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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
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THE NATIVE AMERICAN POSTMODERN-MIMETIC NOVEL

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Robert Tudor
Norman, Oklahoma
2000

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THE NATIVE AMERICAN POSTMODERN-MIMETIC NOVEL

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

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For my mother.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter One: The Realist Aesthetic 14

Chapter Two: Hybrids, Genres, and Modes 30

Chapter Three: Magical Realism and the Postmodern-Mimetic 73

Chapter Four: Historical and Experiential Postmodernism 84

Chapter Five: *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* 104

Conclusion 164

Works Cited 171

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines a new literary phenomenon–the Native American Postmodern-Mimetic novel. This genre is heralded by N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn,* and it is exemplified by his subsequent novel, *The Ancient Child.* It consists of the real-world difficulties of Native Americans overlaid with postmodern literary techniques to create a unique dialogical narrative.

Introduction

In a recent interview Hartwig Isernhagen asked N. Scott Momaday, "what is the role of the literary critic?" Momaday responded: "I think that clearly the function of the critic is to enable us better to understand literature. A good critic, I think, will show us things in literature that we might not see for ourselves" (58). Momaday even asserts, "Sometimes the least reliable witness to a work of art is the creator himself" (58). However, without a thorough understanding of the philosophy of literature, a critic cannot adequately perform that function. For example, I once dismissed Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* as merely a ghost story and N. Scott Momaday's novel *The Ancient Child* as just a playful *faux* Dime Novel featuring Billy the Kid. However, after steeping myself in philosophy of literature, I recognize that both novels are much, much more. They began to manifest themselves to me as literary masterpieces. In my first reading, I did not recognize the chapter in *The Ancient Child* in which Billy the Kid pays obeisance to Sitting Bear as actually a personification of Euro-America's western frontier *weltanschauung* interacting with the Kiowa *weltanschauung*. Furthermore, I failed to recognize the complex metaphorical nature of Beloved in *Beloved*. Consequently, I devote a considerable amount of the first portion of my dissertation to profiling the literary theories that inform my reading of literature. My brief survey is by no means exhaustive, but it does provide a foundation for challenging and rewarding interpretations of the novels that I choose to examine. If through the application of various theories more than one reading manifests itself, one must remember that one of the hallmarks of serious literature is the ambiguity that allows a depth and richness of reading on multiple levels.

Lately, theory has received an unwarranted poor reputation because it has been abused by critics who forget that their job is to make complex texts accessible to the common reader. Theory's purpose is not to exclude readers through specialized jargon that only the initiated can understand. Of course, literary journals have contributed to the problem by publishing and thereby encouraging critics to write articles which are so abstruse and full of jargon as to be valueless. Academia has encouraged the continuing isolation of the work of critics from common people through its long-time embrace of elitist forms of Modernism and through promoting turf wars between different critical schools of thought, which often result in disabling communication even between scholars. Often forgotten is the task of trying to make literature accessible and meaningful to readers. Thus, the work of the critic to "enable us to better understand literature" suffers.

This phenomenon has been particularly injurious to Native American literature, which has become a specialized field fiercely protected by its specialists. Moreover, Native American literature is subject to a few prescribed interpretive templates. These procrustean templates prevent Native American literature from being read as literature written by fully human, fully modern men and women. In reference to Abel, for instance, Momaday says, "He is recognizably Indian. And, for my purposes, at least, this means nothing so much as that he is recognizably human" (King 152). Unfortunately, *Indian* and "recognizably human" are not widely recognized as the same thing.

Momaday's novels are read as literature written by an *Indian* containing *Indians*. For instance, would a critic ask Kafka if the protagonist in *Metamorphosis* really turns into a bug? Or, if Kafka believes people are able to turn themselves into insects? If someone did ask Kafka such questions, he or she would be laughed at or glared at with a silent expression of: *Are you nuts?* However, most critics of Native American literature assert that Set, in *The Ancient Child,* really does turn into a bear. Likewise, Momaday has been asked, in all seriousness, if he believes people can literally turn into animals. How can intelligent critics ask Momaday that question? Momaday, who grew up in modern America, and is totally aware of contemporary literary trends. The only explanation seems to be that they think of him and his literature as Indian, *Indian,* not Native American. *Indian,* as Chanady defines it in her book on Magical Realism, is a synonym for "primitive" and "superstitious." Of course, most North American critics are too politically savvy to use those terms, but the idea is still there. Granted, Momaday and other Native American authors have taken advantage of the situation to extend their literary metaphors into the real world, in ways similar to Borges's fictional Uqbar inserting itself into the real world or the fictional medieval text *The Three Impostors,* a "nonexistent blasphemous treatise against Moses, Christ, and Mohammed" that a clever forger actually produced in the eighteenth century (Barth, *Friday Book* 70). Nevertheless, such awareness does not negate the damage caused by treating Native American literature as *Indian* literature.

For example, most critics have accepted Momaday's standard response to the question: Do you believe people can turn into bears?

And, Have you ever turned into a bear? Which is: "I am a bear. I do have this capacity to become a bear. The bear sometimes takes me over and I am transformed. I never know precisely when it is going to happen" (Woodard, *Ancestral* 15). However, Charles Woodard, who has a long-standing acquaintance with Momaday, asked a follow-up question to which Momaday's answer demonstrates, in no uncertain terms, that he is speaking of the bear metaphorically:

> [It is] a power that rises up in you and becomes dominant. The feeling is unmistakable. And you deal with it in various ways. You become very spiritual. You feel a greater kinship with the animal world and with the wilderness. You feel strong when you are most in touch with this bear. You become very intense in your work. And in your life. You accelerate your activity–writing, painting, whatever. You tend to be reckless, careless, self-destructive. You drink too much. You drive too fast. You pick on guys bigger than you are. All kinds of things. You become a magnificent lover, storyteller–it's just a great burst of vitality. (16)

Obviously, he is not talking about turning into an actual bear. He does not, for instance, go out into the woods naked and eat berries, as some critics imagine Set does at the end of *The Ancient Child*. The bear metaphor is simply Momaday's way of dealing with periods of heightened vitality and periodic euphoria. Afterward, he says there is a period of exhaustion and disorientation (17). This is not an uncommon psychological/physiological experience, especially in creative personal process.

Momaday, whose novels form the exemplary model for this study, is well-versed in theory. He earned his doctorate at Stanford under the tutelage of Yvor Winters, and he is a long-time tenured college professor. Momaday's first book was the highly praised edition of *The Complete Poems of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman,* in which he wrote knowingly about Transcendental philosophy and literature. Published interviews demonstrate his sophisticated knowledge of the philosophy of literature and an acute awareness of complex literary devices which he masterfully uses in his writing.

In this dissertation, I am deliberately using an interdisciplinary theoretical approach by focusing on the real-world implications of the texts examined and interpretations of the texts to show that theory, or the philosophy of literature, does not have to be abstruse or difficult. In addition to identifying a new genre, the postmodern-mimetic Native American novel, I want to show that the novels discussed, *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child,* have a common theme that is intimate and personal, one that has meaning for ordinary readers, all readers, not just Native American readers. That theme, which to my knowledge has not been commented on in thirty years of criticism of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn* and over a decade of criticism of Momaday's other critically acclaimed novel *The Ancient Child,* is that of the absent father. Of course, the absent father represents more than simply the absence of a father. There are complex socio-historical reasons for his absence.

In addition, it is also my assertion that the common theme of the absent father in *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* has not been commented upon because the novels are interpreted as *Indian* literature and therefore must be about alienation and identity. The absent father, if noted in passing, is glossed over as simply a metaphor for the protagonists's social alienation and cultural identity crisis. There are now thirty years of criticism that looks at Native American characters, such as Abel and Set, as Indians instead of as men, thirty years of criticism that interprets the father-son relationship, or its absence, as a metaphor for these characters' struggles for ethnic identity rather than their struggle for ethnic identity as a metaphor for the absence of a father-son relationship. I am not suggesting that the ethnic identity problem is not pertinent, but that rather it is subservient to the more immediate parent-child one. I propose, and through the use of postmodern-mimetic criticism demonstrate, that the absence of the father is the real crisis, and social alienation and cultural identity issues are the consequences of that absence. In this paradigm, alienation and identity issues are symptoms or metaphors of the absence of the father. Characters like Abel and Set are men and sons and fathers first (I will discuss whether Abel is the father of Angela's child later). Then they are *Indians*. As men and sons and fathers, their narratives are important and meaningful for everyone who is a son or a father or who has a son or father, that is everyone, not only *Indians* or those curious about *Indians*. I believe this paradigm will open up new lines of inquiry, at least new lines of emphasis, which will lead to new interpretations, a wider audience, and a renewed appreciation for old texts such as *House Made of Dawn*.

The postmodern-mimetic is not simply a creative technique, it is also a critical approach to interpreting texts. It is more than a mere pragmatic approach, it is a hybrid approach to reading literature. The postmodern-mimetic critical method is a postmodern-mimetic narrative. For example, where the postmodern-mimetic novel is a particular way of reading and representing life, postmodern-mimetic criticism is a particular way of reading and representing literature. The postmodern-mimetic is a work in progress, but its distinguishing features are: a realist and subjective aesthetic, a careful noting of the structure and type of text, the application of historical and experiential sensibilities, and the careful listening for voices embedded in the narrative. For example, Catherine Hobbs noted that my critical approach is postmodern-mimetic in as much as it is part autobiography, part memoir, part rhetorical polemic, part rational criticism, and because it does not really resolve or come together in any finite or circumscribed way. In other words, it is an intransitive form of writing. And, analogous in many ways to the type of writing Berel Lang describes in his book *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide*: "This conception of writing denies the distances among the writer, text, what is written about, and finally, the reader, they all converge on a single point" (xii). These same characteristics, of course, are very evident in the postmodern-mimetic creative and critical work of N. Scott Momaday.

The first chapter, *The Realist Aesthetic in the Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel,* defines the realist aesthetic, an aesthetic which refers to the real-life experiences of real-life characters. Of course, the characters are fictional, but they are based on the experiences of real people. Abel, for example, is named after a Native American neighbor of Momaday's who killed himself. The name Abel is thus from a real person. Likewise, many people have commented on the autobiographical nature of many of Momaday's characters, from Tosamah in *House Made of Dawn,* to Set, and even Grey, in *The*

Ancient Child. The background, the historical, and the social conditions depicted in Momaday's novels are likewise authentic. Most importantly, however, the novels contain embedded voices. While there are some simple allegorical figures, such as Angela St. John, in Momaday's narratives, most characters are sophisticated, multi-dimensional personalities that go so far as to satirize their author, and who hold opinions very different from those expressed by Momaday in interviews and in his essays. Many of these voices articulate the real suffering of real people.

Of course, realism refers to more than the realistic depiction of real people; it also refers to explaining what has led to this reality. For example, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* is an aesthetically great novel and a realistic novel that has been praised by combat veterans for capturing the spirit of war, but it fails to show the reader what led to the war and why the protagonist is fighting for his life. While Remarque does explain the immediate cause for Paul Baumer's enlisting in the army, which is prompting by his teacher, Kantorek, he does not adequately inform his readers of the larger socio-historical milieu responsible for the war. However, with Abel and Set, Momaday lets us know how and why these men are fighting for their lives and sanity. These novels stress the disruption of the family as causative agents. Abel and Set are not flawed people; they are ordinary people living in a flawed society. In the final analysis they cannot "get well" because the fault does not lie with them, but with ourselves. They are not challenged to act: We, as readers, are. *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* are in the same genre as Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-five,* Joseph Heller's *Catch-22,* and J.D. Salinger's

Catcher in the Rye. If Abel or Set adjusts like Benally, or adopts a role like Francisco, are they well? They may be functional, they may be productive, but are they happy? Do they live satisfying lives? Obviously not. If Abel is able to make the adjustment, is that a happy ending? No. It is simply one more man beaten into a mold, shackled with manacles of the mind, adjusted perhaps, educated perhaps, but not happy. Happy is an inconceivable concept for Abel and Set.

In the second chapter, *Hybrids, Genres, and Modes: The Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel Defined,* I set some suggested definitional boundaries between different types of writing. The chapter is an apology of nomenclature in which examples are given of the use of common terms like "hybrid," "genre," "mode," and why specific terms are necessary to talk intelligibly about specific texts. Genre, for example, is a product of a culture, not an individual. Also, it is through genre that a culture's history and health can be evaluated. Modes generally represent individual contributions to genre. Hybrid refers to an author's dexterous use of genres and modes to fulfill a specific communicative need. In effect, it is using genres and modes as symbols: A symbol is "sign for something that is not known, . . . an indicator of something not known and not expressible otherwise than symbolically" (Le Guin 394). Hybrid writing becomes necessary when genres and modes become, like allegory, dead. Le Guin explains the difference between symbol and allegory as one having the quality "living meaning" and the other being its "dead equivalence" (394). This is what John Barth refers to in his widely publicized 1967 essay "The Literature of Exhaustion" (one of only a handful of critical literary essays ever to make it from a literary journal to a popular periodical, the *Atlantic Monthly*). In "The Literature of Exhaustion," Barth claims that conventional forms, genres and modes, are "used up" and their possibilities exhausted. Unfortunately, his essay has been widely misinterpreted to mean that literature itself is exhausted. However, as he subsequently explained in his 1979 essay, "The Literature of Replenishment," he simply means that new forms of writing, specifically what he terms postmodernist fiction, need to be developed.

The third chapter, *Magical Realism Versus the Postmodern-Mimetic*, explains how these seemingly similar critical theories and genres are, in fact, very dissimilar. Magical Realism has been defined by Amaryll Chanady as the juxtaposition of the "primitive," "archaic" American Indian mentality and the mentality of the "erudite," "rational," "empirical," "supercivilization" of South Americans of European descent. Obviously, the term carries a lot of unwarranted racist baggage when it is applied to the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. Consider, for example, if Chanady were writing about the Jewish author Isaac Bashevis Singer and using the same terms in reference to Jewish literature. It would read: Singer's work is a mixture of primitive Jewish superstition with rational Aryan supercivilization. Chanady's model would also ignore that Singer's immediate literary achievement is more of a familial than cultural product. For example, Singer's father was a rabbi and *chasid*, his mother descended from adherents of chasidism's rationalist opponents, the *misnagdim* (Alexander 13). Likewise, Momaday makes repeated references to the pervasive influence of his father and mother on his life and art in various autobiographical sketches and interviews.

The difference between Magical Realism and Postmodern-Mimetic is much more than the cultural baggage Chanady tags to it. Magical Realism is fundamentally about the real juxtaposed to the unreal (Abrams "Magic Realism"). However, postmodern-mimetic refers to the postmodern and the mimetic. Postmodern contains within it the pre-modern, the modern, and the post-modern. Postmodernism is both a world-view and a rhetorical strategy. Mimetic refers to literary mimesis: The complex use of language to represent real people, places, times, driving socio-cultural forces, causative agents, and ideology as the author sees them.

Chapter Four, *Historical and Experiential Postmodernism: Native American and Euro-American,* explores postmodernism from both a Native American and non-Indian perspective. Euro-Americans have a history of what David Harvey terms "creative destruction," whereas Native Americans are the ones upon whom the destruction fell. These very different historical experiences (subject positions) have led to different types of consciousnesses about living in our age. Succinctly stated, one is a postmodernism born of being colonized, the other of being the colonizer. Of course, these very different experiences result in different forms of creative and critical narratives, which this chapter explores in some detail.

Chapter Five, *House Made of Dawn: A New Interpretation* and *The Ancient Child: A Premier Example of the Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel,* demonstrates the application of a new critical approach, the postmodern-mimetic, and brings a new interpretation to these novels. Readers, like critics, generally assert that *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* have either a happy ending (Marion Willard Hylton, Harold S. McAllister, Carole Oleson, Louis Owens, Susan Scarberry-Garcia, Martha Trimble, Charles Woodard) or a tragic one (Charles Larson). But, the postmodern-mimetic novel spurns the simplistic dichotomy of "happy" or "tragic" because it does not have a definite terminus. It is open-ended.

These particular novels are about suffering. While completing my reading of *The Ancient Child* I was reminded of the opening to Harold Schweizer's book *Suffering and the Remedy of Art* : "At a time when postmodern taste directs us towards the play of signifiers and the pleasures of the text, this book is unfashionably serious" (1). Schweizer's book is about "wounds that will not close despite the sutures, scarring, and bandaging, the patchwork and layering of literary technique" (1). Although Schweizer does not examine *The Ancient Child,* it is an excellent example of his thesis. As he explains:

> In the experience of suffering the ideology of objectivity, the claims of reason and knowledge, are called into question. Philosophical distinctions of body and spirit, sensation and intellect, the universal and the particular, the physical and the metaphysical, no longer apply. (2)

In *The Ancient Child* these distinctions are indeed blurred, not only for the characters, but for the narrator, author and reader as well. *The Ancient Child* is, I assert, the chronicle of a man's journey into madness, facilitated by a world of broken connections and other wounded people, particularly, a tragically wounded young woman, Grey.

Momaday's message of suffering and silence is in *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* for those who are able and willing to see and hear it. Abel and Set's respective "triumphs" are, in fact, tropes of the idea that the average Native American can triumph in America. Abel is alone and silent at the end of *House Made of Dawn,* just as he is at the beginning: "He was alone and running on . . . . There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song" (Momaday, *House* 191). Abel may have the words to the song of healing, but pointedly he is unable to articulate them, the word remains unspoken.

Abel's (*House Made of Dawn*) and Set's (*The Ancient Child*) chief problem is that they do not know who their fathers are and, consequently, do not know who they are either. Critics have long-neglected the fact that the father is absent in almost every contemporary Native American novel, which, it should be noted, stands in stark contrast to the stereotypical American novel in which it is not the absent father, but a dominating father that is ubiquitous.

The Ancient Child and *House Made of Dawn* are novels of suffering, but not futile suffering if it awakens a reader's consciousness and conscience. Novels of suffering perform their function of raising consciousness through reducing the "distances among writer, text, what is written about, and finally, the reader, [so they] all converge on a single point" (Lang xii). Momaday, and other postmodern-mimetic authors, accomplish this through the dexterous use of sophisticated writing strategies, such as heteroglossia, polyphony, self-conscious text, complex inter-textuality, antinomy, and verisimilitude to the real world and the experiences of real people.

Chapter One

The Realist Aesthetic in the Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel

What is the *realist aesthetic*? The realist aesthetic refers to a measure of how successfully an author is able to communicate the ideology of a given time and place while simultaneously presenting an accurate representation of the material conditions and people of that time and place. The realism I refer to is analogous to Lukács's dictum that realism "depicts man [and woman] and society as complete entities, instead of showing merely one or the other" (*Studies* 6). The problem that authors have had to struggle with is that one aspect usually suffers at the expense of the other. For example, a text is either naively idealistic or suffers from a deterministic crass materialism.

These two aspects, for definition purposes only (the subtleties and complexities of the two terms will be dealt with at length in later chapters), I refer to as the postmodern and the mimetic. The postmodern school has generally given up trying to represent concrete reality and has turned instead to intellectualizing language. On the other hand, crass materialist, or the mimetic school, frequently neglect ideology and idealism and metaphysics in their quest to create simple and straightforward polemical narratives. In these novels, elementary cause and effect propels the narrative forward. While the postmodernists have given up trying to represent reality in their narratives, and the materialists have given up trying to incorporate abstract concepts in theirs, they share an absence of an ethical voice. In their respective world-views there is no "right" or "wrong." Both types of writing are deliberately amoral. The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, like Lukács's proletarian revolutionary novel, is the marriage of the two–a sophisticated use of language and a faithful depiction of real people, real places, and a real time, as the author interprets it, combined with a bold ethical voice.

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel contains ideology, an ethical voice, and the depiction of real people and real places in a real time, and through the unfolding of the narrative the dynamic relations between these elements are made manifest to the reader. The reader's unspoken task is to evaluate how accurately an author's narrative correlates to their own real-life experiences. The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel performs the same function stories and storytellers have traditionally performed in their respective communities: To explain, to facilitate understanding of complex ideas, to speculate, to evaluate, to prophecy, to lamentate, to delve into our unconscious mind with both hands and draw into consciousness our collective dreams and nightmares. I do not think it is an over generalization to say that language is especially bountifully meaningful to Native Americans.

Stories have always been used by people, by societies, to try to figure out mysteries and new experiences. Parents have used stories to teach children social values and beliefs, consequently there is nothing radical or revolutionary in this assertion. The only new assertion is that a genre, in this case, the postmodern-mimetic novel, as well as the story itself, is capable of producing real world consequences: "Genre appraises reality and reality clarifies genre" (Bakhtin, *Formal* 136). In some cases, "A particular aspect of reality can only be understood in connection with the particular means of representing it" (134). Likewise, "New means of representation force us to see new aspects of visible reality" (134). However, "These new aspects cannot clarify or significantly enter our horizon if the new means to consolidate them [new genres, for example] are lacking" (134), which is why, "the process of seeing and conceptualizing reality must not be severed from the process of embodying it in the forms of a particular genre" (134). Therefore, generic experimentation is not only an important form of writing, it is a culturally necessary form of appraising an ever-changing reality.

If genre is a tool for conceptualizing an ever-changing reality, reality in the form of verisimilitude is an important component in that process. However, verisimilitude in the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is not an end in itself, but is often a juxtapositional force used to highlight the anti-realist elements, and vice versa. For example, the anti-realist elements in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* reveal the absurdity of life, of history; moreover, we often cannot make sense of them, and the harder we try, the greater fools we make of ourselves. For instance, just as the witnesses' differing descriptions of the tricksters vary from observer to observer to observer in *Green Grass, Running Water*, our perception of reality and anti-reality varies. Despite the posturing and polemics of King's characters, in the end chaos and uncertainty, an angst, a purposelessness appears to rule the universe and drives what we call history. It is comic only in the sense that it is a maniacal laugh into the maw of the abyss. Michael Dorris writes in his essay "The Myth of

Justice," composed shortly before he took his own life in 1997, "The proper response to the tale [Nootka Creation Story] is laughter rather than smugness or indignation. Don't expect from me, the universe seems to suggest, but don't blame me either. You're on your own" (468).

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, like Adena Rosmarin's mask lyric genre, plays on the tension between the imagination and reality, the real and unreal, and tropes the notion of gnosis per se–that is, that we can know what is real and what is illusion. The mask lyric is an illusion coupled with an illusion, yet founded on some fundamental and substantive truth about reality that the reader must puzzle out for him or herself. The truth is labile. Postmodernism demands that we perform an act of conscious illusion; it is the marriage of verisimilitude and artifice. It takes a great deal of skill on the author's part and effort on the reader's part to sustain these contraries; the reader is forced to see irony and conscious illusion everywhere, not just in the novel. The creative tension between the author and the reader makes the novel powerful and alive. And, there is also a persuasive rhetoric in the genre, an unstated plea for the reader to walk a mile in the author's moccasins, to revise his or her opinion of Native Americans, and his or her historical, ontological, and teleological world view. A reader simultaneously finds and makes meaning: verisimilitude finds meaning by showing it to the reader, postmodernism makes meaning by forcing the reader into a *perfecit* (meaning-making) role. According to Bakhtin, "The logic of novelistic construction permits the mastery of the unique logic of new aspects of reality. The artist [author] organically places life as he sees it into the plane of the work" where the reader becomes aware of it through his or her own engagement with the text (*Formal* 135). This shared view of the world between author and reader, the realist aesthetic or verisimilitude, is then the underlying goal of all socially relevant fiction.

Of course, on the face of it, verisimilitude, the mimesis of the postmodern-mimetic novel, may seem an inappropriate vehicle for satire of the dominant culture because the "two fundamental rules of the verisimilar novel, probability and balanced vision, have to be abandoned. Moreover, the verisimilar novel, presupposing an ordered society, has values incompatible with those of certain satiric subgenres, particularly apocalyptic satire . . . " (Fowler 189). Nevertheless, through a deft handling of postmodern narrative, Native American authors create a penetrating and acerbic satire that would be impossible to achieve without verisimilitude. It may be helpful to keep in mind that satire does not come from satyr, as is commonly believed, but from a cooking term, *satura*, which means "mixture" (110). Even Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, which is not a hybrid novel, does contain modal representations of other genres, "Memoirs, saint's lives, trickster tales, journals, letters, [and] poems" (Velie, "Identity and Genre" 181).

On the surface, this also appears to represents an impasse with Bakhtin's definition of the novel which states that the novel per se incorporates a multitude of genres. However, everything that calls itself a novel is not a novel, if we are true to the subtlety and sophistication that are the hallmarks of the novel. Certainly, we can readily think of any number of best-selling pulp fiction "novels" that fall into this category, as well as some that have found their way into literary studies, such as Michael Dorris's and Louise Erdrich's *Crown of Columbus*. Furthermore, there is no published Bakhtinian treatise distinguishing the terms "hybrid" and "mode" in relation to the novel. As a matter of fact, there is boisterous disagreement among literary scholars today as to what exactly constitutes a mode and a genre. Should we use the term genre to refer to the novel, and continue to claim the short story is a genre, the memoir is a genre, the mask lyric is a genre, etc.? How can a genre contain genres? There seems to be some taxonomic fallacy, or at least an indeterminacy, that obviously leads to confusion. Biologist have species, genus, family, order, class, and phylum–how can we expect one categorizing term, genus, to continue to bear the burden of all the disparate beasties we analyze in literary studies? Although I will continue to use the term genre in reference to the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, I think that novels, especially hybrid novels, are, at least in complexity, an order above the genres they contain. Unfortunately, literary studies has yet to develop a vocabulary that will be widely accepted to match the complexity of our task. This, then, is the topic of Chapter Two, *Hybrids, Genres, Modes: The Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel Defined.*

For now, let us simply agree that meaning matters for the author, the reader, and society. The question then becomes a matter of whose meanings and of what matters. Because, "In actual practice, the freedom to interpret is never unconditional" (Fowler 268). Lukács's legitimate criticism of the literature of his day is apropos today. He wrote, "Bourgeois aesthetics and critics . . . regard poetry merely as a revelation of the inner life, a clear-sighted recognition of social hopelessness or at best a consolation, an outward-reflected miracle"

(*Studies* 3). The critics to whom Lukács referred are the New Critics, but contemporary literary nihilists also fit the bill. Lukács' solution is an alternative aesthetic, the *realist aesthetic*.

Lukács' definition of realism entails more than mere verisimilitude. Realism "depicts man and society as complete entities, instead of showing merely one or the other of their aspects" (6). Realism is important because:

> only if we accept the concept of the complete human personality as the social and historical task humanity has to solve; only if we regard it as the vocation of art to depict the most important turning-point of this process with all the wealth of the factors affecting it; only if aesthetics assign to art the role of explorer and guide, can the content of life be systematically divided into spheres of greater and lesser importance . . . . (7)

How else can we say, as literary scholars, that one particular novel is more important than another, or even that it is important to read this novel? Furthermore, Lukács warns that mere surface verisimilitude, the showing of what, but not how, not only fails to engage in praxis (thoughtful action), but becomes an obstacle in itself when he writes:

> only then does it become evident that any description of mere biological processes–be these the sexual act or pain and sufferings, however detailed and from the literary point of view perfect it may be–results in a leveling-down of the social, historical and moral being of men and is not a means but an obstacle to such essential artistic expression as illuminating human conflicts in all their complexity and completeness. (7-8)

Lukács repeatedly stresses the "organic and indissoluble connection between man as a private individual and man as a social being, as a member of a community" (8). And, he cautions against severing that tie; he calls it a "mutilation of the essence of man" (9). Thus, he calls for a "profound, and all embracing realism . . . [to] educate the people and transform public opinion" (18). His version of realism is a potent remedy for the denaturing of literature and society that N. Katherine Hayles so eloquently warns us about in *How We Became Posthuman*.

Lukács also points out that the style of a writer–that is, the genre he chooses, the themes he selects, the motifs he uses, are reflections of a writer's involvement in his or her community's struggles (11). For example, "Realists such as Balzac and Tolstoy . . . always take the most important, burning problems of the community for their starting-point; their pathos as writers is always stimulated by those sufferings of the people which are the most acute at the time . . ." (12). He continues:

> No one experienced more deeply than Balzac the torments which the transition to the capitalist system of production inflicted on every section of the people, the profound moral and spiritual degradation which necessarily accompanied this transformation of every level of society. (12)

Likewise, some Native American authors chronicle the forced assimilation and acculturation, not only into a capitalist culture, but also into a foreign culture, as well as the everyday struggle of landless, dispossessed urban Indians to survive as America's indigenous diaspora, while others do not.

To be truly verisimilar an author needs to make manifest the causes of that reality. Rodney Livingstone writes that for Lukács "the crucial fact . . . is that what we see is appearance, whereas the great novelist reveals the driving forces of history which are invisible to actual consciousness" (12). In other words, it is the author's job to enable the reader to see through the "veils of reification" that blind one's vision of one's true self and one's true relation to other selves. As Heraclitus said: "Those who are awake have a world in common, but every sleeper has a world of his own." Lukács quotes Heraclitus in reference to aesthetic modernists, but it follows that his statement is equally applicable to contemporary nihilistic sophists. For example, Lukács praises Willi Brendel's novels because while the text "forms a coherent narrative entity, it still had no absolute beginning or end, but is portrayed as one part of the overall process" (*Essays* 23). While this is mentioned in passing by Lukács, it is an important part of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel because of the milieu of complex and historical forces that work together to create the everyday environment of Native America.

Lukács's lifetime project was the identifying, evaluating, and expounding of the proletarian revolutionary novel. The proletarian revolutionary novel is an exercise in deliberate action, not simple idealism or journalistic reportage, but a combination of stark realism based on the continuum of history and identification of the hegemony of powers that combine to create this reality, a process to which the characters may be blind, but which the author's craft makes evident to the reader. For this reason Lukács praises Upton Sinclair's efforts, but he ultimately condemns Sinclair's work for its "lack of clarity in questions of class struggle," a lack of clarity attributable to his "fluctuation between petty-bourgeois moralizing social criticism and genuine adherence to the proletarian class struggle" (55). Lukács uses *Jimmy Higgins* and *Petroleum* as examples, but the more widely read novel *The Jungle* also displays this defect. The powers that are identified seem inexorable, such as avarice and Social Darwinism, and the characters lack any real depth and fail to grow over the course of the narrative. For example, how can a reader be expected to believe that a man who has witnessed the death of his wife, his infant child, his son, and the piecemeal destruction of his entire extended family, would, in the end, be happy working as a doorman in a hotel, even if the owner is a Marxist? One need only recall how Ralph Ellison's protagonist in the *Invisible Man* suffers only a fraction of these traumas and yet ends up living in not much more than a hole in the ground, his encounter with Marxists such as Sinclair's notwithstanding.

Lukács chooses Tolstoy's final novel, *Resurrection,* as an example of the proletarian revolutionary novel. Why? Because Tolstoy, through the "suffering of the prisoner, from the stinking, bug-ridden cell through to the actual chastisement [beating], is portrayed in terms of the real suffering of real people," and it exposes the hegemonic power of class over the judiciary system in a capitalist state (57). Of course, the hegemony of power that the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel attempts to expose is far more complex than simple class antagonism, although that, too, is a powerful force, because it includes such elements as racism, colonialism, cultural hubris, etc. as well as the psychic by-products that Frantz Fanon (*Wretched of the Earth* and *White Masks, Black Faces*) identified as existing in his exploited and colonized Algerians, such as internalized colonialism, anomie, ennui, and self-hatred.

It is noteworthy that Upton Sinclair was disappointed that *The Jungle* did not have the intended effect. He said, "I aimed at the public's heart and by accident I hit it in the stomach" (*Afterward* 349). His novel was not only about the meatpacking industry, but about the way in which capitalism in America exhausts then disposes of its workers.

In addition, according to Lukács, realism requires that characters be more than mere "objects of demonstration for the presentation of certain factual content" (*Essays* 61). He explains:

> The creative writer does not create in perfect freedom, simply out of his own mind, as bourgeois-idealist aesthetic claims. He is on the contrary closely tied to the reproduction of reality in a manner faithful to its true content. This tie, however, means that he has to reproduce the overall process . . . by disclosing its actual and essential driving forces. (52)

Why, for example, were the workers in the meat-packing plant described in *The Jungle* powerless to change the conditions of their workplace? Why did Jurgis lose his house, and his families' life savings? Why did his son die? Why did the "boss" escape punishment for raping Jurgis's wife?

Obviously, critics are not in agreement that Lukács's proletariat revolutionary novel genre does indeed represent the highest literary creation, but his efforts have placed his ideas on the critical table, and as such are subject to discussion and serious consideration. It lays the foundation for a work such as this in which genre is looked at from from the perspective of its effects on people and community.

Lukács was one of the first opponents of "narrow-minded specialism" which he asserts is not the consequence of the blossoming of knowledge, but a deliberate attempt on the part of "bourgeois ideologists" to obscure the complex relations among things (*Essays* 125-7). His emphasis, of course, is on bourgeois removal of economics from social development discourse, but this same "specialism" also functions to obfuscate the relations between literature and colonialism, imperialism, racism, etc. For instance:

> The tremendous social power of literature consists in the fact that it depicts the human being directly and with the full richness of his inward and outward life, in concrete fashion not equaled by any other field of reflection of objective reality. Literature is able to portray the contradictions, struggles and conflicts of social life in the same way as these appear in the mind and life of actual human beings, and portray the connections between these collisions in the same way as they focus themselves within the human being. (143)

Realist literature is thus the antidote to "modern bourgeois literature" and commodity fiction written for a market economy, and from which readers can get "nothing new and fundamental" (143).

Additionally, without realism, "Literature becomes a mere playground for formal experiments" (145). As a matter of fact, Lukács's pronouncement seems to be prophetic of Gerald Vizenor's playing with words and of another, more grim, characteristic of his work too:

> The humorist's soul yearns for a more genuine substantiality than life can offer; and so he smashes all the forms and limits of life's fragile totality in order to reach the sole source of life, the pure, world-dominating 'I'. But as the objective world breaks down, so the subject, too, becomes a fragment. (53)

Where, for example, is the wholeness in Vizenor's novel *Bearheart*? It is populated with a host of world-dominating "I's," and homicidal maniacs. It is a horrible, nightmarish vision of the world and of humanity.

Lukács's realism involves a genuine love for humanity and a thirst for life. For example, he writes that without "love for humanity and life in general, something that necessarily involves the deepest hatred for a society, classes and their representatives who humiliate and deform human beings, it is impossible for any genuinely major realism to develop" (*Essays* 148). Compare, for instance, the fetishization of death in popular culture to death as portrayed in Tolstoy. Lukács points out that in Tolstoy death always appears in a quite different form depending on its "connection with the individual and social life of particular human beings" (152). For example, "The more meaningful [the] life was, the more harmoniously related to human social existence, the less terror does death have" (152). Above all, the central task of literature is the portrayal of real human beings in all their complexity and social relations (156).

It is in the focus on real human beings in all their complexity and social relations that Lukács's proletarian revolutionary novel and the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel harmonize. Of course, they differ in narrative technique, but that is more a product of how writing has changed over the past few decades than a difference in ideology. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., for example, introduced many of the narrative techniques that distinguish the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, such as self-referential language, self-consciously created context, splicing together of different contexts, characters constructed in such a way as to be conscious of themselves as characters, multiple levels of meaning, and multiple valid interpretations. The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel does, however, differ in significant socio-historical ways from Lukács's proletarian revolutionary novel. Lukács, for example, is operating from a European, albeit a Eastern European, cultural context, whereas the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is particular to Native America, including Canada and Latin America. Consequently, it is important to examine in some detail the unique historical and cultural matrices of the Native American intellectual tradition to fully appreciate what is the *Native American* postmodern-mimetic novel, and why it is different from the postmodern European or postmodern American novel, which is the topic of chapter Four, *Historical and Experiential Postmodernism: Native American and Euro-American.*

Why are Native American novels important? Many dispossessed urban Indians have parents or grandparents living with them who can tell them what it was like to live on their own land, in their own homes, or who at least remember their parents telling them what it was like. Indeed, with each generation questions of what it means to be Indian become more urgent. The pressures of living in poverty, in crowded inner-city neighborhoods, splintering families, state seizure of our children, erases generations of personal narratives, and, in many cases children grow up without their fathers, or even knowing the identity of their father. Nowhere is the issue of what it means to be "Indian" expressed more passionately and creatively than in the work of N. Scott Momaday.

Indeed, writers such as Momaday have become fathers, and their novels substitute personal narratives of a new generation of Native Americans who have only vestigial ties to their tribal and communal heritage. The fascinating promise from this generation of post-Indians is their steadfast refusal to let go of their Indianness. My Chickasaw ancestors believed their identity was contingent with the land where they and their ancestors walked, died and were buried. However, removal and relocation taught them that their identity was not dependent on a place, but rather on community. Subsequently, when the U.S. Congress unilaterally abolished their Nation and allotted their lands, deliberately separating families for assimilation purposes, they learned that being Chickasaw is more than living together. It is family. Then the U.S. government forcibly removed our children to boarding schools and erased our language, but we discovered we were still Chickasaw. We finally learned that being Chickasaw is something we carry in our heart, and as long as we live, it cannot be taken away. Remember the Bahkyush immigrants at the beginning of *House Made of Dawn*, with nothing more than the shirts on their backs . . . "even in this moment of deep hurt and humiliation they thought of themselves as a people" (Momaday, *House* 19). Every morning we wake up and we are still Chickasaw. I grew up in east Houston, but I have never doubted for a moment that I am Chickasaw. Being Chickasaw would not change if there were no Native American novels, but the novels do ease the burden. I remember coming across a torn copy of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* in a used bookstore when I was a teenager. I did not know that Native Americans wrote novels. I read that novel several times, I still have that copy, and it is the only copy I own after all of these years, even though its pages are yellow and brittle. The book has passages underlined in black, blue, red and green ink and pencil. Many of the marks I do not recall making, or remember why, but I note that it is marked from cover to cover, and that itself means something.

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is a novel written by an author who considers him or herself a Native American and is a recognized member of a Native American Nation or tribe. It is postmodern in its self-referential use of language, self-consciously created context, splicing together of different contexts, characters who are self-conscious, contain multiple levels of meanings and multiple valid interpretations, it is heteroglossiac, polyphonic, antinomous, contains a meaningful theme, and is hybrid. It is mimetic in that it demonstrates verisimilitude to the real world and contains the embodied voices and experiences of real people.

Chapter Two

Hybrids, Genres, Modes: The Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel Defined

How does one distinguish one type of novel from another? For that, we rely on genre. Genre provides a necessary context for what is being written and a guide to understanding it. Literature without genre is like writing without grammar. Consequently, the starting point for this analysis of the phenomenon of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel in contemporary literature is the recondite enigma of genre.

Genres, according to M.H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* sketchy entry, are simply "arbitrary ways of classifying literature" for the convenience of critics (77). However, this cursory entry belies genre's importance to the study and future of literary criticism and literature per se. Without genre, we may fall into the fallacy of comparing apples and oranges unaware. Without genre, we may not recognize the robust counter-hegemonic discourse of survival that informs and transforms author and reader of the hybrid genre, the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel.

Genre is not merely a classification scheme. It also engages "problems in interpretation and literary hermeneutics" because a "clear relation exists between a reader's generic perceptions of a text . . . and her interpretation of that text" (Kent 9). Genre has two dimensions which must be taken into consideration: the synchronic, a system of codifiable conventions; and, the diachronic, cultural changes wrought over time (15). To recognize satire, for example, a reader "must recognize both the formal [synchronic] and cultural conventions [diachronic] violated by satire" (19). In other words, "A reader must recognize what satire is *not*, before she may recognize what it is" (author's emphasis 19). A naive reader, one who is unable to recognize generic conventions, is like a child who does not know what to expect next when reading, and is unsure of what he or she has read.

Thomas Kent, in *Interpretation and Genre*, points out that three competent critics, F. O. Matthiessen, Charles Feidelson, Jr., and R. W. B. Lewis, all interpret Melville's *Pierre* as a failure because they, correctly, identify it as a tragic novel that is predictable and formulaic. They are also in agreement that Melville's *Moby-Dick* is a literary success. However, they each give very different reasons for liking that novel. One, for instance, praises it as a kind of moral allegory cast as a reverse tragedy, another praises it as a phenomenological text, and another praises it as a dialectical novel with tension without resolution (24-5). Kent points out, however, that *Moby-Dick*'s aesthetic success lies not in being any one of those things, but in possessing elements of all of those genres "as well as elements of genres like the picaresque novel, the epic, and the romance" (26). In other words, *Moby-Dick*'s aesthetic success is attributable to hybridization. Therefore, it is not enough simply to be able to identify specific genres, one must also be able to recognize hybrid writing. Otherwise, his or her analysis will be incomplete.

Hybridity is the hallmark of postmodern writing, the deliberate mixing of genres in order to create a new genre. Although this new form of writing requires more astute and careful analysis, it does not mean that "indeterminacy" and "inconclusiveness" (Bakhtin's terms) reign. Indeed, mixing genres creates new meaning. It does not negate meaning. Mixing genres expands the capacity of language. In an analogous example, chaos theory did not negate physics, but led to renewed vigor and imagination in the discipline. N. Katherine Hayles notes in *Chaos Bound* that "Chaos theorists . . . value chaos as the engine that drives a system toward a more complex kind of order. They like chaos because it makes order possible" (23). Chaos is defined as the "hidden order that exists within chaotic systems," and/or "the spontaneous emergence of self organization from chaos" (9). Expanded language equals expanded imagination. This is not, as many deconstructionists and critics of postmodernism would have us believe, a time of failing communication and the disintegration of meaning, but an age in which there is an unprecedented potential for expanding understanding in ways heretofore unimagined. For example, again citing Hayles, "New paradigms [generated by chaos theory applied to literature] bring into focus classical texts that may not have fitted very well into older traditions, and these texts help to give traditional authority to new paradigms" (23). Momaday, for example, does not employ genre haphazardly, but with great care and deliberately to bridge the chasm between different Native American and Euro-American world views; significantly, his novels are written for a primarily non-native audience.

It is important to look at the construction of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel not in the classical Saussure or Jakobson model of Addresser-Message-Addressee in which the message is: "formulated by the speaker, encoded, and then decoded by the listener" with understanding being simply a "matter of decoding," and "nothing about the message would change if the addressee were asleep or entirely absent" (Morson 128). But, rather, the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel should be examined as an "utterance." As Morson and Emerson point out in their seminal work on Bakhtin, "utterances do not just happen to be understood" (128). Instead, utterances are the result of a process of active understanding which is anticipated by the speaker, and the message is created by an author's anticipation of his or her audience's ability to understand his or her message (128). In Bakhtin's own words:

> The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual horizon, that determines this word within the alien horizon of the understanding receiver; he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this horizon. The speaker breaks through the alien horizon of the listener, constructs his utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener's, apperceptive background. (*Discourse* 282)

Bakhtin's pupil Voloshonov, uses the example of a bridge which depends on both sides to hold it up to illustrate how the process of utterance works (qtd. in Morson 129). Most importantly, however, the Saussure-Jakobson model overlooks genre, "which leads to disaster when applied to novels" (Morson 129). And it also obfuscates the diachronic development of an author's work over the course of his or her lifetime which develops through feedback from his or her audience (129).

In other words, the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is dialogic. The most important characteristic of a dialogic text is that it represents an embodied voice, not abstract, fanciful, or merely intellectual points of view (Bakhtin, *Problems* 183). There is an important but subtle distinction between the dialectic and the dialogic: the dialectic may, but does not necessarily, represent an embodied voice; the dialogic always represents an embodied voice. Consequently, utterances have an evaluative element, which necessarily entails an ethical stance (Morson 134).

Heteroglossia, one of Bakhtin's more complex concepts, is also a distinguishing characteristic of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, and, in fact, of all true novels. Heteroglossia is not so difficult a concept to understand if we think of it in terms of an embodied voice. A heteroglossial text, for example, is simply one that contains more than one embodied voice. These voices, sometimes referred to by Bakhtin as languages, are the result of real, lived experiences, personal, community, historical, that culminate in various particular world-views that are expressed in the words, syntax, metaphors, grammar, and tone of a speaking subject that is, more or less, conscious of his or her subjectivity, or beingness vis-á-vis other beings.

Closely related to heteroglossia, even sometimes confused with heteroglossia, is polyphony. Polyphony refers to a plurality of consciousnesses (Morson 238), not simply languages. In addition, these consciousnesses represent the lived life experiences of embodied voices. The key to understanding the importance of this term is to recognize that it, like heteroglossia, represents embodied voices. Even when the voices speak in harmony, polyphony may be present because they may agree "from different perspectives and different senses of the world" (237). Bakhtin considers a voice "embodied" when the idea a person holds is insuperable, and shapes their personality and actions (237).

In addition, a novel is polyphonic if an author such as Bakhtin's exemplar Dostoevsky, "treats the truths of other consciousnesses as equals" (Morson 238). That is, characters are not merely objects manipulated by a master puppeteer, but subjects with independent consciousnessess. Characters in a polyphonic novel are not "voiceless slaves . . . but true people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him " (*Problems* 6). This is why Bakhtin asserts that: "Poetics should really begin with genre, not end with it. For genre is the typical form of the whole work, the whole utterance. A work is only real in the form of a definite genre, each element's constructive meaning can only be understood in connection with genre" (*Formal* 129). Bakhtin defines genre as "the typical totality of the artistic utterance, and a vital totality, a finished and resolved whole" (129).

On the surface, Bakhtin's analysis seems flawed because common sense seems to dictate that however sophisticated an author is he is still the author, and as such deliberately manipulates his characters at his will. However, Momaday candidly states that he learns, sometimes long after publication, "what's really going on" (Abbott 30). He explains: "When a man is writing, he is operating on two levels: he writes out of his consciousness and out of his unconsciousness. And very many times he will not, after the fact, know all about his writing" (30). He explains in a later interview with Gretchen Bataille that while writing there are things he understood "on one level and ha[s] come to understand on a different level and will again in the future understand on yet another level" (63). Along these same lines, Momaday consistently refuses to answer what happens to Abel after the end of the novel. His typical response is, "your idea is as good as mine" (Bonnetti 140). Indicating that Abel has an existence independent of the author which somehow occurs through the dynamic process of storytelling. Momaday makes no distinction between the storyteller as writer, singer, or speaker, the characters as well as the storyteller and listener are creatively transformed or renewed or given the breath of life (Bonetti 131).

Now, back to the thorny issue of genre. If we use Bakhtin's definition of genre as "the aggregate of the means for seeing and conceptualizing reality" (*Formal* 137), we may confidently assert that the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is a genre geared to seeing and conceptualizing reality in a new way. Consequently, genre has by nature an internal and external efferent effect. That is, it is creative. It functions as a nerve center that sends creative energy outward, it has an effervescent quality that flows upward and outward. First, it is oriented toward the reader in reference to some "definite conditions of performance and perception" (130). Second, every genre conceptualizes reality for its reader in a certain way (131). And, finally, it occupies a definite locus and time.

Many popular literary critics seem willfully oblivious to locus and time when it comes to Native American literature. For example, it is currently in vogue to divide Native American literature into oral and written narratives without taking into consideration locus or time, or to assert internal textual conflict between the oral and written forms of Native American narrative, as illustrated in an essay published in the Winter 1999 edition of *World Literature Today,* titled "The Arbitrary Nature of the Story: Poking Fun at Oral and Written Authority in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water,*" again without considering locus or time. For example, if Sharon Bailey were really interested in the "war" between the oral and written traditions in Cherokee narrative, it seems the proper way of addressing the issue would be to learn Cherokee, learn the Cherokee syllabary, and then examine narratives published in the first fifty or even one hundred years of Cherokee literary tradition instead of beginning her analysis over one hundred and fifty years after the beginning of Cherokee written tradition. It is equivalent to examining a Shakespearian text to speculate on literary issues relevant in Chaucer's era, and not bothering to even learn the language of Chaucer. Why is such dilettantism tolerated and rewarded in Native American literary studies when it is frowned upon in other areas? Bailey even neglects to discuss the very pertinent fact that while King is a Cherokee, he is writing about the Blackfoot.

Not all literary critics are blind to locus and time. Giorgio Mariani, for instance, points out in *Post-Tribal Epics,* published in 1996, that:

> The audiences for which contemporary indigenous literature is written are on a material plane so enormously different from the ones traditional stories are told for that any attempt to see

> the two as part of an unbroken continuum c[an] not be seriously sustained. (25)

And, as Mariani's book further illustrates, a more relevant and current critical discourse that takes into account locus and time would center on the distinction between Native American literature as epic or as novel.

Novel, as defined by Lukács, is the form of narrative that develops in a culture after "beauty" ceases to be "the meaning of the world made visible" (*Theory* 34), before the soul "knows it can lose itself, [before] it thinks of looking for itself" (30). And, when "what is given form [in the novel] is not the totality of life but the artist's relationship with that totality, his approving or condemnatory attitude toward it" (53). Unfortunately, authors cannot create a new totality with their words, "however high the subject may rise above its objects and take them into its sovereign possession, they are still and always only isolated objects, whose sum can never equal a real totality" (53). In this locus and time "loneliness has become a problem unto itself, deepening and confusing the tragic problem and ultimately taking its place . . . such loneliness is . . . the torment of a creature condemned to solitude and devoured by a longing for community" (45). This is poignantly demonstrated by Welch in *The Death of Jim Loney*, Momaday in *House Made of Dawn*, and Thomas King in *Medicine River*. In addition, these novels also contain the characteristic quest motif, a hero who searches for meaning, for totality, that is no longer immanent (60). Significantly, the "problematic individual" and the "contingent world" are the hallmarks of the novel (78). According to Lukács, "The inner form of the novel has been understood as the process of the problematic individual's journeying towards himself . . . towards clear self-recognition" (80). And, "The immanence of meaning which the form of the novel requires lies in the hero's finding out through experience that a mere glimpse of meaning is the highest that life has to offer" (80). These characteristics sound remarkably, and not coincidentally, like a plot summary of many contemporary Native American novels. Consequently, the real tension in contemporary Native American novels is not between orality and the written word, but between the integrating totality of our not too distant past, which is still a part of our living memory, and the fractured existence of our everyday lives.

As a matter of fact, the popularity of the quest for oral-written tension in Native American narratives by critics becomes absurd when you consider that the novels commonly examined by them for oral and written tension are usually written by Native American authors who are, for the most part, highly literate, highly educated professional writers, and whose major exposure to oral literature occurred, as likely as not, in a university setting; such as Thomas King, the author of the novel Bailey chose for the subject of her essay. Indeed, the project of discovering an oral-written *war* in Native American narrative also seems spurious because of its paradigmatic ascription of orality and written word traditions *exclusively* to Native American and European cultures, respectively. Much like the arbitrary division of magic and realism into indigenous and European cultures, respectively, by authors like Amaryll Chanady in her text *Magical Realism.*

In the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel the only totality is in the novel; it is not immanent nor is it tied to some other world totality (like Dante's Christian totality); indeed its presence in the novel emphasizes its absence in real life. As Lukács explains it, since totality is absent in the historico-philosophical age of the novel, it can only be present symbolically, as an "abstract systematization," unfortunately, "in the created reality of the novel all that becomes visible is the distance separating the systematization from the concrete life " (70). As Mrs. Angela Grace St. John mused as she watched Abel engaged in the Christian-Indian syncretic ritual of the chicken-pull in *House Made of Dawn*, "so empty of meaning . . . yet so full of appearance" (Momaday, *House* 43). Indeed, Mrs. Angela Grace St. John herself is, in many ways, a mere abstract allegory of the Christian totality. On the other hand, Leslie Silko's novels, *Ceremony* and *Almanac of the Dead*, are not postmodern-mimetic, but post-tribal epics because they are tied to some other world totality.

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel comprises multiple genres. Of course, the use of multiple genres to create a novel is not new. Bakhtin asserts in *The Formal Method of Literary Scholarship* that, "A new genre is made from genres at hand; within every genre a regrouping of already prepared elements takes place. Everything is provided the artist–all that remains is to combine the ready material in a new way" (140-1). Similarly, Barbara Lewalsky, in *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms*, calls *Paradise Lost* a virtual "encyclopedia of literary forms" (23). And, Susan Strehle, in *Fiction in the Quantum Universe*, notes Hawthorne's and Melville's innovative use of narrative technique as important antecedents for contemporary writers (18). Admittedly, however, these early examples in genre mixing are more in the form of modulation than true hybridity.

It is important to distinguish hybridity from its close cousin modulation. Fowler distinguishes true hybridity from modulation by stating that modulation is when "one of the genres [is] only a modal abstraction with a token repertoire" (191). For example, Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* contains a minor character that the reader is asked to believe is a ghost. However, *Mean Spirit* is not a ghost story. The ghost occupies a peripheral space, and the reader can either choose to believe in it or not. Chanady's observation that a ghost's appearance in an otherwise realistic novel is insufficient to merit reclassifying the text as magical realism is applicable in this instance. To support her assertion, Chanady quotes Louis Vas's *L'Art et la littérature fantastic*:

> *Le revenant n'est rein par lui-même. C'est le context qui précise sa forme et fait résonner en nous le ton affectif qui convient. Ce n'est pas le motif qui fait la fantastique, c'est le fantstique qui se développe á partir du motiff.* (qtd. in Chanady 15)

In a similar vein, hybridity is the presence of two or more complete repertoires in "proportion that no one of them dominates (Fowler 183).

That being said, it is also important to observe that while genre, particularly hybrid genre, can be recognized, it cannot be defined. John Snyder points out in *Prospects of Power* that genre, like Nietzsche's "dialectic," cannot be defined because it is not a thing but a "historical phenomenon" (1), which is where, he claims, all attempts to define genre (Aristotle, Corneille, Johnson, Frye, Genette, Derrida, for example) fail. Genre is not any kind of classification scheme. The failure of so many gifted and talented scholars to create a system of genres testifies to that fact. Adena Rosmarin states that "genre is not, as is commonly thought, a class but, rather a classifying statement. It is therefore itself a text" (46). However, that does not mean one cannot or should not adopt a systematic approach to genre. In fact, it should mean exactly the opposite. For example, genre can be distinguished diachronically, that is, by observing how any given form develops over time. As a text, it is subject to diachronic analysis and comment.

Genre, as a text, reveals history. Genre defines forms and types; by the changes in these forms and types we, as critics, can plot history (Rosmarin 11). Through plotting, we can fulfill our role as critics, speculating about the causes and consequences of these changes in the text and in the world they represent. For example, we can note Walter Benjamin's concept of *Ursprung* when evaluating the evolution of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, as Benjamin did in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. *Ursprung* refers to a process: "There takes place in every original phenomenon a determination of the form in which as idea will constantly confront the historical world, until it is revealed fulfilled, in the totality of its history" (45-6). For example, "There is a good deal to say about Attic tragedy, Elizabethan tragedy, perhaps even modern tragedy, but not much that makes sense about all tragedy without some historical localization, discussion of genre [without historical localization] tends toward the vacuous" (Fowler 47). Later, Fowler writes: "In reception, genre operates in at least three ways, corresponding to the logical phases of criticism–construction, interpretation, and evaluation" (256). And, "The processes of generic recognition are in fact fundamental to the reading process" (259). For example, *Paradise Regained* would be almost unintelligible by a reader unfamiliar with the genre of "brief epic" (259). By the same token, "No work, however avant-garde, is intelligible without some context of familiar types . . . other genres, larger, neighboring or contrasting, guide our recognitions" (259-60). Interpretation is more than an individual activity, it is an institutional activity (260). However much we would like to deny it, "our relations are with critics and writers as well as with works" (260).

Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that familiarity with generic conventions does not obscure the author's individuality, but on the contrary, it puts it in bold relief by its ability to allow the reader to know when, where, and how far an author has strayed from the convention (Fowler 260-2). For example, "How did Shakespeare's realistic departures from romance strike audiences to whom naturalism was unknown?" (261). Or as Borges responded to a similar question posed to him:

> If I am not mistaken, the heterogeneous pieces I have enumerated resemble Kafka; if I am not mistaken, not all of them resemble each other. This second fact is the more significant. In each of these texts we find Kafka's idiosyncrasy to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had never written a line, we would not perceive this quality; in other words, it would not exist. The poem 'Fears and Scruples' by Browning foretells Kafka's work, but our reading of Kafka perceptibly sharpens and deflects our reading of the poem. Browning did not read it as we do now. In the critics' vocabulary, the word 'precursor' is indispensable, but it should be cleansed of all connotation of polemics or rivalry. The fact is that every writer creates his own

> precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In this correlation the identity or plurality of the men involved is unimportant. The early Kafka of *Betrachtung* is less a precursor of the Kafka of somber myths and atrocious institutions than is Browning or Lord Dunsany. (From *Kafka and His Precursors* 72-3)

Thus, genre is an individual as well as a cultural phenomenon.

Heather Dubrow, author of *Genre*, examines genre as a cultural phenomenon. According Dubrow, genre "is related both to very specialized technical issues and to very broad human ones" (2). "Like a firmly rooted institution, a well-established genre transmits certain cultural attitudes, attitudes which it is shaped by and in turn helps to shape" (4). For example, one may ask, How did the phenomenon of the postmodern-mimetic novel happen? Stanislaw Lem proposes a theory which he calls "conceptual ecology." Simply stated, it theorizes that within any given conceptual space, which he calls a topology, certain forms are facilitated while others are suppressed. The "particularities of history and personality determine which actually appear and which are repressed. All forms that are realized . . . are linked to each other by the common attributes that define the space" (Hayles, *Chaos* 185). Of course, these developments are not inevitable, which is why not every contemporary Native American novel is a postmodern-mimetic narrative. However, the widespread use of the postmodern-mimetic narrative technique does indicate that a conceptual ecology does exist. Or, in Bakhtin's words, "Genre is . . . the product of social intercourse and the attempt to thematically master one's reality" (*Formal* 135). Finally, in examining the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, one very important question is: Is it an emergent form, or an isolated *tour de force*? As this dissertation will demonstrate, it is an emergent form. It is a product of a literary community.

Another prominent literary critic who has commented on genre as a cultural phenomenon is Jonathan Culler. In *Structural Poetics,* Culler asserts that:

> To write a poem or a novel is immediately to engage with a literary tradition or at the very least with a certain idea of the poem or novel. The activity is made possible by the existence of the genre, which the author can write against, certainly, whose conventions he may attempt to subvert . . . . (116)

Dubrow notes that gestalt psychologists observe that people perceive visual phenomena, such as arbitrary patterns, according to the way they have learned to interpret them; similarly when we read our familiarity with genre leads us to interpret the text in a certain manner (36). And, Rosmarin's citing of Gombrich's observation that "a painter tends to see what he paints rather than paints what he sees" (93), reinforces the complex process of vision and the artist's attempt to convey that vision to his or her audience, as well as the reader's reception of that vision.

Consequently, it is important to keep in mind the author's culture and how his or her culture influences his or her use of genre. Culler writes:

> some of the theorists who underestimate the author's role are doing so because they also underestimate the extent to which a writer can reshape all the codes, generic and otherwise, that he has inherited. Even more fundamental an objection to

> discounting the author [and the author's culture] is the obvious but too often neglected fact that the writer must decide which literary form to adopt among the many available to him. (109)

Similarly, Dubrow states: "Familiarization and defamiliarization are . . . not mutually contradictory" (34), because, "as we read we are often acutely conscious of the ways the writer is reshaping his genre even while working within it" (37). As a matter of fact, "One of the most effective ways a writer can use genre is to evoke and intensify our generic expectations only to overturn them" (37). For example, Shakespeare's sonnets' refusal to "play by the rules of their genre" makes the reader "intensely suspicious of the attitudes to love implicit in the sonnet's conventions" (37). Likewise, Native American authors tampering with the conventions of the verisimilar novel make the reader inherently suspicious of reality as it is defined by the hegemonic culture.

Examining genre is also, as alluded to earlier, a fecund means of hermeneutics. Alastair Fowler notes in his seminal work, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, that while individual genres are not fixed or definable, they are, at least, identifiable (18-9). He states, "Every work of literature belongs to at least one genre," but, of course, it may belong to more than one (20). Therefore, we should not think of genre as a "curb on expression" but, rather, as a facilitator of an author's power of expression via active modulation. It modulates communication by expanding the individual *parole* (the words a person has at his or her disposal) with auxiliary literary repertoires of forms (20).

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, the hybrid genre which is the focus of this dissertation, is simply the identification of this new repertoire that Native American authors are using to expand their power of expression. Fowler asserts that genre, "of all our literary *langue* [system of language]. . . [is] the most important" (22). Because, genre "is an instrument not of classification, but of meaning" (22). Genre "actively forms the experience of each work of literature. If we see *The Jew of Malta* as a savage farce, our response will not be the same as if we saw it as tragedy . . . When we try to decide the genre of a work, then, our aim is to discover its meaning" (38).

In an analogous observation about genre, Adena Rosmarin, in *The Power of Genre,* asserts that through genre, literary criticism can give "reasoned, convincing, and self-aware" answers to textual questions (ix). It is informative to balance this assertion against the typical deconstructionist theorist who asserts that there are no answers, only an infinite regression of questions. Rosmarin's second observation about genre is that through it theory and practice can be "pragmatically joined" (ix). Thus genre is necessary for the "very possibility of reasoned discussion about literature" (7). For example:

> Are genres found in texts, in the reader's mind, in the author's, or in some combination thereof? Or are they not 'found' at all, but, rather, devised and used? Are they 'theoretical' or 'historical'? Are they 'prescriptive' or 'descriptive'? How many genres are there? Where do they come from? How, exactly, do they work? And change? (7)

These and many other, equally productive questions are prompted by generic discussion.

Other theorists, however, neglect the importance of genre. Generally, there are two types of denial of the magnitude of genre: first, the denial by the critic that the author wrote with generic constraints; second, that the author writes without acknowledging generic constraints (8). However, the preposterousness of the first becomes manifest when one considers the consequence of, for example, denying that Keats was aware that he was writing an ode when he wrote *Ode to a Nightingale*; the second would entail a literary discussion of the ode without reference to its "odeness" (8). Obviously, the first is absurd, the second irresponsible and incomplete.

A generic definition is "meant to enable discussion of a group of poems [or novels] as if they were like each other and unlike poems [or novels] not in the group" (Rosmarin 56). In practice, then, genre theory facilitates interpretation in two ways: first, "by remarking similarity we make syndoches for our criticisms"; second, by "thinking generically, like all syllogistic and metaphoric thinking, is also thinking of difference . . ." (70). This is a necessary first step in any reasoned evaluation or critical analysis of a novel by interested readers and scholars. Otherwise we have illogical arguments about why an apple is not as good as an orange because it does not have the taste of an orange, instead of a reasoned discussion about how one apple compares to another. For example, Rosmarin's assertion that "the best dramatic monologues we have are Browning's" would be meaningless without a clear understanding of the genre of dramatic monologue. Likewise, the assertion that Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* is the best example of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel would be meaningless without an understanding of the genre. And, it would be unfair to compare King's Native American postmodern-mimetic novel to Vizenor's trickster novel, *Bearheart*.

For example, King's *Green Grass, Running Water* is generically distinguishable from Vizenor's *Bearheart* by its mimesis. To be a Native American postmodern-mimetic novel, a novel must be mimetic. Mimetic, according to Ian Watts' definition, consists of : (a) cynical tone, (b) detailed nature of characterization, and (c) specific description of time and space. In his essay "The Trickster Novel," Alan Velie argues that Vizenor's *Bearheart* fits this abbreviated definition of mimetic. In addition, Velie argues that the novel does have a "meticulous rendering of the details of time and space" (albeit some *future* time and place), thus meeting Bakhtin's definition of "fantastic realism" and Vizenor's "mythic verism" (129). In addition, Velie dismisses those who still cling to a customary definition of mimetic that includes a realistic representation of life by asserting that novelists cannot describe the world as it really is anyway–"only their culturally determined construct of it" (128). Therefore, *Bearheart* appears, on the surface, to meet the revised definition of mimetic. Indeed, it does. However, this bowdlerized definition, in effect, negates the critical importance of the socio-historical cultural matrix which has always *de facto* defined "mimetic" as literally an imitation of life. As a matter of fact, the awareness of the ability of culture to determine the construction of that mimesis is a strong argument to maintain "an imitation of life" as an essential criterion, albeit with the caveat that it is an imitation of life *as viewed by the author*. In fact, this empirical process simply reiterates the importance of the socio-historical cultural matrix to what exactly is meant by mimetic. This does not mean, however, that the fantastic cannot be used. Simply in order to be postmodern-*mimetic,* a novel must be embedded in a specific, identifiable socio-historical cultural matrix. In fact, it seems contradictory to, on the one hand, assert the extraneousness of literal mimesis and, on the other, to bolster an argument for "fantastic realism" and "mythic verism" by appealing to the specific socio-historical cultural matrix of its practitioners–in this case, Bakhtin, Rabelais, and Vizenor, arguing that they are "engaged in battles against the values and perceptions of the dominant cultures of their time" (129); Soviet, medieval, and mainstream America, respectively. Remember, Vizenor's argument for the Trickster being a "holotrope" rests on his being embedded in a specific "culturally centered, communally created" discourse (131).

The issue of mimesis is important, for without mimesis the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel cannot perform its function of validating the Native American experience. How can it if it is not tied directly to the real-life experiences of real people? Therefore, the questions to ask when considering whether or not to include *Bearheart* in the postmodern-mimetic novel genre are: Is *Bearheart* an act of individual rebellion (or play) or one of community resistance? Does *Bearheart* address issues faced by a real-life Native American community, or imaginary ones faced by an imaginary community in an imaginary place and in an imaginary time? And, Does it make a difference? Is Vizenor's writing an act of resistance or (personal) retreat from the discursive fray? For instance, many Native American readers have no idea what Vizenor is doing in his writing. This is very disheartening for those who have followed his writing career from his early journalistic projects when he used his writing talents for immediate, concrete political ends, and in the service of his community. Today, even educated and relatively sophisticated readers, such as the three college students who complained to Louis Owens about his use of *Bearheart* as a course text, are unable to fathom how *Bearheart* aids the Native American community, and, in fact, they have complained that it is actually injurious to the Native American community (see Owens' essay in *Narrative Chance*). Of course, a scholar such as Louis Owens can point out clever literary devices and theories to show that there are elements in *Bearheart* that challenge hegemonic discourse, but how many Native Americans have access to a graduate education in literary theory? Conversely, Thomas King is accessible to even the average reader, and his resistance to Euro-American hegemony is clear. Finally, if "what" a text does to a reader, its efferent effect, is a central issue in Native American literary criticism, and important in considering whether a text is included or excluded from the postmodern-mimetic genre, then the large number of Native American readers for whom *Bearheart* is simply inaccessible or offensive is surely a significant consideration. Therefore, *Bearheart* may be a *Postmodern* novel; it may be a *Trickster* novel; it may even be classified as a *Postmodern-Trickster* novel; but it is not a postmodern-mimetic novel.

Fowler offers a general heuristic to help identify genres in a more formal, less politicized, manner. Fowler's heuristic asks, From a representational aspect, is it narrative, dramatic, or discoursive? In external structure, are there chapters or conventional contexts? In size, is it short, medium, or long? In scale, is there development of character, place, and time? What is the subject? What values, and how are these values modified or validated? What is the emotional coloration or mood? What is the author's attitude toward the reader? What character types and types of character are depicted? What type of action occurs? Is it a tragedy, comedy, or romance? And, finally, is the reader's task passive or active? Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive or necessary list because "almost any feature, however minor, however elusive, may become genre-linked" (73). Thus, not only genres, but generic rules change over time, that is, they are diachronic, too.

However, the phenomenon in Native American literature with which I am concerned now is the almost simultaneous production of a new genre within it by several different Native American authors–the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. One could call it polygenesis because it is truly a cultural phenomenon. If we look at one novelist, N. Scott Momaday, for example, and compare his first novel, *House Made of Dawn* (1966) with his later novel, *The Ancient Child* (1989), we find a radical generic departure. We may also look at the work of Thomas King, and compare his first novel *Medicine River* (1989) to his later novel, *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993), and we find the same radical generic break. In addition, they are both writing in the same new genre, the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. As a matter of fact, we may also observe the same phenomenon occurring in the work of Chickasaw author Linda Hogan as we compare and contrast her first novel *Mean Spirit* (1990) with her latest novel *Power* (1998). Yet again, we see the shift from a conventional narrative technique to the postmodern-mimetic in James Welch's three highly acclaimed novels, *Winter in the Blood* (1972), *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979), and *Fools Crow* (1986).

Interestingly enough, one of the distinguishing features of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is its attempt to breach the gap between the world of ideas and the world of nature that Schiller identifies as the paradigmatic distinction between "modern" (in the post-Enlightenment sense, not in the contemporary sense) and "ancient" writers. The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel uses textual allusiveness to highlight the text's tropologically dense surface via the character's ability to transcend inscribed borders and escape stereotypes. As Louis Owens points out, the "novel represents a process of reconstruction, of self-discovery and cultural recovery . . . a process of deconstructing the verbal artifacts of Indian"(5). The postmodern-mimetic novel is what Northrop Frye would call descriptive and literary writing because of its realist content and complex metaphysical exegesis of that reality.

Before delving deeper into Native American authors' use of postmodern narrative, it is necessary to first define literary postmodernism. N. Katherine Hayles explains literary postmodernism as a consequence of a denaturing process:

> In the first wave language was denatured, in the sense that it was not seen as a mimetic representation of the world of objects but as a sign system generating significance internally through series of relational differences. In the second wave context was denatured when information technology severed the relationship between text and context by making it possible to embed any text in a context arbitrarily far removed from its

> point of origin. In the third wave time was denatured when it ceased to be seen as a given of human existence and became a construct that could be conceptualized in different ways. . . the next wave. . . is the denaturing of the human. (*Chaos* 266)

However, she asserts that this is a blind alley because the essential components of narrative construction are language, context, time, and the human. Furthermore, the denaturing of experience "constitutes a cultural metanarrative; and its peculiar property is to imply incredulity not just toward other metanarratives but toward narrative as a form of representation. It thus implies [even demands] its own deconstruction" (294). Fowler has a somewhat facetious answer to adherents of literary postmodernism: "to those critical sophists who argue . . . that the concept of original meaning is vacuous, a short answer is possible: in that case their own meanings do not exist either" (262).

The consequences of literary postmodernism are very serious, as Alvin Kernan, retired president of Yale University and former English professor, points out in his memoir, *In Plato's Cave*. What are the political implications of language freed from its referents? Kernan discusses this issue in relation to the discovery of de Man's complicity with Nazi's during World War II. Kernan cites two of de Man's former students, Jeffrey Mehlman's and Stanley Corngold's, assertions that deconstruction is "a vast amnesty project for the politics of collaboration" (Mehlman), and deconstruction "makes good sense, once it has been identified as his carapace and portable house" (Corngold); however, "to continue to teach it while pretending to forget its beginnings in Nazi collaboration is to play out a masquerade–

a life that is, then, precisely only a text" (Corngold qtd. in Kernan 200). As Kernan notes:

> The words *'on voit donc qu'une solution du probléme juif qui viseriat á la création d'une colonie juive isolée de l'Europé'* pointed straight to a real world where six million Jews perished in the Holocaust. The de Man affair further demonstrated that 'correspondence between sign and referent,' words and things, was, however loose and imprecise, far from being a myth. (201)

Kernan identifies the basic axiom of deconstruction as:

> *Il n'y a rien hors du texte,* everything is a text, everything, that is, is made up and unreal–but far from there being nothing outside of the de Man text, everything was out there, waiting to be called back into reality by the awesome power of words to retain and control meaning. . . the de Man case removed deconstruction from the realm of pure theory and put it, protesting and wriggling, in a full living human context. It confronted deconstruction with the monstrous and passionately felt fact of the Holocaust and asked, Is this too only a text? Can its meaning be endlessly deferred? Can any 'reading' of it, such as that it did not take place, be considered as correct as any other? (210)

The answer is, "of course not." Likewise, the genocide of entire indigenous nations, the erasure of indigenous languages, and the lived experiences of indigenous people are not merely texts whose meaning may be endlessly deferred. No, the foregoing example explains the importance of verisimilitude in the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel.

N. Katherine Hayles reiterates Kernan's point when she writes, "Theories about language which claim that it is free to be interpreted in any way whatsoever are the allies and precursors of state terrorism" (*Chaos* 126). Hayles points out in her study of Stanislaw Lem's novel *The Cyberiad* that:

> The connections between the textual politics of empty language and political violence when Trurl [a character] too is ensnared within the proliferating signs. . . Trurl is vulnerable . . . because he has reduced his identity to a series of signs . . . [and] if identity is merely a collection of signs, capable of dissemination through multiple cybernetic texts . . . then on what basis can human rights, which rest on the sanctity and uniqueness of the individual, be justified? (*Chaos* 126)

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel may have multiple valid meanings or interpretations, but, and this is extremely important, it does have meaning. "Multiple meaningful interpretations" is not synonymous with an endlessly deferred meaning.

Another way of thinking about meaning is theme. Of course, deconstructionists are not and cannot be concerned, or bothered with, questions of theme. Theme, according to Abrams, is the "general concept or doctrine, whether implicit or asserted, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader" ("Motif and Theme"). However, theme is not decipherable from the endless uncoiling of words because, as Bakhtin/ Medvedev note, theme transcends not only words but even language: "Theme always transcends language" (*Formal* 132). Additionally, "it is the whole utterance [previously defined as generic] and its forms, which cannot be reduced to any linguistic forms, which control theme. The theme of a work is the theme of the whole utterance as a definite sociohistoric act" (132). Later, he states, that it is genre that essentially determines the theme rather than "the sentence, the period, or their aggregate," and that genre is "insuperable from its primary orientation in its environment, insuperable . . . from the circumstances of place and time" (132). Further, he comments on what constitutes thematic unity:

> The thematic unity of the work and its place in life organically grow together in the unity of the genre. The unity of the factual reality of the word and its meaning . . . is most fully realized in the genre. Reality is comprehended with the help of the real word, the word-utterance. The word's definite forms of reality are connected with the definite forms of reality the word helps comprehend . . . Genre is the organic unity of theme with what lies beyond it" (*Formal* 133).

He points out that the denaturing of literature, the removal of relevant meaning, could have been avoided if critics had simply remembered that the problem of genre is the problem of the artistic whole, and one cannot "ascribe independent constructive significance to abstract elements of language" (*Formal* 129). Morson interprets this to mean that "a unified theory of literary aesthetics cannot deal only with words, it must also deal with ethics and with cognition," at least, that is how he defines Bakhtin's denotation of the artistic whole (83).

Another important characteristic of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is "unfinalizability." Interestingly enough, unfinalizability is remarkably similar to Vizenor's concept of "terminal creeds." Terminal creeds, that is the avoidance of terminal creeds, appeals to the same necessity of "unfinalizability" of character to the maintenance of authentic selfhood, or vital subjectivity. Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson in their exhaustive work *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*, explain that Bakhtin considered "the act of finalizing, defining, or accounting for another 'causally and genetically' and 'secondhand'. . . as a fundamental threat to the essence of selfhood" (91). Vizenor's rationale for opposing "terminal creeds" is starkly similar to Bakhtin's reason for insisting on "unfinalizability":

> The sin of . . . the 'monologic' conception of truth prevalent in Western thought of the past few centuries–is to reduce people to the circumstances that produced them, without seeing their genuine freedom to remake themselves and take responsibility for their action . . . without unfinalizability, there is neither selfhood nor ethical responsibility. (92)

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel emphasizes this unfinalizability.

Perhaps the reason Vizenor repeatedly introduces the theme of "terminal creeds" into his novels is his sublimated fear of the simulacrum, that is, the vanishing of the barrier between the copy and the original. For example, the young woman who represents the American Indian Movement in the prologue to *Bearheart* wears chicken feathers, plastic bear claws, and "shouts but does not dream with great medicine" (ix-xii). In fact, there is something disturbing and ridiculous about young men and women who grow up in inner-city neighborhoods, like Minneapolis, the home of the founders of the

American Indian Movement, (to Vizenor the epitome of terminal creeds), donning feathers, beads, leather, and other 19th-century Plains Indian accouterments.

The postmodern is the age of the ubiquitous simulacrum. The *hyper-real* occurs when "copies refer no longer to originals but to other copies; or more precisely, when it is impossible to distinguish any longer between a copy and an original" (Hayles, *Chaos* 276). Vizenor's unspoken fear is, however, cogently articulated by Jean Baudrillard, "reality and our representation of it have collapsed into the same space" (*Chaos* 264). Hayles also articulates the dilemma during her course of explicating a Doris Lessing novel when she notes that the protagonist's challenge, significantly that of an author, in *The Golden Notebook* is:

> in being able to distinguish her authentic voice from a parody, Anna retains a sense of the reality of her subjectivity, and consequently of its potential as a source for her art. Thus the ending can be read as a reinscription of the values that underlie the realistic novel, and more generally of the assumptions that make modernist representations possible. But it can also be read as signaling the transformation of the text into a postmodern collage of information, in which parody does not exist because the center did not hold. The ambiguity points toward a profound duality within the new paradigms–whether they imply the renewal of human subjectivity as it has traditionally been constituted or its demise. (*Chaos* 264)

This is an important question, because the answer to it is also the answer to whether the novel, as a genre, survives or not.

What then is the future of the novel? Can it survive being denatured? Can it have meaning? Hayles notes the fact that the denatured novel is not new:

> Although I have defined cultural postmodernism as the denaturing of experience and have placed it within the time frame of the twentieth century, the literary strategies mentioned above can be found in texts from virtually any period. What could be more self-referential than the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or more effective at representing the denatured human than *Frankenstein*? Postmodern texts do not have a monopoly on these literary strategies. It is not the literary strategies in isolation that make a text postmodern but rather their connection through complex feedback loops with postmodernism as a cultural dominant. Other times have had glimpses of what it would mean to live in a denatured world. But never before have such strong feedback loops among culture, theory, and technology brought it so close to being a reality. (*Chaos* 295)

What is new is that society is itself becoming more and more postmodern (a subject that will be discussed later in this chapter). Keeping in mind earlier discussion of the dynamic interrelationship between society and genre, the importance of maintaining real-world connections between what is written and lived experience, the more urgent question we should be asking is: "How can genre help to maintain society," instead of "how can society maintain genre?" And, "What type of society does genre support?" Novels, literature, viewed in this light really do matter because meaning matters.

Now, what of the *idea* of the novel? After all, some critics assert that the novel is dead, or dying. For example, it has been asserted that the "disintegration of the subject will precipitate a crisis in representation which makes a traditional novel impossible to write" (Hayles, *Chaos* 256). However, the novel is also a fecund means to assert one's subjectivity. Consequently, I believe the novel is simply going through a radical transformation and is being revitalized through hybridization to assume new avatars in a new millennium. Fowler notes that genres, and we may include novels, change when when new topics or new combinations of repertoires are added (170-1); both are obviously occurring in Native American literature. As a matter of fact, the very nature of the novel per se is dynamic and eternally mutable. Bakhtin claims that the novel is not poetic in the strictest sense of the term, but anti-poetic in its challenge to the traditional unifying aspects of "high literature"–its destabilizing force is in its forced conscription of two opposing forces: the force for unity, and the force for heteroglossia. The novel, in all its genres, is a trope of modernist's notions of the poetic, and makes manifest this struggle through its utterances. And, keep in mind Fowler's prophecy: "most genres have still to be identified" (23).

If Bakhtin were familiar with the current critical discourse around postmodernism, he would probably assert that there has never been a "modern" novel, that the form at its inception was postmodern because of its inherent challenge to "common unitary language" by its inclusion of dissonant socio-linguistic dialogue (utterances). However, this does not topple the paradigm of modern versus postmodern novels by which we identify one more by what it is not rather than by what it is. As a matter of fact, under the paradigm of the modern versus, or juxtaposed to, the postmodern we are able to observe the centuries-old phenomenon of novels with a view to "real ideologically situated 'language consciousness,'" one that contains in its very form challenges to the unifying ideology it purports in its words and theme. For example, the parody of the hegemonic ideology of the church and state are apparent in Cervantes' *Don Quixote,* often cited as the first novel. Quotidian means "the mundane," and, consequently, may be considered as the lower strata speaking back to the higher strata, and is an example of heteroglossia. Also, consider the contemporary musical, *Man of La Mancha,* based on *Don Quixote,* which asks the question: Is it madness to see the world as it is (that is, through the view of a common unifying language), or as it should be (that is, through the point of view of an alternative ideological construct)? The heteroglossiac voice of the novel "create[s] the background necessary for his [the author's] own voice, outside of which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which 'they do not sound'" (278). Bakhtin asserts that the theme of *Don Quixote* is the ideological conflict of Cervantes's age (*Formal* 138). Likewise, one of the overarching themes of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is the ideological conflict between Europeans and Native Americans, and how Native Americans are dealing with this conflict, which is a very uneven struggle.

Literary works may be timeless, but they seldom make the best-seller list. Why? Because they are difficult to read in content and rhetoric. Literary works demand a certain level of intellectual rigor. Most people are simply too lazy, too complacent, or too fearful to wrestle with thinking authors. Of course, my sample, first-year college students, may not be representative of "most people." When I ask my students to name their favorite authors, they consistently name pulp fiction writers. Seldom do I hear George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, James Joyce, or Milton. Occasionally, I do hear Shakespeare, but when pressed they seldom have have a cognizant reason for naming him. Most students, when asked why they read, respond, *to escape, to relax, to be entertained*. I have yet to hear any say, *to have my beliefs challenged, to see the world and people in a different way, to critique my assumptions*. Serious reading, however, is work, and if one is not being challenged, then one is not reading well.

Robert Scholes's explanation of Edgar Allen Poe's *ratiocination* illustrates the effort required to read well. He writes:

> As we start to read we build up expectations in the form of cloudy and tentative structures, into which we try to fit the details of character and event as they are presented to us. We modify these tentative structures as we are forced to by elements that do not fit, and we seek to perfect them as we move toward the end of the story. (108)

Scholes uses, for example, the opening line of Iris Murdoch's novel, *The Unicorn*, to demonstrate how this process works, and how an author can utilize the process of ratiocination to create meaning from the interaction of a reader and text (author). The opening line of *The Unicorn* asks the question: "How far away is it?" This "sets up in our structure of expectations at least eight additional questions: (1) What is it? (2) Who wants to know? (3) Why does he or she want to know? (4) Who is he or she asking (5) Does he or she plan to go there? (6) Will he or she get there? (7) How? (8) What will he or she find there? (108). Scholes's "ideal reader is . . . much like a good chess player, who is always thinking ahead many moves and holding alternative possibilities in mind as structures which the game may actually assume" (108). In the case of *The Unicorn*, the "alert and experienced reader is given enough information in the opening lines so that his first, tentative sketch should derive from his generic knowledge of suspense-mystery fiction" (110). Ordinarily, "Conventions provide a frame of reference for the reader, helping him to orient himself, but also provide material for ironic or parodic scrutiny by the author, who manipulates the conventions with a certain amount of disdain" (110-11). However, the "reader who carries his mystery-suspense set of expectations over into the ideational complexities of *The Unicorn* longs for dénoument. Gradually, one realizes that this is just what Iris Murdoch is not going to provide. The relativity of significance emanating from Hannah's suffering is in itself a major dimension of the book's meaning" (123). Scholes points out that although "we are not entitled to make any final choice among the various metaphysical possibilities offered us. . . the book is far from meaningless. There is a meaning in its lesson in relativity" (137). In *Structural Fabulation*, published some twelve years after *The Fabulators*, Scholes reiterates and expounds on his earlier assertions about fabulation and its power to communicate with the active reader. He states, for example, "in its cognitive function, fiction helps us to know ourselves and our existential situation " (5). Notably, one of the ways fiction accomplishes this is by "providing us with models that reveal the nature of reality by their very failure to coincide with it" (7). Thus, by juxtaposing reality with unreality, postmodern-mimetic novels, for example, may accomplish their task of bringing to the reader's attention a new awareness of their true condition.

In the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel there is a paradoxical bond between the real and the imaginary, between art as illusion, and reality as the inescapable consequences of that illusion. Bakhtin points out that, "Language and its forms play an essential role in the process of the consciousness's refraction of existence" (*Formal* 133). Thus, the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is a genre that, without doubt, changes "consciousness's refraction of existence" for the reader. It is important that we keep in mind that we are talking about two types of consciousness, the non-Indian and the Native American. For the Native American reader we may ask, "What type of consciousness is it?" Is it as Sarris asserts in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, a Fanonian (Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*) consciousness of internal colonization manifested through self-destructive behavior and self-loathing? If so, how does the Native American author use language to change his or her Native American reader's "consciousness's refraction of existence"? What type of "consciousness's refraction of existence" does the non-Indian reader have? Is it one of cultural and/or racial hubris? If so, how does the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel change it? Because just "as the plastic arts give width and depth to the visual realm and teach our eye to see, the genres of literature enrich our inner speech with new devices for the awareness and conceptualization of reality" (*Formal* 134). Therefore, it is important that "we approach genre from the point of view of its intrinsic thematic relationship to reality and the generation of reality, we may say that every genre has its methods and means of seeing and conceptualizing reality, which are accessible to it alone . . . every significant genre is a complex system of means and methods for the conscious control . . . of reality" (*Formal* 133).

The topic of my master's thesis was the identification of the ways European and American literatures have contributed and continues to contribute to the growing hegemony of Euro-America over Native America. Beginning with the apocalyptic Caliban of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to the absurd Chief Halfoat in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, and the mysteriously vanished Indians of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town;* the *Savage* and *Princess* plays that were the mainstays of American theater in the 18th and 19th centuries; the "Wild Indians" of the ubiquitous Dime Novel, which was, like contemporary Romance fiction, the primary source of "literary" information most Euro-Americans once had of Native Americans. It is encouraging to now look at how Native American authors are using literature to overthrow this hegemony through the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. Of course, it should be noted that the postmodern-mimetic novel is not new. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-five* (1969) is a premier example of many of the narrative techniques used by authors of postmodern-mimetic novels. *Slaughterhouse-five* and other postmodern-mimetic novels have had a conspicuous effect on the American psyche in a number of important ways. Hopefully, the same will be said for Native American postmodern-mimetic novels.

It strikes me as unusual that the widespread adoption of this new narrative technique by Native American authors who are geographically and tribally disparate remains largely uncommented upon by literary critics, especially since it is a startling phenomenon that has brought profound changes to the the Native American novel, and interpretation of the novel. For example, I have observed the difficulty graduate students have had in discussing some contemporary Native American novels, and, upon reflection, I believe part of the difficultly lies in their failure to recognize these texts as a new genre: the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. Alan Velie's essay "The Trickster Novel" and his question to his students, "What kind of animal are we dealing with here?" prompts me to think of the narratives I have read in terms of genre.

However, a novel such as Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* does not perfectly fit Velie's trickster novel paradigm, even though it certainly contains tricksters; James Welch's *Fools Crow* does not exactly fit the genre of historical novel, although it is a novel set in a specific time and place in history; and, Louis Owen's *Bone Game* does not quite fit the genre of mystery or detective novel, even though it contains hallmark elements of these popular forms. In addition, the text's deviations from the aforementioned associated mainstream genres are more than mere modulations–they are substantive, even critical to the interpretation of the novels in question. The more I think about them generically, the less satisfied I am with placing them in the genres usually ascribed to them. For example, *Fools Crow* is rather much more than merely a historical novel. Significantly, it engages many issues that are relevant today, and it challenges contemporary world views. Finally, I ask myself, what do these Native American novels have in common? On the surface, they appear to be very different, but looking below the surface, discerning the narrative strategies and the ways they engage the reader for example, they are very similar. After carefully listing those ways, I observe several things: first, they are all highly mimetic; second, they are postmodern narratives; and, third, they are hybrid, containing the proportional presence of two or more repertoires. From there, I have developed a rough outline of the distinguishing characteristics of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel genre, and I have experimented with the efficacy of using the generic rules derived from these characteristics to interpret the aforementioned novels. Thus, subsequent readings of these novels have been more productive.

One issue that seems to be self-evident but, unfortunately, is not, is the issue of what is meant by *Native American* in the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. The relevance of the issue was brought to my attention after reading Sharon Bailey's essay in the Winter 1999 edition of *World Literature Today*, in which she asserts that Thomas King is not an *authentic* Indian because he is "only part Cherokee" (prompting one to ask, which part?) and "was raised in northern California far from any reservation" (44). By Bailey's criteria, probably three fourths of all Native Americans are not *authentic*. Of course, all members of the Five Civilized Tribes–Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole–cannot be *authentic* Indians by Bailey's narrow definition because our reservations were allotted to individual tribal members and the so-called surplus confiscated by the U.S. government under the auspices of the Dawes Act. Her other criterion, that of degrees of Indian blood, is apparently based on some mathematical and quantifiable measure of race, which is not simply racialist but racist. Amazingly, she further asserts, Thomas King's lack of *authenticity* should not detract from the validity of her argument. Her argument is that there is a "war" between the oral and written traditions embedded in his novel, because "the *authenticity* of a Native novel lies not in the author, but in the novel itself, either in the content or in the presentation of Native culture"(44). Throughout her essay, she continues to say, with self-assured authority, who and what is *authentic* and who and what is not *authentic*. I counted approximately a dozen such pronouncements. Thus, we have the epitome of the logic of postmodern literary criticism that is freed from its real world referents; a fetishization of theory, of language, until it becomes an end in itself, instead of a means to an end. Lamentably, she is not alone in her hubris of deciding who is and who is not an *authentic* Indian. She cites Rodney Simard's rejection of authenticity based on "genetic, cultural, and social criteria" to substantiate her assertion of what constitutes an *authentic* Native American novel (44). According to Bailey's logic, Native Americans are not necessary for the authorship of an "*authentic* Native novel." Indeed, from Bailey's and Simard's perspective Native Americans are superfluous to the production and study of Native American literature.

Of course, according to Bailey's definition I am not an *authentic* Indian either. However, I am an enrolled member of the Chickasaw Nation. My ancestors were forced at gunpoint down their own *Trail of Tears*, and my mother's grandfather witnessed the U.S. Congress unilaterally dissolve his Nation by fiat, confiscate the majority of the Chickasaw Nation's resources and land, and break up Chickasaw communities. My mother's mother lost our family's *allotment* of land.

My mother's son, my brother, was taken away by the State of California simply because we were so poor that we were living in the back of a pickup. He was six, I was seven, it was Christmas, and the preceding Spring we watched our father die in the crowded, open-ward of a Veteran's Administration hospital. My mother had no power to save her son, and I was powerless to save my brother. When I was nineteen the State of Kansas terminated my parental rights to my daughter in violation of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. All of these things are done to *inauthenticate* Indians.

The Indian Child Welfare Act was intended to prevent the termination of the parental rights of Native American parents based on the economic or marital status of the parents, precisely the reasons the State of Kansas gave for legitimating its termination of my parental rights. The Indian Child Welfare Act was passed because one-third of all Native American children are forcefully removed from their families and placed in non-Indian homes because of poverty or the marital status of the children's parents. I fought four years for my daughter, renamed by Euro-American pillagers Leanne Marie Glaesman, through the state courts of appeal, and finally before the United States Supreme Court (assisted along the way by other Native Americans, Pamela Fahey of the Heart of America Indian Center in Kansas City and Richard Daphanais of the Native American Rights Fund, located in Washington D.C.), all to no avail. My personal and familial tragedy is not unique to me, but rather is representative of the *plight* of landless Native Americans in America. Plight means to be exposed to danger, and it has the connotation of being endangered by powers beyond one's control, powers that one cannot overcome without help. This is an accurate assessment of our condition. It is not easy being a childless father, powerless to change those circumstances. In 1998, the Chickasaw Nation's legislature unanimously passed a resolution censoring the State of Oklahoma's lax enforcement of the Indian Child Welfare Act and opposing any relaxation of the stipulations of the statute. In part the resolution reads: "The Chickasaw Nation recognizes that the future rests with our children and that the future existence of the Chickasaw Nation is being greatly diminished by the removal of Chickasaw children by non-Indian public and private agencies into non-Indian foster and adoptive homes" (Chickasaw Nation Legislative Resolution GR 15-035). The Chickasaw Nation has lost two irreplaceable citizens: my brother and my daughter.

When I write that the suffering of Native Americans described in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* or James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* is communal, I do not mean it is felt by the minority of Native Americans who have profited from their relationship with the United States and various state and local Euro-American governments and corporations. I mean those who, like myself and my mother (who is now deceased), have lost our inheritance, our children, who know what it is to be powerless, to be unable to save our own children from becoming victims, too. I am a victim, as are many other Native Americans, but I am not a silent victim. I will not be shamed into silence; I am not ashamed to say that I am a victim. I assert that Native Americans continue to be victimized everyday in the United States. I am working for my Ph.D. now so that when I find my daughter I can lay it at her feet as proof that she has been lied to all of these years about *Indians*. So she can be proud of being Native American, proud of her father, instead of ashamed. As long as victims are invisible, or our existence denied, or concealed by an omnipotent and allegedly benevolent bureaucracy, oppressors and thieves of children are safe from having an accusing finger pointed at them. Emile Zola wrote his famous denunciation of racism in France, "*J'accuse!*," on behalf of a family pleading for the return of their father, Alfred Dreyfus. Likewise, *J'accuse*. The only difference is that I am a father pleading for his child.

Nevertheless, by Sharon Bailey's definition, I am not an *authentic* Indian. I take Sharon Bailey and *World Literature Today's* publication of her essay very seriously. To me, she is the contemporary equivalent of de Man, who used literature to hide his Nazi ties. I do not play at writing or theory; it is a matter of survival.

Chapter Three

Magical Realism and the Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel

The paradoxical bond between the real and the imaginary may bear some surface resemblance to another well-discussed literary type, magical realism, and although there are some similarities, it is important to distinguish magical realism and the postmodern-mimetic because they are different species. A widely accepted definition of magical realism is found in Amaryll Chanady's *Magical Realism: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*, published in 1985. Chanady asserts that a dichotomous way of thinking is expressed in magical realism, which she characterizes as the juxtaposition of the "primitive," "archaic" American Indian mentality and the mentality of the "erudite," "rational," "empirical," "supercivilization" of Europe. Next, she assumes an exclusive white western reader for magical realist narratives. As well, Chanady bastardizes Kant's and Quinn's widely-used definition of antinomy in order to bolster her essentially dialectical definition of magical realism. It is important to note that Chanady does not cite Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* or W.V. Quinn's *The Ways of Paradox*, or provide any explanation for her unconventional use of the term antinomy. Chanady's shunning of the more accurate term *dialectic* in her analysis is understandable. *Dialectic* has become a hackneyed term and tends to label users as members of a particular school of literary criticism, Marxist. However, what may actually be her careerism (using unfamiliar terms in order to facilitate publication) should not excuse her flippant use of critical vocabulary. It is important to discuss each one of these issues in turn, as they relate to magical realism and the Native American postmodern mimetic novel, beginning with antinomy.

The concept of antinomy was developed by Kant in response to issues that are unresolvable via conventional dialectical processes or reasoning. The term "antinomy," as it is conventionally used, first appears on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* published in 1781. In *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant examines four paradoxes which, not coincidentally, are in one form or another, found in most Native American postmodern-mimetic novels. First, "The world has a beginning in time and is spatially limited": Second, "Every composite substance consists of simple substances": Third, "There is a kind of causality related to freewill and is independent of the causality of laws of nature": Fourth, "There exists either as part of the world or as its cause an absolutely necessary being" (*Oxford Companion to Philosophy* "Antinomy"). Paradoxes, it is important to keep in mind, are not true contradictions. Antinomy is the acceptance of two, not necessarily contradictory, but disparate truths. Thus, to discuss magical realism under the auspices of a dialectical relationship of a conflict between European and American Indian world views is an abuse of the notion of antinomy as it is conventionally used in scholarly vernacular.

Chanady's use of antinomy also violates Quinn's definition of the concept in *The Way of Paradox.* Quinn elaborates and refines Kant's definition to include paradoxes which "produces a self contradiction by accepted ways of reasoning" (5). Quinn also asserts that true antinomy necessarily involves a revision of "trusted patterns of reasoning" and "nothing less than a repudiation of part of our conceptual heritage" (9). Quinn cites, for example, the Copernican revolution and Einstein's theory of relativity (9). Chanady, however, makes no mention of changes in trusted patterns of reasoning or repudiation of conceptual heritage of the readers of magical realism. In fact, Chanady claims just the opposite. She asserts that the magical realist narrative has minimal impact on its, presumed white, reader because "the reader considers the represented world as alien" and she further proposes the "impossibility of complete reader identification in the case of a magico-realist work about American Indians" (163). She claims that "while the [white] reader accepts the unconventional world view [of the American Indian], he does so only within the contexts of the fictitious world, and does not integrate it in his own perception of reality" (163). This is consistent with her notion of magical realism as dialectic, but not as antimony, at least not as Kant coined the term, and not as Quinn delineated the term to mean a paradox which produces new ways of thinking by revealing flaws in the way we have been taught to think about things.

Even the title of Chanady's text, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy,* reflects that she is using the term incorrectly because true antinomy is unresolvable by definition. Quinn's text, for example, gives instances of paradoxes mistaken for antinomy. These paradoxes are generally of two varieties: *veridical* or *falsidical.* A veridical paradox is a paradox which "packs a surprise, but the surprise quickly dissipates itself as we ponder the proof" and a falsidical paradox is one that also "packs a surprise, but is seen as a false alarm [to our way of thinking] when we solve the underlying fallacy" (9). Thus, Chanady's *resolved* antinomy is no antimony at all.

However, Kant's and Quinn's definitions of antimony are applicable to the Native American postmodern mimetic novel. The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is intended to subvert hegemonic ideas about reality by multifarious means. In other words, it is deliberately antinomous. And, it is not the antinomy of the text that is resolved rather than unresolved, but a realignment of the reader's conceptual universe. The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel tropes conventional Modernist notions via postmodern literary techniques which are not "alien" to the non-Native reader but play, even rely, on the non-Native and the Native American reader's familiarity with postmodern texts, such as Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Slaughterhouse-five* and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. Within this postmodern genre, the Native American author embeds unique Native American cultural types, epistemologies, teleologies, etc. in order to create a dialogical, not dialectical, relationship between the author and reader.

Consequently, the Native American novel is fundamentally different from magical realism. Magical realism is premised on spurious racialist notions of an "erudite," "rational," and "empirical" European "supercivilization" juxtaposed to a "primitive" and "archaic" American Indian mentality: magical realism is the product of the synthesis of the dialectical relationship between the two. It also assumes an exclusive non-Native audience. However, these racialist, unscientific, and irrational aspersions are not acceptable, not even by the less rigorous academic standards of the Liberal Arts community. It is simply indisputable that all people are capable of rational and irrational thought, rational and irrational behavior, empirical and metaphysical reasoning. People and races simply cannot be said to be one or the other. Chanady's characterization of mentalities according to racialist notions is reminiscent of the dark age of anthropology when evolutionism reigned. Evolutionism is the:

> classifying of different societies and cultures and defining the phases and states through which all human groups pass . . . some groups progress more slowly, some faster, as they advance . . . from irrational to the rational. (*Encyclopedia Britannica* "Anthropology")

However, twentieth-century anthropology recognizes the unscientific and imperialistic premise of evolutionism and formally renounced its practice, at least on contemporaneous cultures, decades ago.

Furthermore, Chanady claims that antinomy exists in the attitude of the reader vis-á-vis the contradiction between the semantic and textual levels. For example, she asserts that the reader, who is presumed to be white, will somehow suspend all his preconceived and culturally embedded notions of what is real and accept the "primitive, archaic" American Indian mentality as an equal to his own, the realist, which results in a contradiction between the reader's denial of the supernatural on the semantic level and the reader's acceptance of it on the textual level (106). However, she is once again using antinomy in an unconventional sense, referring to a contradictory thesis and antithesis in the reader's attitude that results in tension that is resolved through synthesis. Again, this is not antimony.

However, Chanady does make an astute observation in relation to the role of language, the technology of storytelling, to facilitate understanding the *mystery of reality* that is pertinent to the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. Chanady writes:

> The mystery of life does not exist in objective reality, but in the subjective reaction to and interpretation of the world. By presenting various different perceptions of reality, . . . the narrator allows us to see dimensions of reality of which we are not normally aware. . . the amalgamation of realism and fantasy is the means to an end, and this is the penetration of the mystery of reality. (27)

Another pertinent observation of Chanady's is the role of the focalizer in narrative. In magical realism, for example, the focalizer is European: "The Indians are the object, not the subject, of focalization" (35). This is important because the "focalization, conveyed by the narrative voice, also determines the reactions of the implied reader" (36). For example, would *Dances With Wolves* have been as successful if the focalizer were not a white man? Julia Goodfox, a Pawnee, stated that she hated the movie because her nation, the Pawnees, were depicted as "savages" once again, but she understood why white people and even Sioux would like the movie, because their point of view (focalization) are depicted. Noting, of course, that "Indians" are the objects, not the subjects of the focalization in magical realism certainly distinguishes it from the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. In the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel Native Americans are the focalizers, the subjects, of the narrative.

Focalization and the subject position of the real-life people portrayed in magical realism is a pertinent point that needs to be addressed as a distinguishing point between magical realism and the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. Jimmie Durham in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance,* writes that such distinguished and Nobel Prize-wining magical realist authors as Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez lived in the countryside where most of Columbia's indigenous population live, and notes at the period during which his novels are set, the indigenous people became politically organized and were consequently hunted down and murdered by the Colombian government. Yet, Marquez makes no mention of these facts in his writing. Likewise, the Mexican writer Juan Rulfo ignores crimes against the indigenous people in his country. As well as, the literary giant Miguel Angel Asturias, as an official of the Guatemalan government, participated in the razing of Maya villages and the murder of the residents. Other authors, such as Chile's Isabelle Allende, simply label the indigenous population of their countries as "placidly evil" (430-2).

In effect, magical realism is more similar than dissimilar to a longstanding practice of European novelists, such as Jane Austen, who do not want to look to closely at the source of their prosperity. As William James writes:

> we divert our attention away from disease and death as much as we can; and the slaughter-house and indecencies without end on which our life is founded and huddled out of sight and never mentioned, so that the world we recognize officially in literature

> and in society is a poetic fiction far handsomer and cleaner and better than the world that really is. (90)

Edward Said, more to the point, writes that the fictional myopia of the real-life suffering of real-life people is simply a continuing white tradition (55-62).

Willful myopia of others' suffering and exploitation is different from authorial reticence. Authorial reticence is a prominent feature of the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. Authorial reticence is the "withholding of information and explanations" (121). Chanady explains that "one of the factors that distinguishes stories of the fantastic from magico-realist narratives such as Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* is the absence of essential information about certain occurrences within the fictitious world" (135). In magical realism:

> it serves the purpose mainly of preventing the reader from questioning the narrated events, as no attention is drawn to the strangeness of the world view. The unnatural is naturalized by commenting as little as possible on it, and reducing the distance between the narrator and the situation he is describing. (160)

Authorial reticence serves a similar function in the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel. For example, in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water,* no special attention is drawn by the narrator to the supernatural powers of the Trickster characters.

The difference between Magical Realism and postmodern-mimetic is much more than the cultural baggage Chanady tags to it. Magical Realism is fundamentally about the real juxtaposed to the unreal. However, postmodern-mimetic refers to the postmodern and the mimetic. Postmodern contains within it the pre-modern, the modern, and the post-modern. Postmodernism is a world-view and a rhetorical strategy. The pre-modern contributions to literature include epic and heroic narratives like *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Beowulf.* The Modern created, according to Daniel Ammam in his essay *Modernist Mysteries: Cracking the Code,* a generation of readers who read

> beyond the semantic interpretation of the text, suspect yet another code written into the inner message: subtexts, intertexts, subliminal messages, compositional codes and lexical patterns, chiastic structures and what not . . . it is this form of artistic appreciation and critical interpretation modernism has cultivated. (16)

Post-modern refers to self-referential use of language, self-consciously created context, splicing together of different contexts, characters who are self-conscious, and contains multiple levels of meaning, to name only a few of the most prominent characteristics.

Isenhagen makes an important comment on Momaday in relation to modernism and postmodernism in the introduction to his collection of interviews with Momaday, Gerald Vizenor, and Jeannette Armstrong. He notes that while Jeannette Armstrong would be labeled a realist, Momaday a modernist, and Vizenor a postmodernist, the "discussion of postmodernism is shot through with references to the impossibility of clearly separating postmodernist and modernist strategies of writing, as well as the constant reemergence of realism in both genres" (5). These are three contemporary authors "sharing a historical moment of great complexity" (5). He specifically cites Momaday as an example,

> he has made modernism deal with specific, urgent questions of material and political life . . . in this context he has often had to resort to an almost postmodern gesture of deconstructing established stereotypes and debilitating points of view. (6)

Not *almost*, Momaday, in fact, uses postmodern writing strategies. Larry Lundrum writes in "The Shattered Modernism of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*":

> The text's strategy is not to infuse a modernist structure with an overlay of realism as most critics imply but to shatter the modernist display-case that represents cultural diversity without cultural substance. (764)

Or, as J.J.Healy notes in his essay "Wrestling With White Spirits: The Uses and Limits of Modernism and Postmodernism in Aboriginal and Native American Literary Contexts": "Modernism and postmodernism no longer matter at Ragnarok or Wounded Knee . . . it is a survival literature, written by survivors, about surviving" (46).

Mimesis refers to more than the real or "simple mimesis." In fact, there has never been "simple mimesis." Literary mimesis is very complex, as it was in Aristotle's day. (Aristotle's *Poetics* is the first recorded attempt to define the concept.) Erich Auerbach explains some of the fundamentals of mimesis that were present in Aristotle's time in his classic text, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature.* He says, "look at Homer and you will find fully externalized description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events in the foreground, . . . unmistakable meanings, few elements of historical development and of psychological perspective," and although Auerbach's, "on the other hand" examples are from "Old Testament figures" an examination of Greek drama, Sophocles, for example, demonstrates other early characteristics of mimesis, "certain parts are brought into high relief, others left obscure, abruptness, suggestive influence of the inexpresssed, background quality, multiplicity of meanings and the need for interpretation, universal-historical claims, development of the concept of historical becoming, and preoccupation with the problematic" (23). Of course, Auerbach goes on to examine mimesis as it is expressed in literature until the early twentieth century, and comments on those relevant changes too. Lukács' brilliant work on mimesis takes up where Auerbach leaves off. In addition to his insights on the use and development of mimesis in contemporary literature, Lukács also explains the socio-political reason for the shunning of mimesis today. He points out that it is not simply a coincidence that those who shun realism (mimesis) also tend to embrace fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism, both Soviet and American varieties.

Chapter Four

Historical and Experiential Postmodernism:
Native American and Euro-American

The different historical and cultural matrices from which the Native American intellectual tradition springs and that of European and American postmodernism is succinctly illustrated by David Harvey's explanation of the process of "creative destruction" in modernism. Harvey explains that:

> The image of 'creative destruction' is very important to understanding modernity precisely because it derived from the practical dilemmas that faced the implementation of the modernist project. How could a *new world* be created, . . . without destroying much that had gone before? (emphasis added, 16).

At this point, Harvey cites Berman's and Lukács's example of Faust: "Prepared to eliminate everything and everyone who stands in the way of the realization of his sublime vision, Faust, to his own ultimate horror, deploys Mephistopheles to kill a much loved old couple who lived in a small cottage by the sea-shore for no other reason than the fact that they do not fit in with the master plan . . ." (16). Thus, according to Berman, "the very process of development, even as it transforms the wasteland into a thriving, physical and social space, recreated the wasteland inside of the developer himself. This is how the tragedy of development works" (16). In America, Native Americans are the ones displaced and killed in order to create this

"New World," while Euro-Americans are the ones who are dealing with the psychic cost of burning down "the cottage by the sea. . . and killing." These different historical and cultural matrices have caused different psychical maladies, as well as different intellectual and philosophical traditions. Louis Owens, in *Other Destinies*, defines, for example, the difference between being "alienated" and being a "postmodern schizophrenic." Native Americans are "alienated" to the degree that their "coherent sense of self" and "centered sense of personal identity" through their respective tribal communities have been usurped by the colonizing process (131). Euro-Americans, on the other hand, are "postmodern schizophrenic" to the degree that they are "unable to unify the past, present, and future" as a consequence of the fragmented nature of their colonizing society (131).

In order to understand postmodernism, one also has to know its origins in modernism. Sanford Schwartz's *Matrix of Modernism* explores the philosophical and cultural influences that went into creating the phenomenon known as modernism. Culturally, Schwartz identifies two books, Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1922) and Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1918), as having had a tremendous impact on changing nineteenth-century Enlightenment notions about the inevitable progress and natural superiority of Western civilization over other cultures through their emphasis upon the "common foundations of all cultures, past and present, Western and non-Western, in an unchanging system of ritual and psychic structure" (5). Philosophically, Schwartz identifies Henri Bergson and Frederick Nietzsche as instrumental in influencing the development of modern literature. Bergson taught that "beneath the level of ordinary awareness there is the deeper consciousness that we generally overlook. And it is here, in this dynamic temporal flux, that we are liberated from the habits of everyday life and restored to our own humanity" (27). And, that "contrary to traditional beliefs, the intellect is designed not to find a preexisting reality behind the sensory flux but to project a useful grid upon it" (28). Thus, modernist writers write in order to liberate themselves from everyday, mundane social conventions in order to act, feel, and think for themselves; and to search for an authentic humanity beneath the surface that they can project onto surface reality. T.S. Eliot, one of the high priests of literary modernism, attended Bergson's lectures regularly in 1910 and 1911 (31). Ezra Pound, the other modernist literary giant, was influenced by Nietzsche. Schwartz identifies Nietzsche's claim that truth is "a movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthromorphisms. . . a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to people to be fixed, canonical, and binding". . .[but are really only] "illusions we have forgotten are illusions" as Pound's lodestar (77). Schwartz writes, "Pound constantly searches for 'tensional' constructs that hold together abstraction and sensation, identity and difference, and these tensional constructs are central to his works" (86). Schwartz asserts that Eliot and Pound may not have originally intended to disassociate art from life, but it occurred because "it is precisely through its capacity to detach us from ordinary life that art performs its existential function" (112). Further, in striving to understand a work of art through the "structure of the world he has made" the subjective life of the author is lost (172); and, consequently, we have modernist poetry, like Eliot's, in which people appear as "mere objects rather than fully human subjects" (189), and Pound's shameful endorsement of fascism.

Modernist literary conventions that treated people as objects rather than subjects and that used art as a hegemonic instrument, led, according to Peter Burger, to the development of the avant-garde. As a matter of fact, in Burger's and Habermas's view, it may be considered as a type of ineffectual "reformation" (in the sense of the Protestant attempt to reform the Catholic Church) of modernism, or as Habermas prefers to refer to it, "the project of Enlightenment," to break down the barrier between life and art. However, in the final analysis, Burger does not believe art can ever be "reintegrated into the life praxis" of a "bourgeois society" (Jochen Schulte-Sasse's Forward to Burger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* xliii). The legacy of the avant-garde movement is that although they failed to break down the barrier between life and art by destroying art as an institution, they were able to overthrow any one school's hegemony over art, which is one of the sources of postmodernism's pluralism (87).

Andreas Huyssen's "Great Divide" in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, and Postmodernism* is the breach between "high art and mass culture" (viii). He defines postmodernism as another attempt to breach this divide. Postmodernism, like the historical avant-garde, challenges "the belief in the necessary separation of high art from mass culture, politics, and the everyday" (x). He notes, for example, that "one of the few widely agreed features of postmodernism is its attempt to negotiate forms of high art with certain forms and genres of mass culture and the culture of everyday life" (59). Consequently, Huyssen characterizes postmodernism as the "endgame of the avant-garde and not as some radical breakthrough" (168). And, in this light, postmodernism may even be considered as the avant-garde's play for legitimation and institutionalization. In art, for example, "rather than aiming at a mediation between art and life, postmodernist experiments soon came to be valued for typically modernist features such as self-reflexivity, immanence, and indeterminacy" (Ihab Hassam qtd. in Huyssen 170). However, unlike modernism, Huyssen notes, postmodernism contains a significant, at least vocal, minority element. And,

> It is precisely the. . . self-assertion of minority cultures and their emergence into public consciousness which has undermined the modernist belief [embedded in postmodernism] that high and low culture have to be categorically kept apart; such rigorous segregation simply does not make much sense within a given minority culture which has always existed outside in the shadow of the dominant 'high culture.' (194)

Thus, ironically, "minority culture" may be able to do what the avant-garde (a community composed primarily of privileged white men) was not. Vincent Leitch also recognizes the importance of minority culture to postmodernism in his definition: "Postmodernism is the corrosive cultural moment when suspicion of master narratives becomes widespread and the *margins* solicit the matrix" (emphasis added ix).

David Harvey, on the other hand, defines postmodernism as "not so much as a set of ideas . . . as a historical condition" (viii). One of the key features of this historical condition is the "plasticity of human personality through the malleability of appearances and surfaces . . .

[and] the self-referential positioning of the authors to themselves as subjects" (7). He cites Cindy Sherman's photographs as an example of postmodern identity: Her photographs are all of herself in different guises. Cindy Sherman's ability to change her appearance, to free herself from the "masks of fixed cultural identity" is one of the reasons Gerald Vizenor celebrates the postmodern condition; he treasures its freeing and liberating potentials, and finds them necessary for resistance to the suffocating oppressive hegemony the Native American community and Native American individuals find themselves wrestling with day to day (Owens, *Other Destinies* 242).

Gerald Vizenor, in *Narrative Chance,* defines postmodernism by first stating clearly what it is not: It is not "tragic themes, individualism and modernism" (3); on the contrary, it is "playful, paratactical, and deconstructionist" (4). He cites Stephen Tyler's assertion that postmodern writing eschews "modernist mimesis in favor of a writing that 'evokes' or 'calls to mind,' not by completion and similarity but by suggestion and difference" (5). Mimesis is one of the ways he fears that tribal narratives will be turned into "consumable cultural artifacts." He feels that postmodernism is a writing strategy that can prevent that from happening by "liberat[ing] the imagination and widen[ing] the audiences for tribal literatures . . .rouse[ing] a comic world view, [and resurrecting] narrative discourse and language games of the past" (6). Besides, he asserts, postmodernism is not foreign to Native American discourse; "the trickster is postmodern," and "comic world views are communal" (9). Vizenor's eschewing of mimesis, however, has prompted some Native American critics to accuse him of "racial nihilism." For Vizenor, however, postmodern trickster discourse does represent authentic Native American culture; thus, in his view postmodern writing is not "nihilism," but preservation and procreation of his culture in new and vital ways.

Nevertheless, the danger of "racial nihilism" lies in the fact that Vizenor may, like Eliot and Pound, disassociate art from life. This does not necessarily mean that Vizenor will view people as mere objects or that he will endorse fascism, but modernism's ahistorical and socially disassociative potentialities, as Hassam and Huyssen point out, are embedded in the postmodern. In addition, the phenomenon of postmodernism originates in a different historical and social matrix (in reference to certain philosophical and experiential components adumbrated earlier) than contemporary traditional Native American literature and criticism.

In addition, writing postmodern literature without a grounding in realism, even with a trickster twist, leads to postmodern criticism. And, this leads to some important hermeneutical questions such as the importance of history and social circumstances to a thorough understanding of what an author is really saying (a postmodern critic, like Foucault, does ask if there even is an author; another might ask if an author can even know what it is he is saying; another might ask if language is capable of carrying a meaningful message accurately); as well as the more general question of what is the relation of art, be it basket-making or novel writing, to society. It is precisely this development in literature that Jorge Luis Borges satirizes in his short story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," in which he satirizes the language of Tlön. For example, they claim all nouns have "only metaphorical value" (22). In essence, that there is no definitive correlation between signifier and signified resulting eventually in a "kind of reduction ad absurdum" in which one sign can stand for all things (22). Likewise, he satirizes literary critics who assert the so-called death of the author when he notes in Tlön that "the concept of plagiarism does not exist: it has been established that all works are the creation of one author, who is atemporal and anonymous" (24).

Greg Sarris and Robert Warrior represent a more traditional approach to Native American writing and criticism. Warrior's *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* places emphasis upon a Native American intellectual tradition centered on Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) and John Joseph Mathews (Osage). In Greg Sarris's *Keeping Slug Woman Alive,* narrative is embedded with the "traditional" voice and world view of Mabel McKay (Cache Creek Pomo). Warrior and Sarris believe that a knowledge of history and social circumstance, tribal and personal, are essential to deeper insights into literature and art. In addition, they both give numerous examples of how neglect of either can lead to erroneous interpretations of texts and people(s).

Warrior demonstrates the importance of the history and social circumstances of writer and critic in interpreting a text such as John Joseph Mathews' *Sundown*. Interestingly, he frames his discussion by suggesting that if "Mathews could have known in advance some of the ways his . . . novel has been interpreted, he would perhaps have saved the postage and used the pages of the manuscript to wrap his season's take of quail" (53). Of course, we are glad he did not. Charles Larson, for example, "reduces *Sundown* to the individual identity struggle of Chal;" Warrior wonders how Larson could "completely ignore the fact that the story parallels exactly the social issues confronting Osages of the period" (54). Likewise, Andrew Wiget "emphasizes Chal's identity struggle as strictly biological-cultural rather than political-ideological" (54). To Warrior, it is *"quite obvious* . . . Mathews did not intend *Sundown* to be merely a story about how an individual deals with personal identity . . . [but about] a historical period of intense importance for Osage people . . . and how the political strategies of various groups played out and what possible future might exist" (emphasis added, 54). Carol Hunter (Osage), in fact, "demonstrates without a doubt that the novel cannot be reduced to a simple story of an individual identity struggle" by "tracing many of the historical themes" of the novel, and asserts, "it is from the historical context that the novel's message emerges" (55). A reading founded on a specifically Osage historical and ideological nexus is able to glean "from *Sundown* meanings and nuances that the traditional critical categories of alienation, tragedy, and unredeemed suffering cannot" (83). However, "by reading *Sundown* in this way," of a community in a crisis of land and sovereignty, Warrior "hoped to demonstrate that relying either on standard critical categories of individual alienation and historically necessary tragedy or on essentializing concepts of radical Otherness [also] severally limits the textual landscapes of Mathews . . ." (86). Therefore, an interpretive strategy that takes into account the particular historical nexus of the author and the Osage is necessary for an accurate and comprehensive interpretation of the novel.

Warrior then throws light on how an interpreter's own particular historical circumstances may influence their reception of a given text. He contrasts, for example, the lukewarm reception of

Mathews' *Sundown* with the hearty endorsement that Charles Larson and Andrew Wiget gives D'Arcy McNickle's *The Surrounded* and suggests the sympathetic reading is the consequence of the protagonist's, Archilde, of *The Surrounded* being the "powerless figure whose destiny is foreordained" that is expected of Native American characters in American literature (55); a figure that "promotes a view of American Indian history that highlights decline, inevitable disintegration of the legal and political status of tribal nations, and Western superiority" (83). Archilde, for example, is "sober, motivated, and seeks to do something to escape his difficult situation," but still ends up tragically (83). Warrior even suggests McNickle deliberately wrote the character that way because "his major concern was for his own writing career rather than for Indian communities" at the time (56).

Another text that Warrior cites as frequently misinterpreted is Mathews' *Talking to the Moon*. He frames this discussion under the heading: "Talking to the Moon *When No One Listens*" (emphasis added, 57). He asserts: "More than simple nature writing, *Talking to the Moon* is an interpretation of the ecological and social history of the Osage land and people" (58). In *Talking to the Moon,* for example, "categories of land and community and their relationship to each other" are "critical keys to unlocking the contours of the novel" (45). He categorizes for instance:

> The difference between the Osage way of living with the land and that of the invading Euro-Americans was a difference not so much between primitive people and advanced people, but between people who channeled their ornamentation urge

> toward balance with nature and those who, disastrously, considered the freedom of ornamentation to be a release from natural processes. (65)

Thus, *Talking to the Moon*, like *Sundown*, is a distinctly Native American political-ideological text. Warrior asserts that an examination of "Deloria's analyses of land and community [would] further bolster this reading. . . [because] like Mathews, he seeks to understand American Indian traditions in light of a great number of economic, religious, social, political, and biological factors" (84). And, keep in mind that "for both [Deloria and Mathews], land and community are necessary starting points for the process of coming to a deep perception of the conflicts and challenges that face American Indian people and communities" (85). Thus, "Mathews no longer seems like a Native American Thoreau. He is, rather, a person whose work becomes a living part of the ongoing struggle for a sovereign American Indian future. . . [and] an embrace of people in pain and crisis" (114).

Sarris devotes an entire chapter to interpreting Louise Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine*. He is not quite as adamant about his interpretation of *Love Medicine* as Warrior is of the texts he examines. However, Sarris does question the correctness of interpretations that do not consider the specific historical frame and particular social context of the novel. For example, Sarris suggests that although Lipsha does "get to meet his father, see him face to face," that does not necessarily "change the nature of home for Lipsha" because a similar experience did not change it for him (142). He adds, there is "still the drinking and violence, gossip and bickering. Indians fighting each other. Is finding your fathers . . . medicine enough?"(142). Most critics read the last lines: "The sun flared . . .The morning was clear. A good road led on. So there was nothing to do but cross the water and bring her home" as a happy ending; but, Sarris asks, "what will he find?"(142).

Sarris speculates that the cause of all the unhappiness and self-destructive behavior of the characters in the novel is not to be found in the personal animosities and petty bickerings, but have their origin instead in the particular historical experience of "having your cottage burned down, and your loved ones killed for progress' sake." In other words, they are suffering from the disease Frantz Fanon identifies as afflicting colonized people everywhere, "internal oppression" (143). Internal oppression is the condition in which colonized people become unwitting agents of their own continuing oppression through self-destructive and violent behavior; it is also a feeling of a "deep, unconscious fear" (134). Sarris supports this historically specific interpretation by citing various characters in the novel expressing that fear, or of experiencing the "wet blanket of sadness coming down on us all" (134). Sarris asks:

> Is Marie Lazarre Kashpaw simply an insecure woman driven to garner herself for self-worth? Isn't her insecurity, her denial of her origins, rooted in a history of which she is a part? Is King merely another male with low self-esteem who must beat his wife to feel significant and powerful? Is Gordie just another drunk, down on his luck? (143)

Sarris's answer is: No. Sarris believes "much of the pain these characters experience and inflict upon one another is tied to colonialism, and ironically and inadvertently they work to complete what the colonizer began" (143).

Sarris gives an unforgettable example of the depth of colonialism on Native people's psyche in the story of "Crawling Woman." Crawling Woman was:

> a Coast Miwok woman who was born in the old village that was called Nicasias . . . Crawling woman is not her real name. It is how she is remembered. Even her great-great-granddaughter, Juanita Carrio, the noted Miwok elder and matriarch who told me this story, could not remember the name for Crawling Woman. She was one of my grandmother's ancestors too . . . she got her name because at the end of her life she became child-like . . . she did not know anybody or anything. She didn't talk, she only made baby-like sounds and cried. And she crawled. She crawled everywhere, out the front door, up the road, into fields. People said she was at least a hundred and ten years old by that time. She was a grown woman when the first Spanish missionaries invaded her home. She was a grandmother by the time General Vallejo's Mexican soldiers established a fort in Petaluma, and when California became a state in 1850, she was already a very old woman. . . she washed clothes for the Americans and she sold fish she caught herself. This was when she was over eighty. . . No one can remember how she lost her mind, whether gradually with age or suddenly, say from a stroke. . . she had to be watched all the time . . . Juanita's mother used to babysit the old woman. She was just a young girl at the time, and to get the old woman to behave she would put on an

> old soldier's jacket they kept in the closet. Crawling Woman would see the brass buttons on the coat and let out a loud shriek and crawl as fast as she could back to the house. The coat was the *only* thing she recognized. (emphasis added 144-5)

The story of Crawling Woman, and the real person's life experiences on whom it is based, were created by a people with a specific historical and cultural matrix. For example, the old woman's terror of the soldier's coat's brass buttons is a real and tangible thing. Native Americans across the country can empathize with Crawling Woman, and the people who tell her story, because they are from the same historical and cultural matrix. They understand why an old woman, who cannot even remember her own children's faces, or walk upright, still cringes in terror when she sees the shining brass buttons on an army coat--and they cringe in sympathy.

The psychic trauma of colonialism is also manifest in the mixed-blood dilemma of being simultaneously the one who "tears down cottages" and the one "whose cottages have been torn down." This dilemma is poignantly described in the poetry of Linda Hogan. Her poem "The Truth Is" begins: "In my left pocket a Chickasaw hand/ rests on the bone of my pelvis/ In my right pocket/a white hand. Don't worry. It's mine." Obviously, racial characteristics such as skin pigmentation are not distributed this way. Hogan is describing the experience of internal colonialism, being simultaneously the colonized and the colonizer, like Tayo's guilt over killing Japanese prisoners of war--seeing "Josiah standing there" instead of a Japanese soldier (Silko, *Ceremony* 7). But, in Hogan's case, history is played out in a single mind, a single body; and its pervasive intimacy is demonstrated by the fact that her hand is resting on her pelvis. Although the Chickasaw hand and the white hand are both her hands, there is a disjunction between the two. It is significant to note that other racial characteristics are, in reality, unevenly distributed: A mixed-blood may have blue eyes and brown skin, or white skin and brown eyes; blond hair and brown skin, brown hair and white skin; brown eyes and brown hair and white skin, etc. The point that Hogan is graphically illustrating by selection of an unrealistic distribution of characteristics is that, to a mixed-blood, it feels as disconcerting and confusing to look in the mirror and see those disparate racial features that occur naturally as it would be to see the unnatural distribution of those features that she mentions in her poem. Other Americans do not have to come face-to-face with colonialism every time they look in a mirror. Being a mixed-blood means living with the feeling of being "taped together," "crowded together," having one's "hands" (metaphorically representing white and Chickasaw) "knock[ing] against each other at night"; even if you can "[r]elax there are other things to think about" . . . like your red foot and your white foot, for example. This mind-set, this internal/eternal struggle, makes it difficult for the mixed-blood to attain any type of fixed authentic identity. Gerald Vizenor claims that he is not afflicted with this dilemma (Isernhagen 83), but it is significant that many of his characters are.

Louis Owens also discuss this issue in *Other Destinies*. For example, Owens speculates that one of the reasons that the unnamed protagonist in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* is on the road to recovery is his discovery that he is the "grandson of Yellow Calf, the hunter" instead of a "vague, halfblood drifter" (143). On the other hand, Owens asks in relation to Jim Loney's inability to come to a reconciliation of who he is:

> What if the narrator of *Winter in the Blood* had been the son of a halfbreed drifter and had had no grandmother to tell him stories of who he is, no Yellow Calf to trick him into self-knowledge? What if the narrator had been a 'stranger to both' Indian and white, made so by blood and circumstance? (147)

The answer, of course, is that he would be "Jim Loney."

What is traditional Native American intellectual tradition's, and what is postmodernism's, respective position on the relationship of art and society? From the *Crawling Woman* story and the various novels discussed, the Native American intellectual tradition would say that they inform one another and are inseparable. On the other hand, adherents of the modernist/postmodernist tradition would not necessarily agree. Exemplifying the two positions is the case of Pomo baskets displayed in museums and art galleries. For Sarris, their display in museums and art galleries abrogates their societal relations and exemplifies the break between art and society typical of modernism/postmodernism; additionally, it also demonstrates that for modernism/postmodernism the value of a basket is an "exchange" one. In a Native American intellectual tradition, such as that of Mabel McKay, the baskets have sacral value as well because they are an integral part of the society that created them. In fact, they not only have sacral value, but sacral power too; and, they are a living things. Mabel McKay talks to the baskets, and they are products of her dreams. But, exhibiting basketry out of context diminishes it by removing its sacral value and power (52). Sarris explains this through an analogy of

Walter Benjamin's "exhibition value" and "cult value" (53). For example, an object loses its "cult value," or sacral value when it is placed out of context, outside of history. This "precipitates a closed cycle of presentation and discussion about basketry itself" without raising the embarrassing question of "what happened and continues to happen that allows one group of people to discuss the artifacts of another people separate from the people themselves" (53-4). In explanation, Sarris juxtaposes the murder and dispossession of Poma people, what Mabel McKay calls "the raping time," with the genteel basket collecting of Mrs. Grace Hudson whose collection of Pomo baskets is displayed in various museums and art galleries (55). Likewise, one cannot discuss a mimetic novel like *House Made of Dawn* or *Death of Jim Loney* outside of its historical and social context without diminishing the humanity of the real-life suffering of the people these characters represent. People have "sacral value" too.

The applicability of this principle to Native American postmodern-mimetic novels rests in recognizing that the narratives refer to the real, lived experiences of real people. That is the context, not where they are read. It is critical to recognize the importance of context, or as Hayles asserts:

> who controls which context for what purposes [is] an important question. Consider the term 'context control,' which entered the vernacular as a euphemism favored by government spokesmen. It implies that is one can control the context in which damaging information is released, one has a much better chance of controlling the way the information will be interpreted . . . only

> in a (created?) context of national security is it plausible to distinguish between 'disinformation' and lies. (*Chaos* 274)

Just as the sterile environment belies the violence and bloodshed surrounding the acquisition of Native American cultural artifacts, reading a Native American postmodern-mimetic novel without framing it in real life voids it of its sacral value.

Edward Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism* that all European and American theories of literature have avoided the major determining political horizon of contemporary Western culture, which is imperialism and its neocolonial outcome. He asserts, "We need to read the canon as the polymorphic accompaniment to the expansion of Europe" (60). If so, there is also a vital need to read Native American literature as a response to that process, too.

Sarris also points out that Euro-American critics such as Arnold Krupat, David Brumble, Gretchen Batille, and Kathleen Sands sometimes err in their interpretation of Native American-narrated autobiographies because they fail to note history from a Native American point of view (89). They often replace real Native Americans with fictional ones who are "made safe, intelligible on the colonizer's terms" (90). However, this error is not a fatal flaw, but simply an error that they may correct if they would simply ask themselves: "Who am I as a reader?" (91). Sarris demonstrates the cultural hubris of these critics by asking what if they put their editing and interpreting methods to work on Faulkner instead of a Native American (100). The result, of course, would be a radically different story from the one Faulkner intended.

Additionally, it is important to note the subtle but substantive differences between the guises Cindy Sherman (a postmodern artist) dons, the Trickster's multiple identities, and the three names of Welch's *Fools Crow's* protagonist (Sinopa, White Man's Dog, and Fools Crow), Cindy Sherman's guises are all equally meaningless or meaningful, the Trickster's multiple identities are intended to prevent him/her from being contained and commodified by America's hegemonic consumer culture, and Fools Crow's names are each authentic identities representing his integration in an authentic community. These substantial differences are the result of different historical and cultural matrices, and of different responses to those matrices: postmodern Euro-American, postmodern trickster discourse, and traditional Native American. Euro-American postmodern theory is based on certain philosophical assumptions about the role of the writer, text, and audience which arise from specific historical and material conditions. Those conditions are primarily those associated with an expanding colonial and colonizing capitalist society, whereas, Native American sensibilities emerge from the historical and material conditions of hundreds of societies, originally living in very different environments, under very different material circumstances, with very different customs, beliefs, and even languages, who have been subject to the colonial enterprise. One may even say that a type of pan-Indian consciousness has been forced upon Native Americans by our common experience of losing our independent ancestral homelands, our independent material means of living, our sovereignty, and even our languages.

On the surface, it appears that there is no reconciliation possible between postmodernism and mimesis in the Native American intellectual tradition. For example, pejorative phrases like "racial nihilist" and "terminal creed" repeatedly fly between Warrior's camp and Vizenor's camp, respectively. The stakes are high: Each side believes the other is endangering the future of Native American culture, and compromising what it means to be Native American. However, both camps' survival is dependent upon resisting the encroaching hegemony of the colonizing discourse surrounding them. It can creep into Vizenor's camp via ahistoricism and the rending of the fragile living bond between art and society; and it can sneak into Warrior's camp via uncompromising posturing and cultural stagnation. Independently, each may become a relic for a museum curator to collect and display, like Pomo baskets, or Ishi, "the world's last wild Indian." However, when deftly weaved together by master storytellers like N. Scott Momaday, Thomas King, James Welch, and Linda Hogan into the Native American postmodern-mimetic novel they form a powerful counter-discourse of survival.

The novels this dissertation examines are important because they constitute a discourse of survival. N. Scott Momaday's novels, *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* are excellent examples of this discourse, and are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

House Made of Dawn: A New Interpretation and *The Ancient Child*: Premier Example of the Native American Postmodern-Mimetic Novel

Abel is dead. He returned to his home alone, like any other day, but this day he loaded a shotgun, perhaps took a few drinks of strong liquor to steady his hand, then placed the barrel in his mouth and pulled the trigger, blowing his brains out the back of his skull and the remnants of his head onto the wall, ceiling, and floor. His body crumples to the floor and blood and urine soak into the carpet, congeal in the matting below and permanently stain the wooden floor.

I am not speculating about what becomes of the literary character, Abel, from Momaday's novel *House Made of Dawn,* but rather an actual Native American man of the same name. Abel was N. Scott Momaday's neighbor who killed himself, the man Momaday chose to name his literary character after. "Abel happens to be the name of a neighbor who blew his brains out at the reservation" (*Persona* 119). In an earlier interview with Gretchen Bataille he said that he had a particular person in mind, "someone at Jemez whose name was Abel" (61). Momaday specifically refutes the practice of "a lot of people" who want to "make some symbolic sense out of the name" (119). He did not select the name *Abel* for symbolic reasons or conventional symbolism as it relates to the mythical character from Judeo-Christian literary tradition (although parallels may be drawn). Momaday's decision to name his character after a real-world neighbor makes the question of the fictional Abel's survival relevant to the real-world. Additionally, it shows why a man like the fictional Abel, a man with Abel's life experiences, for example, may choose to kill himself. Finally, it is significant that *Persona* did not ask Momaday why he named his leading character after a man who "blew his brains out" but chose instead to focus on the use of literary forms.

The necessity of real-world referents is also illustrated in Tosamah's monologue in Book Two, "The Priest of the Sun," in the novel. While the conventional way of looking at Tosamah, and Tosamah's quoting of the passage from "The Gospel of St. John," is as an illustration of the unlimited power of words, of language to create a new reality and to heal, much like Leslie Silko's use of Thought Woman in the beginning of her novel *Ceremony*. For example, Louis Owens asserts that Tosamah "has nothing except imagination and language out of which to fashion his world" (110). However, Tosamah does indeed have something–he has his grandmother's narrative, he has her memory, he has history, and a sense of place. These are not "nothing" or merely products of his "imagination." Consequently, there is a valid alternative, or corresponding, interpretation which also merits consideration: The passage illustrates the powerlessness, even the danger, of words void of discoursive meaning and without real-world referents. The power of Tosamah's oratory comes from his grandmother's reverence for words and her instruction. The danger is that Tosamah, like John:

> 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 (87).

For John, of course, the fat was God: "The Truth was overgrown with fat, and the fat was God. The fat was John's God, and God stood between John and Truth" (86). For Tosamah, and other Native American wordsmiths, the danger may be that we will create our own God or gods to stand between us and the Truth. The problem to which Momaday, in the guise of Tosamah, is alluding to is language's loss of meaning when it is used frivolously. Language has become a game, a thing of advertisements, entertainment, "bills, bulletins, commentaries and conversations," in short, language has become "diluted" and is beginning to close in on us. We are becoming "sated and insensitive," language has "diminished almost to the point of no return," and we may well perish because of that (89).

To most readers, the preacher is a hypocrite or trickster; one who uses Christianity for his own purposes. He does not believe in the historic Christian deity or Church. His sermon tropes orthodox Christianity. Momaday states, "He takes one of the great, classic doctrines of the Western world, "The Gospel of St. John," and he twists it around so that he condemns the whole White culture" (Weiler 172). In addition, Momaday asserts that Tosamah is a trickster figure who "wears masks" so he can take advantage of every situation, "he's shrewd and a cynic" (172).

It is important to keep in mind that the "The Gospel of St. John," and the woman, Mrs. St. John, are both allegorical rather than symbolic figures. The difference between a symbol and an allegory is that one has the quality of "living meaning" and the other being its "dead equivalence" (Le Guin 394). "Living meaning" simply means that it has a real-world referent, whereas the other does not. Obviously, there is a physical Christian Church in the world, but it does not appear that Tosamah considers it a "living thing," as Christianity is not a living religion to Mrs. St. John. They have become reified, petrified, dead. Just as the words of the historical, or iconic, St. John are void of real meaning, the religion of the latter day St. John is void of meaning, too. For example, she mocks Father Olguin when he visits her and discovers her adulterous affair with Abel:

> 'Oh my God', she said laughing, 'I am heartily sorry . . . for having offended Thee.' She laughed. It was a hard and brittle, her laughter, but far from desperate, underlain with perfect presence, nearly too controlled. And that, even more that the meaning and the mockery, horrified him. (68)

In addition, Momaday shows the priest's faith is dead, too. For instance, Father Olguin is apparently sexually tempted by Mrs. St. John. The first time he sees her, "He followed her with his one good eye all the way to the door, trying to imagine who she was" (29), then when he meets her he "wonders that her physical presence should suddenly dawn upon him so. She was more beautiful than he had thought at first" (30). However, he rationalizes his celibacy through his faith, and when he intuits that Mrs. St. John has had sex with Abel, his doubts come to the surface. To him "there was nothing but her (laughing) voice in the room, going on wearily, without inflection, even after he had ceased to hear" (68). Next, he thinks the entire world is laughing at him, mocking him and his dead religion: "Suddenly the walls of the town rang out with laughter and enclosed him all around . . . walls lined with people, innumerable and grotesque" (69). In his mad drive back to town from Mrs. St. John's cabin, he almost kills several people. He perceives a young child he hits with his car and knocks to the ground is laughing at him, as well as an infant tied to a cradle board that he spies after crashing into the parent's wagon appears to him to be laughing at him, and at his ludicrous and self-deceiving faith:

> Then in the ebbing pitch and rock that followed, as the cloud of dust and *laughter* drew down upon him, he saw the cradle board fixed to the wagon. And just above and beyond the bobbing ornament of the hood, at the level of his own eyes, was the face of the infant inside. Its little eyes were overhung with fat, and its cheeks and chins sagged down in front of the tight swaddle at its throat. The hair lay in tight wet rings above the eyes, and all the shapeless flesh of the face dripped with sweat and shone like copper in the sunlight. Flies crawled upon the face and lay thick about the eyes and mouth. The muscles twitched under the fat and the head turned slowly from side to side in the agony of sad and helpless laughter. (69)

In the end, he succumbs to the same crisis in faith as his predecessor, Fray Nicolás. They both come to realize that they are living, not in epic or mythic time, but modern time, and in modern time God is dead. This realization drives Father Olguin temporarily mad.

This is an important observation to make because Louis Owens asserts that *House Made of Dawn* is set in mythic time. Owens's primary backing for making this claim is the recitation of some of the lines from the song "House Made of Dawn" in the Prologue (94). He asserts, for example, "this paragraph shifts the actual landscape of

Walatowa, or Jemez, recognizable even in such lyrical description, into the timeless realm of myth . . . time and place are mythic" (94). Thus, "The reader is thus oriented away from historic consciousness into mythic time" (94). Additionally, Owens claims this single paragraph in the prologue "removes Abel from time as the Occident conceives of it and shifts him into nonlinear, cyclical time of the pueblo" (95). However, the novel proceeds according to linear time. Momaday, in fact, gives the reader specific dates and times: Summer 20 July, 21 July, Abel is 17 when he has his first kill and his first sex with "one of Medina's daughters" (17), July 24, July 25, in 1875 the Albino is born, in 1945 the Albino is 70 years old, August 1, August 2, then the story skips ahead to Los Angeles 26 January 1952, January 27, 20 February 1952, February 27, and, finally, on February 28 his grandfather dies. Although the novel contains dramatic flashbacks, there is always a recognizable linear progression of time. In addition, Abel's quest, if he has a quest, is not heroic as would be expected in a mythic story, but mundane and real. Additionally, his goal is not communal, nor does he bring new, sacred knowledge to his community as would be expected of a mythic questing hero. He is simply trying to find his place in the world. Of course, Owens needs the novel to be set in mythic time in order to support his larger claim that Abel is an "archetypical questing hero" (99) and is later successfully integrated into the community (115) because "only in the pre-capitalist, organic society . . . are the individual and the communitarian selves commensurable" (Mariani 29).

A close examination of *House Made of Dawn* shows that many of the traditional beliefs and customs are dead to Abel. For example, Abel is not, as some anthropologizing literary critics think, counting coup when he jumps up and shouts at the German tank. He has a very different memory of the event with the tank than the other witnesses to the event. He remembers that there were no men around, only the bodies of men "strewn among the pits," and then the tank came and he "began to shake violently" and hugged the earth (26). Later, in Los Angeles, he meets some soldiers who recall the event very differently:

> He (Abel) just all of a sudden got up and started jumping around and yelling at that goddam tank . . . he was giving it the finger and whooping it up and doing a goddam war dance . . . hopping around with his finger in the air and giving it to the tank in Sioux or Algonquin or something . . . and he didn't have no weapon or helmet even. (108)

However, if he were deliberately counting coup, it seems he would have a vivid memory of the event, and tell the story boastfully instead of being embarrassed when he hears it. In addition, Abel never counts coup. For instance, he has no compunction against killing the malevolent Albino. He certainly is not counting coup when he stabs the Albino in the groin. Neither does he go out to count coup on the vicious cop Martinez. He goes out to kill him. Unfortunately, he loses that fight. As a matter of fact, this also helps to explain why Abel kills the eagle. He sees it as Mrs. St. John does the chicken pull, and her own religion: "so empty of meaning, so full of appearance" (45). The eagle has no living meaning, it is dead to him, so he literally kills it: "The sight of it filled him with shame and disgust. He took hold of its throat in the darkness and cut off its breath" (25). Consequently, it is more probable that Abel was simply behaving hysterically during the incident with the tank, not fulfilling some *Indian* custom. Besides counting coup is a Kiowa, not Pueblo tradition (Velie, "Nobody's Protest Novel" 55).

Momaday himself has repeatedly stressed the importance of real-world referents to his writing and to his sense of self. However, he is often misquoted by critics who jump on his much-quoted assertion that an Indian is someone who imagines him or herself as an Indian. In fact, he said, "a Kiowa is someone who thinks as himself as a Kiowa" (*Persona* 127). Critics neglect his important caveat that there must be a real-world, historical basis for a person considering him or herself Indian. He states:

> And what does that mean? It means that he has an experience in a way that enables him to think of himself in a way other people cannot think of themselves; his experience is unique. It involves a history, a history of their migration from Yellowstone to the Washita. Each time a Kiowa ponders his Kiowaness, he invents that whole history–it is his invention, it is whatever he makes of it in his own mind. It is not written down, and he can't go to a book and find out what happened to the Kiowa in the Black hills. All he can do is imagine. But it is his invention, finally, I think what I am saying is an oversimplification, but it is also true that we all invent history; history is an invention. It is not there except that we think of it and make something of it in our minds. (*Persona* 127)

In another interview, Momaday cites his mentor Yvor Winters' assertion that: "Unless we understand the history which produced us, we are determined by that history; we may be determined in any event, but the understanding gives us a chance" (Schubnell xvi). In fact, what

Momaday is asserting is only that it has been necessary for him, and other Native Americans, to imagine the details of their history, but he does not deny the fact that there has to be a historical reality to base the act of imagination on. Schubenell describes Momaday's writing as "a way to create an understanding of self and history through language" (xvi). Consequently, a person cannot simply imagine him or herself as Native American and be Native American. Even Momaday's mother had a real, if tenuous, basis for "recreating" herself as Native American. J.J. Healy notes that Momaday carefully uses the word "acquired" when speaking of his Kiowa identity, noting that something acquired is "something given in the act of looking. Not just something constructed" (37). On another occasion, Momaday claims his "authority to write about the Indian world" is "based upon experience" (Isernhagen 52).

Compared to Abel, who has a basis in reality, Mrs. Angela Grace St. John is a mere "satirical figure" (Isernhagen 58). Momaday states, "Angela is a satirical figure, she satirizes an attitude that is ultimately, in the context of the novel, destructive" (60). For example, her names, "Angela," "Grace," and "St. John" are clearly references to the Christian church and institution. Angela is not an angel. She is not a messenger of God to Abel, but rather is an instrument of further humiliation. She witnesses Abel's brutalization at the hands of the Albino during the chicken pull. The narrator, in fact, describes Abel's brutal beating by the Albino from Angela's eyes. The scene begins:

> 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 . . . and the open lips were blue and violet . . .the

> Albino was directly above her for one instant . . . then he was past, he rode beside Abel, turned suddenly upon him, and he began to flail him with the rooster . . . again and again the white man struck him, heavily, brutally, upon the chest and shoulders and head, and Abel threw up his hands, but the great bird fell upon them and beat them down . . . the white man leaned and struck, back and forth, with only the mute malice of the act itself, careless, undetermined, almost composed in some final, preeminent sense . . . then the bird was dead, and still he swung it down and across, and the neck of the bird was broken and the flesh torn open and blood splattered everywhere about . . . and it was finished. (44-5)

Then, "She felt afterward, this strange exhaustion of her whole being" (45). Obviously, she has taken *schadenfreude* (shameful pleasure in another's humiliation) in Abel's suffering, and is exhausted from the experience. Although Momaday claims that the Albino does not represent Euro-Americans, this particular scene is too commonly representative of the Native American experience with Euro-Americans to prevent comparison, whether Momaday wrote it deliberately for that purpose or not.

The beating describes what it feels like to be part of America's Native American diaspora. In the beginning there was the violence and rage in beating Native Americans, the beating continued even after we threw up our arms, we continued to be beaten, but today it is not necessarily with malice, it is more in the nature of "careless, undetermined, almost composed in some final, preeminent sense." Of course, in this analogy, Angela represents all of those bystanders who take shameful pleasure in our suffering. Remember, the concept of *schadenfreude* is not new, Edmund Burke wrote of the pleasure people derive from watching others suffer centuries ago. Finally, Angela asks Abel to have intercourse with her, but even then she does not think of Abel as a man, but as an animal, a bear or badger (62). So the question is: What is Angela satirizing? The Church or America in general? It seems the answer is, both.

Even though Angela is a satirical figure, she is real to Abel. For example, it is the sight of her in Westwood, an affluent suburb of Los Angeles, that pushes Abel over the edge. It is after he sees her that he stops looking for a job, and eventually goes looking for Martinez:

> One day I came by for him and we went out to Westwood . . . a woman came out of one of the shops, and he nodded and wanted me to look at her. She was all dressed up and walking kind of slow and looking in the windows . . . she was rich-looking and kind of slim; you could tell she had been out in the sun and her skin was kind of golden . . . we watched her out of sight. He said he knew her . . . He didn't look for a job anymore. (160-1)

It is, once again, Angela that prompts his self-destructive behavior. Recall, she was also present immediately before he kills the Albino.

Some critics, such as Susan Scarberry-Garcia, Harold McAllister, and Louis Owens, view Angela, not as a destructive force in Abel's life, nor as a contributor to his suffering, but as a "landmark of healing." McAllister goes so far as to claim that she is Abel's "path of salvation" (117). Scarberry-Garcia and Owens assert that Angela's bear story is healing. Scarberry-Garcia says, for example, "Angela appears in the [hospital] room with the self-assurance of a healer. She uses language in this scene in a positive commanding way" (51). This loving, caring picture, however, is belied by the fact that Angela waits two days after learning that Abel was in the hospital before she comes to visit him, and she does not visit him again, neither does she bring Peter by to visit him. Benally says, "And two days later she came to the hospital" (169). Owens says of this same story:

> Angela's story indicates she has truly learned to 'see' beyond; she has . . . seen into the mythic consciousness out of which is born oral tradition . . . And by bringing the healing forces of the Night Chant into the hospital room, with the powerful healing presence of Bear associated with Abel, Angela has joined with Benally in working to cure Abel. (115-6)

Can Owens' interpretation be supported by the text? Does Abel show any signs of healing afterward? No. The first thing he does when he is released from the hospital is to start drinking again. In fact, Angela's bear story, with its implication that Peter is Abel's son, simply gives him one more reason to get drunk. He does not know his own father, and now he has a son whom he does not know. Abel is certainly led to believe that Angela's son, Peter, is his. Angela "started telling him about her son, Peter. Peter was growing up, she said, and she wanted to bring him along, but Peter was busy with his friends and couldn't come" (169). Peter, she says, always asks her about Indians. Why? It seems reasonable to speculate that perhaps it is because, if he is Abel's son, he has Native American features. Angela's answer to Peter's question is also curious. She tells Peter about a "young Indian brave" who was born of a bear and a maiden. She says it is the story Peter likes most, and that she thinks of him, Abel, when she tells it (169). There is certainly the strong implication in the selection of the story, and the story itself, that Abel is Peter's father. In either case, Angela undoubtedly paints Abel as Peter's metaphorical father. Scarberry-Garcia and Owens identify Abel with Bear, "thus making Peter, or the mythical young Indian of Angela's story, Bear's son and by implication the symbolic son of her union with Abel" (Owens 115). In Angela's story Abel is obviously Bear, Angela the maiden, and Peter their son.

This passage also reinforces that she does not see Abel as a man, in this instance, a seriously injured man in a hospital bed, but as an Indian. Angela callously makes it clear from her bear story that Abel, the father, has no place in her or Peter's life. Angela does not recognize an Indian father's right to know his son, or his son's right to know him. This must be extremely painful to Abel since he "never knew his father." How can this experience contribute to Abel's healing? It cannot.

Consequently, the question of whether or not Abel is Peter's father is extremely important to correctly interpreting the text. Some readers may believe that Angela is pregnant when she comes to the reservation because of her macabre imagining of her body hosting a fetus:

> She thought of her body and could not understand that it was beautiful. She could think of nothing more vile and obscene that the raw flesh and blood of her body, the raveled veins and the gore upon her bones. And, now the monstrous fetal form, the blue, blind, great-headed thing growing within and feeding upon her. (36)

However, that passage occurs after she imagines having sex with Abel:

> She would have liked to throw him off balance, to startle and appall him, to make an obscene gesture, perhaps, or to say, 'How would you like a white woman? My white belly and my breasts, my painted fingers and my feet?' (35-6)

Thus, she may very well be speculating about being pregnant with a child conceived from their union. Indeed, it does not seem unwarranted to speculate that she came to the reservation to get pregnant, and her musing about entertaining a fetus is simply her musing on the consequences of fulfilling her desire for a child. Also, there are the facts that she has no children when she comes to the reservation, and she does not have any other children later. It is certainly possible that her husband, Martin St. John, is infertile or impotent–which does extend the metaphor concerning the biblical St. John; just as the "Gospel of St. John" has become infertile and impotent with fat, so has Mr. St. John.

However, just because Angela's relationship with Abel is one of condescension and dehumanization, it does not have to be. Milly, for example, is a fully-developed character with a voice and an attitude. In many ways, she is the white, female equivalent of Abel. She has her own broken connections. Like Abel, she, too, has lost her father and mother and child (granting for the moment that Peter is Abel's child). She grew up watching her father "beaten by the land" and daily going into the fields "without hope," until the day he put her on a bus and told her goodbye, and she never saw him again (114-5). And, then she lost her four-year-old daughter, Carrie, to a fever:

> The doctor came and took Carrie away in an ambulance. She seemed to know what was happening to her, and at the hospital

> she lay very still, looking at the ceiling. She seemed not afraid, but curious, strangely thoughtful and wise. To me that was the most unreasonable, terrifying thing of all: that my child should be calm in the face of death. She seemed to come of age, to live a whole lifetime in those few hours, and at last there was a look of infinite wisdom and old age on her little face. And sometime in the night she asked me if she was going to die. And do you see how it was, there was not time for deceit, and I didn't even have the right to look away. 'Yes,' I said. And she asked me what it was like to die, and I answered, 'I don't know.' 'I love you Milly,' she said; she had never called me by my name before. In a little while she looked very hard at the ceiling, and her eyes blazed for a moment. Then she turned her head a little and closed her eyes. She seemed very tired. 'I love you so much,' she whispered, and she did not wake up again. (114-5)

It is Abel's remembrance of this story that gives him the strength to get up off the beach and struggle for his life after being beaten almost to death by Martinez, not the grunion, as Scarberry-Garcia and other critics allege. For example, it is immediately following his remembrance of Milly's story that the text says: "He had to get up," and he did (115). He did not know Milly's little girl, but he had a connection to life through Milly's narrative of Carrie's all too-brief life and death; it was this connection that gave him the strength to live, not magic fish.

Which theory is more probable and supported by the text: (a) that Abel is moved by the dying voice of Milly's child Carrie; or, (b) that the grunion function as "the supernaturals, the Holy People" and as "mediators between sea and land, and as arbitrators of Abel's vacillation between . . . life and death" (Scarberry-Garcia 89)? The fish are presented in the text almost twenty pages before Abel decides to get up, whereas Carrie's voice immediately precedes his getting up. Also, to Abel the fish are merely mindlessly spawning in relation to the phases of the moon (91).

As a matter of fact, Scarberry-Garcia completely misses the irony of the passage where Abel is lying on the beach vacillating between life and death, when she cites it to demonstrate Abel's ability to articulate, to communicate, to Milly what he is really feeling and thinking. She writes:

> Years later when Abel is a grown man with broken hands, his pain triggers this memory of the time he had held a dying goose. And the memory of the beautiful flying geese prompts Abel to tell his story of this experience to Milly–one of the rare moments in the novel when Abel talks. (24)

Although this passage begins with "Oh Milly," Milly is not there, and he is thinking perhaps of what he wanted to say to her, or should have said to her, but did not. However, we are allowed to know what he does say to her:

> 'Milly?'
>
> 'Yes, honey.'
>
> 'Did you like it, Milly? It was good, wasn't it, Milly?'
>
> 'Oh honey, I liked it.'
>
> 'I'm going out tomorrow, Milly. I'm going to look for a job.'
>
> 'You bet. You'll find a good job if you keep looking. Sometimes it's hard.'
>
> 'I'm going to find one tomorrow, Milly. You'll see.'

'I know it, honey.'

'Listen, I'm going to get a good job . . . '

'It was good again, Milly?'

'It was lovely.' (111)

The lack of ability to communicate is demonstrated by Abel repeatedly asking if the sex was satisfactory, and his lying about looking for a job. They both know all he does is lie around the apartment while Milly is at work, and then he goes out drinking at night.

This passage also demonstrates the extent of Abel's suffering. Although he does not love Milly, he needs her to be with him so he will not be alone. His repeated questioning of Milly about the adequacy of his sexual performance demonstrates his profound fear that she will abandon him if he fails to sexually satisfy her. This passage, in context, represents Abel at his most pathetic. Momaday throws into high relief the intimacy Milly and Abel could have if he were able to express what he feels. Abel is thinking about the water birds and the significance they have for him and his brother, how he wishes his brother could see them as he does. Consequently, it is difficult to understand how Scarberry-Garcia can cite it as a "landmark of healing" (24). She completely misses the irony of the passage.

A close examination of the events that shape Abel's life show how broken connections are the source of Abel's grief. Abel does not know who his father is, his brother Vidal and his mother have both died, and his only possible connection to the Pueblo is with his grandfather Francisco. It is essential to look at these broken connections to understand Abel and the novel.

The theme of the life's work of Betty Jean Lifton and her husband, Robert J. Lifton, as reflected in the title of Robert Lifton's signature book *The Broken Connection*, is that of broken connections. The Liftons assert the necessity of unbroken connections between generations for good mental, community, and national health. When that connection is severed, disaster and holocaust, personal and on epic scale, are the inevitable consequences. Betty Jean Lifton's autobiographical narrative, *Twice Born*, concerns people, like herself and Abel in *House Made of Dawn*, who fail to make that connection because they do not know their father. In *Twice Born*, Lifton examines the motif of the absent and unknown parent from the literature, oral and written, of ancient and modern people from around the world to prove her point. For example, from a Tartan Folk Tale:

> Once upon a time, long ago,
> there lived an orphan boy,
> created of God.
> Created of Pajana.
> Without food to eat,
> without clothes to wear:
> So he lived.
> No woman came to marry him.
> A fox came.
> The fox said to the youth:
> *How will you get to be a man?* he said.
> And the boy said:
> *I don't know myself*
> *how I shall get to be a man ?* (*Twice* 47)

And from the Pueblo, which is more pertinent to this study of *House Made of Dawn*, there is the myth of the Water Jar Boy:

> Who is my father? the Water Jar Boy asked his mother.
> I don't know, she said.
> He asked her again. Who is my father?
> but she kept on crying and did not answer.
> Where is my father's home? he asked.
> She could not tell him.
> You cannot find your father, she said.
> I never go with any boy, so there is no place where you can look for your father.
> The mother did not want him to go, but he wanted to go.
> So early the next morning she fixed a lunch for him,
> and he went off to the southeast where they called the spring *waiyu powdi*, Horse Mesa Point. He was coming close to that spring, he saw somebody walking a little way from the spring.
> He went up to him. It was a man.
> He asked the boy, Where are you going?
> I am going to see my father, he said.
> Who is your father? said the man.
> Well, my father is living in this spring.
> You will never find your father.
> Well, I want to go into the spring, he is living inside it.
> Who is your father? said the man again.
> Well, I think you are my father, said the boy.
> How do you know I am your father?
> Then the man just looked at him to scare him.

> The boy kept saying, You are my father.
>
> I know you are my father.
>
> Pretty soon the man said, Yes, I am your father.
>
> I came out of that spring to meet you, and he put his arm around the boy's neck. His father was very glad his boy had come, and he took him down inside the spring. (Lifton, *Twice* 203-4)

This story also demonstrates that even in a matrilineal society, fathers are still necessary: sons and daughters still have a need to know their fathers. There are also parallels to the classic tragic figure of Oedipus who mistakenly kills his own father simply because he does not know him.

Betty and Robert Lifton's thesis is premised on Freud's less known but more tenable theory that all human behavior is finally attributable to a simple choice between the impulse for death and the impulse for life, in Freud's terms, *thanatos* and *eros*. If a person chooses to smoke or drink excessively, or use drugs or commit acts of violence, that is exercising an impulse for death, and not simply an indulgence of the ego. There are reasons, identifiable but often not conscious reasons, for people making death-loving choices. The most prominent one being that the person does not have a living connection to life. Their connection to their parents, or society, or humanity has been severed or seriously impaired in some way.

A person's connection may be severed by personal tragedy, such as Abel's and Set's, or as the result of social conditions, again, like Abel's and Set's, in which a person lives. The Liftons' work complements one another's. Betty Jean Lifton concentrates of the intimate consequences of a person growing up without his or her father or mother. Robert J.

Lifton's work, on the other hand, focuses on large-scale social consequences of cultural dehumanization. For example, *Hiroshima's Children* looks at the United States' use of atomic weapons against Japan, *The Nazi Doctors* examines the complicity of the academic and professional community, particularly the medical community, in the Nazi holocaust, and the broken connections that have made the Cold War imaginable, placing our extinction as a species a mere hair's breadth away for decades.

One does not need to be a specialist, like Emile Durkheim, to recognize that if an individual commits suicide it is a personal tragedy, but if a substantial and disproportunate portion of a community's population commits suicide, generation after generation, it is a cultural phenomenon and a community tragedy. The aspect of "culture" that is pertinent here is the disruption of the family; specifically through the severing of parent-child and intergenerational connections through the imposition of the Euro-American nuclear family model, the direct removal of children from their home, and the need for young people to participate in a Capitalistic economy, often far from home, as well as U.S. government programs such as allotment and relocation and termination that were intended to break up extended family ties as part of the process of assimilating Native Americans into the general population. Native American communities have the highest rate of suicide of any other ethnic group in America. As early as 1965, J.E. Levy documented that Navajo suicide rates were attributable to the forceful intrusion of white society into their culture (309). Van Winkle and May noted that the Pueblos most acculturated to the American system have the highest rates of suicide, Laguna Pueblo, where Leslie Marmon Silko grew up, for example, has a high incidence of suicide; Jemez Pueblo, where N. Scott Momaday grew up, is listed as "transitional," with a moderate suicide rate; and Santa Domingo, held by many to be the most traditional Pueblo, has the lowest rate of suicides (305). Additionally, Judith and Joseph Davenport, clinical psychologists, found that, unlike the dominant white community, suicide is most prevalent in the young instead of the old (537). Even outwardly successful Native Americans, such as Michael Dorris, who committed suicide in April 1997, are susceptible to it. Gerald Vizenor and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn can maintain that we, as Native Americans, are not victims, but this does not change the suicide statistics, the excessively high poverty rate, the rates of alcoholism and drug abuse, the violence, etc. It is easy to assert that social ills are the consequences of negative thinking and dismiss those who suffer as simply being weak-minded. It is a lot tougher to provide the connections people need to survive and flourish.

Abel is isolated, not because he is Indian or a mixed-blood, although those are certainly contributing factors, but because of his profound grief. One source of Abel's profound grief comes from the fact that he "did not know his father." Abel needed his father. Just as Jim Loney needed his father in James Welch's novel *Death of Jim Loney*. Louis Owens notes that the nameless protagonist in James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* would be Jim Loney if he did not have his grandfather, Yellow Calf, to provide the necessary and essential bond needed in order to continue living:

> What if the narrator of *Winter in the Blood* had been the son of a halfblood drifter and had had no grandmother to tell him stories of who he is, no Yellow Calf to trick him into self-

> knowledge? What if the narrator had been truly and inexorably a 'stranger to both' Indian and white, made so by blood and circumstance? Such is the condition of Jim Loney (147).

The absence of his father is one of the things that propels Jim to his death. In Jim's case, of course, he knew the identity of his father; he simply never knew him. Before Jim kills his friend Pretty Weasel and commits suicide by police, he goes to his father's trailer and shoots out the light (150). Perhaps he went there with the intention of killing him, but if so, we are not told. However, the Oedipal allegory is self-evident. His desire to at least confront his estranged father, shooting out the light, casting himself in darkness, is like Oedipus's blinding of himself, and taking the curse of homicide on himself. It is also extremely interesting to note in light of Momaday's novels, that Jim Loney shoots and kills Pretty Weasel because he imagines that Pretty Weasel is a bear about to attack him (120).

Abel's and Set's chief problem is that they do not know who their fathers are and, consequently, do not know who they are either. In effect, Alan Velie asserted essentially the same thing, at least about Abel, in 1982, but did not follow up on it.

> Abel's chief problem, both before he goes to war and immediately after he returns, is that he is not living in the world of his fathers. *He does not know who his father is, [consequently] he does not know who he is himself.* (emphasis added 60)

Velie intuitively interprets the theme of the novel correctly, but this interpretation does not fit the paradigm that Abel's problem and solution are cultural rather than familial, and it further does not mesh with a "happy ending" because for it to have a "happy ending" Abel must discover his father, which he does not. The above cited quote is nine pages into the essay "*House Made of Dawn:*Nobody's Protest Novel" and the concluding sentence of a paragraph discussing Abel's "alienation." The next paragraph returns to the theme of cultural alienation.

Of course, alienation is part of Abel's problem, but it is not the primary theme of the novel. It is much easier to integrate someone into a community than to rebuild a family, or replace a father. Set says, "We need good fathers, Bent. Be my father" (136), and again, "Bent listened and he heard my concern. Be my father" (140). Bent is depicted as a good man and an excellent father-figure, but he is not Set's father. Cate Setman is Set's father. When Set has his first breakdown his thoughts are: "Bent, be my father. Be my father, Bent. I love you" (Momaday, *Ancient* 162). Not, *I want to be Indian*. Or, *I want to be white*. Or, *I want to be a happy amalgam*. But, "Be my father." His quest is for his father. Set has lost his father, and with him his self. In Set's words, "I had lost my *self*!" (author's emphasis 140).

Set's childhood memories of his father are displaced by the intense repressive atmosphere of the Peter and Paul Home and Sister Stella Francesca's forcing him to perform cunnilingus. Not only are Native American fathers displaced, even children's memories of their fathers are often lost. In my opinion and experience, the absence of the father, even the memory of the father, is the most critical problem facing the Native American community, at least the urban Native American community, today. That is why the absent father is reflected in almost every contemporary Native American novel. It should be noted that this stands in stark contrast to the stereotypical American novel in which it is not the absent father, but a dominating father that is ubiquitous.

The Ancient Child also contains the rather macabre story of Set-angya, an almost mythical, yet historical story of father and son. Set-angya's son was killed far from home, in a strange land. When his father heard of his son's death he went to recover his son's body, at great risk to himself. He recovers his son's bones and carries them around in a sack for the rest of his life. "Your son in his bones and you in your flesh and blood are of the same sacred mystery, the same medicine, most powerful" (258). Why the story of the father and his son's bones? Obviously, it is to show the importance of the father-son relationship. Bones and Flesh: it takes both to make a complete man. Although it is a rather macabre metaphor, it is a simple and striking one that demonstrates the necessity of a father to make a son whole and a son to make a father whole. What is flesh without bones or bones without flesh? Abel and Set, perhaps. Abel strikes me as a man of bone, alone and skeletal; Set, the man of flesh without form, metamorphic in a grotesque, Kafkaesque way.

While completing my reading of *The Ancient Child,* I was reminded of the opening to Harold Schweizer's book *Suffering and the Remedy of Art* : "At a time when postmodern taste directs us towards the play of signifiers and the pleasures of the text, this book is unfashionably serious" (1). Schweizer's book is about "wounds that will not close despite the sutures, scarring, and bandaging, the patchwork and layering of literary technique" (1). Although Schweizer does not examine *The Ancient Child,* it is an excellent example of his thesis. As he explains:

> In the experience of suffering the ideology of objectivity, the claims of reason and knowledge, are called into question. Philosophical distinctions of body and spirit, sensation and intellect, the universal and the particular, the physical and the metaphysical, no longer apply (2).

In *The Ancient Child* these distinctions are indeed blurred, not only for the characters, but for the narrator, author and reader as well. *The Ancient Child* is, I assert, the chronicle of a man's journey into madness, facilitated by a world of broken connections and other wounded people, particularly, a tragically wounded young woman, Grey.

Perhaps the most poignant message a reader can glean from *The Ancient Child* is that, contrary to popular belief and to Schweizer's own conclusion, suffering is not necessarily individualized and ahistorical, but communal and historical. For example, the passage from the beginning of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* strikes a familiar chord with many Native Americans because it is part of our shared history:

> We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall. It was surprising there were so many of us left to die. For those who survived the spotted sickness from the south, our long fights west . . . then a wind from the east, bringing exile in a storm of government papers, . . . by then we thought disaster must surely have spent its force, that disease must have claimed all of the Anishinabe that the earth could hold and bury. But the earth is limitless and so is luck and so were our people once. (1)

As a Chickasaw I am able to identify with the suffering of the Anishinabe people in *Tracks* because my people have a similar historical experience. Linda Hogan (Chickasaw) describes the phenomenon eloquently in her novel *Power*:

> History is the place where the Spanish cut off the hands of my ancestors. The Spanish who laughed at our desperation and dying, and I wish it didn't but history still terrifies me so that I dream it in dreams with skies the color of green bottle glass. (73)

Likewise, the absence of Abel's and Set's and Grey's fathers are familiar to many Native Americans as well as exposure to sexual violence at an early age.

Schweizer believes that art "is a remedy only in the sense in which it binds up to make visible" (3). For example, in the chapter titled "The Failure of the Remedy of Art," he looks at the poetry of Sylvia Plath, and discusses how her art did not prevent her from killing herself, and probably exacerbated her own sense of lack of signification. However, her art did perform that fundamental task of art, to "bind up and make visible" her suffering. Failure to act, or sufficient action, after that suffering was made visible through art is not the flaw of art, but the flaw of readers. Once we hear a cry for help it behooves us to respond to that cry. Art has performed its job, it is now we who must perform ours. If a serious book is unfashionable in postmodern times, then this assertion of responsibility for our historical and social circumstances, responsibility to other selves, is sure to strike many as downright offensive. Schweizer, in fact, shows the "effects of the decentering of the value of human suffering" in his examination of W.H. Auden's poem, "Musées des Beaux Arts." He writes that Auden's poem is an example of an instance "where the cries of the sufferer are muted and turned inward, and where suffering becomes the allegory of an intimate, unvalorized subjectivity" (6). In other words, an aesthetic, however poignant and tragic, that is meaningless and dead.

Novels with suffering as a theme have been savagely attacked by critics, such as Gerald Vizenor, for reinforcing a stereotype of Native Americans as victims, and authors who focus on suffering are likewise personally impugned for "whining." These latter-day Hannah Arendts prefer novels of survival and triumph, what Gerald Vizenor terms "survivance," and praise their authors. Of course, novels of triumph assuage Euro-Americans of responsibility for current social conditions and guilt for five hundred years of genocide, forced assimilation, disenfranchisement, and exile of half of the surviving Native American population to the poverty and obscurity of the inner cities. In inner cities invisibility, the violence of poverty, malnutrition, inadequate education and health care, miscellaneous pernicious assaults on our families, the theft of children in violation of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (if a child is not living on a reservation, he or she is not *really* Indian), contribute to our continuing demise. Native American authors who write about suffering are condemned for being hawkers of stereotypes. And, triumphant Indians, the emergence of the so-called middle-class Indians, are now considered authentic representations of modern-day Indians. At least, that is what critics would have us believe. Suffering Indians are suffering because they want to suffer, if only they had the will, if only they would *endeavor to persevere,* as Andrew Jackson is apocalyptically said to have advised the Cherokee as they departed on their "Trail of Tears," they would be triumphant as well, and they can own their own piece of the American pie. Those who suffer are responsible for their own suffering, and they should have the courtesy to suffer in silence and shame.

Momaday's message of suffering and silence is in *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* for those who are able to see and hear it. Abel's and Set's respective "triumphs" are, in fact, tropes of the idea that the average Native American can triumph in America. Abel is alone and silent at the end of *House Made of Dawn*, just as he is at the beginning. He may have the words to the song of healing, but pointedly he is unable to articulate them, the word remains unspoken. Abel is unable to speak: "There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words to a song" (*House* 191). *House Made of Dawn* is not, as Charles Woodard asserts in his dissertation, "the story of how a young American Indian finds his way back to the kind of native spirituality that at last enables him to *creatively articulate* who he is, and what he is in relation to the natural universe" (emphasis added 46). I have read *House Made of Dawn* many times and I have yet to find where Abel "creatively articulates who he is," and Woodard does not cite any passages from the novel to prove his assertion.

Momaday could have had Abel "creatively articulate who he is, and what he is in relation to the natural universe," as Woodard asserts Abel does (46), by giving him words like the ones Momaday uses in his essay "I Am Alive":

> You see, I am alive.
> You see, I stand in good relation to the earth.
> You see, I stand in good relation to the gods.
> You see, I stand in good relation to all that is beautiful.

> You see, I am alive, I am alive. ("I Am Alive" 14)

Then there would be no doubt about Abel's healing, but he does not. Instead, Abel is unable to speak.

Why is Momaday able to articulate those sentiments and Abel is not? Perhaps it is because of the vital connections Momaday has with his family that are unavailable to Abel. Momaday, for example, has enjoyed a loving connection with his grandmother, a strong, positive connection with his father and mother, and enjoys a healthy connection with his daughters as well. Without these his life might well have been like Abel's or Set's or any of a dozen other literary characters who lack familial connections. Indeed, part of the poignancy of *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child,* especially *The Ancient Child* because Set is so similar to Momaday in so many other ways, such as his artistic pursuits and international success as an artist, is the reader's juxtaposition of these literary characters with the life of the author in his or her mind. It is not simply the juxtaposition of the fictional with the real, but the juxtaposition of the way things are with the way things can, or should, be. *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child,* like Catlin Setman's Bear-boy story, are as much about the story and storyteller and audience as they are about plot. At least they are when they are read postmodern-mimetically.

On the other hand, it may be enough to merely have the words in your heart. The text does say that he has the words of a song. It specifically states: "he had only the words of a song" (191). However, there is the strong implication in the narrator's use of "only" that the words were not alive to him. The "only" may simply refer back to the beginning of the sentence in which the narrator says, "There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song" (191). In either case, the text seems to stress that Abel's future is problematic, rather than that Abel's healing in assured. Additionally, although the reader is frequently given the thoughts of Abel, there are no words thought by Abel at the conclusion that are the equivalent to those Momaday articulates in "I Am Alive."

Likewise, in *The Ancient Child,* Set, even if we accept the notion that Set turns into an actual bear, he is still alone, separated from his wife and child, and unable to speak, inarticulate, living as an animal without language. Alternatively, of course, he has journeyed out into the woods and died after several intense hallucinations. Dying in the woods is a probable scenario since the text says that his only nourishment, in at least four days, is tea. Either way, he is alone and silent.

Where is the triumph for these men? Where the victory? Where is the "happy ending" that is so apparent to non-Indian critics and Native American critics who have "made it"? For example, Louis Owens would have us believe that:

> with the final lines of Benally's chant, the force of language to compel order and harmony is brought to fruition . . .with the four iterations, the sacred number, the patient is centered and all is in balance and harmony with the universe. Abel, whose body has been broken by brutal beating, and whose consciousness has been badly fragmented from our first meeting with him is now able to return home, whole and on the path toward healing. (114-5)

Beautiful picture (incidentally Susan Scarberry-Garcia makes the same assertion four years earlier in *Landmarks of Healing*), but it is not what happens. At least not in the novel I read. In *House Made of Dawn*, after Benally's chant (during which Ben and Abel are both drinking, a fact omitted in Owen's version for obvious reasons), Abel borrows money from Milly and goes home drunk, he stays drunk until he runs out of Milly's money. Benally's chant does not stop Abel from drinking, being broke does. The chant may point Abel in the right direction, but in and of itself, it does not make him "whole." His continuing to drink, for example, is a sign of his continuing suffering. Owens assertion is untenable unless a person can be blind drunk and "whole and on the path to healing" simultaneously. Not only is Abel still alone at the end, he is even more alone than he is at the beginning because his grandfather is dead. And, his grandfather's words still hold "no meaning" for him:

> Abel sat in the dark of his grandfather's house . . . He had gone out on the first and second days and got drunk. He wanted to go out on the third, but he had no money and it was bitter cold and he was sick and in pain. He had been there for six days at dawn, listening to his grandfather's voice. He heard it now, but it had no meaning. The random words fell together and made no sense. (175)

House Made of Dawn is a book of suffering, but it is not a futile suffering if it awakens a reader's consciousness and conscience.

It is also important to note that Benally is not a success story for the Bureau of Indian Affairs policy of relocation, and he is certainly not the equivalent of Betonie in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*. For Benally *home*, the reservation, is "just empty land and a lot of old people, going no place and dying off" (145). The land and customs and people are dead to him. Later, he repeats this assertion more explicitly: "There is nothing there, you know, just the land, and the land is empty and dead" (164). Benally's advice to new arrivals like Abel is:

> you've got to put a lot of things out of your mind . . . you've got to take it easy and get drunk once in a while and just forget about who you are . . . its hard . . . and you think about going home. You want to think you belong someplace, I guess. You go up on a the hill and you hear the singing and the talk and you think about going home. But then the next day you know it's no use; you know that if you went home there would be nothing there, just empty land and a lot of old people, going nowhere and dying off. And you've got to forget about that, too. (144-5)

And for what? Because, "you see the way it is, how everything is going on without you . . . because there's nothing else. And you want 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" (144). A little later, he repeats why: for "money and nice things, radios and cars and clothes and big houses," and a person would be "crazy" not to want them (164). And, "it's a good place to live . . . every thing you could ever want is here . . .you never have to be alone" (164).

However, between these assertions of the boons of the city, of America, there is the maudlin scene of old Mrs. Carlozini and her guinea pig. Mrs. Carlozini is a neighbor of Benally's who lives alone without any friends or family. One day Benally and Abel find her sitting on the stairs hunched over a small cardboard box, when they start to go around her she says, "Vincenzo is not well," and holds the box containing his body out to them (163):

> 'He's very smart, you know; he can stand up straight, just like you gentlemen, and clap his hands.' And her eyes lit up and she had to smile thinking about it. She went on like that, like the little thing was still alive and . . . going to stand up and clap its little hands like a baby. It made me real sad to see her, so lonely and old and carrying on like that . . . after a while he (Abel) said it was dead. At first I thought he shouldn't have said that: it seemed kind of mean somehow . . . but I guess she had to be told. I think maybe she knew it was dead all the time, and she was just waiting for someone to say it . . . all at once she jerked that little box away and looked at him real hard for a minute, like she was hurt and couldn't understand how it was, why on earth he should say such a thing like that. But then she just nodded and slumped over a bit. She didn't say any more, and she wasn't crying; it was like she was real tired . . . and didn't have any strength left . . . she just sat there and didn't say anything. She was just siting there on the stairs, holding that little dead animal real close to her, and she looked awful small and alone . . . It's funny, you know, that little animal was her friend, I guess, and she kept it down there in her room always, maybe, and we didn't even know about it. And afterward, it was just the same. She never said anything to us again. (163-4)

Benally knows the city is not what he purports it to be. In many cases it is living alone, perhaps with only a rodent for company. Benally's description of the city, juxtaposed to the reality of old Mrs. Carlozini, demonstrates the profound irony of his assertions, particularly that a person is never alone in the city. And, his erroneous view of the city goes a long way to discrediting his evaluation of Tosamah. For instance, perhaps Tosamah is not as bad as Benally alleges, just as the city is not as good as he alleges.

Momaday is careful to let the reader know that Mrs. Carlozini's condition is representative of life in America's cities by giving us other examples such as Milly:

> She had been in Los Angeles four years, and in all that time she had not talked to anyone. There were people all around, she knew them, worked with them–sometimes they would not leave her alone–but she did not talk to them, tell them anything that mattered in the least. She greeted them and joked with them and wished them well, and then she withdrew and lived her life. No one knew what she thought or felt or who she was. (112)

For that matter, Benally too, is alone. Even when he says good-bye to Abel, after he sang to him, and they are planning to meet again, there is the strong implication that they both know they will not see each other again. He lists, for example, all the things they will do together when he comes to visit, such as riding horses, getting drunk and singing, and that it will be "right and beautiful," but then he states to the reader, "it was going to be the last time" (172), referring to their present good-bye.

A conventional *bildungsroman*, which *House Made of Dawn* appears on the surface to be, would end with the protagonist returning home more mature and sure of himself. Once home, he is either integrated into his community or, as is typical in some more contemporary examples of this genre, he sees his community as hopelessly provincial and he is forever alienated from it. In either case, the typical *bildungsroman* begins with the loss of the father, entails several life-threatening ordeals abroad, and "at least two sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting" (Buckley 17). Although, *House Made of Dawn* contains these elements, it also transgresses the boundaries of the *bildungsroman* in several significant ways. Unlike the typical *bildungsroman*, uncertainty permeates the end of the novel. Abel returns home drunk and unsure of himself. Bernard Selinger points out in his critical essay, "*House Made of Dawn*: A Positively Ambivalent Bildungsroman," that "rupture and disjunction, not development and continuity, are the novel's guiding principles" (43). Indeed, Abel appears to be the same man we are introduced to in the beginning, the one who stumbles off the bus and into his grandfather without recognizing him. Additionally, Selinger asserts that *House Made of Dawn*, unlike the model *bildungsroman*, "questions the very possibility of identity itself" (43). I agree, but for a different reason than Selinger. He believes modern conditions preclude a person from discovering an intrinsic identity. However, I believe, at least in Abel's case, it is the absent father which all but precludes him from ascertaining his intrinsic identity. If we define identity as a solid notion of who one is, knowledge of one's history, and an idea of one's future self.

Selinger notes that Benally is also fatherless (51). Perhaps this explains Benally's, like Abel's, "hesitancy, doubt, lack of knowledge, . . . [which] leave him and his narrative constantly poised between negation and affirmation" (50). Abel, for instance, has the words to a song of healing, but is unable to actually sing them (Momaday, *House*

191). Tosamah apparently does not know his father either. He has many vivid memories of his grandmother, but his father is peculiarly absent from his stories. Selinger asserts that "critics erroneously label [Tosamah] a trickster" when, in fact, his true nature is not trickster-like but a failed portrait, "essentially a caricature of a developed, syncretic self rather than a portrait of a fully-developed one" (50). Even Francisco, who likewise did not know his father, is an inappropriate role model. Readers are led to believe that Francisco was "sired by the old consumptive priest [Fray Nicolás]" (Larson 184). Francisco's lonely death is an image of the suffering and loneliness caused by broken connections. He is tended to in his dying days only by his drunken grandson, Abel. Abel's inability to sing a song of healing and prayer at the end of the novel is hauntingly similar to Francisco's inability to trap a bird for a prayer plume at the beginning of the novel:

> A sparrow hung from the reed . . . . The eyes were neither open nor closed. Francisco was disappointed, for he had wished for a male mountain bluebird, breast feathers the pale color of April skies or of turquoise, lake water. Or a summer tanager: a prayer plume ought to be beautiful. He drew in the reed from the sand and cut loose the horsehair from the sparrow's feet. The bird fell into the water and was carried away in the current. (Momaday, *House* 10)

The snare Francisco set for a prayer plume yields only a poor sparrow that he discards into the stream. Benally, Tosamah, and Francisco each fail as appropriate role models for Abel; and, significantly, each lack a father themselves. Thus, it is not surprising that Abel is unable to pass "into maturity and the recognition of his . . . identity and role in the world" which is the prescribed end for an exemplary *bildungsroman* (Abrams "bildungsroman").

The Ancient Child is modeled on the nineteenth-century American Dime Novel genre. The Dime Novel was usually about Indian and white relations. The first recognizable example of this genre is Ann S. Stephen's *Molaeska; The Indian Wife of the White Hunter,* published in 1860 (Kent 81). In the Dime Novel genre there is usually a prelude which clues the reader in to the "loss" the protagonist has suffered. As a result of this loss the protagonist is isolated from society. Before long, however, he or she encounters an "insider" who "has traits similar to his [or her] own," but is a member of a community. This "insider" usually has some "possession" that has been inherited, which is threatened by one or more "villains." The protagonist is then reintegrated into the community by protecting or recovering the insider's possession. (From, "The Automatized Text: the American Dime Novel," in Kent's *Interpretation and Genre.*)

While *The Ancient Child* does not have a prelude, it does have a prologue which is an abbreviated version of the "Story of Tsoai." It is a story the Kiowas created to explain a mysterious rock formation they encountered. Momaday asserts that they "incorporated it into their experience by telling a story about it" (Woodard, *Center* 15). As Momaday explains, "all things can be accepted, if not understood, if you put them into a story" (15). The "Story of Tsoai" also helps to explain the astronomical phenomenon of the Big Dipper. Additionally, however, it is about the disappearance and loss of children. A longer version of the story, for example, tells about the tremendous grief the loss of the children caused their loved ones. The longer version appears in Chapter One of Book Two of *The Ancient Child*. In this longer version, the reader is informed that "old Koi-ehm-toya . . . cut off two fingers on her left hand" (130). It seems that Momaday would not frustrate his reader's generic expectation at so early a stage in the development of his novel by omitting to cite a significant loss, therefore, we may ask: What is lost in the prologue? The answer is children. Which is more important when analyzing the "Story of Tsoai": That a boy turned into a bear, or that eight children were lost? The primary significance of the story, at least to me, and old Koi-ehm-toya, is that eight children were lost. The children are separated from their families. What has Set lost? He is like one of the lost children. He has lost his connection to his family. He has lost his father and mother.

Next, the astute reader should ask, Who is the "insider" and what "possession" does he or she have that is threatened by what "villain"? And, what traits do the insider and the protagonist share? Obviously, Grey is the "insider," although she is viewed as peculiar or eccentric by the standards of her community, and the possession that she has is herself. It is her mind and her body that are repeatedly threatened by villains such as Dwight Dicks and the neocolonial ideology that casts Indians, like herself, as evil. She is struggling, like Set, to find her own sense of self. On occasion she, like Set, has been sexually abused. However, *The Ancient Child* deviates from the Dime Novel genre because Set is unable to significantly aid Grey. Unlike the protagonists of the Dime Novel, who are strong, confident types, Set is physically and mentally sick. The Dime Novels have heroes, but Set is not a hero. In fact, Set is, in several ways, an antihero, inasmuch as he is ineffectual, passive, and has been "stripped of certainties, values, or even meaning" (Abrams "Antihero"). Through protecting Grey, which Set's brief recovery and marriage seem to indicate he will be able to do, he would be reintegrated into the community. However, Set wanders off into the woods after he learns of Grey's pregnancy, and is not heard from again, thus, finally, circumventing the Dime Novel genre once and for all.

Michelle Trusty-Murphy suggests that Momaday characteristically uses a uniquely Kiowa form of narrative which she calls "clustering" (122). Clustering and reverse-clustering involve locating the center of a story and moving out from there. This is radically different from traditional western narratives that have a beginning, middle, and end, but no center. The center is not the same as the middle; the center is what holds the story together. Trusty-Murphy specifically examines Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain,* but examining *House Made of Dawn* and *The Ancient Child* are also equally productive. It is also important to keep in mind that this type of examination is very much in the postmodern-mimetic critical practice. For example, Trusty-Murphy finds that *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is located in a real place, Rainy Mountain, and from this center she identifies grandmother, personal memory, and weather as clustering around this "place" (143). All of these things are related to one another through various interactions. For instance, grandmother is tied to blood memory which is tied to sun dance which is tied to creation which is tied to landscape which is tied to weather which is tied to gatherings which is tied to grandmother, and so on in ever widening concentric circles.

Likewise, *The Ancient Child* has a center, which Momaday makes it convenient to identify by stating in chapter 24, "this is the center of the story" (117). Note this is not the middle of the story, the novel goes on for some three hundred pages, this is the *center* of the story. This is a clear indicator that this is the most important chapter in the book, it is the *center* of the story. What is the center of the story? Catlin Setman explains to his son Set:

> Loki, this matter of having no name is perhaps the center of the story. Words are names. The old man (storyteller) understood that, and he used his understanding to soothe and console his people. And everyone felt better. (117)

The center of *The Ancient Child* is Set's search for his self, for his name. Set remembers being called Loki by his father. He remembers the story his father told him about a boy who wanders into camp, and then is gone in the morning. The event is so startling to the people that the storyteller makes up a story about what happened, explaining it was not a boy who wandered into camp, but a bear:

> Because he could not simply take the little boy away from them. That would have been to deceive them. They could no longer have believed their eyes and ears. So he offered them something in the child's stead, a bear in the boy's place. And, they thought: Yes, so it was; it must indeed have been a bear; yes, a little bear came into our camp and babbled to us. Curious and playful it was, a cub. And, Loki, imagine, the little boy must have returned to the woods that same night. . . and surely the Piegan camp dreamed of him and how they would play with him in the morning. Perhaps the women thought of how they would make

> him handsome shirts and leggings, and of how they would give him a name, for he was an extraordinary being. And then, when it was suggested to them that he was a bear, what must have been their response? Oh, they were relieved, for they had not then to explain a strange and unlikely thing to themselves. But they must have known a sense of loss. And the boy, Loki, what became of him? What brought him to the camp of the Piegans in the first place? And what urged him away? Was it a yearning, a great loneliness? Did his tracks become the tracks of a bear? Did his lively, alien tongue fade into the whimper and growl of a beast? (121-2)

A bear wandering into the camp was not so unusual, and the people accepted that explanation. Their world was in order again. However, the boy did not really turn into a bear. The people simply accepted the story that he was a bear all along because they could not understand a world in which strange boys wander in and out of camp. This story also serves as an interpretive key to the novel.

The Bear-Boy story is also, even primarily, about the story and the storyteller–two elements that have been critically neglected. For example, why are readers, like the listeners to the story of the boy who turned into a bear, so willing and desirous to accept a fabrication? Is it because it is easier to accept than any alternative? Is it easier to accept that a boy or man can turn into a bear than that he is estranged from his family by the conditions that he finds himself in nowadays? Are we so willing to accept any story so we can keep our world in order too? Of course, many are, but, as the father asked the son: did the boys track become those of a bear? Did his language fade into the whimper and growl of a bear *just because* that is the story the storyteller decided to tell the people to soothe them, and the people chose to believe to keep their world in order. No, the only thing that changed was the people's definition of what was real.

In a clustering or reverse-clustering of *The Ancient Child* we have Set's search for his self at the center. Then there are all of the people who contribute to that sense of self, Grey, Catlin Setman, and Bent, in widening concentric circles, Sister Stella Francisca, who had molested Set when he was a boy, Dwight Dicks, the man who raped Grey, Set's lovers, Lola and Alais, Grey's sexual partners, Murphy Dicks and Perfecto Atole, etc. in ever-widening circles. The important thing is recognizing the story that Catlin Setman told his son Set, and Set's search for his name, as the center of the story.

Reinforcing this *center* is the question asked in the first line of the book: "Quién es?" Those words are reportedly the last words Billy the Kid hears in his life. That question is fatal to him because he does not know the answer. He dies because he could not answer that question. "Quién es?" does mean "Who is there?," but it also means, "Who are you?" Obviously, it is essential that Set discover his origins, and find out who he is in order to survive. Later, Grey asks Billy, "why didn't you drop the son of a bitch?" (11); emphasizing, once again the center, or theme of the novel: To not know who one is is fatal, even for a legend. Also, associated with Billy's death is a young woman, Paulita Maxwell. Significantly, Grey fancies herself Paulita.

From the reader's first introduction to Grey, it is obvious that she has a problem recognizing and living in reality. In addition to her imaginary conversations with Billy the Kid, she also has visions, and is able to "burst into tears" at will (12). She considers herself beautiful, tall and lithe, with a delicate mouth, and aquiline nose, when, in fact, she is "not more than five feet five inches," with heavy brows, a short, tilted nose, square jaw, crooked teeth, a prominent mole on the left corner of her mouth, and downy (hairy) arms (18-9). She has delusions, not only about what she hears and sees, but also about her own body. Although she is not beautiful in any conventional sense of the word, the narrator does engage in some clever *jeu de mots* by saying she has a "beauty beyond telling" (19). Which can be interpreted as meaning you could not tell that she was beautiful, or she had a beauty that could not be told.

The reader is then introduced to Grey's sexual partners. First, Perfecto Atole, a middle-aged Jicarilla man (26), Murphy Dicks, a boy her own age, and his father Dwight Dicks, who rapes her after his son boasts of having sex with Grey in exchange for a horse. Later, we are introduced to Grey's last lover in the novel, Set Lockman. Set is a 44 year-old painter, who is beginning to feel alienated from his art because, as a commodity, it was beginning to determine him instead of him determining it. He is not happy. For instance, though men and women seemed to admire him, "there were times when the *disillusionment* was so great that he wept"(emphasis added 37). It seemed to him that nobody cared about what was in his soul (37). What he wanted, more than anything, was a child, someone to see what he did with a child's eye instead of the "narrow-eyed glib" and "calculations" of dealers and critics (37). The real meaning of a person's life's work is how it is seen by his or her children, without a child he became "sick and tired," yes "sick and tired" (38). Note, "sick and tired" is repeated twice with an affirmation.

We learn some of the reasons for Set feeling sick and tired. His mother died in childbirth, his father died in an accident when he was seven, he was placed in an orphanage, the Peter and Paul Home, where he was sexually abused by Sister Stella Francesca until he was adopted by Bent, a philosophy professor. Set remembers being called Loki and having a dog called Lukie. He has vivid dreams about his mother, whom he cannot possibly remember, but strangely enough he has no recollection of his father until he is notified by telegram of grandmother Kopemah's death, a telegram with his father's name on it sent by Grey.

Set becomes fascinated with his father's name on the telegram. The telegram has his and his father's name on it, it was a thing of "impenetrable meaning, an enigma, perhaps an omen. It bore his father's name, therefore his spirit" (52). His brooding becomes restlessness, then determination and he travels to Oklahoma to visit his father's family.

Once there, he encounters Grey, whom he mistakes for a boy, a "deranged boy" (60). Louis Owens speculates this "boy" is really an apparition, "Set's transformational self, the boy of the Kiowa myth" (124). However, the text does not support that reading. For instance, Jessie instantly recognizes Set's description of the "boy" as Grey (66), and later when he awakens to see the same "boy," he calls out "Grey," and she answers him (72-3). Thereby confirming, without doubt, that she is the "boy." In addition, the realistic description of Grey as being short, stout, with heavy brows and downy arms also supports her being mistaken for a boy in the dark or at a distance.

Set and Grey are both obsessed with the dead. Set thinks visiting his father's grave and the graves of his ancestors will help him remember his father and to find himself. Instead, he finds that "he was out of place among the groups of strangers . . . weeds had grown up long ago over the grave of Catlin Setmaunt" (105). The "weeds" functioning metaphorically, of course, to show the passage of time and events between him and the father he knew as a child. This scene is chilling because it seems to forecast the hopelessness of Set's goal of finding his father and his self. Similarly chilling is the image of Grey sleeping on her grandmother's grave and imagining that she hears her grandmother telling her Set is a bear (116). Reader's familiar with Western literature will expect that nothing good can come of these things. Grey and Set have a macabre bond. Separately, they may be all right, but together they exacerbate one another's injuries.

Interestingly enough, Set knows, or at least suspects, that he is going mad. Set wonders if he is"losing his mind" (61). And, the narrator says, "Set reels inside himself, he applies color to his brain with a knife . . . a deranged boy (himself) glares from the shadows" (123), he interrogates the mirror, a "Cyclops," a monster with one vacant eye, "are you Set ?" (132). In addition, he becomes unaware of his everyday surroundings, like the phone which he does not notice ringing (133), staring into the mirror for an interminable amount of time, and loss of appetite. He asks himself, for example, "When did I last eat, I ought to be hungry?" (135), and, of course, talking to himself. Why? Again, because he needs his father. Set pleads, "Bent, be my father" (136). He asks when did Lukie, his dog, die. Lukie is an obvious metaphor for himself; his father called him Loki. Loki and Lukie, Lukie and Loki. Therefore, what he is really asking is when did Loki, Catlin's son, die; and when was Set, Bent's son, born? Who am I? Immediately after this questioning, he reiterates his fear that he is losing his mind: "I am beginning to doubt my own mind"(138). Furthermore, he reflects that this crisis is not a new one: "A disease has been eating at my inside for years . . . (I am) beginning to be desperate . . . I am fighting for my life" (138).

Another indicator that he is going mad is his dreams about himself being called Loki. Interestingly, the voice calling him is his, but he does not know who or where he is. He is in search of himself (140). Indeed, he has not known who he was for a long time. For instance, in his first meeting with Jason, his agent, and Lola, his lover, he jokes about a "creeping figure among the trees, a shadow" being a self-portrait (144). He explains that from the time he was adopted that he was "forced to be responsible for creating an identity," but his ability to maintain that identity was coming to an end. Likewise, Grey forces him to be responsible for creating an identity which he is able to maintain for a while, until he disappears into the woods. The point is, he has a debilitating need to please those who are close to him. He readily accepts the responsibility for acting out the role they foist on him as long as he is able precisely because he does not have a clear sense of self.

The person who almost succeeds in intuiting this awareness in him is the art critic Alais Sancere. She notes to Set that the image of a horseman in one of his paintings is like a centaur, or a man becoming a centaur. She tells Set about Kafka's story of the Red Indian and horse becoming one; Kafka's work being an exemplar of the metamorphic and malleable nature of the human psyche. To Set, "It seemed as if something was rising to the level of consciousness, a recognition, a truth," and "it was as if Alais Sancere had saw very clearly something in me that I had failed to see in myself" (161). Also, Loki, to Western readers, is a Norse god, "a cunning trickster who had the ability to change his shape and sex" (*Britannica* "Loki"). The facet of this Nordic mythical figure that Momaday chooses to reference is his malleability, not his trickster side. For example, Set does not perform lewd acts (willingly) nor does he play mischievous jokes on others, but he is metamorphic. An aspect of Loki that is often overlooked, which is also characteristic of Set, is his suffering. Nordic Loki was bound to a rock and tortured like the Greek Prometheus. Set's adopted father, Bent, was a philosophy professor. Consequently, Set is probably more familiar with the Western metaphorical meaning of the name Loki, than he is with why his real Native American father called him Loki.

However, before he is able to make the connection, Bent dies. Then he is overcome with guilt and grief, guilt for cheating on his lover Lola with Alais, and Lola being unable to contact him about Bent's stroke because of his affair with Alais, until Bent has already died. Set has a breakdown and helplessly pleads; "Bent, be my father. Be my father. Bent, I love you" (162).

The text of the novel shifts its focus back to Grey and her fantasies about her life with Billy the Kid, her ability to talk to animals and the dead in her dreams. The text makes a careful distinction: "Above all she had been born to dream . . . in her dreams . . . the animals and dead talk to her" (173). Not that "animals and the dead talk to her," but "*in her dreams* the animals and dead talk to her" (emphasis added 173). And, "To dream that was at the center of life, hers anyway" (173). Even her idea of herself as a medicine woman was a product of her dreams: being a medicine woman "was in her to do so; it was her purpose, her reason for being; she had *dreamed* it" (author's emphasis 173):

> In her *dreams* the grandmother instructed her. In her *dreams* the earth, eagles, fishes, coyotes, tortoises, mice and spiders instructed her. In her *dreams* she knew of things that had long since been lost to others. She knew of things that lay in remote distances of time and space. She knew of winter impending upon the top of the world, of sheer glacial vastnesses, of huddled ancients, walking like bears through the mists. And she knew of the ancient child, the boy who turned into a bear. (emphasis added 173-4)

The point is, it was all in her dreams, just as her life with Billy the Kid was in her dreams. She dreams that she is Sister Blandina visiting Billy in jail, she imagines she is riding around naked with a turtle mask on and carrying a spear, she even thinks she turns into a turtle, she imagines she hears her grandmother's voice, and then she suddenly awakens in bed (197-202). It was all simply a dream. Grey also dreams that Set will be her husband, in her mind he is already her husband because he accepted the medicine bundle from her hand (174). And, once she has the opportunity to act on her dreams about Set, she does so by enlisting the help of Perfecto Atole.

Grey's relationship with Perfecto Atole is a strange one. He is a middle-aged man who had sex with her when she was just a child, certainly no more than an adolescent. It was her first sexual experience, and although they appear to have an amicable relationship now it is obvious that she has a lot of pent-up rage against him. She cuts up the expensive boots he gave her as a gift, perhaps a gift for having sex with him. Grey takes pleasure in telling him how she cut up the boots and in publicly displaying the remnants: "I cut the tops off and made shakers out of them" (283). What is she expecting when she asks Perfecto to attack and humiliate Set? She cannot lose in her thinking: Either Set becomes enraged and beats or even kills Perfecto, just as Abel kills Juan, in *House Made of Dawn*. Or, Perfecto, who on the horse looks like a centaur, the image that represents Set's father, severs Set's bond with his father through his act of unmitigated violence and terror. It is certainly reasonable to assume Set has shared his paintings and images and their interpretation with Grey. Thus Grey, in manipulating the images and symbols that are haunting Set, along with his obsession about his father, may be hoping to break that bond, to substitute her own epistemology (way of knowing) and teleology (design in nature) for his. For instance, Grey has already isolated him into a world of women, and the first man he encounters in a while looks like the image he has created of his father, but this man savagely attacks him with a bears's claw. He naturally becomes enraged and delirious. It is a simple thing for Grey to convince him he turned into a bear, or at least that the spirit of the bear came over him, and that without her, he is a senseless and enraged animal subject to a power that he cannot control, but she can. He must therefore submit to her and her secret wisdom as a medicine woman to be able to live at least the semblance of a normal life.

Perfecto Atole deserves some comment. The reader cannot help but compare him with the albino, Juan Reyes Fragua, in *House Made of Dawn*. They are both described as snakelike and innately threatening, as well as overtly sexual. There is also the serious implication of sexual history between Juan and Abel because Abel stabs Juan "deep into the groin" instead of, for instance, the heart or belly or neck (78). Perhaps Juan molested Abel as a child, certainly Perfecto's "taking" of the "girl's virginity" is improper. Grey's subtle accusation of how improper Perfecto's behavior toward her is also indicated in her reference to yellow ribbons, green M and Ms, and pretty red boots in his seduction of her (282). Therefore, how can he be instrumental in the "healing" of Set? Does Grey really love Set? Set, like Perfecto, is a middle-aged man. Set is 44 and Grey is only 19. Somehow, that just does not seem healthy. Especially considering Grey's history of being sexually abused by older men, and the absence of her own father–who would be approximately Set's age. Therefore, it is not unwarranted to speculate that Grey, in her collection of middle-aged men as her lovers, Perfecto Atole, Worcester Meat, and Set, is, in a way, searching for her own absent father. In and of itself, the age difference may not be damning, although it is certainly suspect, but combined with all the other problematic elements in Grey's life it makes the relationship between Set and Grey very inappropriate and dangerous to both.

Grey's own life story indicates why she needs Set to be dependent on her, and why she needs to be in control. Grey has experienced many traumatic sexual experiences in her young life. Her first sexual experience was the result of manipulation by an older man, Perfecto Atole, instead of mutual self discovery between young people who think they are in love. Further, Grey does not have the opportunity to have sex lovingly with the young man she wants to have a meaningful relationship with, Murphy Dicks, but instead she uses the excuse of trading sex for a horse to have sex with him. Of course, his subsequent bragging about the exchange to his father, and probably to his friends, leads directly to the father of the young man, Dwight Dicks, brutally raping her. She subsequently follows Murphy Dicks to where he is attending college, Oklahoma State University, perhaps to tell him what his father did or the real reason she had sex with him was because she loved him. However, instead of a relationship she finds only rejection and further humiliation. All of these things add up to create a state of mind in which she needs to dominate, and to be in control of the man or men she has sex with in order to feel safe. She is barely more than a child herself. She is playing at a very dangerous game despite her sexual experiences, and the unreliable narrator's enchantment with her. In the end, she loses control and Set dies or disappears. Either way, she ends up one more single Native American mother with a fatherless child.

Grey re-imagines Dwight Dicks raping her as an incident in which she gains control of the situation and her body. While Dwight Dicks is raping her she is imagining that she is making love with Billy the Kid, then she is brought forcefully to the dirty floor of the stable:

> In an instant her intense pleasure was turned into pain, concentrated and excruciating. A burst of brilliant red light flashed upon her closed eyes, She screamed in pain. Her eyes burst open. The face above her was red and swollen and dripping sweat. In that instant she saw the face of Bob Olinger (a deputy who brutalized Billy the Kid), but in the next she beheld the huge

> transported head of Dwight Dicks . . . She was nearly blind with rage and desperation and hurt. And already there was in her the seed of sorrow, well below the level of articulate indignation, let alone rage, that would be with her the rest of her life. In that one moment she became almost the personification of hatred, like Olinger, more stricken and diseased with hatred than she could have believed possible. In this unspeakable happening she was forced for the first time to a hatred of the world, of herself, of life itself. (97)

First, she imagines that her horse, Dog, tramples Dwight, then she imagines that Billy shoots Dwight, then she imagines she circumcises him. The first two are obviously products of her imagination, but some readers think that she actually manages to circumcise Dwight. The problem with that interpretation is that it simply does not make sense. Think for a moment about the condition she is in. If, for instance, she were able to somehow manipulate Dwight into a position so she could physically get the upper hand, why would she simply circumcise him? Would not the "almost personification of hatred" kill Dwight or castrate him if she had the opportunity? That seems certain. Therefore, the circumcision makes symbolic sense, but not literal sense. Circumcision is a sign of submission. It was originally intended to mark a man's submission to God. Grey's imagining that she manages to circumcise Dwight is, in effect, her figuratively taking back what was stolen from her. It is important to recall that one of the storyteller's purposes, at least as it is elucidated by Catlin Setman, is to put the world in order.

Later, she has an equally unlikely exchange of words with Dwight when she is dreaming that she is riding her horse naked around rural Oklahoma carrying a spear:

> In the distance, in a cloud of dust, Grey reined in, and Dog squatted on his haunches, his hooves cutting furrows in the earth. She turned him sharply and set him racing back. She stretched out at full speed, and she leaned her lithe, naked body forward, her hair flowing . . . her thighs taut, her toes curled, her breasts bobbing in the wind. And she screamed and held the lance high. Dwight Dicks, who was beside the barn . . . stood up, rigid, his eyes and mouth wide open. Grey reined in again, and Dog came skidding to a halt. The she walked him up close to Dwight. She sat naked above the great, red, dumbfounded man, her coppery body glowing with sweat, her breasts heaving, the unearthly turtle mask tilted downward, looking into his stricken soul.
>
> 'Hey, Dwight.'
>
> 'Hey, Miz Grey,' said Dwight faintly.
>
> 'Nice day, ain't it?' the turtle said.
>
> 'Yes'm, shore is,' Dwight said, trying hard no to smile, smiling feebly.
>
> 'Say, Dwight, how's your injured member?' the turtle inquired.
>
> 'Please, ma'am?'
>
> 'Your cock, Dwight.'
>
> 'Oh, it's fine, Miz Grey, thank you.'

> The mask nodded to him, and Grey turned her horse and walked away, her round buttocks jiggling above the sheen of Dog's long black tail. (199-200)

Then there is a short excerpt from her book about Billy the Kid, and the next moment, "moonlight poured in the window of the grandmother's room. Grey lay asleep on the bed, one of the grandmother's shawls across her legs" (210). Obviously, her mad, naked ride and bizarre conversation with Dwight was all a dream. Also, remember, it is only in her imagination that she is "lithe." It is even questionable if her book about Billy the Kid really exists or if it, too, is just in her head. For example, earlier it is shown that "words fail her," and "she knew what she wanted to say, but she could not say it in writing" (185). The narrator informs the reader that "sometimes she would sit over her notebook for hours, and nothing would come of it, and tears would fill her eyes" (186). She wonders if it is "Billy who is articulate, or [i]s it she?" (192). Is there a book, and is she writing it, or is another personality writing it? The text does not provide a clear answer.

Also, Grey is not a powerful medicine woman. Grey tells Set to lay his hands in the sand and snow and to sing to the earth and the high Rio Arriba plateau would do him good. But, Set gets sicker: "He broke out then into a cold sweat, and his whole body quaked. On his hands and knees on the shoulder of the road he had never felt worse. He was tearing, drooling vomit, weak and humiliated. He wanted to die" (276). When Grey puts her hands on him, he tears away. She continues to tell him it is just the spirit of the bear awakening, but "there on the high plateau of Rio Arriba he would have given anything to hear Bent's voice again–and across some unfathomable chasm of time his father's" (277). Also, when she looks into her mind she wants to see her grandmother Kopemah, but she sees "instead the face of Annie Oakley or that of Emily Dickinson" (194). She "imagined herself Sister Blandina or Saint Teresa or Joan of Arc" (194). Although she looks at her rough hands and thinks they are the hands of a medicine woman, she immediately imagines she is Sister Blandina, sitting on a small chair "regard[ing] her delicate white hands" (195). She is demonstrating, not the complete and secure sense of self that characterizes mature medicine people, but the classic psychic trauma of a victim of colonization that the psychotherapist and revolutionary Frantz Fanon describes afflicting his native Algerians following French occupation in his follow-up book to *The Wretched of the Earth, Black Faces: White Masks*. In *Black Faces: White Masks,* Fanon discusses the insidious phenomenon of the colonization of the mind. Linda Hogan has a similar phenomenon adumbrated metaphorically in her poem "The Truth Is" (quoted earlier).

Grey is obviously afflicted with some type of schizophrenia and Set appears to be suffering from severe depression, or more probably, bipolar disorder. However, this is masked because they are *Indians* in an *Indian* novel: Not representations of the real-life experiences of real-life people. This distinction matters. It matters because many young Native American men died in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam because they were seen as *Indians* instead of as scared young men. They were thought to have some extra sensory perception and were consequently placed on point in combat. How many young Native American men and women drink and smoke and engage in violence and other self-destructive behavior because they are trying to be *Indian* instead of human beings?

I remember when my wife (who told me her grandmother was Indian) was released from the psychiatric ward, I asked her if she told the doctors about the voices she heard and she replied: "I may be crazy, but I'm not stupid. I know they would not let me out if I told them that." A few weeks later I was wrestling a loaded gun away from her because a voice told her to shoot herself and her kids. She was hospitalized for several weeks and placed on medication which she promptly stopped taking once she was released because she, like Grey, thought she was in control, she needed to be in control of her life. She told me that she was angry with her father because he sexually molested her as a child. She told me that she was angry with her father because he refused to believe her when she told him a neighbor sexually molested her. She told me neither of these incidents ever happened. She told me she was angry with her father because he would not buy her a particular coat she wanted for Christmas. She told me she was angry at him for marrying within a few months of her mother's death. She told me that she was angry because her ex-husband raped her and humiliated her in front of her sons. All I know for sure is that she had a lot of rage and pain that her mind was doing somersaults to handle.

I recognize madness when I see it, and when I read it in a novel because I have years of first-hand experience dealing with mental illness in a loved one. Grey's condition, like my wife's, was precipitated by sexual violence. Set's condition, likewise, was precipitated by sexual violence at the Peter and Paul Home when he was a child, and further exacerbated by the loss of his mother, father, adopted father, and, finally, the prospect of becoming a father himself. Grey and Set seek mythic solutions to contemporary real-life problems, and they fail. It does them no service to romanticize the real-life problems that real-life men and women are struggling with every day. Turning into a bear or becoming a powerful medicine woman are simply not options for most Native American young men and women living in modern America. It is important to read the story metaphorically (a sophisticated use of language that represents more than words are capable of representing in and of themselves) and realistically–i.e. postmodern-mimetically.

Of course, this is not to say that psychiatry offers any ready solutions. Abel, it should be recalled, did spend some time in a psychiatric hospital after he killed Juan:

> The walls of his cell were white, or perhaps they were grey; he could not remember. After a while he could not imagine anything beyond the walls . . . the essential character of the walls consisted not in their substance but in their appearance, the bare one dimensional surface that was white, perhaps, or grey, or green. (Momaday, *House* 97)

Instead of healing there is further dehumanizing and anesthetizing. Larson notes, "The fact that he cannot remember the color of his cell is indicative of his general anaesthetized state" (83) Set, too, had psychiatric treatment, but beyond labeling, nothing is done to alleviate his condition: "He is dangerously self-centered" (Momaday, *Ancient* 235).

I wish there were a simple solution as Silko asserts in *Ceremony*. For instance, that a person can enter mythic time, that there are mythic beings who live and are willing to help, like the goddess Tséh helps Tayo, and that all the ills we experience are the result of witchery; that we can control the witchery through rediscovery of traditional, albeit updated, healing ceremonies and rituals, but many of us, like Michael Dorris (Modoc), do not believe that is possible. Michael Dorris wrote in his essay "The Myth of Justice":

> Where did we get the idea that life is ultimately fair? Who promised that there was a balance to things, a yin and yang that perfectly cancels each other out, a divine score sheet that makes sure that all the totals eventually ring even? Who exactly reaps what they sow? Does everything that goes around come around? If that's some people's experience, I haven't met them, and my guess is, if they still believe it, they simply haven't lived long enough to know better. (464)

Dorris endorses the Nootka description of reality as one in which we had better look out for ourselves because "things simply happen without structure or divine plan" (467). For example, in their creation story a trickster in the guise of a Raven eats too many purple berries, and suffering from severe diarrhea defecates all over the earth, and that is the origin of people. Poignantly and pungently, he says if we live as if there were divine beings to look out for us we "like the ground beneath the circling trickster, will never know what hit us" (468).

Why does Abel run at the end of the novel? For that matter, why is he running at the beginning? Because running is all there is: "He was running and there was no reason to run but the running itself . . ." (191).

The novels, like the storyteller's Bear-Boy story in *The Ancient Child,* certainly may "soothe and comfort," but that is only a superficial interpretation of them. The real story, the Truth as Tosamah would say, is underneath, hidden below the fat, but not undiscoverable. The Truth is that it is damn hard to be *Indian* in America, the Truth is that our families are in crisis, the Truth is that parents and children are being torn apart–we are but one generation from extinction.

Conclusion

Paula Gunn Allen, Susan Blumenthal, Harold McAllister, Carole Oleson, Louis Owens, Susan Scarberry-Garcia, Martha Trimble, Charles Woodard, and all the other *feel good* critics who praise Native American novels that offer unreal solutions to real problems are simply amiss. Our problems are real, and we need real solutions. We do not need mumbo jumbo and romanticized notions of who we are. We do not need sham stories about people turning into bears or talking to dead relatives and animals spirits.

My first year at the University of Oklahoma I wrote a paper citing *feel good* critics, but I should have known better. I certainly have no excuse. Every year I visit my relatives and Native American friends in Houston and find out who has died, who was murdered, who is in jail, who is addicted to what, which child is pregnant again, and then I come back to this bubble where people have the leisure to play with words and other people's lives, to be entertained by other people's suffering, and I wait to be pushed out, shoved back to where I come from. I cannot afford to deceive myself any longer. The only merit of literature is to make real, to inform, and inspire or frighten people into changing the way they abuse other people.

Earlier I defined the postmodern-mimetic as an intransitive form of writing, which means that it is dependent upon the reader for its completion. It depends on the reader to give it meaning and to make it meaningful. A competent critic is a careful reader (perhaps "listener" is a better word because that connotes a spirit of patience and receptiveness), and a good critic will, in Momaday's words, "enable us to better understand literature," and "show us things that we might not see for ourselves" (Isernhagen 58). This does not mean, however, that criticism is an entirely subjective enterprise. If it were, then all interpretations would be equally meaningful or meaningless. A critic is also a scholar whose duty it is to support his or her explication of a novel with textual and experiential rationale. While it is the experiential component of postmodern-mimetic criticism that is largely responsible for its verve, one must be cautious not to confuse exegesis, reading what a text says, and eisegesis, reading things into a text which cannot be supported by the text.

For example, when we consider W.J. Stuckey's *The Pulitzer Prize Novels: A Critical Backward Look,* there is evidence of considerable eisegesis under the guise of objective criticism. He challenges the *New York Times* 1969 book review of Momaday's novel as "magnificent." He asserts that the review was written to give "Momaday and the cause of the American Indian the attention both deserve" instead of a honest review of the novel (227). He does not cite any testimony in support of this assertion. He further states, "The conscientious critic (meaning himself, of course), must make a distinction between helpful praise and perceptive comment, and by no stretch of the word could *House Made of Dawn* be called magnificent . . . it suffers from incoherence, obviousness, and pretentiousness" (227). He claims his criticism is objective. He claims for himself the role of "conscientious critic" and simultaneously asserts that those who do not agree with him are doing so because they have a political agenda. Thus, he simultaneously demeans Momaday's novel and casts aspersions on critics who praise the novel.

Stuckey claims Momaday won the Pulitzer Prize, not because of merit, but because 1969 "was not a year remarkable for good fiction" and the Pulitzer committee wanted to award the prize to an American Indian (226). Again, he does not cite any of the committee members to support his maligning claim. I do not know what novels were considered in 1969, but I do know that *House Made of Dawn* is a magnificent novel. The faults that Stuckey sees in the novel are, in fact, its strong points, which reflect a new and experimental type of writing–the precursor to the fully-developed postmodern-mimetic novel. It is a type of writing that addresses the fault in literature that John Barth identified as the "exhaustion of literature" in an essay by the same title published while Momaday was writing *House Made of Dawn*.

Stuckey claims that *House Made of Dawn* suffers from "incoherence," "obviousness," and "pretentiousness." However, the alleged incoherence is, in fact, a bold and innovative narrative technique that gives verve and immediacy to the text, forcing the reader into an active, participatory role. Stuckey believes the novel is obvious because he incorrectly identifies the theme of the novel as simply blaming the white man. When, in fact, Abel's crisis is much more complex than that, as Alan Velie ably demonstrates in his essay, "*House Made of Dawn*: Nobody's Protest Novel." That is not to say, however, that Momaday neglects the instrumental role Euro-American hegemony and forced acculturation play in Abel's crisis, simply that it is not of the same genre as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Stuckey's claims that the scene between Abel and the "white woman" (tellingly, Stuckey does not ever cite her name) is an "obvious" metaphor for the corruption of Indians by white society. However, Abel has affairs with two white women: Mrs. Angela Grace St. John and Milly. Milly represents a clear opportunity for Abel to make a vital, loving connection, which he lamentably fails to seize. Of course, then it would not be an *Indian* novel; at least in the conventional sense that Native American novels are expected to resolve, or "healing" to occur, as a result of the protagonist's rejection of Euro-America, and Euro-Americans, in favor of some idyllic reintegration into mythic time and place. However, most successful Native American writers, like most Native Americans in the United States, are married to Euro-Americans, including Momaday.

Stuckey reduces the symbolism, the allegorical functions, and the interpersonal implications of the characters and actions to one of a single, simple metaphor with the purpose of blaming the white man. He even calls Momaday's use of the metaphor "inept," and proceeds to condemn Momaday's "stylistic excesses" in depicting the "simple customs of the [simple?] Indians" (229). However, even the name of the character, Mrs. Angela Grace St. John, should clue the reader in that her primary function is as a religious allegory and/or symbol, not racial. Stuckey's reducing Angela Grace St. John to "the white woman" reveals the "obviousness" of Stuckey's deep-rooted, perhaps unconscious, fear of miscegenation instead of Momaday's "obviousness." Stuckey's accusation of "pretentiousness" also smacks of racism. Apparently, what he expects in an "Indian" novel is the simple story of simple folk with plenty of rustic detail and an absence of social criticism. For instance, the one section of the novel he praises is the part narrated by

Benally: "The *Night Chanter*, told in the first person by a friend of Abel (note how he omits the friends name, apparently women and Indians are equally anonymous to Stuckey), provides a sympathetic but convincingly *objective* view of Abel's dilemma" (emphasis added 228). Several things should be noted about this section: First, it is in the voice of an uneducated person, thus, fulfilling the "simple" stereotype Stuckey expects Indians to have. Second, it blames Abel for not adjusting to white society and criticizes unmercifully Tosamah, the voice of Momaday, as pretentious. Finally, and this is what is inexcusable for a critic of Stuckey's background and experience to miss, is that the passages he praises as objective are, in fact, ironic. Unfortunately, these faults are not confined to Stuckey.

It is, of course, disheartening that a literary critic and professed scholar of Stuckey's caliber can read a novel and utterly fail to recognize the basic literary devices and writing strategies utilized. Unfortunately, he does fail to recognize simple allegory, symbol, irony, or the more sophisticated writing strategies employed by Momaday to circumvent the "exhaustion of literature": Strategies such as multiple narrators, abrupt shift in time and perspective, an overtly subjective consciousness on the part of the omniscient narrator and ethical voice of the author, the complex interplay of psycho-social-historical forces in the development and experience of the characters, and the seamless integration of biographical and real events into fiction. Stuckey does note some of Momaday's writing strategies, but attributes their occurrence to his inexperience as a novelist and conjectures that the "abrupt shifts in focus, mood and style, and serious narrative gaps" are the signs of a hurriedly and "loosely spliced together" novel (227).

In fact, it seems difficult for Stuckey to imagine Momaday as anything but a simple Indian. He repeatedly uses the word "pretentious" in reference to Momaday. However, it should be noted that *pretentious* means pretending, make-believe, playing-at, in essence Stuckey's aspersion is not a literary one, but a pejorative personal one, one of character: Momaday is an Indian playing at being an author, he is only pretending, imitating, mimicking, being a writer. If this is true of Momaday, arguably the most talented living Native American author, what does that say for other Native American authors? It is at base a claim of authenticity, the white author is authentic, the Indian author is an imitation. Perhaps this is stretching Stuckey's language, but language is our profession and connotations and word history and usage are the backbone of our work. Writers of criticism are, or should be, as subject to being called to task for careless use of words as creative writers, perhaps even more so.

The Native American postmodern-mimetic novel is a matrix of multiple levels of meaning acting in different ways, and in which the underlying epistemology is in a constant state of flux, and remains so, even after the story is read. Does Set turn into a bear? I do not think so, but the text does not absolutely exclude that possibility. Are there supernatural forces at work in the lives of Abel and Set? I do not think so, but the text does not preclude that possibility.

Perhaps the best explanation of the Native American postmodern-mimetic genre is the one Catlin Setman gives his son Loki. Did the boy's voice fade into the whimper and growl of a bear? Did his footprints become the track of a bear? (Momaday, *Ancient* 121-2) No. But, it soothes and comforts some people to believe so, and it helps them to keep their world in order. The postmodern-mimetic novel is not just a good story; it is a narrative that sheds light on the story, the storyteller, and the reader. Likewise, postmodern-mimetic criticism is an interrogative theory and storytelling technique.

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