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Hal Borland's "When the Legends Die" and N Scott Momaday's "House Made of Dawn": Native American alienation

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HAL BORLAND'S *WHEN THE LEGENDS DIE* AND N. SCOTT MOMADAY'S *HOUSE MADE OF DAWN*: NATIVE AMERICAN ALIENATION

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The Native American is a character often stereotyped in literature. However, two authors, one a Native American himself, and the other, a European American or white man, depict the American Indian in a personal but objective manner. To understand these two separate works, House Made of Dawn by N. Scott Momaday, a Kiowa Indian, or When the Legends Die by Hal Borland, it is imperative to understand Native American culture and the problems which confront that culture. There is a basic conflict between the Native American and the Euro-American views of the universe and man's place in that universe. By analyzing this conflict in these two novels, it is possible to illustrate how and why alienation manifests itself in the two main characters.

There are certain aspects of American Indian culture that are essential to the understanding of this conflict. Most importantly, the Native American believes in the continuity of life, and a spiritual bond with the geographical aspects of the earth. The idea is that the world develops and continues in a never ending cycle. The universe is whole, and the earth is everlasting. Man is an integral part of this cycle.[1] If he breaks out of the cycle, he alienates himself from his universal center. This alienation robs the character of his identity and inevitably creates anguish. When the Indian's natural environment is either destroyed or forcefully taken from him, pain is created.

When removed from the universal center and the circle of life, the Indian cannot exist happily.

This alienation manifests itself in the individual's personality. He is estranged from his own life and is thrust into the Euro-American life. He loses his ability to express himself, and his sense of place is destroyed or at least confused when he tries to assimilate into the white world. He tries to dismiss his heritage, but it is always present. This invalidates his search for a new place to exist. Only after many attempts to fight this loss of center can the American Indian return to his origin to reemerge as a whole being.

The four chapters of this thesis will analyze the two novels and discuss how the European American culture creates alienation in the Native American and how alienation affects the Native American. The first chapter of the paper deals with the initial alienation of the two main characters, Abel in House Made of Dawn and Thomas in When the Legends Die. In Chapter Two there is a discussion of how alienation affects the use of language. The heroes' sense of place is the subject of the third section. The final chapter describes the resolution of the problems of alienation through the use of the "Bear's Son Tale."

I. Alienation

In both House Made of Dawn and When the Legends Die the concepts of universal continuity and maintaining contact with one's universal center are extremely important. John Neihardt describes these concepts and man's place in the universe in his book Black Elk Speaks. Black Elk states:

> You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The east gave peace and light, the south gave warmth, the west gave rain, and the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with out religion. Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power,

> whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our tepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children.[2]

Later in the narrative, Black Elk expresses his own disorientation. Black Elk explains:

> And I, to whom so great a vision was given in my youth, you see me now a pitiful old man who has done nothing, for the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.[3]

These concepts of the continuity of life, everlasting earth, and man's place within that framework are important because these themes are shared by Momaday and Borland. Each author uses a young male Native American to point out how these concepts affect that youth.

Borland attempts this by setting up a story line in which he can introduce the basic ideas of Indian culture. Thomas Black Bull, a Ute boy, leaves his house in a mill town for the wilds of the mountains when his father believes himself in danger. Thomas, his mother, and his father proceed to live in the "old way" relying almost totally on nature for their survival. His mother, unhappy with her life in town, is delighted to be living within nature:

> They walked for an hour and she felt the boy's tiredness as he walked behind her, holding to her skirt. She put down the pack and held him in her arms while they rested. They went on again. The star that was the hunter with a pack on his back was down near the horizon, making the big circle the stars made every night, the circle, the roundness. It was good to know the roundness, the completeness again, not the sharp squareness of houses and streets.[4]

She teaches Thomas the ideas of the past, and soon these ideas incorporate themselves into Thomas' way of life:

> In her mind was one of the old songs that her mother had sung when Bessie was the age of the boy. It was a song about the roundness of things, of the grass stems and the aspens and the sun and the days

> and the years. Bessie sang it now, softly, and she added words of her own about the roundness of a little boy's eyes and arms and legs. The boy smiled as he heard it, this old song about the roundness of life. And Bessie sang about the roundness of a bird's nest and a basket, which was coiled and woven and complete, a part of the roundness. (WTLD p.12)

After the family has set up their three person community in the mountains, both of Thomas' parents die. Thomas is eventually discovered and brought back to the reservation school. This is his break with the center of the universe. He no longer fits in with the rest of the reservation children because he has lived for several years as one with nature. This break almost destroys Thomas before he can return to rediscover his center.

In House Made of Dawn Momaday outlines his story in a different and more complex manner. The reader initially meets Abel as he stumbles drunkenly out of a bus into the arms of his grandfather, Francisco. At this introduction it is evident that Abel has already lost touch with his universe. He is returning from war. His initial break with his Indian way of life had come when he left for the army:

> He had been ready for hours, and he was restless, full of excitement and the dread of going. It was

> time. He heard the horn and went out and closed the door. And suddenly he had the sense of being all alone, as if he were already miles and months away, gone long ago from the town and the valley and the hills, from everything he knew and had always known. He walked quickly and looked straight ahead, centered upon himself in the onset of loneliness and fear. . . . The walls of the town fell away. . . . There was a lot of speed and sound then, and he tried desperately to take it into account, to know what it meant. Only when it was too late did he remember to look back in the direction of the fields.[5]

At Abel's departure the things he had always known, "the town and the valley and the hills" are no longer the center of Abel's universe. Instead he has broken with them, and he becomes centered upon himself.[6]

After Abel separates himself, it is impossible for him to return to his old life while he is still self-centered. Abel does not fit in because he has lost touch with the fundamentals of his spiritual upbringing. His grandfather Francisco had taught both Abel and his younger brother these ideas; Francisco feels:

> They must know the long journey of the sun on the black mesa, how it rode in the seasons and years,

> and they must live according to the sun appearing, for only then could they reckon where they were, where all things were, in time. (HMD p.177)

Francisco explains precisely the idea of continuity, the great "organic calendar." Individual seasons are unimportant, but man's relationship to the environment is. He must blend into the world and allow it to give him an identity. By becoming a part of the flowing cycle of nature, he completes nature, and it completes him. To stress this extremely important motif, Momaday continually blurs the identities of Abel and his grandfather, illustrating how the organic calendar works--how one generation slips to another without visible change.[7]

Abel and Thomas are both estranged from the life that was their center. They are thrust into the Euro-American or white civilization. By pushing these characters into the alien world, Momaday and Borland illustrate the problems of the Native American when he interrupts the natural cycle of continuity of life. Both authors reveal the deficiencies of the dominant culture and affirm the values of the Native American culture. At the same time Borland and Momaday show why the Euro-American society could not assimilate and sustain everyone in the United States. The authors also point out how the Euro-American influences tear away and break down the Native American culture. Joseph Trimmer explains this idea in his

article on House Made of Dawn, a point which also applies to When the Legends Die:

> . . . the world of the Indian in modern America appears to be a world with an eroding center, a world of fragments in danger of losing whatever cultural coherence it still retains; it is also a world dominated by the enormity of the physical landscape and the immediacy of sensory perceptions, a world diminished rather than explained by extensive use of "the word."[8]

Carole Oleson describes House Made of Dawn as a "story of human thought, action and emotion placed in the organic patterns of the earth, sun, and moon. Man is not a self-contained whole whom the universe serves, but a part of a larger whole. He finds himself only by relating to the universal scheme."[9] Abel and Tom are good examples of such a man, one who loses himself by "boxing himself up in the city."[10] At the same time, it is difficult for them to return to this larger whole from the city because the outside world also influences them. They cannot escape unscathed from their journey into the white civilization. The two cultures are continually trying to modify one another. Martha Trimble discusses this central problem as it appears in House Made of Dawn, "Oppositions arising from two points revolve around the difference between the white's and Indian's view of the world

and the need to reveal to each culture the knowledge possessed by the other."[11] The themes of an everlasting earth governed within a universal whole and man's departure from that same continuous cycle are thus present in both novels and manifest themselves in specific examples throughout both works.

II. Use of Language

Within this culture of a continuous cycle of an everlasting earth, there is a distinctive feature--the use of language. The Native American literary tradition is basically oral, and there are specific characteristics of this tradition which make it unique. The oral tradition is not monolithic. Instead, it is based on the specific individual's relationship to the land, and how that individual regards his language.[1]

In his book The Way to Rainy Mountain Momaday expresses his attitude toward the importance of language to both the European American and the Native American when he states that only "by means of words can a man deal with the world on equal terms."[2] The author continues, "A word has power in and of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning, it gives origin to all things."[3] Only through words can a man express his relationship to the universe. Language is the process through which the individual discovers his heritage and identity.

How the two cultures deal with language is at the center of the conflict. Abel and Thomas lose their communication abilities, and in turn, lose their heritage and identities. Benjamin Lee Whorf presents a theoretical background for understanding this difference in the so-called "Whorf hypothesis."[4]

The hypothesis simply states that "one's perception of the world and thus, his ways of thinking and behaving are deeply influenced by the structure of his language."[5] To determine an individual's conception of reality, Whorf notes the "unconsciously perceived structure of his language system"[6] and "the mode of consciousness his culture habitually employed."[7] Whorf studied the Hopi language as a contrast to the European languages. He found that the Hopi language was holistic in approaching nature rather than dissective as European languages which "arbitrarily divide words into categories of things and actions."[8] Whorf favors the Indian system because "nature is not thus polarized" as in the European system.[9] Whorf feels that the Hopi lives in a holistic world where the European "ideas of time, velocity, and matter are utterly foreign."[10] He believes that the Hopi view of the universe is far more consistent to the reality of nature.

Death is one aspect of nature which is approached differently. Bessie's attitude toward death which influences Tom's best exemplifies this approach. When Tom's father is killed in an avalanche, whose approach she sees, "She moaned with grief known as clearly as though she had been there and seen what happened," (WTLD p.20). When Bessie dies, Tom begins to sing a sorrow chant even though he does not know the words. After each death, mourning is prepared. Their reactions are not stereotyped or pigeonholed; instead they respond emotionally without dissection.

I believe it is possible to apply this Hopi linguistic approach to other Native Americans and to the Momaday and Borland novels. Both Abel and Tom lose touch with the holistic approach to language as they enter the white man's world. However, neither completely masters the dissective approach. In turn they are lost in the middle ground where they are unable to accept either their heritage or discover their identities. Momaday demonstrates the significant difference between the white and Indian relationship to language through Tosamah. He is the satirical preacher in "The Word" section of the novel. Tosamah tells his congregation how the white man has lost the special relationship with language that Indians still possess; the Indian cherishes the word as sacred. He points out the difference by comparing his grandmother to John in the Bible. In his sermon Tosamah relates the story of his grandmother, the storyteller. "She knew her way around words" even though she could never read or write. When she told him the stories:

> . . . she was taking hold of my [Tosamah] imagination, giving me to share in the great fortune of her wonder and delight. She was asking me to go with her to the confrontation of something that was sacred and eternal. It was a timeless, timeless thing; nothing of her old age or my childhood came between us. (HMD p.88)

Tosamah's grandmother is the epitome of Whorf's idea of the Indian's approach to nature through language.

Then Tosamah points out his grandmother's marked difference to John. He begins by quoting John's opening words, "In the beginning was the Word. . . ." Tosamah believes John should have stopped speaking at that time, but he did not. Tosamah continues,

> The perfect vision faded from his mind, and he went on. The instant passed, and then he had nothing but a memory. . . .old John was a white man, and the white man has his ways. . . .He talks about the Word. He talks through it and around it. He builds upon it with syllables, with prefixes and suffixes, and hyphens and accents. He adds and divides and multiplies the Word. And in all of this he subtracts the Truth. (HMD p.87)

By using this comparison, Momaday builds a framework in which Abel can develop. As Abel enters the white man's world and sees "his way," Abel loses the Truth. This is part of what makes Abel so confused and unhappy.

Momaday establishes that language is fundamental to the native identity at the beginning of House Made of Dawn. When Abel returns to his home town, he feels failure because he has been unable to say the things he wants to his grandfather:

> . . . he had tried to pray, to sing, to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue, but he was no longer attuned to it. Had he been able to say it, anything of his own language . . . would once again have shown him whole to himself; but he was dumb. Not dumb--silence was the older and better part of custom still--but inarticulate. (HMD p.57)

Abel's dilemma is that he tries to see the world in the highly verbalized and conventionally logical way of the white man when his vision is based in the native tongue. As a result, he is inarticulate in both languages.[11]

A specific example of his inability to express himself occurs when he goes for a walk and wants to make a song out of the natural wonders he experiences:

> He was alone, and he wanted to make a song out of the colored canyon the way the women of Torreón made songs upon their looms out of colored yarn, but he had not got the right words together. (HMD p.57)

Abel's inability to speak shows that he cannot grasp the white man's mentality, nor can he express the nature of Pueblo life even though he feels it and sees it clearly on the level of image rather than language.[12] Momaday himself has commented: "One of the most tragic things about Abel, as I think of him, is his inability to express himself. He is in some ways a

man without a voice. . . . So I think of him as having been removed from oral tradition."[13] Abel's lack of expression demonstrates that the cultural background of a language must be possessed in order for words to relate to meanings. The patterns of a language system must be perceived in order for it to be understood.

More specifically, words are a problem for Abel. The white man's words do not work for Abel because they no longer connect with the physical world, "And because his [white man's] words abstract, dilute, and attenuate experience, the white man has become sated and insensitive to the world around him."[14] Benally, Abel's friend in Los Angeles, perceives Abel's problem as one of words. Benally equates finding community with having the appropriate words. In the "Night Chanter" Benally speaks about finding that community in the white world:

> And they can't help you because you don't know how to talk to them. They have a lot of words, and you know they mean something, but you don't know what, and your own words are no good because they're not the same; they're different, and they're the only words you've got! (HMD p.144)

Benally shares Abel's desire to find a place in the white man's world because he sees it as good and successful. But he and Abel do not have the tools to reach that world; instead they subsist in that world.

Borland also deals with the issue of language. He points out what separation from the Indian world does to Thomas' ability to communicate. It is not the words as much as it is the denotative meaning behind those words. As with Abel, the white man's words do not relate to the physical world. The Euro-American fascination with the artificial materials of the civilized world (paper, steel, concrete) protects him from confronting himself or nature. The white man loses touch with himself. Although Thomas is unhappy in the civilized world, he separates himself from his Indian heritage by entering this unnatural world. At the same time he loses his ability to communicate.

When Thomas is brought down to the school from his mountain home, he does not speak. This is partly due to his unfamiliarity with English, but even when Benny Grayback speaks in Ute, he does not respond. Even though the language is Indian, its meaning is based in the white culture and is confusing to him.

When Blue Elk, Tom's captor, finds Thomas on the mountain, Blue Elk is moved by all the vestiges of his forgotten past that Tom possesses. To Blue Elk's surprise, Thomas follows the Indian traditions very closely. The singing of songs is extremely important to the Indian, and Tom's singing, a type of communication, touches Blue Elk intensely:

> The boy stood in the open, his face lifted to the sun, which was down near the peaks. He was singing a song softly to himself. Blue Elk knew it was the song to the setting sun to the coming night. He [Blue Elk] had not sung that song for so long that not even his tongue remembered the words. . . . (WTLD p.43)

Momentarily Blue Elk becomes a Native American in tune with nature instead of separate from it. Through Tom's song Blue Elk touches his own center, his past and his heritage. As Blue Elk regains his composure, he decides to use this communication device to influence Tom to return to the reservation. He tells Tom to return and teach others the songs of their past.

Tom enters school, but all the Indian agent is concerned with is Tom's assimilation into the white culture. A teacher, Benny Grayback, locks Tom up when he realizes he has been tricked and tries to leave. Tom beats on the door and begins to chant. Benny listens outside the door:

> It was a sorrow song, a song that Benny had never heard because it was the boy's own song. Benny did not want to listen, but he heard, and although he wanted to go away, he stayed there. Without knowing he began to hum the chant, then to say its words softly, and to sway with its rhythm. It was

> a song from far back, not only in the boy, but in Benjamin's own people. Its rhythm was his own heartbeat. (WTLD p.59)

He forced himself to stop because, "It was of the old ways, and the old ways were gone," (WTLD p.59).

Thomas returns to the mountain soon after his capture, but the short stay at the school has tarnished his ability to communicate:

> He watched for the jay, thought he saw it. He called to it but it sat silent in a tall aspen, watching him, screamed and flew away. He watched for the squirrels and the chipmunks, called to them. The chipmunks chattered at him and ran and hid among the rocks. The squirrels scurried up the pines, peered at him from the high branches, scolded at his intrusion. (WTLD p.69)

Even his pet bear is gone and the lodge in which he lived has burned to the ground. Feeling completely ostracized by his own world, Tom realizes there is nothing left for him there. He returns to the school. Tom cuts himself off from the past; he no longer speaks Ute; he cuts his braids and dresses in the pants, white shirt, and black shoes of the white students.

Thomas' most permanent break with his past occurs when his pet bear returns to the school, and he must send the bear

away to save its life. Thomas cries as he whips the bear, and finally he walks it into the woods:

> After another little while the boy came back out of the shadows of the trees, walking alone. He walked with the weariness of one who sings the going-away song for the only other person in the world. But he sang no song. (WTLD p.73)

Thomas separates himself from his native method of communicating, and at the same time, communication in any form.

This inability follows Thomas throughout his life, destroying his chance of forming any type of personal relationship. At the end of the novel, Tom is hospitalized. On the day he leaves, he feels very alone and helpless. He wants to call for someone, but he is incapable of doing so:

> He went out into the corridor and walked toward the sun porch, without the wheel chair and with no one at his elbow. He almost wished the supervisor, or someone, would try to stop him. But nobody did. (WTLD p.173)

Thomas has hidden in the white man's society too long to communicate any kind of feeling.

Both Thomas and Abel alienate themselves from the Native American world. By alienating themselves, they lose their abilities to communicate with both the Indian and white worlds.

At the same time they lose touch with themselves and their place in the universe. Because of their loss of self, they cannot function normally in society, nor can they develop fulfilling interpersonal relationships.

III. Sense of Place

Because both Abel and Tom alienate themselves from their Native American heritage, they lose their sense of place as well as their ability to communicate. Without a sense of place, an individual is lost in the world; he cannot relate to nature or the people around him.

Lawrence Evers describes an individual's sense of place as coming from his perception of a "culturally imposed symbolic order on a particular physical topography." He imagines who and what he is in relation to particular landscapes, cultures, and people in those landscapes.[1]

The definition of a sense of place discussed in this chapter is derived from the Kiowa Indian emergence narrative. As told by Momaday, the legend states that the Kiowas migrated through a hollow log to a new life. Symbolically the Indian moved from chaos to order, from discord to harmony. The journey toward this order is symbolized by a cultural landscape.[2] In The Way to Rainy Mountain Momaday illustrates how the Kiowas created a cultural landscape during this migration journey in which they "dared to imagine and determine who they were. . . ."[3] By finding enough harmony the Indian finds a sense of place in the universe.

Momaday's grandmother's sense of place gave her "strength enough to hold still against all the forces of chance and

disorder."[4] Conversely Tom and Abel lose this sense of place. Partly due to this loss they cannot deal with the chaos and disorder in their lives. Their sense of order is disrupted; they lose touch with the landscape, their culture, and other people. Instead they find themselves alone--isolated.

Both Tom and Abel initially learn about the land and life from their families. Tom is taught by his parents, and Abel by his grandfather, Francisco. Both are then harshly uprooted from this native culture and are thrust into the white world. The Euro-American and the Native American views of the land are so opposite that they create conflict in the two young Indians. The influence of the Euro-American land ethic makes it difficult for them to accept their native teachings. The views contrast, and the boys are confused.

One problem is how differently the two peoples view the world. The Euro-American sees with the physical eye and the eye of the mind, but each view is separate from the other. He sees things in a physical sense and in an imaginative way. Continually the Euro-American is trying to align these two views into one view.[6] The Native American is able to do this, and in turn, he accomplishes the ultimate goal of spiritual vision. Bessie has spiritual vision when she views the town as being angular and square in comparison to the circular and complete nature of the wilderness. She does not see just the houses and the streets, but also the inner conflicts of the town.

A part of spiritual vision is the use of the imagination. Imagination comes from a reaction to a cultural experience.[7] Part of this cultural experience is the Indian's reverence for the land. There is a sacred bond with and in the universe. The Indian establishes a relationship with the other creatures and objects of the universe. The earth is alive, and there is a spiritual dimension to it where man belongs.[8]

The Native American land ethic is in keeping with the idea of the living earth and man's place in that physical world. In his article on Native American environmental attitudes, Momaday defines a land ethic as "a matter of reciprocal appropriation: appropriations in which man invests himself in the landscape, and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his most fundamental experience."[9]

In comparison the Euro-American land ethic is greatly influenced by the industrial and technical revolution. It repudiates the pastoral ideal popular in art and literature in the nineteenth century. At one time the United States was basically an agricultural country. However, with the onset of the industrial revolution, the population moved from the rural areas to the city. This ethic uproots the white man from the soil and draws him toward the urban life. He and the land are two separate entities isolated from one another. Tom lives in the mountains and moves to the city; Abel resides in a rural area until he is drafted into the army. When Tom and Abel are in the urban center, they lose the appropriateness

with the land. This loss of appropriateness creates a loss of sense of place and a loss of identity.

Momaday describes appropriation as a matter of imagination. The Indian thinks of himself in a particular manner, and this concept of himself is his relationship with the physical world. His relationship with the physical world is how he defines himself.[10] Losing this contact with the physical world causes the two young men to lose touch with themselves.

Momaday believes that appropriate behavior is a moral rather than a religious idea. Appropriation is what is right within the framework of human and nature relationships:

> It is a respect for the understanding of one's heritage. It is a kind of racial memory, and it has its origin beyond any sort of historical experience. It reaches back to the dawn of time.[11]

Tom and Abel deny their heritage so they lose their place in that framework. Something as strong as this respect is hard to deny for very long. Considering how opposite the two land ethics are, it is easy to understand why they raise such conflict in Abel and Tom.

Both Momaday and Borland describe these land ethics to point out how different they are. They also show how the pull of the opposing cultures cause Tom and Abel to lose their sense of place.

Momaday illustrates this dichotomy by contrasting wild and domestic animals. The wild animals, used symbolically for the Indian, have "tenure in the land", while the white man's representatives, the domestic animals, are considered "late-coming things . . . these have an alien and inferior aspect, a poverty of vision and instinct, by which they are estranged from the wild land, and made tentative," (HMD p.56). When the domestic animals die, they are gone as if they were never there.

Thomas and Abel have taken on the characteristics of the domestic animals due to their exposure to white civilization. They both suffer from a lack of vision because of this influence. Abel is blinded both literally and figuratively. After Abel is beaten and awakes on the beach, Momaday observes, "He could not see. He could not open his eyes to see. Something was wrong, terribly wrong," (WTLD p.92). He cannot physically see, and at the same time, he is blinded symbolically. He cannot see that the white influence is destroying his sense of place, and that is what is causing his pain. By refusing his Indian birthright, he has lost his vision.

Momaday also illustrates the difference between the native and Euro-American land ethics through other characters in his novel. He sets up a comparison between Abel's grandfather, Francisco, who reverces the land, and Milly's (Abel's social worker) father, who feels pitted against it. As Milly's father works the land, which fails to produce year

after year, he begins to hate it. He thinks of it "as some kind of enemy, his own personal and deadly enemy," (HMD p.113). Francisco works with the land; he loves both the natural beauty and the beauty which comes from working the land. The author describes Francisco:

> And the old man had an ethnic, planter's love of harvests and of rain. And just there on the obsidian sky, extending out and across the eastern slope of the plain, was a sheer and perfect arc of brilliant colors. (HMD p.72)

This justaposition indicates the superiority of the Indian's relationship with the earth and the pathetic state of the white man who is disconnected from the earth.[12]

Momaday's use of two other characters in HMD also exemplifies the transcendence of the Indian land ethic. Milly is an incomplete person because of her father's attitude. She is separate from the land. She helps Abel in Los Angeles, but at the same time, Abel nourishes Milly by furnishing a symbolic link with the earth.[13] Benally, Abel's Indian friend in L.A., believes he has achieved total assimilation into the white culture, and he has no use for his native past. He states:

> Once you find your way around and get used to everything, you wonder how you ever got along out there where you came from. There's nothing there, you

> know, just the land, and the land is empty and dead. (HMD p.164)

Although Benally speaks as if he is happy, he lives in a tiny rundown apartment where he waits for something to happen to him. He is continually searching for something to fill the void where his respect for the land once was. He spends his day working in the factory and the night seeking human companionship.[14] His sense of place is lost in idealism, and this limits his vision. Benally does not see the reality of Los Angeles.

Although there is no literal description of Thomas' lack of vision, there is a symbolic blinding, and it is self-inflicted. Tom escapes from the reservation school and returns to his camp. It is destroyed, and Borland describes this destruction:

> There was no lodge. Where the lodge had been was a charred place, a circle of ashes. Not a pot or a beam remained. Nothing. . . .It was as though he had never been here. (WTLD p.70)

When Tom realizes that everything he has known is gone, he is devastated. At the same time he cuts himself off from this part of his life to eliminate any more hurt. He blinds himself, for he no longer "sees" his past in order to protect himself. Entering the white world, even for a few days, has erased his spiritual vision.

Borland illustrates how the Euro-American land ethic affects Tom while at the school. The instructors try to teach Tom a trade. He is given cows and sheep to care for, but he is unsuccessful. In the barn he is sickened by the smell of these domesticated animals. The only time he enjoys his work is when he is out in the open. The only type of farm animal he can tolerate is the wild horse which he tames while tending the cows. He does not break horses. Tom believes that, "In the old days the people had respected their horses, tamed them. But the old days were gone. Now they broke the horses, broke their spirit," (WTLD p.77). When his riding is discovered, it is stopped. The horses are to be broken the new way.

Tom is also taught to plow the fields. He is not good at it because it seems to senseless. Tom thinks:

> Why should anyone rip up the grass even if it was sparse grass and make the earth grow something else? If left to itself, the earth would grow grass and many other good things. When you plowed up the grass you were making the earth into something it did not want to be. (WTLD p.74)

In Tom's statement is the essence of the conflict between the two cultures. The white civilization tries to make the Indian into something he does not want.

To clarify this point further, Borland uses supporting characters. Tom's parents are persuaded to move to a mill

town. His mother is unhappy and longs for a life in the wild. When her husband kills a man in self-defense, they are frightened, and flee back to the mountains from which they came. Once the family is established in the wilderness, both parents are very happy and content. They begin living with nature rather than fighting against it.

As Momaday uses two characters in juxtaposition to illustrate the incompatibility between the two land ethics, Borland uses two old rodeo riders the same way. Tom leaves the school to become a bronc rider with Red Dillon, a hustling old rodeo rider who buys Tom's work permit. An old Mexican named Meo cooks for Red and becomes Tom's ethnic counterpart and spiritual advisor. Meo discusses his heritage and his relationship with the land with Tom to help Tom accept his own heritage. Meo is harvesting beans and talking:

> The frijole takes its own time. It waits for the sun and the rain, then grows one day at a time. Why should I tell it to hurry now? If I do not eat this frijole, it will wait and grow again. It does not need me to tell it what to do. (WTLD p.104)

Meo is in tune with the natural rhythms of the earth and its produce. He works with the cycles of nature; he does not try to rush this growth. Meo attributes this harmony to his own heritage; "We know these things, you and I. Our people were not born last year. We are of the old people," (WTLD p.104).

Red, on the other hand, is totally at odds with the land. He is a squatter with a rundown cabin which serves as a resting place between rodeos. His horses are uncared for, even though they are important to his livelihood. Red drinks too much, gambles, cheats and uses Tom for his own profit. He is unhappy and out of touch with the world. Although Red and Meo live together, Red is unhappy, and Meo is content. Red is continually searching for a new town, a new rodeo, a new horse, a new scam. Meo lives quietly at peace at the cabin where he finds his own sense of place.

Thus both authors use a sense of place and its loss as themes and demonstrate the conflict of two cultures in that regard. If this theme is analyzed in still further detail, it is possible to see how this loss and the conflict ultimately affect Tom and Abel and their intense alienation.

When Abel leaves on the bus to go to war, he leaves the land and the culture in which he is intimately involved. At the same time he loses his center, the part of him which anchors his identity. The bus takes Abel out of the context where he has worth and meaning and into a context where "There were enemies all around. . . ." (WTLD p.98) His alienation begins when:

> He heard the horn [of the bus] and went out and closed the door. And suddenly he had the sense of being all alone, as if he were already miles and

> months away, gone long ago from the town and the valley and the hills, from everything he knew and had always known. He walked quickly and looked straight ahead, centered upon himself in the onset of loneliness and fear. (WTLD p.25)

Instead of relating to his own familiar landscape and culture, he focuses in on himself.

After the war Abel returns to his village. His grandfather meets his bus, and Abel is drunk. The alienation Abel felt on leaving home has intensified and produced a lack of a sense of place. This loss is suggested by Abel's drunkenness. Abel's experiences in the white world have disturbed the delicate balance between man and nature. These experiences have blurred Abel's vision and infected his soul.[15]

Abel's inability to find a place in his community causes his excessive drinking. Because of his loss, Abel cannot control his emotions as well as he should. When the albino Indian insults him, he cannot bear the affront. Instead of acting ritually with the community, Abel acts individually against evil and kills the albino.[16] By killing the albino, Abel kills an Indian, but a white Indian, or the white man in the Indian. He kills "the white man in Abel and his culture which he can no longer recognize and control."[17]

The murder is an expression of Abel's disharmony and loss of a sense of place. To the Indian, "evil is that which is

ritually not under control. . . ." [18] Abel is ritually out of control. Only by acting together in ceremony can a man resist evil. Abel's community fights evil by running a ceremonial race; Abel is estranged from this community, and in turn, from the ceremony.

However, the whiteness of the albino is more than evil. It represents the emptiness that Abel is feeling because he has lost touch with his own cultural landscape. Abel's life has no meaning. When he confronts the albino, he realizes his own lack of a sense of place, his own lack of meaning.[19] Abel kills an evil spirit in himself.

The albino is also a symbol of the poor vision which results from losing touch with one's sense of place. He represents the white man who took over the land. The white man proved himself insensitive and unseeing as he destroyed the Indian way of life.

Because Abel murders a man, he enters another white institution, prison, where he is further separated from the land. When he is released, he resides in Los Angeles. Again he fails to find a sense of place because he cannot find community there. The factory workers and the Indian men at the Silver Dollar Saloon all reject Abel. He cannot succeed there, and he begins to drink again. He is beaten, his hands are broken, and he is left unconscious on the beach. In his delirium he watches the ceremonial race, and comes in touch with himself. Abel thinks:

> Now, here, the world was open at his back. He had lost his place. He had been long ago at the center, had known where he was, had lost his way, had wandered to the end of the earth, was even now reeling on the edge of the void. The sea reached and leaned, licked after him and withdrew, falling off forever in the abyss. (HMD p.96)

Francisco has taught Abel that this sense of place is important, and on the beach Abel realizes that he has lost it. Francisco had tried to teach both his grandsons what is vital to their heritage:

> They must learn the whole contour of the black mesa. . . . They must know the long journey of the sun on the black mesa, how it rode in the seasons and the years, and they must live according to the sun appearing, for only then could they reckon where they were, where all things were, in time. (HMD p.177)

The problem is that this relationship with nature and the world is broken by each white experience--the army, prison, the Los Angeles factory--just as his hands were. These institutions create weakness in Abel. In order for Abel to strengthen his life, he must repair these breaks and regain a sense of place.

Tom's estrangement from the land is also brought on by the white man or his emissary. Blue Elk, an old Indian who betrays his people for the white man's money, discovers Tom and brings him to the school, thus initiating the break. The white agent shuffles Tom off to another Indian man, Benny Grayback, whose sole purpose in life is to put his past behind him and assimilate into the white world. Benny and all the other instructors ignore Tom's ideas in order for Tom to absorb the new culture. His response to this separation from the land is the opposite of Abel's reaction. Instead of becoming weak, Tom grows silent, remote, friendless, and hostile. When Tom makes his final break with his past, the other people at the school see a drastic change in him. Borland describes this reaction:

> Men and boys were standing beside the doorway, but he seemed not to see them. . . . they said it was like seeing a strange man, a remote and terrible man, not a boy. . . . those who looked into his eyes saw something there that made them afraid to talk to him. (WTLD pp.73-4)

After Tom begins the bronc riding circuit, he discovers an outlet for his hostility. He punishes the horses for the pain the white man has caused him. Borland describes this rage when Tom is riding, "But Tom heard neither horn or crowd. He wasn't riding for time or for the crowd. He was riding for

himself. . . . He was riding a hurt and a hate, deep inside," (WTLD p.99).

Tom spends so much time resenting the people who have hurt him, he has little time to develop any healthy human relationships. The other riders do not know him as a person. Instead he is a legend; he does not always win, but that does not matter to the riders or the crowd. Their fascination is for Tom's method of riding. The author explains this fascination, "Tom Black was more than a rider. He was a kind of elemental force, a primitive scourge and a raw challenge that summoned diabolic violence from every horse he rode," (WTLD p.148). Even though he is infamous with the public, Tom is alone and unhappy. Because he has no human contacts, he loses track of time. He has no one to think about but himself, and the days, weeks, seasons, and years slip away. Tom thinks about this lack of connection:

> Time no longer mattered to him. Nothing mattered except those intervals in the arena. . . . Between shows he merely went through the motions of living, waiting almost passively. . . . Time had no meaning. Put it that way. Forget time. (WTLD p.151)

As separation from the land creates a weak part in Abel, it builds a tough layer on Tom. The separation weakens Abel's ability to cope, while it strengthens Tom's desire to isolate himself.

One reaction to this estrangement from the land is common to both characters. Tom, as well as Abel, responds to evil individually. Because he feels disconnected from his culture, Tom takes on the world by himself, and he tries to resolve his problems outside the rituals of the Indian culture. By not using these rituals, Tom cannot resolve his problems, and he remains detached.

In both novels time, place, and vision influence the main characters' ability to find a sense of place. Borland constructs his novel by using a geographical cycle which begins in the mountains, and also concludes in the mountains. The plot evolves by using places and emphasizes how Tom has lost his place in the world. Momaday implements a similar scheme in HMD; however, it is time rather than place which is used. Time evolves within the cycle of a single season as both the Prologue and the final section are dated February. By comparing the structure of time to Abel's life, Abel appears lost in time.

In order for Tom and Abel to regain a sense of place, they must regain their vision, that ability to align the physical eye and the eye of the mind into one view. Tom must quit avoiding where and what he comes from in order to find a new place in the world. Abel must see and understand where in time he is. Only then can he find the vision for which he is searching. When both characters achieve these

goals, they can once again feel a sense of place and that wholeness which accompanies it.

IV. Symbolic Reemergence Journey

Both Tom and Abel lose touch with the center of their lives because they deny the existence and influence of their heritage. After numerous attempts to reject the need for this heritage, both characters return to their beginnings to reemerge as whole beings. To resolve this conflict in their lives, both Tom and Abel are confronted with a symbolic journey which they successfully complete.

There are certain natural laws in the Native American awareness that give perspective, design, and meaning to the world. The basic idea of these laws is that nature and the land are the center of the universe, and man must live in harmony with them in order to find self-fulfillment and peace. The structure and the world of these two novels operate in accordance with these laws. To find a place in this world, Tom and Abel must learn to understand and to accept these laws, and at the same time, to accept their heritage:[1]

> In order for harmony to be restored, each character must be taken through a ritual reemergence journey similar to that of the Kiowa people. It requires a ritual; without songs there cannot be a cure or restoration of order.[2]

Conflict between two cultures or religions is capable of destroying some men, and as indicated in earlier chapters of this paper, it nearly destroys Tom and Abel. However, this struggle eventually strengthens the two young men.[3]

The conflict between the white and Indian culture is more than just a determination of lifestyle. The Indian has more to lose than a method of education or manner of expression. Momaday cautions against the white society, "they [Native Americans] may lose more than they gain if they assimilate into the American mix."[4] Momaday states that the Native American must come to moral terms with the world in order to survive, "There is no alternative . . . if we are to realize and maintain our humanity, for our humanity must consist in part in the ethical as well as the practical ideal of preservation."[5] The Indian needs to know who and what he is in relation to the earth and sky. Only then can he preserve his identity as a Native American.

Abel's remembrances of past traditions illustrate that Indians must cherish the idea of being a people who cherish traditions. Borland uses a flashback to show how positive these traditions are and how withdrawal from these same traditions destroys the Indian people. Only pride and faith in their culture will bring the destitute Indian people out of their misery into a better age.[6]

Abel and Tom are initially involved in the Indian culture by birthright. However, they later choose the Indian culture

as a basis for their lives, because its perception of life offers more wholesome rewards in adulthood.[7]

A symbolic example of the Native American lifestyle is the Eagle Watchers Society of which Abel is a member. This is a society of men whose tribe had come close to extinction, and because of that, "They had got a keener sense of humility than their benefactors, and paradoxically a greater sense of pride. . . ."[8] Unlike the Eagle Watcher Society, the individual Eagle Watcher cannot survive with dignity in a different environment. Abel finds himself in this alien position in Los Angeles, and he is almost destroyed. When he captures a wild eagle, he responds empathetically to the eagle's predicament and strangles it. The eagle is an unacceptable prey to Abel because it is captured, "The sight of it filled him with shame and disgust. He took hold of its throat in the darkness and cut off its breath," (WTLD p.25).

Abel feels shame because the eagle is a prisoner or victim of a dominant being. In the eagle's case man is the superior; in Abel's case the white man is the superior. Both superiors oppress their victims until the victims lose all self-respect and pride. This example of oppression tells why many young Indians kill themselves. It also points out Abel's helplessness in the white world. His killing of the eagle reflects his own self-destructive behavior when he moves to Los Angeles. Abel is filled with shame and disgust because of his own helplessness.

Helplessness is also Tom's response to oppressive white influence. Constant self-reproach is the result of this impotence. In the place of the eagle is the riding bronc which assumes the sympathetic symbol of Tom's helplessness. Even though Tom discovers that each individual horse has a rhythm by which it can be tamed, he intentionally and brutally breaks his draws. The horse, like Tom, is a victim of external oppression; Tom cannot tolerate this manipluation of himself; instead he destroys the horse. When he ruins a horse, there is no elation, only ignominy.

Because Tom and Abel equate the white man with this sense of helplessness, they associate him with the evil and alienation that confronts the Indian. Both characters attempt to combat this evil. However, instead of using the traditions within the Indian culture to fight evil, they utilize the white man's methods. Since they alienate themselves from the very power that is in their heritage, they are doomed to failure.

When Abel is confronted with evil in the form of the albino, a white Indian, he fights that evil incorrectly by killing the albino. Instead of killing the albino, he should fight as his people always have, by running at dawn:

> They ran with great dignity and calm, not in the hope of anything, but hopelessly, neither in fear nor hatred nor despair of evil, but simply in

> recognition and with respect. Evil was. Evil was abroad in the night; they must venture out to the confrontation, they must reckon dues and divide the world. (HMD p.96)

At the time of the murder, however, Abel regards the albino as a snake, a symbol of pure evil and decides to kill him. To equate evil with the snake is not an Indian idea, but rather a Christian one.[9] Abel strays from his Indian traditions and acts out in a way which further alienates him from the center of his world.

Even though Abel reacts to evil in a Euro-American way, he is surprised at the manner in which they white legal structure reacts. Killing such an enemy is not encouraged in the white world even though it may appear as a basic Old Testament tenet. For Abel to act upon traditional values Carole Oleson says in her article that to destroy evil is "to suffer at the hand of the invader."[10]

Similarly, George Black Bull, Tom's father, kills a man in self defense--a man who has robbed George many times. George's wife Bessie cannot understand why the white sheriff is hunting for George. George only protected himself from a man who was destroying his family's chance to escape from the non-Indian way of life.

Although Tom does not commit the murder of a human being, he does consider the horse representative of all the evil

which is inflicted upon him. Instead of coming to terms with this evil, he tries to destroy it by destroying the horse. This action is not advocated in either society. However, bronc busting is a Euro-American form of entertainment.

Through several experiences, including the examples mentioned above, both characters realize they want to reenter the world in which they once found contentment. Many obstacles stand in their way, and they find it a difficult journey. Several characters assist Abel and Tom on their journey to find themselves. Abel receives more assistance than Tom, but both realize a new beginning.

In the chapter "Night Chanter" Abel is relocated to Los Angeles; he meets Benally, who also comes from an Indian culture, and understands Abel's perspective. They become very close, and their kinship gives the reader special insight into Abel's problems.[11] Benally describes Abel's cultural shock when he enters the factory. Abel cannot move from his own concept of time to the faster paced white city culture unless he is given time.[12] When he is taught the fundamental duties of his job, he moves slowly; he cannot grasp the ideas quickly--not because of an inability to learn, but an inability to do something on time. Benally attempts to mold Abel by describing what his life could be if Abel assimilates. Even though Benally is unsuccessful in reaching Abel, he acts as a night chanter, one who helps restore voice and harmony in Abel's life.[13]

While Abel is living in Los Angeles, he is beaten by a Mexican policeman, Martinez. He is left unconscious on a beach where he sees a vision of, "the old men in white leggings running after evil in the night. . . ," (HMD p.96). Abel is on an edge of awareness that will make him whole and strong again; this is the point on which he will stand until he can figure it out. The sense of coherence and continuity he feels after seeing this vision convinces him to return to his place in the old culture--to become a dawn runner.[14]

Another main source of enlightenment to Abel is "Tosamah, orator, physician, Priest of the Sun, son of Hummingbird," (HMD p.117). Tosamah's perspective, which influences Abel greatly, derives from two sermons he gives. He believes if a man has a working imagination, he will see the land from which he came as a place "where Creation was begun," (HMD p.117). For Abel this is a strong starting point on which to initiate reentrance into his native culture.

In the section "The Priest of the Sun," Tosamah assists Abel's journey as a priest and as a clown.[15] Abel is at his lowest moment. He is physically, mentally, and emotionally ill, but due to Tosamah's influence, there appears to be a hint of a new beginning.[16]

Only at his weakest moment does Tom finally find the strength to go back to accept his Indian heritage. Meo initially approaches Tom about the pride and acceptance he should have in his past, "We know these things, you and I.

Our people were not born last year. We are of the old people," (WTLD p.104). But Tom is too young at this point, and he considers the old ways dead. As Tom becomes older and lonelier he has moments when he thinks of the old customs. One day he is by himself in a hotel room, and he looks at the ceiling. He begins thinking:

> It was sky blue. The drapes were a darker blue, the furniture still darker. Blue, the female color. He was surprised to think of that. He hadn't thought in the old way in a long time. Blue for the south, the gentle, the female. Black for the north, the harsh, the male. . . . He put the thought away from him. Blue was blue. (WTLD p.152)

Tom is severely injured riding a bronc. He is worn out by loneliness, and he is at a low point in his life. As he recovers, his thoughts are of home. His memories come back as dreams, and he decides to return to his ancestral home. He returns to the land because it is permanent. Upon his return, he takes a penance journey up the side of a mountain in order to cleanse himself. Only when Tom is purified can he begin his new life. The journey is not his salvation or Abel's, but through this reentrance journey, the two characters can eventually accept and unite themselves with their heritage.

Abel's journey ends as it begins--he runs in the "Prologue", and at the end in the first race of the Jemez ceremonial season. The conclusion of all the journeying is Abel's return to his starting point. This last run is a type of penance. When he joins the other runners, it does not signify assimilation but the beginning of penance. Once he is back, his race will commemorate the dawn of a new beginning for Abel.[17]

Symbolically both authors use the "Bear's Son Tale" to show the stages of alienation, journey, and final acceptance of their heritage in the two young men. At the conclusion of these stages, Abel and Tom find peace. The "Bear's Son Tale" provides a structural framework for both novels. There is a circular movement in the narratives which allows understanding of the characters' states of mind which cannot be explained rationally. This tale becomes a metaphor for both Abel's and Tom's self-realization.

In her perceptive article, Nora Baker Barry delineates the general tenets of the "Bear's Son Tale". This tale is found oftentimes in novels where the protagonist is in tune with a heroic cultural background.[18] In both of these novels the background is Native American, but the tale is found in both European and Asian literature. There are several motifs found in this tale. First, the hero is raised by a bear. The character lives a life of adventures with various

companions. However, his personality is often sullen and taciturn, and he has a tendency to be lazy.[19]

"Bear's Son Tale" heroes must undergo two struggles with supernatural foes within an enclosed area. The hero resists and often mutilates the supernatural foe in the arm. Previously his companions have been unable to defeat this being who has light shining from its eyes. During the hero's initial encounter with the enemy, he wrestles with it rather than attacks it.[20]

The second struggle occurs after the hero tracks the being to a source of water and then to a cave. The hero descends into the cave and overcomes another supernatural foe. This second foe is often a former enemy or the enemy's mother. A weapon is used, but it is not effective. In both struggles the main motif is the abandonment of the hero by his companions, or in this case, the alienation of the hero from others.[21]

In When the Legends Die many of the motifs of the "Bear's Son Tale" are used. The first motif, the hero raised by a bear, is symbolically employed. When Tom and his mother leave the sawmill town to meet George Black Bull, they stop at a bear's cave. After Tom's father dies, he calls himself Bear's Brother. Bessie Black Bull dies, and Tom seeks out a she bear who is killed by a prospector. Her cub becomes Tom's brother and companion for the duration of his stay in the mountains. Tom is removed from the twentieth century by

his parents' death. He returns to the old ways, and then he becomes further entrenched in this state. He begins to rely on the songs and the chants of his heritage and finally undertakes a painful return journey to Indian society.[22]

Tom's return journey is represented by his change of names; he progresses from Bear's Brother to Thomas Black Bull to Tom Black by undergoing a great deal of suffering. When Tom separates himself from his brother, the bear, he severs the relationship during the Bear Dance, a holiday sacred to the Indians. At this point Tom undergoes a tremendous change. After he releases the bear, the other students describe him as, "A strange man, not a boy," (WTLD p.73). Tom is reluctant to speak and to work, and so the school authorities consider him "lazy," typical of a Bear's Son hero. Because of this separation from his brother, Tom becomes short tempered, and his dangerous personality reveals itself as he enters "The Arena" section.

The Bear Tale's theme of strength is exhibited in Tom's display of self-reliance in the wilderness. He demonstrates his pure physical strength when he is victorious over three boys who are tormenting him. As a bronc rider, he physically dominates the horses. He is reputed to have killed ten horses, while the actual number is seven.

Tom's rodeo experiences also qualify as the adventures of a Bear's Tale hero. Within the "Arena" section, Tom meets Red and Meo. They introduce Tom to the world of the circuit

rodeo, a world of gambling, of drinking, and of great excitement. The theme of abandonment is illustrated when these two men plus Tom's parents desert him through death. Along with physical abandonment there is also psychological abandonment. Blue Elk betrays his own people to the white man. Benny Grayback and the other teachers at the reservation school reject Tom's Native American identity. This rejection causes Tom to deny his Indian heritage.

"The Arena" and "The Mountain" sections also contain evidence of the struggles which characterizes the "Bear's Son Tale" hero. The fighting sequence shifts from physical struggles to internal and psychological ones. There are two battles, but in both, Tom is his own worst enemy; his demons are personal ones. In the first fighting sequence Tom physically combats the bronc. At this time he is fighting himself and symbolically killing those who tried to alter his true nature. The horses he kills are destroyed in the enclosure of the rodeo arena, and they are spoken of as devils. Tom is called "devil-killer" and "killer Tom Black," and when others discuss him, they relate legends of Satan. He is described as superhuman, perhaps a man with supernatural powers:

> Tom Black was more than a rider. He was a kind of elemental force, a primitive scourge and a raw challenge that summoned diabolic violence from every horse he rode. (WTLD p.148)

When Tom finally decides to return to his old life, he is injured or "mutilated" by the horse or in a way by himself, his own enemy.

His second struggle is psychological more than physical. On his return to the mountains he tracks a grizzly bear. This confrontation with himself through the bear parallels the folktale.[23] Initially there is a chase in which Tom follows to kill the bear. However, if he kills the bear, he will be killing himself, his culture and heritage. As Benny Grayback tells the Indian agent earlier in the book, "If you kill the bear, you kill the boy," (WTLD p.60). Essential to this folktale is the ambiguity of the bear's identity. Is it Tom's bear? While he waits for the bear, Tom realizes who his true enemy is--himself. He has a gun, but he never uses it once he has this moment of enlightenment.

Borland establishes Tom as a Bear's Son hero, and then he presents his adventures against the legend. Momaday presents Abel's life and suffering first, and then he interprets his character through the Bear's Son Tale."[24] Abel is a Bear's Son type, but he is described more subtly and in a less schematized manner than Tom.

However, there are explicit references to the folktale in House Made of Dawn. Angela fantasizes Abel as a bear when they make love, "She would have liked to touch the soft muzzle of a bear, the thin black lips, the great flat head. She would have liked to cup her hand to the wet black snout,

to hold for a moment the hot blowing of the bear's life," (HMD p.34). Angela also tells her son of the Indian brave whose father was a bear, "He had many adventures, and he became a great leader and saved his people," (HMD p.169).

Francisco, Abel's grandfather, has a dream in the section "Dawn Runner" in which he has an initiation hunt for a bear. This memory contains the tracking motif.[25] He follows the bear up to a waterfall as is necessary in the folktale, where "an ancient watercourse fell away like a flight of stairs to the left . . .", (HMD p.181). Francisco continues to track the bear until he kills it. By killing the bear, he becomes a man in the eyes of the village.[26]

Other "Bear's Son Tale" themes are not as clearly stated, but they are present in the narrative. Although Abel is not raised by a bear, his mother is dead, and there is a mystery about his father's whereabouts. Being an orphan is characteristic of the hero of a "Bear's Son Tale." Even though Abel is not literally raised by a bear, he is figuratively connected.[27]

During the war, Abel fulfills the role of a hero with extraordinary physical strength. To his army companions he appears to have supernatural powers as he dances down a tank. In this same incident Abel experiences abandonment. His white companions leave Abel to face the tank alone. Later, when he is beaten by the policeman, he is left on the beach unconscious and alone.

Abel's struggles parallel Tom's. There is an external fight and an internal one. The physical battle takes place when he kills the albino. Abel waits in the darkness for the albino to make his move, and then he wrestles with him. There is light shining from the white Indian's eyes--his eyes are very light. Abel feels that he has killed a great enemy, and he would do it again because the man threatened him with supernatural powers; the albino threatened to turn him into a snake. The priest also sees Abel's act as an act against supernatural evil.

Abel's second struggle is an internal battle told through Tosamah and Benally. The struggle is personified in Martinez as a force of evil and as a symbol of the urban world. Martinez is a force that ignores Abel's humanity and his version of reality.[28] The policeman is not Abel's only object of struggle, but he epitomizes Abel's inability to adjust to the urban world. He descends into a pit spiritually, loses his job, borrows money from his friends, drinks himself into physical illness, is belittled by his friends, and is thrown out of his room by Benally and into the waiting Martinez. From that lowest point Abel begins his journey upward. Through the poetic language of the Bear's Tale, Abel becomes a universal hero of the imagination.

Both heroes reenter their culture after Tom and Abel realize the emptiness of their social and cultural alienation.

For them to return to this way of life, they must act ritually as described in the "Bear's Son Tale" analysis.

Before Tom can revert to his heritage, he senses the requirement of self-purification. When he reaches the mountain, he takes a bath in a cold spring, and remains naked while he hikes through the wild, hunting the bear, the symbol of his past. Tom has venison to eat, but it has putrified because when he killed the deer he only took part and discarded the rest. In vomiting he literally and figuratively cleanses his body. He continues to fast with only a few berries to eat. This fasting, and the discomfort caused by his nakedness create in Tom an altered state of consciousness. Even though he appears to be hallucinating at times, he also manifests a new clarity of thought. He begins to see what the problem is. He does not kill the bear when he finds it because he realizes the bear is not the problem. Tom has lost touch with the "All Mother"; she can also be referred to as nature, the land, or the spirit of the land. The problem is with Tom, himself, and his loss of consciousness of the land.

After Tom is cognizant that the problem is his own insensitivity, he celebrates by killing the deer through use of the old rituals. After breaking his fast, he decides to go back to the reservation and talk to those he left behind in bitterness:

> He was not a clout Indian, never would be again. But for a time he had to go back to the old ways, make his peace with his world and with himself. . . . He had begun to feel that peace, at last. . . . He would go to the reservation, eventually, to the school, and see what was happening there now, try to understand that, too. . . . He was Tom Black Bull, a man who knew and was proud of his own inheritance, who had come to the end of his long hunt. (WTLD pp.215-216)

Through the use of ritual, Abel reenters his village. The sacrificial rooster ceremony promotes fertility of plants and animals, and it gives Abel his first opportunity to re-enter the ceremonial functions of the village. The first time he tries the rooster game, he has just removed his army uniform, and he is "too rigid" and "too careful" to succeed. He is overly influenced by the white world and cannot function in the Native American rituals.

After Abel is beaten by Martinez, he loses his vision, but he finds insight while he is on the beach. He realizes his problem, "Now, here, the world was open at his back . . . falling off forever in the abyss," (HMD p.96). And that realization is a beginning. He asks himself, "where the trouble had begun, what the trouble was . . ?" (HMD p.97). Abel also learns the trouble is within himself. When he goes

back to his village and runs the race, he sheds the "stress of his sojourn in the white man's world and once again finds himself attuned to his own. . . ."[29] He loses this feeling during his prison term and his time in Los Angeles. Thus there is no romantic heroism in Abel's final choice to return to the village because he is forced to do so by the circumstances of his life. By failing to find peace and prosperity in the white world, he must return to the Indian world.[30]

Out of the pain and exhaustion of Abel's race at dawn, he regains his clarity of vision, "he could see at last without having to think," (HMD p.191). By recovering his insight, Abel reestablishes a rapport with his village and his culture. Abel's last reality is the "essential unity and harmony of man and land. He feels a sense of place he was unable to articulate in Part I. At last he has voice, words, song. In beauty he has begun."[31]

Tom and Abel ritually involve themselves in their Native American culture. By again practicing their traditions, they lose their sense of alienation. Both characters regain their sense of place and find their universal center; thus the heroes of these two novels discover peace in their own worlds.

V. Conclusion

In the article "The Remembered Earth, Momaday's House Made of Dawn", Carole Oleson discusses one of the main symbols of House Made of Dawn, the everlasting earth, and how it affects the people who love it. She believes the novel is not a novel about Abel, "but a long prose poem about the earth, about the people who have long known how to love it, and who can survive as people if they cling to that knowledge."[1] Oleson continues, "House Made of Dawn is a story of human thought, action and emotion placed in the organic patterns of the earth, sun, and moon. Man is not a self-contained whole whom the universe serves, but a part of a larger whole. He finds himself only by relating to the universal scheme. He loses himself by boxing himself up in the city. . . ."[2] Although Oleson speaks only of Momaday's novel, these same ideas prevail in Borland's When the Legends Die. When man separates himself from the cycles of the universe and enters urban society, he alienates himself from the earth and his heritage.

Tom and Abel are examples of this alienation which is caused by contact with the Euro-American world. Both begin their lives in an isolated Indian society. However, they are thrust into the Euro-American civilization--Tom into the

school, Abel into the army. Their problems begin due to an interruption of the natural cycle of their lives.

Borland and Momaday use these characters to illustrate why the Euro-American lifestyle cannot assimilate and sustain everyone. At the same time the narratives describe how white influence corrupts the Indian.

When these two cultures blend, a main point of conflict is the use of language. One's perception of the world, and his way of thinking and behaving are greatly influenced by the structure of language. The language structures of the European and Native American cultures are very different; the former uses a dissective approach while the latter uses a holistic approach. The Euro-American puts ideas into slots while the Native American looks at ideas in relation to their place in nature. The deep structure of language must be possessed in order for words to relate to meaning. Patterns of thought also must be mastered in order to think in its terms. When the Native American enters the Euro-American society, he loses touch with the holistic view of language because he is away from the center of his universe, but he cannot master the dissective approach because the influence of his traditional upbringing is too strong. The Native American sees the white world as good, but he does not have the tools to reach that world; this only further alienates him from both worlds.

When Tom loses his bear, the last vestige of his heritage, he ceases to communicate. Because he cannot communicate, his ability to form personal relationships is destroyed. This further alienates him from the world around him. Abel's use of language is more subtly diminished. He tries to reenter the traditional ceremonies of his home town, but he cannot because he is unable to say what he wants. He tries to see the world through the white man's eyes while his vision is based on his Native American heritage. As a result he is inarticulate in both languages which separates him from everyone, including his own grandfather.

Tom's and Abel's initial alienation is caused by contact with the white world. This causes communication difficulties which creates more alienation. Tom and Abel's sense of place is affected in much the same way: they lose their sense of place because they are alienated from their universal center, and this loss intensifies their feelings of isolation.

As defined earlier in these pages, a sense of place is a symbolic order placed on man and nature. A person determines who or what he is in relation to the world. If a person is uprooted from this order, he loses touch with the landscape, his culture, and his people. When the Native American is separated from his sense of place, he cannot relate to nature.

Contact with Euro-American culture may hasten this loss of sense of place in the Native American. The method in which

these two cultures view the world differ greatly. In viewing nature and society, a person sees with the physical eye and the mind's eye. However, the Euro-American uses these two types of vision separately, where the Indian aligns the two and creates spiritual vision. There is not a conflict between the two types of vision in the Native American but rather a consolidation or a blending of views. Losing this vision leaves a void in the Native American's life that is difficult to fill, for he can no longer see below the surface of reality.

A similar aspect of this sense of place is found in the land ethics of the two cultures. The Euro-American is separate from the land where the Native American feels that he is part of the land, and the land a part of him. When Tom and Abel enter the Euro-American society, they feel the pull of the opposing ethics, and this struggle causes Tom and Abel to lose their sense of place. Neither character is able to find a place in his own community. Tom is unhappy at the school, but he is rejected by nature when he returns to his mountain campsite. Abel no longer feels a part of his home community, but he almost destroys himself in Los Angeles. Tom's and Abel's relationship with nature and the world is broken by their experiences with the white world. In order to find a place in the world, Tom and Abel must accept their heritage and the wholeness which accompanies it.

In order to accept their own native heritage, Tom and Abel must be reaccepted by that legacy. They have lost touch with their spiritual center and have become alienated because they have denied the Native American culture from which they come. To rid themselves of this alienation, Tom and Abel must ritually reenter the traditions of their community. The Bear's Son Tale underlies the symbolic purification and self-realization of the two young men. At the end of each novel Tom and Abel appreciate that they have been the center of their own problems. They had allowed the Euro-American world to distort their vision, and at the same time, to deny their birthright. Through this process Tom and Abel rid themselves of these feelings of alienation. Both accept the past and regain their vision. They are not the undefiled Indians of their youth, but are mature men who can now accept the white world without denying the Indian culture from which they came. As such, they can begin to be whole again.

Notes

Chapter I

[1] Carole Oleson, "The Remembered Earth: Momaday's House Made of Dawn," South Dakota Review, II; (1973), p.76.

[2] John G. Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks (New York: Pocket Books, 1977), p.230.

[3] Neihardt, p.230.

[4] Hal Borland, When the Legends Die (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1963), p.14. Hereafter, this work will be referred to as (WTLD).

[5] N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (New York: Perennial Library, Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), p.25. Hereafter, this work will be referred to as (HMD).

[6] Lawrence J. Evers, "Words and Place: A Reading of House Made of Dawn," Western American Literature, II (1977), p.303.

[7] Joseph F. Trimmer, "Native Americans and the American Mix: N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn," Indiana Social Studies Quarterly 28, (1975), p.177.

[8] Trimmer, p.16.

[9] Oleson, p.76.

[10] Olseon, p.76.

[11] Nora Baker Barry, "The Bear's Son Folk Tale in When the Legends Die and House Made of Dawn," Western American Literature, 12 (1978), p.87.

Chapter II

[1] Evers, p.297.

[2] Evers, p.300.

[3] Evers, p.300.

[4] Jack L. Davis discusses his interpretation of his hypothesis in his article "The Whorf Hypothesis and Native American Literature," South Dakota Review 14, ii, pp.59-72. John P. Carroll presented some of Benjamin Lee Whorf's essays in a collection entitled Language, Thought, and Reality. The paperbook edition was published by the M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. in 1964.

[5] Davis, p.59.

[6] Davis, p.61.

[7] Davis, p.61.

[8] Davis, p.61.

[9] Davis, p.61.

[10] Davis, p.61.

[11] Davis, p.67.

[12] N. Scott Momaday, "A First American Views His Land," National Geographic, 150, No. 1 (1976) p.25.

[13] Evers, p.301.

[14] Trimmer, p.85.

Chapter III

[1] Evers, p.298.

[2] Evers, p.300.

[3] Evers, p.298.

[4] Evers, p.298.

[5] N. Scott Momaday, "Native American Attitudes to the Environment," in Seeing with a Native Eye; Essays on Native American Relationships, ed. Walter H. Capps, (New York: Harper, 1976), p.81.

[6] Momaday, "N.A. Attitudes," p.80.

[7] Momaday, "A First American," p.18.

[8] Momaday, "N.A. Attitudes," p.80.

[9] Momaday, "N.A. Attitudes," p.80.

[10] Momaday, "N.A. Attitudes," p.83.

[11] Oleson, p.71.

[12] Trimmer, p.85.

[13] Trimmer, p.86.

[14] Trimmer, p.79.

[15] Evers, p.309.

[16] Evers, p.309.

[17] Evers, p.312.

[18] Evers, p.310.

Chapter IV

[1] Trimmer, p.76.

[2] Evers, p.300.

[3] Trimmer, p.76.

[4] Trimmer, p.88.

[5] N. Scott Momaday, "An American Land Ethic," Sierra Club Bulletin, 55 (1970), p.10.

[6] Oleson, p.62.

[7] Trimmer, p.89.

[8] Barry, p.282.

[9] Evers, p.308.

[10] Oleson, p.62.

[11] Evers, p.316.

[12] Barry, p.285.

[13] Evers, p.316.

[14] Trimmer, p.86.

[15] Evers, p.313.

[16] Oleson, p.72.

[17] Harold S. McAllister, "Incarnate Grace and the Paths of Salvation in House Made of Dawn," South Dakota Review, 12, iv. (1974), p.124.

[18] Barry, p.275.

[19] Barry, p.275.

[20] Barry, p.275.

[21] Barry, p.276.

[22] Barry, p.276.

[23] Barry, pp.207-8.

[24] Barry, p.282.

[25] Barry, p.282.

[26] Barry, p.281.

[27] Barry, p.282.

[28] Barry, p.285.

[29] Oleson, p.66.

[30] McAllister, p.123.

[31] Evers, p.320.

Conclusion

[1] Oleson, p.60.

[2] Oleson, p.76.

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