California 1975.

Smith, William James. "House Made of Dawn: Review." Commonweal, 10 (September 1968), p. 636.

Spence, Lewis. Myths and Legends of the North American Indians. Blauvelt, New York: Multimedia Publishing Corp., 1975.

Spencer, Katherine. Mythology and Values: An Analysis of Navajo Chant-way Myths. Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957.

Sprague, Marshall. "Anglos and Indians." New York Times Book Review. 441 (9 June 1968), 5.

Standing Bear, Chief Luther. Land of the Spotted Eagle. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1933.

Standing Bear, Luther. My People the Sioux. E. A. Brininstool, ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975.

Stegner, Wallace. "My Name is Tsoai-talee." A review of The Names. New York Times Book Review, 6 March 1977, p. 6.

Steiger, Brad. Medicine Power. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1974.

Stensland, Anna Lee. Literature By and About the American Indians. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973.

Strelke, Barbara. "N. Scott Momaday: Racial Memory and Individual Imagination." Literature of the American Indians. Abraham Chapman, ed. New York: New American Library, 1975.

Tax, Sol, Robert Thomas, and Samuel Stanley. 1950 Distribution of Descendents of the Aboriginal Population of Alaska, Canada, and the United States. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

Taylor, J. Golden. "The Editor's Essay Review." Western American Literature, 5, No. 2 (Summer 1970), 167-68.

Thomas, Lewis. "The Strangeness of Nature." Human Nature, 1, No. 10 (October 1978), 61.

Toelken, Barre. "A Circular World." Parabola, 1, Issue 1 (Winter 1976), 30-37.

Toelken, Barre. "How Many Sheep Will It Hold?" Seeing With a Native Eye. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Toelken, Barre. "The Demands of Harmony: An Appreciation of Navajo Relation." Parabola, 2, Issue 4 (1977), 74-81.

Toelken, Barre. The Dynamics of Folklore. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979.

Toelken, Barre. "The Native American: A Review Article." Western Folklore, 29, No. 1 (January 1970), 268-78.

Travers, P. L. "The World of the Hero." Parabola, 1, Issue 1 (Winter 1976), 42-47.

Trimble, Martha Scott. N. Scott Momaday. Western Writers Series #9. Boise, Idaho: Boise State College Press, 1973.

Turner, Frederick W., III, ed. The Portable North American Indian Reader. New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1973.

Tyler, Hamilton A. Pueblo Gods and Myths. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964.

Underhill, Ruth M. Red Man's Religion. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Vecsey, Christopher. "Notices." Parabola, 2, No. 2 (Spring 1977), 110.

Velie, Alan R. "Cain and Abel in N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn." Colloquium address, Oklahoma State University, 16 December 1967. 3:30 p.m., Student Union Theater, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Waters, Frank. Masked Gods. New York: Ballantine Books, 1950.

Waters, Frank. Pumpkin Seed Point. Chicago: Swallow Press, Inc., 1969.

Waters, Frank. "Two Views of Nature: White and Indian." The American Indian Speaks. John R. Milton, ed. Vermillian, S. Dakota: Dakota Press, 1969.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. "An American Indian Model of the Universe." Language, Thought and Reality. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1956.

Whorf, Benjamin Lee. Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings. John B. Carroll, ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1956.

Winters, Yvor. Forms of Discovery. New York: Alan Swallow Press, 1967.

Winters, Yvor. In Defense of Reason. New York: Swallow Press, 1947.

Winters, Yvor. The Function of Criticism. Denver: Alan Swallow Press, 1957.

Winters, Yvor. Uncollected Essays and Reviews. Francis Murphy, ed. Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1973.

Wisser, Clark. Indians of the United States. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1940.

Witcap, Carl J., Jr. "Albinism." Natural History, 84, No. 8 (October 1975), 48-59.

Witt, Shirley, and Stan Steiner, eds. The Way. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1972.

Woodard, Charles L. "The Concept of the Creative Word in the Writings of N. Scott Momaday." Diss. University of Oklahoma Press, 1975.

Wynn, Dudley. "Book Reviews: The Way to Rainy Mountain." New Mexico Historical Review, 45 (January 1970), 89-90.

Zola, Elemire. The Writer and the Shaman. Raymond Rosenthal, trans. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973.

VITA

Margaret F. Nelson

Candidate for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Thesis: ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE PROSE WORKS OF N. SCOTT MOMADAY

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Claremore, Oklahoma, August 16, 1922, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Dawson; married to William E. Nelson; mother of John E. Nelson, Diana L. Nelson Fiorello, Mary L. Nelson Wyman, William H. Nelson, Bette F. Nelson.

Education: Graduated from Claremore High School, Claremore, Oklahoma, 1940; attended Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1940-42; received Bachelor of Arts degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Alva, Oklahoma, May, 1969; received Master of Arts in English from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1971; attended Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, summer, 1972; attended Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, summer, 1973; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University, December, 1979.

Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, 1969-70; Instructor, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, 1970-79. Academic Advisor, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, 1973-79.

Professional Organizations: Modern Language Association, South Central Modern Language Association, American Folklore Society, College English Association, American Indian Historical Society, Oklahoma Education Association, National Education Association, Oklahoma Indian Education Association, National Indian Education Association.