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~~A~~ RHECTORICAL STUDY OF
N. SCOTT MOMADAY'S CONTEMPORARY
AMERICAN INDIAN PROSE 2

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Julie LaMay Abner
September 1994


PARCUMENT IDEED
SOUTH WESTERN U.S.A.

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Approved by:




Rodney Simard, Chair, English Composition

9/8/94
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Harry Hellenbrand



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Abstract

The oral tradition is an aural, visual, public, communal (or tribal), and culturally dependent event in which stories and histories are publicly transmitted polyvocally (more than one person narrating and participating in the event) and with a performance dimension (singing, dancing, ritual, and costuming). Usually in the Euroamerican novelistic form, a reader approaches a text, in isolation, with an assumption of a sequential un-folding of plot and a linear presentation of form and events--beginning, middle, end--but unlike other experimental rhetorical forms in prose (e.g., The Canterbury Tales, The Sound and the Fury, Finnegan's Wake, Forgetting Elena), N. Scott Momaday experiments with distinctly Indian non-sequential and non-linear narrative structures in his prose, some decidedly circular, using multiple points of view and inverting expected sequential order, approximating the audience (or reader) response and participation usually inherent in the narrative style of the oral tradition.

Momaday breaks generic distinctions by mixing such genres as poetry, prose, art, and by the arrangement of the text on the page (indeed, many scholars and critics disagree about the "proper" generic designations for Momaday's works). For example, in The Way to Rainy Mountain each two-page spread contains three paragraphs, each relating the same experience in either the past, present, or future, or rather the mythic, historical, and personal, in an attempt

to create a fused visual and verbal experience (and object) for the reader by forcing reader involvement and active participation while locating the individual authorial voice within tribal (communal) sensibility. In Momaday's conscious attempt to meld the Native American oral tradition into written novelistic form, he possibly even creates a new Native American rhetorical form and expressive style, updating traditional Native American literary forms and suggesting future direction for the canon.

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Introduction

"'A great general [Sherman] has said that the only good Indian is a dead one. . . . In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man,' Captain Richard Pratt, Superintendent, Carlisle Indian School" (Vizenor 134).

Today, in the post-Dances With Wolves era, to be Indian is not only to be socially acceptable, but also politically correct; this has not always been the case. N. Scott Momaday's winning the Pulitzer Prize (the first and only Indian to be so honored) for House Made of Dawn in 1969 is greatly responsible for this new social attitude about Indians, Indianness, and the quest to capture an Indian in the proverbial familial woodpile. Pretend Indians and Indian wannabes abound, Jamake Highwater and Hyemeyohsts Storm seem to have assumed Indian identities for the purpose of creating pseudo-Indian heritages to validate their writings and are highly publicized examples of such.

Not until Momaday's publishing of his complex text, in which he consciously and purposely takes Native oral tradition and successfully segues it with Euroamerican written form, is a new Native American genre created in form and effect; thus substantiating the theory that literature can and does create new political attitudes, for, as Rodney Simard contends "[literary] theory, as we currently

understand it, is a social activity; therefore it must be political . . ." (Simard 243). Pre-Momaday authors, such as Black Elk and John G. Neihardt in Black Elk Speaks, struggle with their attempts to join oral and written forms. Paula Gunn Allen asserts:

Native Americans reared in the oral tradition of the tribes, however, are not ignoring or "experimenting" with accepted conventions when they do not follow Western structural conventions. Indeed, when they write within the conventions of the tradition from which James Joyce departs, they are being as experimental as he was when he wrote Finnegans Wake.

American Indian novelists who write more or less chronological narratives that center on Indian themes and materials and adapt ritual narrative structures while maintaining the unities of location, time, and action, and the conflict resolution structure of Western plots are very daring indeed. (101)

Because he did create a new genre, every Native author writing after Momaday must confront his melding of these two diverse forms of imaginative communication. In fact, some authors have written works that are so similar in form to House Made of Dawn that some have argued that these contemporary novels emulate Momaday. Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony is the book most often acknowledged as being similar to House Made of Dawn.

Kenneth Lincoln, who coined the term "Native American Renaissance," calls Momaday the greatest Native American writer of all time and credits him with creating and defining this new genre--Native American Literatures. For a time, some Native American authors did not feel that this

designation existed. For example, Michael Dorris once stated that "there is no such thing as 'Native American literature,' though it may yet, someday, come into being" (147-62). Fortunately, a decade later, even Dorris, who chaired the Native American Studies Program at Dartmouth (Momaday originated the same program at The University of California, Berkeley), agrees that such a designation (Native American Literatures) does indeed exist and to a large degree because of the efforts of Momaday's precedent setting work. He further states that Momaday ". . . in House Made of Dawn, be best understood as a Native American Henry James, Ralph Ellison, or James Joyce" (154).

To comment on Native American Literatures and to begin to analyze exactly what Native writers previous to Momaday, Momaday himself, and other Native writers following him have done to meld Native oral traditions with Euroamerican written texts, two controversial questions must first be addressed: what is an Indian, and what constitutes Native American oral traditions? One definition of oral traditions includes both audience and storyteller: oral traditions are a rhetorical method of verbal communication intended to transmit didactically essential cultural values to the next generation within a cultural group. The other question does not have an easy answer: is Indian authenticity determined by blood quantum, the ability to speak a Native language, being born on a reservation, or being listed on a tribal

roll. Sadly, Native Americans are the only group of people in America who must prove their heritage and cultural identity by carrying a tribal ID or a Bureau of Indian Affairs blood quantum card. On this topic of bloodedness, Karen I. Blu has asserted:

For Whites, blood is a substance that can be either racially pure or racially polluted. Black pollutes White blood absolutely, so that, in the logical extreme, one drop of Black blood makes an otherwise white man [or woman] Black White ideas about "Indian blood" are less formalized and clear-cut. . . . It may take only one drop of Black blood to make a person a Negro, but it takes a lot of Indian blood to make a person a "real" Indian. (25)

Identity for Native Americans is a complex and highly controversial issue and was recently thrust into the academic forefront when novelist David Seals, while reviewing The Indian Lawyer, states that James Welch and Louise Erdrich are not "Indian enough" because they both depict the atrocities that contemporary Native Americans must face but do not demonstrate the strength of cultural values and traditions that have allowed Indians to survive the Columbian trauma and subsequent centuries of xenophobia (648-50).

Even Momaday's Indianness has been called into question and Rodney Simard, General Editor of Studies in American Indian Literatures and a strong advocate for redefining the American literary canon to include such works as House Made of Dawn and Alice Walker's The Color Purple, comments on

this issue. He states that Momaday's critics laud his winning the Pulitzer as an

. . . event slurred as ethnic pandering, as an anomaly, or as fraudulent, since Momaday isn't "really Indian," for, though he does have some mixed blood and does indeed look the part, he is, after all, a professor of comparative literature with a doctorate from Stanford who had to, at best, reinvent an Indian identity. (244)

Several contemporary Native authors have struggled to define their own Indianness. Gerald Vizenor, the academic trickster who writes about "tribal people" and "terminal creeds," is a leading voice in Native America today. Louis Owens states that Vizenor is the first Indian author to find "'crossbloods' cause for joyous celebration" (254). Vizenor comments, "about Indian identity I have a revolutionary fervor. The hardest part of it is I believe we're all invented as Indians. . . . The inventions have become disguises" (Bowers and Silet 45). The safest and best definition of Indianness still appears to be Momaday's, "An Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself" (Momaday 97), even though Arnold Krupat calls it hopelessly vague and sexist (186-87).

One underlying concept that unites all attempts to define Indianness is Native American oral traditions. Momaday asserts that the oral tradition is fragile and always just one generation away from extinction (174). Walter Ong in Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word similarly states that when an oral tale is not

being articulated, the only actuality is the potential of the oration's telling--it is not fixed and permanent like writing (11). Although this fragility of form is universally recognized, joining them together is not without controversy and difficulty, and as Krupat and Ong have stated, orality and literacy each require separate and distinct mind sets. Reading a book is a solitary venture: it is done alone. In oration the experience is aural, tribal, verbal, communal, evolving, visual, and participatory in nature. Ong laments:

Oral cultures produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. . . . We have to die to continue living. . . . Oral communication unites people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself. A teacher speaking to a class which he [or she] feels and which feels itself as a close-knit group, finds that if the class is asked to pick up its textbooks and read a given passage, the unity of the group vanishes as each person enters into his or her private lifeworld. (14-15, 69)

Along with Ong, Krupat, and A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, as well as many others, have also commented on the differences in oral and written cultures and argue that "oral literatures" is a contradiction in terms. Another problem piece of diction is "pre-literate," which assumes literacy as a superior and cultivated state, when actually the more appropriate term should be "post-oral."

Andrew Wiget in Native American Literature also comments on these same difficulties when he states,

. . . transcribing an oral performance is, to borrow Albert Lord's phrase, like "photographing Proteus" and immediately produces an anomaly that is neither a part of living folkloric tradition nor of a truly literary one. (2)

Also, Paula Gunn Allen states that "the oral tradition is more than a record of a people's culture. It is the creative source of their collective and individual selves" (224) and makes another declaration regarding the sacredness of Native oral tradition and the difficulties in transcribing an oral event when she declares:

. . . oral tradition has prevented the complete destruction of the web, the ultimate disruption of tribal ways. The oral tradition is vital; it heals itself and the tribal web by adapting to the flow of the present while never relinquishing its connections the past. . . . Traditional American Indian literature is not similar to western literature because the basic assumptions about the universe and, therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and by Western peoples are not the same, even at the level of folklore. This difference has confused non-Indians for centuries. (45, 55)

Even though many critics believe these two ideas are irreconcilable, many contemporary Native American authors recognize and embrace the differences in oral and written texts. While some things will be lost in writing down oral stories, most Indians would prefer these sacred and secular myths and tales be preserved even if some dynamics are not transferable into print. Indeed, Elaine Jahner asserts that "the novel provides an alternative to perishing by the word" (220).

Even though Momaday is an author, and, as such, a proponent of the written word, he still is a strong advocate for the power of the spoken word; words contain the power to actuate; articulation begets reality. To say something makes it so. Therefore, Native Americans have always been aware of the ignorance of wasting words or speaking carelessly. Vizenor also lends his voice to the power and sanctity of words when he states, "I mean, we imagine ourselves, we create ourselves, we touch ourselves into being with words, words are that important to us. As children we're touched into being by learning our environment in words" (Coltelli 158).

The idea of literary supremacy is further explained by Ong's observation that all cultures spring forth from oral cultures, and writing is a fairly recent phenomenon. Ong further argues that:

language is so overwhelmingly oral that of all the many thousands of languages--possibly tens of thousands--spoken in the course of human history only around 106 have ever been committed to writing to a degree sufficient to have produced literature, and most have never been written at all. (7)

Other cultures also value their oral traditions. For example, Alex Haley, famous for his genealogical research and Roots, when he spoke at California State University, San Bernardino, in 1990, commented on the enormous amounts of information that are stored year after year, decade after decade--mentally by tribal orators. When he visited Africa,

the tribe identity-keeper began spontaneously to recite Haley's "begats" for centuries, demonstrating the enormous memories that some human beings possess.

Similarly, Indianness was not valued, at least in Indian Literatures, before Momaday changed the face of contemporary Native American Literatures. The two main methods Momaday employs to segue these timeless traditions into the victor's Euroamerican printed forms are circularity and active audience participation, transforming essential elements of Native American oral traditions into EuroAmerican printed form.

N. Scott Momaday

"He is the storyteller of whom he often speaks. The man made of words" (Woodard IX).

Navarro Scotte Mammedaty (Kiowa) or Tsoai-talee (Rock Tree Boy) was born on 27 February 1934, to Alfred Momaday (who changed the family name from Mammedaty to Momaday in 1932) and Natachee Scott, teachers at the Kiowa and Comanche Indian Hospital in Lawton, Oklahoma. From 1936 to 1943 he lived on reservations in New Mexico and Arizona, primarily among the Navajo. Momaday graduated from high school at the Augustus Military Academy, in Fort Defiance, Virginia, in 1952. In 1958, Momaday received a BA in Political Science from the University of Virginia. In 1959, he was sponsored by Yvor Winters for a creative writing fellowship at Stanford University, and he received his MA in 1960 and his PhD in 1963. Momaday taught at UC Santa Barbara from 1963 to 1969, where he was denied tenure immediately before being awarded the Pulitzer. From 1969 to 1972, he was a professor at UC Berkeley. In 1972 Momaday accepted a position at Stanford but soon thereafter left to accept the first distinguished visiting Professor of Humanities at New Mexico State University, where he remained for one year. In 1974 he taught for one semester at the University of Moscow (Twentieth-Century American Literature). In 1981 Momaday accepted an endowed chair at the University of Arizona, where he remains today.

In 1968 Momaday wrote House Made of Dawn, his first novel, The Way to Rainy Mountain, in 1969, An Angle of Geese and Other Poems, in 1974, The Names: A Memoir and The Gourd Dancer, in 1976, The Ancient Child, in 1990, and In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991, in 1992.

Surprisingly, even after the enormous literary attention Momaday has received, he does not consider himself a writer. He comments:

. . . I don't often think of myself as a novelist. I started out writing poetry, and I identified with poetry and the poet when I was earning my wings, and I still think of myself as a poet. (Woodard 128).

House Made of Dawn

When N. Scott Momaday was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 for his first novel House Made of Dawn (1968), one of the Pulitzer jury members declared that "an award to its author might be considered as a recognition of the 'arrival on the American literary scene of a matured, sophisticated literary artist from the original Americans'" (Owens 90). Although this statement is laudatory for Momaday, it implies that prior to his work no "sophisticated literary artist from the original Americans" had ever existed and thus ignores significant Native authors such as Mourning Dove (Cogewea: The Half-Blood 1927), John Joseph Matthews (Sundown 1934) and D'Arcy McNickle (The Surrounded 1936). Also implied in this statement is that a Native American had finally written something that was acceptable to a privileged EuroAmerican literary establishment. Louis Owens comments:

. . . this juror's words seem uncomfortably similar to the words of the publisher of John Rollin Ridge's Joaquin Murieta more than a century earlier: "The aboriginal race has produced great warriors, and powerful orators, but literary men--only a few." (91)

Because they set the acceptance climate for the general populace, these kinds of blatant sins of omission have helped to perpetuate negative Native stereotypes that have existed for five hundred years or more and have kept Native American Literatures in the margins and completely absent

(along with the literatures of all other people of color and women) from the very structured and elitist literary canon, filled with the works of dead white men.

Despite the various controversies surrounding Momaday and his highly sophisticated and extraordinarily complex texts, they have become cultural touchstones by which contemporary Native writers have to measure. In the interview "I Climb the Mesas in My Dreams," Paula Gunn Allen comments on how crucial Momaday's text is to her personally when she asserts "Dick's [Wilson] presence and Momaday's novel are probably what saved my life. . . . I wouldn't be writing now if Momaday hadn't done that book. I would have died" (213-14). Susan Scarberry-Garcia in the preface of her penetrating and singular work, Landmarks of Healing: A Study of House Made of Dawn, similarly states that Momaday's text "would change the course of my life" (XVI).

Framing the narrative with the Walatowa, or Jemez Pueblo traditional ritualistic opening and closing words of storytelling, "Dypaloh" (1) and "Otsedaba" (212), House Made of Dawn preserves that which it emulates and actually becomes an oral story. Scarberry-Garcia states: "When we read House Made of Dawn, we are experiencing, first hand, the transformation of oral tradition into written literature" (13). Also, the reader is kidnapped from the comfort of recognizable landscape and thrust into the realm of a surreal and mythical experience. Linda Hogan states

that House Made of Dawn "uses the traditional Native American oral concept of language where words function as a poetic process of creation, transformation, and restoration" (103).

On the other hand, the renowned scholar and critic Karl Kroeber points out several intrinsic contradictions in what he calls Momaday's "strange" novel and argues that "Momaday's personal displacements thus echo those of his people, and one is tempted to read the protagonist of his novel as echoing Momaday's own difficulties in establishing his Indian identity" (17). He also believes that Momaday was strongly influenced by the works of Lawrence, Conrad, Hemingway, Faulkner, Melville, and Wolfe, whose writings at times become jarringly obvious. He further attacks Momaday's reliance on information gained from ethnographers, such as Washington Matthews, for the Navajo Night Chant, from which comes the title and central image of the novel.

These allegations are unfounded because style supports substance in this non-linear, time-fragmented, stream of consciousness tale that may take place entirely inside the mind of Abel. The fragmented narrative imitates his disconnected, jumbled, and inarticulate consciousness.

This--everything in advance of his going--he could remember whole and in detail. It was the recent past, the intervention of days and years without meaning, of awful calm and collision, time always immediate and confused, that he could not put together in his mind. (23)

This stream of consciousness text triggers one memory after another. These thoughts are not necessarily linked thematically, such as when Abel is severely beaten by Officer Martinez; his mind travels from the war to Milly and to the flight of the geese (116-19). These non-linear and non-sequential thoughts demonstrate the highly subjective perceptions and associations in Abel's mind.

The complex Russian thinker and strong critic of formalism and structuralism, Mikhail Bakhtin believes that creativity and ethical responsibility are meaningful and real and of the three of his central philosophies ("prosaics," "unfinalizability," and "dialogue") the one that is the most relevant to Native American Literatures is "dialogue." He believes that no text exists in isolation, and that an individual absorbs language through the point of view of another. Language is, therefore, according to Bakhtin, polyphonic. Similarly, Stanley Fish, a controversial contemporary literary theorist expounds on the important relationship between a reader and the text itself, which has been called reader-response theory. Momaday's texts employ these two linking theories to demonstrate the communal and ever changing oral tale.

Two other of the most obvious and unique qualities of Momaday's writing deal with transposing the oral quality of circularity into written form and involving the reader in the formation of the text. These two qualities brought his

work to the forefront of literary consciousness and means that all Native writers after Momaday must deal with his genre-creating tale; the significance of Momaday's House Made of Dawn cannot be understated.

Circularity

"You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round." (Black Elk Speaks 194)

Circularity is a Native American characteristic that is demonstrated in Momaday's works and is a rhetorical device that can also be found in non-Indian literatures; Homer's epic poem The Illiad is rooted in circularity and the particular oral tradition from which it springs. This ancient pattern is similar to the circularity presently found in Indian Literatures, as Paula Gunn Allen demonstrates in her assertion "Traditional tribal narratives possess a circular structure" (99).

Even though some non-Indian literatures are grounded in circularity, the dominant literary tradition for the past few centuries has been linear. Therefore, the inherent circularity found in Momaday's works is foreign to many readers and has been interpreted very differently by scholars and critics. Charles Larson views circularity as a death image and states that "The circularity [in Momaday's prose] can be seen as a trap because there is no way out" (95). Thekla Zachrau also comments on Momaday's literary circularity and says, "one wonders whether this cycle, offered by Momaday to his readers as the solution in the quest for identity, does not in reality represent a circular

entrapment excluding the dimension of the future" (55).

Both critics voice the views of other Momaday scholars and view the circular aspect of the novel as stasis.

Indeed, the image of perpetual motion and the inherent entrapment of a hamster wheel springs easily to mind-- constantly moving, but never progressing. Following the logic of Larson's and Zachrau's arguments, the very structure of the novel would be a metaphor for the hopelessness, entrapment, and futility of many Native Americans today. For example, one would only have to look at the current, unusually high unemployment, alcoholism, and death rates of Native Americans to give validity to these claims, both generally to Indians as a nominalized whole, and specifically to Abel, the mixed-blood protagonist of House Made of Dawn (Wilson 1-24).

Critics like Larson and Zachrau, who strongly assert that the circularity in Momaday's House Made of Dawn is negative and ineffective cannot be judged harshly because they fail to see the text from the perspective of a new genre of Native American Literatures, whose parameters Momaday helps to set and create with his novels.

Conversely, many other critics value the inherent circularity in Momaday's House Made of Dawn and view the literal and metaphoric circle not as futureless, but as holistic, culturally signifying harmony, wholeness, balance, and health. The circle is a symbol of unity to most Native

Americans and Momaday's use of a sacred symbol in his prose links his works to the timeless oral tradition and the values and mores firmly rooted in most Indian perspectives.

Charles Woodward states:

The journey is not linear and permanent, as is so often true of modern displacements, but circular and, in interesting ways, continuous. And no version of the essential journey is complete until the return is made. Often the return is physical, as it was with the tribes that moved with the seasons, spiritually and in pursuit of game, returning always to their origin places, to their native grounds. One returns to one's native landscape whenever possible, to renew oneself. But the return is as importantly spiritual, and can be reached through the oral tradition. One can circle back imaginatively to one's origins. One can actualize those origins through storytelling. (48)

The most obvious example of circularity in House Made of Dawn is the race that ends and begins the novel. The fact that it is the same race is undisputed. The significance of the race, however, has been disputed.

Another fact that is not usually debated is that ritualistic running is significant to Pueblo peoples. "House Made of Dawn creates in action the ritual of racing" (Watkins 146). These ritualistic races can be associated with religion, renewal, harmony, and fertility of both the people and the earth.

In literary terms the actual text, House Made of Dawn, is intrinsically circular with Abel's running the same exact ritualistic race as the novel opens and closes; the novel begins where it ends and ends where it begins. "Abel was

running. . . . He was running and running. . . . And Abel was running" (1). Similarly, "He was alone and running on. . . . He was running, and under his breath he began to sing" (212). Commenting on this recursive aspect of House Made of Dawn, Momaday has stated:

I see the novel as a circle. It ends where it begins and it's informed with a kind of thread that runs through it and holds everything together. The book itself is a race.

Abel is running, which becomes a recurrent metaphor throughout the text, as a traditional supplication for rain. The landscape in which the book takes place is dry and arid--rain is not just significant in the usual literary sense, representing rebirth, renewal, and cleansing. "Abel threw down the knife and the rain fell upon it and made it clean" (83). Abel's running is as intrinsic to his survival as the rain is to the parched earth.

This high holy ceremony and feat of physical endurance, continuity, and cultural embrace demonstrate Abel's spiritual devotion. It is held in early spring before the rains are due to honor the sacred rain beings and entice them to join in and activate the rain; the Jiminez people believe that the spirits of their departed ancestors reside and return in the rain. The runners smear themselves with ashes and imitate, and thus literally become, the Cloud Beings. The individual pushes beyond normal physical endurance, ignoring physical pain as he is spiritually

united with departed ancestors. Running cements the image of hope for Abel.

Style and tradition support substance in this non-linear, stream of consciousness episode that takes place inside the mind of Abel. The text acts as the mind in a manner similar to the way that one memory sets off the thoughts of event after event, not necessarily thematically linked, and definitely not linear or sequential. By the conclusion of House Made of Dawn, the circle is complete; Abel is still running and has the words to a song. With the circle being joined--balance and harmony are achieved.

Circularity is also apparent in Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain. The most obvious reference is the fact that the introduction and ending both center on his grandmother's grave; his journey begins and ends with Aho. As the circle is complete in House Made of Dawn with balance and harmony restored, so is Momaday in harmony after his sojourn on Rainy Mountain.

Active Audience Participation:

The Reader as Co-Author of the Text

The second important technique that Momaday employs to adapt oral tales to written forms is active audience participation, which forces readers to participate actively in his storytelling. Reader-Response theory finds its origins in the works of Aristotle and Plato, who were both concerned with the effects of literature on a reader; the reader becomes a decisive component in the event. In reader-response criticism, "The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence" (Iser 50). Richard Bauman asserts that this allows the reader to transform into an audience, thus creating a performance in which the reader becomes part of the event created by the author. Bauman further states:

In reader-response criticism, in all its various guises, the focus is on the role of the reader, no longer as a passive receiver of the meaning inherent in the text, but as an active participant in the actualization--indeed, the production--of textual meaning as an interpretive accomplishment, much like the members of an oral storytelling audience. (113)

When an oral tale is performed, the audience may/can laugh, sing, pray, dance, and chant together; they feel strong emotions together; they SEE a story together. According to reader-response theory, literature can imitate this essential interaction.

Momaday's work that best illustrates reader response theory is The Way to Rainy Mountain. The actual physical makeup of the book invites the reader to interact with the text. The main body of the text is written in a triad form with large blank spaces. Because four is such a significant number to most Native Americans, many argue that this fourth portion of the work completes and makes whole the text. These expanses of white actively involve the reader in the text, and perhaps make the reader the fourth voice, similarly when readers inevitably write in the space they literalize this concept, joining the historical, traditional, and personal. Some have seen these blank spaces as representing the silence that is inherently part of storytelling and reverence for language. Others view these spots as performance cues or cues for the audience. All of these views may be correct because they force active audience participation with the text, and, similar to an oral performance, makes each participant's interpretation and interaction slightly different and personal.

Also, the ambiguity of the text invites close reading and myriad interpretations. For example, the well-known arrowmaker story in which an enemy is found outside the tent and is killed because he does not say his name has been interpreted in several ways. One way to interpret the story is that tradition is life-giving. The arrowmaker would have died had he not followed Kiowa way and made his arrow

straight and true. Another interpretation is the power of the word. The arrow could be symbolic of the piercing power of language for both good and ill.

This ambiguity is also found in Momaday's House Made of Dawn, which does not have a prescribed and absolute ending; a reader's imagination becomes an important aspect of this participation. The reader supplies the appropriate ending based on his or her needs or life experiences. These varying and personal responses are equally valid, and transcend cultural boundaries. A person's reading may change over time, making House Made of Dawn a resolutionless and constantly evolving narrative, which is never read exactly the same way twice. This important aspect of Momaday's prose expands outside the bounds of stasis and is constantly evolving and rereadable. Also, Momaday contends that "In a sense, I'm not concerned to change my subject from book to book. Rather, I'm concerned to keep the story going. I mean to keep the same subject, to carry it farther with each telling" (Bruchac 187).

This active participation of the reader is important to many Native Americans authors. Duane Niatum says:

I've tried to create these stories in such a way that the reader has a lot of space to work. . . using imagination on an equal basis. . . . The artist. . . sets the groundwork. The piece is finished by the reader. (200)

Jerald Ramsey asserts that the reader becomes a participant in the event when a reader uses his or her imagination to

fill in the gaps or finish the story (187).

Some critics argue against the possibility of replicating the storyteller/audience participation and assert that oral events simply cannot be reproduced in print. Arnold Krupat claims that Native Literatures do not and cannot exist in written form because oral tales are not even in the same genre as textual objects, and any attempt to replicate Native Literatures inevitable produces a very misleading and false artifact. Robert A. Georges similarly affirms that a multitextured and layered event cannot be rightfully reproduced by isolating certain aspects of the event. He elaborates on this point and states:

No single aspect of a storytelling event can be regarded universally as primary or dominant, and no one aspect can be studied without considering its interrelationships with the other aspects as a whole. (316-17)

Momaday himself avows that "Listeners imagine their participatory places in the story" (Ancestral Voices). Reading is usually a solitary and recursive event and the reader often expects to partake passively in the story, but audience participation is an important aspect of Native storytelling. By leaving House Made of Dawn resolutionless, the saga is constantly evolving. Gerald Vizenor comments on the integral relationship between tale teller and receiver when he states, "The story doesn't work without a participant" (301), and Ramsey lends his voice to the same schema ". . . one is compelled to participate in the story"

(187). And Woodard, while interviewing Momaday, comments "in your writing, in my opinion, those elements of the oral tradition confront reader passivity and overcome it" (93). Momaday agrees. This year at the Stanford Program for Faculty Renewal, Paula Gunn Allen stated that Indian novels are an intrinsic Native form of storytelling. Momaday's prose shifts the reader from passive to active, and the text itself from fixed to fluid.

Conclusion

The effect Momaday has had on Native American Literatures is evident. For example, when looking at pre-Momaday works such as Black Elk Speaks, one is able to understand the difficulty that John G. Neihardt had with ethnographic problems of form; the oral stories that Black Elk related to Neihardt did not fit into a structure that was familiar to him. Therefore, Neihardt shoved Black Elk's story into a EuroAmerican form. Black Elk (with the help of other elders) tells the story in his own language to Ben Black Elk, who tells the story to Neihardt in pigeon English, Neihardt dictates to his daughter, Enid, the words of Ben Black Elk and she writes them down in short hand. Later, Enid transcribes her notes and gives them to Neihardt who closely edits them and also adds some parts completely on his own. Momaday melds these two forms, and when analyzing authors who have written since Momaday, one notices that virtually all of their writings have incorporated Momaday features, thus embracing his genre-creating prose.

Although Galen Buller is speaking of contemporary Indian writers generally, her words can be applied to Momaday specifically:

The premises of Native American oral literature are fundamentally different in function, style, format, theme and world-view from post-Renaissance western literature; thus the contemporary Indian

writer stands with one foot in each of the two literary traditions. (174)

Considering that Momaday wrote House Made of Dawn in 1968 and Buller is writing in 1988, the gap that Momaday straddles seems all the more apparent. Even after twenty years the chasm is still being straddled by Native American authors.

Even though a gap still exists between the two genres, Momaday has done much to bridge the chasm. David Brumble comments:

Before Momaday, these narratives were regarded as miscellaneous if fascinating assortment of anthropological, historical, psychological, and literary documents. Momaday's self-conscious attempt to write autobiography after the fashion of the oral storytellers has done much to make this miscellany into a literary tradition. (187)

This tradition is being carried on by many contemporary Native American authors such as Louise Erdrich, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Paula Gunn Allen, and Gerald Vizenor.

Two of the rhetorical devices that Momaday employs to bridge the gap and create a new genre are circularity and active audience participation. Momaday uses the circle to represent happiness, wholeness, harmony, and balance, and audience participation because

within oral traditions, fluidity and change are very much in evidence and are two of the most common characteristics of oral traditions. Telling a story is a unique act and never happens the same way twice. (Woodard 72)

Momaday's prose captures this ever-changing aspect of Native storytelling, and validates the theories of Bakhtin and

Fish. Bakhtin further demonstrates that the interaction between speaker and listener act as coparticipants in the storytelling:

Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist--or, on the contrary, by the "light" of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed toward its object, enter a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words. (8)

Simard further comments on language and demonstrates that with the fluidity in oral tales and literatures "tradition is an organic, evolving pattern, and growth does not necessarily mean assimilation or termination" (245). Simon Ortiz similarly lends his voice to the same issue:

The indigenous peoples of the Americas have taken the languages of the colonialists and used them for their own purposes. Some would argue that this means that Indian people have succumbed or become educated into a different linguistic system and have forgotten or have been forced to forsake their native selves. This is simply not true. . . . This is a crucial item that has to be understood, that it is entirely possible for a people to retain and maintain their lives through the use of any language. There is not a question of authenticity here, rather it is the way Indian people have creatively responded to forced colonization. And this response has been one of resistance; there is no clearer word for it than resistance. (10)

And Allen identifies:

. . . the novels most properly termed American Indian novels because they rely on native forms, themes, and symbols far more than on nonIndian ones and so are not colonial or exploitative.

Rather, they carry on the oral tradition at many levels, furthering and nourishing it and being furthered and nourished by it. (98)

Krupat suggests that "oral performances, . . . spoken/sung rather than written in a Native language, and controlled by traditional forms 'internal to the culture,' . . . seem the best representatives of what might be meant by an Indian literature" (209).

And, finally, Vizenor, at the Stanford Program for Faculty Renewal this year, orated that survivance (not dominance induced victimage), representation (not simulation), and presence (not absence) are ways for the postIndian to survive Manifest Manners. He chanted "I think Native Americans, like Jews, are alive in the text and must be there as tacit knowledge." In storytelling there is a dynamic just in being present, and the storyteller instinctively touches on tacit knowledge.

Brian Swann postulates:

The fact that Indians were human took some time to sink in. The fact that their languages had value took longer. . . . The fact that Indians had a literature of great significance took the longest to be acknowledged. (xiii)

He concludes his thought on Native American Literatures:

"In short, then, it is about time that we began to study this literature as seriously as we study Faulkner or Hemingway" (XV). Dennis Tedlock similarly discusses some of the problems of the oral/written polyphony and the "problems of making a visible text" (9). Both men expound

on the inherent difficulties of culture clashes and misunderstandings when the myth-teller meets the mythographer.

Momaday has received worldwide acclaim because he is the first author intentionally and successfully to join Native oral and EuroAmerican written texts, winning the Pulitzer Prize, and creating a new genre in form and effect. Approximately twenty-five years have passed since Momaday's novel was published--and time itself has answered many of the skeptical critics. Any serious Native American author writing after Momaday must at least confront his work, and a scholar in Native Literatures could not possibly function credibly in academia without knowledge of his book. And Karl Kroeber asks an important rhetorical question ". . . one must ask if any written text can accurately [re]produce an oral recitation" (2), and now with the precedent setting work of Momaday, the reader nods and silently answers--yes.

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