CHAPTER: II

N. SCOTT. MOMADAY

N. Scott Momaday is one of the most versatile creative artist in the United States of America. He is a poet, painter, scholar, novelist and storyteller. Being a member of American Indian group he is keenly interested in propagating the native literary work of art with its proper message. He was born in 1934 in Lawton, Oklahoma, Kiowa country in South western Oklahoma. Though he belongs to a Kiowa group, he is fully aware of the American Indian’s history in general and their plight after the arrival of white invaders. Academically very sound (B.A. with Law, M.A., Ph.D. in English) and working at a very reputed post, Momaday has been using his creative energy to invite the attention of the people towards American Indian Art.

As a writer Momaday is well known for his skill of writing. He is the first American Indian writer who is acclaimed for knowing the oral traditions, ceremonial liturgies, Native American history and for making right use of it in his writing.

His very first novel, *The House Made of Dawn* (1968), is unique in its nature. One can see the skill of writer in making use of rich integrations of oral and written tradition of the American Indian in their life. The publication of this novel marked the
beginning of the modern period in the American Indian Writing. Momaday was honoured with the most prestigious Pulitzer Award of 1969 for this novel. This novel has given not only name and fame to him but also dragged attention of the critics towards Native American Literature.

Momaday’s individual talent and racial memory is one of the most significant forces behind his writing. His two autobiographical books, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *The Names: A Memoir* (1976) emphasize importance of the Kiowa landscape and his father’s tribal heritage. *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is the best example of intricate collection of the Kiowa tribal and family stories, history, personal memories of landscapes and the people. It is loaded with multicultural reading experiences. The speciality of this book is that it grew out of the stories Momaday had heard since his childhood. It is the most favourite book to Momaday himself. In the year 1989, Momaday published a novel with different type of theme. The protagonist of the novel is Set, an adopted Kiowa-Anglo. He is a successful San Francisco artist going through a painful mid-life crisis. He gets name, fame and great success but without satisfaction. It may be due to the loss of the loss of forgetting his Kiowa identity. Grey, a mix blood woman nurtures him
towards an understanding of his Kiowa identity and exhilarating and terrifying encounter with bear power.

Momaday’s basic interest is in poetry. His important collection of poetry includes – *Angle of Geese* (1974), *The Guard Dancer* (1976), *In the Presence of Sun* (1992) and the section of poems in *In the Bear’s House* (1999). Through his poetry Momaday tries to demonstrate his ability to draw upon his complex cultural backgrounds. Momaday’s poetry is full of Native American experiences with the mixture of Native Oral and written Euro-American poetic tradition. Momaday is very good painter. He supports his writing with special reference to paintings. In, *In the Presence of the Sun* the third section offers 16 drawings of plains shields each accompanied by a prose poem based on Kiowa oral and written history. In *In The Bear’s House* there is a kind of strong fascination for bear. “The Bear” is not only a long standing personal testament to Kiowa storytelling tradition but also to Momaday it is a spiritual animal. Momaday presents different types of bear figures with poems and the dialogues developed in the book.

Momaday being a keen observer of the native oral tradition, is deeply interested in careful use of language. His collection of essays entitled *The Man made of Words* was published in 1997. In
this book Momaday reveals importance of the Native Oral literatures. He emphasizes the power of words and their effects in the human life.


N. Scott Momaday has achieved greatness in his life. At present he is one of the most celebrated figures in American literature. Most of his works are widely read throughout the world. His works are translated into French, Italian, Russian, Japanese and many other languages in the world. He works as a Regent’s Professor of English at the University of Arizona, he was honoured by different prestigious awards. Some of them are Academy of American Poets Award, the Premio Letterario International “Mondello”, Italy’s highest literary award and the Pulitzer Prize for his celebrated novel *The House Made of Dawn*. Momaday is acting as a member the Kiowa Gaurd Dance Society
and Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is the founder and chairman of the Buffalo Trust, a non-profit foundation dedicated to the preservation of the Sacred in Native American Culture, and its transmission to Native American Youth. Momaday has become a mythic figure for some emerging writers in American; it is the greatest success for any creative artist.

N. Scott Momaday is an American Indian of Kiowa origin. He grew up among the Navajo and Jemez people of Arizona and New Mexico. This background of him has shaped his socio-economic, political, cultural and literary sensibility.

Therefore, temptation to examine Momaday’s works for their “Indian” qualities has been considerable. A reviewer of Momaday’s *The Names: A Memoir* has suggested that the essence of the book is: “undeniably Indian, with only Indian understanding of the beauty and value of life.”¹

Margaret F. Nelson operated with similar racial criteria in her study of Momaday.² She claimed that one reason why Momaday “may be difficult to understand is that he ‘thinks like an Indian.’” And added that “Momaday is typically Indian in his refusal to explain”.³ She concluded that “Momaday’s search for his identity is selective in typically Indian fashion.”⁴
However the adjective “Indian” as a critical term is untenable because it is so vague that at times it might appear to be meaningless. More important, the suggestion that Momaday’s work reflects only some kind of aboriginal mentality. It betrays insufficient understanding of the context from which his writing emerges. Such a critical stance inevitably leads to an unbalanced and restricted view of his importance as a writer and may even give rise to racial stereotypes.

Racial identity is an important concern of many minority writers and therefore, it might demand critic’s attention. But since their identities are shaped in the tension between cultures, they embrace elements and patterns from different culture. Moreover, these writers do not work in an artistic vacuum. They are free to incorporate elements from literature and art outside their immediate cultural spheres.

The examination of the cultural and literary influences on Momaday’s work is important to understand his writing. These are also crucial for appreciation of literature by many other indigenous writers. Momaday once made the point:

The Indian..., by virtue of his diversity, has been rather more difficult to identify than have other Americans. His ethnic definitions, whatever it is, consist in an intricate, complex of experience, and in
numerous categories of language, philosophy and society.\textsuperscript{5}

The recognition of these facts has also been sadly missing in the history of Indian-White relations, resulting in the lack of understanding for one in the motivations for the self-portrayal of American Indian writers today. The quality and success of Momaday’s first novel is the result of a long-ripening process. It was conceived in the conception in early 1960s and 1968. \textit{The House Made of Dawn} was originally intended as a book of poems. However it was converted into the novel.

If Momaday’s \textit{The Way to Rainy Mountain} and \textit{The Names: A Memoir} are expressions of his own search for an identity, \textit{The House made of Dawn} is a powerful plea for the realistic portrayal of forces against which it is accomplished.

In fact, \textit{The House Made of Dawn} focuses on the problem of identity. It deals with Abel’s early years of harmony and the gradual emergence of conflicts which lead to his departure from the community. It is to examine Abel’s attempts to resolve his confusion after his return from a war which has further undermined his sense of belonging. In fact, Abel has become a man between two cultures, unable to cope with either: Abel’s eventual return to his nature and culture takes the course of a rite of passage.
Abel is struggling to find his identity within his own tribes long before he comes in direct contact with the culture of modern America. From a developmental point of view his experience is universal; it is the struggle of a young man to find his rightful place in changing community. However, his crisis also reflects the crisis of his tribe and culture which denies its young members accommodation in changing situation.

Abel’s problem grows out of a generational conflict within a tribal community in which the ancient traditions tend to lose their meanings for the young ones who confront the cultural tradition of modern America. The old generation of the tribe tends to exert pressure on the young members in order to assure the perpetuation of the old customs, traditions and way of life. This can lead to a conflict between communal obligations and the search for a new Indian identity which can include the benefit of modernism in American society. The old generation tends to exert pressure on young tribal members in order to assure the perpetuation of the old ways. This can lead to a conflict between communal obligations and the search for a new Indian identity that includes the benefit of modern society.

Abel’s return to the native community suggests that Indian culture is capable of overcoming crisis. This is possible not by
isolating oneself but through an adherence to the basic traditional values and by the selective acceptance of new values from other cultures including that of modern America. This strategy, which has been a strength of American Indian societies throughout the period of contact with other cultural groups, must be continued. In giving an account of the developmental crisis in the protagonist’s life in a period of increasing cultural and economic pressures, *The House Made Of Dawn*, then, is a novel about an individual and a communal search for identity.

As a result of their geographical isolation and their cultural conservatism, the Rio Grande Pueblos, have succeeded in keeping their languages, religions, and traditional customs relatively intact despite the pressures of Spanish and Anglo-American cultural encroachment. This is how Momaday portrays life in the village:

The people of town have little need. They do not hanker after progress and have never changed their essential way of life. Their invaders were long time in conquering them; and now, after four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky and make their living from the things that are and have always been within their reach; while in the discrimination of pride they acquire form their conquerors only the luxury of example. They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own,
Abel grows up in the world where the preservation of old values counts more than progress; even today Pueblo life revolves around a complex system of religious ceremonies based on a solar calendar, whose keeper is the Cacique, the Pueblo medicine man. According to his observation of the course of the sun, the Cacique determines all the essential events of tribal life, the planting, harvesting, and the religious ceremonies.

In *The House Made of Dawn* the old man, grandfather of Abel, Francisco functions as a teacher and guardian of the traditional Pueblo way of life. He represents the old generation of the tribe which possesses the cultural heritage and serves to preserve it by handing it down to the next generation. Francisco teaches his grandsons, Abel and Vidal, to observe the sun. He tells them:

> 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.7

In revealing the connection between the sun, landscape, and rhythms of Indian life, Francisco is routes the two boys in the old ways of the tribe. Francisco’s teaching are central to their development as well as perpetuation of Jemez tradition. Jamez is a
place, where these native people were living. It had its own traditions and customs. Under the guidance of the old man, Francisco, Abel is raised according to the tribal patterns of his people and acquires a deep feeling for his environment. Typical of Abel’s consciousness in his natural attitude towards death, Momaday writes:

    .... he knew somehow that his mother was soon going to die of her illness. It was nothing he was told, but he knew it anyway and without understanding, as he knew already the motion of the sun and the seasons.\(^8\)

Abel is at the center of Indian life. He herds sheep, takes part in a deer hunt, and participates in the ceremonial activities of life. Despite this seeming harmony with the tribal world, however, Abel somehow remains a stranger within his community. Not only during his time away from the reservation but also while growing up among his own people, he lives in a state of isolation. He was born in this situation as an outsider. The novel describes:

    He did not know who his father was. His father was a Navajo, they said, or a Sia, or an Isleta, on outsider anyway, which made him and his mother and Vidal somehow foreign and strange.\(^9\)

Tribal communities are not necessarily homogeneous entities as they are often perceived by outsiders; within the tribe
subgroups may exist which do not acquire the full acceptance of the majority. The early deaths of his mother and brother increase Abel’s isolation. He is left with his grandfather, Francisco, as his only other relation. Momaday shows in his novel the severity of the conflict between a budding individual and a rigid tribal pattern which depends for its perpetuation on the absence of individual awareness. He reveals how the crisis in Abel’s personal development that reflects in the Pueblo culture. Abel’s decision to leave the Pueblo community grows out of the realization that he cannot find an identity simply by adopting the teachings of his grandfather. Momaday shows by means of a few central events that in order to remain to himself, Abel has no choice but to step out of the limiting realm of his native village.

A most significant experience during Abel’s adolescence is his vision of an eagle which carries a snake in its talons. Momaday describes:

He had seen a strange thing, an eagle which carries a snake in its Talons closed upon a snake; it was an awful, holy sight, full of magic and meaning.¹⁰

Both eagle and snake have deep religious meaning for the Indians of the Southwest. The snake is associated with the coming of water
and is worshiped in ceremonies such as the famous snake dance of the Hopis.

The fascination of the albino figure in *The House Made of Dawn* ties as much in its connection with the Indian notion of witchcraft as in Momaday’s adoption of the great theme of evil in American Literature to the world of the Jemez Pueblo Indians.

The Priest of the Sun chapter is the most puzzling and haunting section of *The House Made of Dawn*. The narrative voice is centered in Abel’s consciousness as he is lying delirious from alcohol and the brutal beating he received from Martinez, a violent and corrupt police officer, on the beach outside Los Angeles. Through multiple flashbacks Momaday reveals the psychological situation of a man who is lost between two worlds. Firstly, he is torn apart culturally and spiritually and secondly, the world which is drifting towards death. Abel is “reeling on the edge of the void.” But he does not fall.

The very moment when Abel seems to have exhausted all the possibilities of finding redemption, holds the seed to his ultimate recovery. In the extremity of his situation, Abel gains insight into his native culture which leads him to a new understanding of his place in the scheme of things.
Momaday uses imagery only when the seemingly unrelated symbols are combined in a coherent pattern give full meaning of the beach scene. Abel has been suffering from the lack of stable identity as it is revealed by his position as an outsider in the community. He is unable to identify the tribal ritual and ceremonies. He fails to relate on a level of intimacy to his female partners. The process of degeneration resulting from this is a lack of stability that reaches to its climax, Abel’s struggle with the murderous police officer and subsequently with death itself is a symbol that surrounds the events which suggest that, what is actually happening in this powerfully conceived scene, in which Abel progresses from lack of understanding to knowledge, from chaos to ritualistic death to rebirth.

The fish imagery used by Momaday not only reflects Abel’s suffering but also indicates the upward movement in his development after he has become aware of his situation. When Abel raises the energy to fight against the situation where he was put in and eventually escapes the drift towards death, the fish too have found its way back to safety in the deep. As Abel will eventually return home to his tribal community:

and far out in the night where nothing else was, the fishes lay out on the black water, holding still against all the force
and motion of the sea; or close to the surface, darting and rolling and spinning like lures, they played in the track of the moon.\textsuperscript{12}

The most complex symbol Momaday employs in this novel is that of the moon. It is the common denominator in a number of scenes throughout the novel. It brings various episodes together in Abel and reader’s mind. The moon, of course, is also associated with the sea and the initiation ritual. Most importantly, however, it is Abel’s realization of cosmic significance of the moon. To appreciate the subtlety of this image pattern, we need to scrutinize in detail its various functions. An important step towards Abel’s understanding of cosmic unity lies in his realization that the moon controls the sea as well as the land

Why should Abel think of the fishes? He could not understand the sea; it was not of his world. It was an enchanted thing, too, for it lay under the spell of the moon. It bent to the moon and the moon made a bright, shimmering course upon it.\textsuperscript{13}

This recognition of the moon’s universal power is to order and control the universe reflects Abel’s growing reattunement of American Indian thought.

At the beginning of \textit{The House Made Of Dawn}, Momaday refers to the moon’s influence on the communal work in the field. He writes: “The townsmen work all the summer in the fields.
When the moon is full, they work at night with ancient, hand
made plows and hoes.”14

The holiness attributed to the moon by American
Indians is eluded to it in the: “red and yellow symbols of the
sun and the moon.”15 Which decorate the lantern in the Indian
church in Los Angeles.

Momaday believes that the Indian relation to the world is
based on the power of the word. The word links the Indian to
his religious and mythological heritage. Indian culture is based
on an oral tradition and maintains itself through the creative
power of the word. If the word is lost, culture and identity are
also lost. The following passage shows that Abel has indeed lost
the power of words:

He began almost to be a peace, as if he had
drunk a little of warm, sweet wine, for a
time no longer centered upon himself. He
was alone, and he wanted to make songs
upon their looms out of colored yarn, but
he had not got the right words together. It
would have been a creation song; he
would have sung lowly of the first world,
of fire and flood, and of the emergence of
dawn from the hills.16

As his imaginative recreation of his childhood and adolescence
was an attempt to understand his problematic situation, his efforts
to make a song is an endeavour to restore harmony between him
and the universe. Abel’s creation song would have been a bid for the creative power that heals and restores harmony between himself and the universe. The second symptom of identity confusion, accordingly, is the upset in his sexuality. The sexual relationship between Abel and Angela St. John is totally disturbed. At the same time after various attempts to find access to the tribal rituals and ceremonies, Abel could not get the success. At last Abel tries to acquire some kind of stability in an intimate relationship with the white women. This second endeavour proves to be as unsuccessful as the first. Abel reveals the insecurity in his confused identity. The third characteristic of identity confusion, is inability to vent aggression appropriately, leads to the climax of the first chapter. Abel’s killing of the Albino, the white man is the act of violence which reflects Abel’s inability to cope with the confusion. He is the victim of his personal and cultural isolation. White man’s culture has estranged him from his home. His attempt to establish an identity in an intimate relationship with Angela has also failed.

Abel’s running at dawn, singing the words of “Night Chant”, marks the end of his struggle for identity. He is finally returned to his place in the The House Made of Dawn. He has found the right words to articulate himself and he has a vision of the appropriate path to wholeness. The novel’s final scene is
charged with mythological overtones according to a Pueblo emergence myth. Latik, the corn mother, after creating the present world, called on the people to emerge from previous underground world. As they entered their new environment they were blinded. Then, the story goes on to explain the primordial setting of dawn over the Jemez valley. Abel with the native vision could see at last without having to thank. He could see the canyons and the mountains and the sky. He could see the rain and the rivers and the fields beyond. He could see the dark hills at dawn.  

His vision and voice are expressions of his communion with his native tradition. He raises the hope that he may become the living link between the ancient past and a promising future for his tribal culture.

As the novel ends, Abel spreads his arms and chest, as the ritual prescribes, and joins the runners, though unlike Francisco he runs behind them. As he runs, he sings the songs he had longed to: “House Made of Pollen, House Made Of Dawn.”

This is a happy ending, or as happy an ending as the novel will allow. Abel has entered into the ceremonial life of his people, and he has regained his voice. His running is symbolic of his emotional and spiritual health, even though his legs buckle and he
falls. For him to win the race would be impossible corny—a totally discordant note of contrived cheerfulness.

Like Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake*, *The House Made of Dawn* ends as it begins. Abel is running and, while he running he sings. It is important to notice what he sings. It is the Navajo prayer song that is *The House Made of Dawn*. Abel has found himself in his own culture, a blend of Tanoan, Spanish, and American influences, and he is sings a Navajo song, appropriate in light of his own mixed ancestry.

*The Way to Rainy Mountain* is multivoiced response to the question of personal and cultural creation through imagination and language. In this novel Momaday retraces the migration route of the Kiowa from the *Headwaters* of the *Yellowstone* to *Rainy Mountain*, a knoll on the southern plains. In his own fifteen-hundred-mile journey he recreates the emergence, Golden Age, and waning of Kiowa culture. He had heard the legends from Aho, his grandmother. He says in the introduction that he wanted to see in reality Aho; his grandmother. He says:

> Although my grandmother lived out her long life in the shadow of Rainy Mountain, the immense landscape of the continental interior lay like memory in her blood. She could tell of the Crows whom she had never seen, and of the Black Hills, Where she had never been. I wanted to see in
The novel, like *The House Made of Dawn*, is carefully structured. He begins with a poem “Headwaters”, proceeds with prologue and introduction, and develops the body of the work in three main sections: “The Setting Out”, “The Going On”, “The Closing In”. Each of these major sections is comprised of a number of three units which reflect on the subject’s literal or metaphoric-through legend, history, and personal recollection. “The Closing” In is followed by an epilogue and a final poem – “Rainy Mountain Cemetery”. Illustration by AL Momaday, N. Scott’s father, accents the images of the legends and sketches.

There are three distinct narrative voices in *The Way to Rainy Mountains*: the mythical, the historical, and the immediate. Each of the translations is followed by two kinds of commentary, the first is documentary and the second is privately reminiscent. Together, they serve, hopefully, to validate the oral tradition to an extent that might not otherwise be possible. The commentaries may not otherwise be possible. The commentaries are meant to provide a context in which the elements of oral tradition might transcend the categorical limits of prehistory, anonymity, and archaeology in the narrow sense.
The device of the journey is peculiarly appropriate to such principle of narration. *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is a whole journey, intricate with notion and meaning. It is made with the whole memory, that experience of the mind which is legendary as well as historical, personal at the same time cultural.

The Kiowa tales which are contained in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* constitute a kind of literary chronicle. In a sense they are the milestones of that old migration in which Kiowa’s made journey from the Yellowstone to the Washita. They recorded a transformation of the tribal mind, as it encounters for the first time the landscape of the Great Plains; they evoke the sense of search and discovery. Many of the tales are very old, and they have not until now been set down in writing. Among them there is one that stands out in mind.

In the prologue Momaday clarifies his theme. The Kiowa, he says:

had conceived a good idea of themselves; they had dared to imagine and determine who they are in one sense. Then, the way to Rainy Mountain is preeminently the history of an idea, man’s idea of himself, and it has old and essential being in Language.... the journey herein recalled continues to be made a new each time the miracle comes to mind, for that is
peculiarly the right and responsibility of imagination. \(^{20}\)

Momaday continues in the prologue to elucidate his method, which parallels the working of the mind and memory:

> It is a whole journey, intricate with motion; and it is made with the whole memory, that experience of the mind which is legendary as well as historical, personal as well as cultural. And the journey is an evocation of three things in particular: a landscape that is incomparable, a time that is gone forever, and the human spirit, which endures. The imaginative experience and the historical express equally the tradition of man’s reality. Finally, then, the journey recalled among other things the revelation of one way in which these tradition are conceived, developed, and interfused in the human mind. \(^{21}\)

Momaday’s link with the legends of the Kiowa, with his racial memory, comes through Aho. In the introduction he recalls his grandmother, a woman who remembered in her life the last days of the Golden Age. She remembers the horse, the buffalo, and the Sun Dance, the expression of religious belief and cultural pride. His grandmother was present at the bend of the Washita river in July 1890, when the soldier rode out from fort sill to put an end to the dance:
forbidden without cause the essential act of their faith, having seen the wild herds slaughtered and left to rot upon the ground, the Kiowa’s backed away forever from the medicine tree.” His grandmother.” without bitterness and for as long as she lived, bore a vision of decide.  

This passage and others in the introduction establish the tone of nostalgia, regret, and sadness at the virtual of Kiowa culture. In The Setting Out, it emphasis is on the sacred myths of Kiowa, the origin of the tribe, of their name for themselves, of Tai-Me, the Sun Dance figure, and of the medicine bundles. The legends in this section of the novel are based on the verbal tradition from time immemorial and, because of this much of “The Setting Out” is sacred, mythic, and profound. The individual legends in themselves show the power of the imagination translated through racial memory. The ability to make a story to explain changes in the physical environment is one thing, but the power to make a story change in the physical environment is another. The legends of the twins, grandmother spider, of dogs and sea creatures who speak to man, are complimented by references to Mommedaty. The narrator’s grandfather, a peyote man, has power to see signs full of magic and meaning.

The eighth unit of this section specifically concerns language. The legend centers on the twins, the offspring of the
Sun. The twins caught in the cave of the giant recall the advice of their grandmother spider:

If ever you get caught in the cave, say to yourselves the word thain Mom, above my eyes, “when the giant began to set fires around, the twins repeated the words thain-mom over and over to themselves, and the smoke remained above their eyes. When the giant had made three great clouds of smoke, his wife saw that the twins sat without coughing or crying, and she became frightened. “Let them go”, she said, “or something bad will happen to us."

The historical passage notes the custom of the people concerning names:

A ward has power in and of itself. It comes from nothing into sound and meaning; it gives origin to all things. By means of words can a man deal with the world an equal terms. And the word is sacred. A man’s name is his own; he can keep it or give it away as he likes. Until recent times, the Kiowa’s would not speak the name of a dead man. To do so would have been disrespected and dishonest. The dead take their names with them out of the world.

And Momaday’s recollection is of Aho and the word she pronounced to word of evil:

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

In these passages Momaday illustrates how the power of language lives on the mythic, cultural and personal level.

In “The Going on” Momaday narrows his scope and concentrates on the picture of the Kiowa during their Golden Age. The individual segments disclose aspects of the customs of the people. One episode tells of the poor status of women, another relates the veneration paid to a horse and dog. Another triplet, segment XVI, shows contrasting view of the buffalo. Because The Going On shows the custom of the people, it also shows the changes in Kiowa lifestyle after the coming of the white man. The three parts of this segment directly contrast each other, pointing out nobility, pathos, and nostalgia. The legends tell of a buffalo with horns of steel, a beautiful and sacred creature. The historical passage relates how in the easily 1930s the town people of Carnegie, Oklahoma, gathered around two old Kiowa men who found and ran down a broken down buffalo, a crowd of men shouted and laughed at the scene. Then Momaday recalls how he
and his father were chased by a buffalo-cow that was protecting her new born calf:

Her great dark head (was) low and fearful looking.... She gave up after a short run, and I think we had not been in any real danger. But the spring morning was deep and beautiful and our hearts were beating fast and we knew just then what it was to be alive.  

In “The Closing In” the subjects and references become more and more particular. Mommedaty, the original name of Momaday’s grandfather and Aho are the new figures in the legend. The narrator has literally closed-in on specific figures, his grandparents, who embody the creative qualities of myth and language. Mommedaty, we have been told, was a peyote man. In section XXI, the narrator recalls the four important things his grandfather had seen:

Mommedaty saw four things that were truly remarkable. This head of the child was one, and the tracks of water beast another. Once, when he walked near the pecan grove, he saw three small alligators on a log. No one has ever seen them before and no one ever saw them again. Finally there was this something had always bothered Mommedaty, a small aggravation that was never quite out of mind, like a name on the tip of the tongue. He had always wondered how it is that the mound of earth which a mole makes
around the opening of its burrow is so fine. It is nearly as fine as powder, and it seems almost to have been shifted. One day Mommedaty was sitting quietly when a mole came out of the earth. Its checks were puffed out as it had been a squirrel packing nuts. It looked all round for a moment, then blew the fine dark earth out of its mouth. And this it did again and again, until there was a ring of black powdery earth on the ground. That was a strange and meaningful thing to see. It meant that Mommedaty had got possession of a powerful medicine.27

Aho remembered strange, unexplainable things also. It concerned the Tai-Me bundle:

Once Aho went to see the Tai-me keeper’s wife. The two of them were sitting together, passing the time of day, when they heard an awful noise, as if a tree or some other very heavy object had fallen down. It frightened them, and they went to see what on earth it was. It was Tai-me fell; nothing caused it, as far as anyone could see.28

With the last entry in “The Closing In” Momaday restates his method and subject, to imagine from the many angles of vision the remembered earth:

Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from many angles as he can, to
Momaday has ended his pilgrimage. He has recreated by merging time and space, the journey of the Kiowa. The writer’s pilgrimage had added another dimension to his existence.

Two other non Native American writers come to mind in connection with the above passage. One is Wendell Berry, the Kentucky writer and teacher, whose essays in _The Long-Legged House_ speak prophetically about the power of the land. Similar to Momaday in conviction and poetic intensity, Berry believes that unless we understand land, we are:

> at odds with everything we touch, to leave the regions of our conquest, the cleared fields, the towns and cities, the highways- and re-enter the woods. For only there can a man encounter the silence and the darkness of his own absence? Only in this silence and darkness can he recover the sense of the world’s Longevity.

Another southern writer, Eudora Wetly, in an essay entitled ‘Place in Fiction’ characterizes writing, which rendered the actual and metaphoric force of a particular place. Although she uses the word “Place” in a more limited sense than Momaday’s experience with particular landscape of which he speaks. She says:
I think the sense of place is as essential to good and honest writing as a logical mind...One place comprehend can make us understand other places better. Sense of place gives equilibrium extended, it is sense of direction too... it is the sense of place going with us still that is the ball of golden thread to carry us there back and in every sense of the word to bring us home.\(^{31}\)

Momaday’s journey in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, informed by personal and racial memory and evocative of real and imagined place, arrives at a remarkable destination. It is the same destination which Abel reached when he came home and learned to experience his own cure. It is a destination not often reached in Western literature, for to get there a person must call upon the power of the spirit to speak, sing, and affirm existence.

*The Way to Rainy Mountain*, is a journey of the Kiowa’s from the hollow log of their myth to their destiny on the southern plains. It is also the author’s own journey from his first discovery of what it means to be a Kiowa descendant to the recognition of common morality. In *The Way to Rainy Mountain* cemetery, and of its final wisdom makes it possible in restructuring the common Kiowa experience in a literary work of art.

The novel, therefore, which is built on small pieces of myth, legend and history, achieves structural unity in spite of its apparently fragmentary nature. But this unity is reinforced by two
motifs which sound again and again in the fragments. They are equally important because, if taken together, they are the source of the tension in Kiowa story. On one hand, there is the preoccupation with what might be called human duality, division, as reflected in stories of divided brothers of tribal division, of loss. On the other hand, there is the constant presence of the grandmother, as a unifying force. In the first story ‘The Setting Forth’, we see why the division of the Kiowa was both a danger and a necessity. Before the people went through the hollow log to emerge into the world there were more of them, but not all of them “go-out” because a pregnant woman got stuck in the log. This juxtaposition of fertility and tribal birth on the one hand, and of threat to the life of the tribe, on the other, is crucial. It suggests both the positive and negative aspects of the duality which is the novel’s basic theme.

Theme of separation is appropriate for a novel which is designed to bring the divided past and present of the Kiowa’s together to unite Kiowa myth and Kiowa reality in one unified vision. Furthermore, the author’s real journey is his own. It is a story of the process by which his separation from the Kiowa identity was healed by his own journey to Rainy Mountain.
The Life of the Kiowa’s, from their mysterious beginning to their final decline as a society and culture, is understood in terms of the grandmother who strives to maintain unity is constantly threatened and ultimately dies. The death of Aho, the living presence of that principle in the memory of the author, requires the unity of the Kiowa past and present. Aho stands for the myth and reality, of the Kiowa experience and the experience of the modern Kiowa. Momaday achieves it in the only way which remains the old vitality of the culture which has fallen into memory:

Yet it is within the reach of memory still, though tenuously now, and moreover it is even defined in remarkably rich and living verbal tradition which demands to be preserved for its own sake. The Living memory and the verbal tradition which transcends it were brought together for me once and for all in the person of Ko-sahn.32

The intelligence of the artist, which restores life of myths of the Kiowa’s as it makes yet another contribution to the ever necessary process of restoring life to language itself. In Momaday’s vision, language is the magical element in human experience. As Tai-Me spoke to the Kiowa’s and to the vision out of which Momaday has produced a profoundly civilized work of literature.

*The Names: A Memoir* too, deals with the unity between myth and an individual’s life. Momaday’s Kiowa name, Tsoai-
Talee, is the symbolic tie to the mythical world of his ancestors. When Momaday was six months old, his parents took him to Devil’s Tower in Wyoming Tsoai is the milestone for the Kiowa migration to the south. The Kiowa’s has made a story to account for the monolith. It tells of seven sisters and a brother; while they were playing, the boy suddenly changes into bear and chases after his frightened sisters who, with the help of a taking tree, escape into the sky where they become the stars of the Big Dipper. The bear, in his futile pursuit, leaves his claw marks on the bark of the tree, which turns Tsoai into a “rock tree”.

The purpose of this pilgrimage to Devil Tower was to place Momaday in Tsoai’s presence, “so that by means of the child the memory of the myth should be renewed in the blood of the coming-out-people.”

This ritual identification between Momaday and the mythical Kiowa landmark was formally completed by the old man Pohd-Lohk:

Pohd-lohk spoke, as if telling a story, of the coming out people, of their long journey. He spoke of how it was that everything began, of Tsoai, and of the stars falling or holding fast in strange patterns on the Sky. And in this, at last, Pohd-lohk affirmed the whole life of the child in a name, saying. Now you are, Tsoai-Talee”. 
*The Names: A Memoir* is an imaginative reconstruct of childhood and youth, an account of a search for identity. It is also a portrayal of how past and present, myth and reality, dreams and visions come together in the mind of a contemporary American Indian.

In taking stock of his emotional, intellectual, and imaginative responses of the people, culture, and landscapes of his own and his ancestor’s past, Momaday comes to an understanding of himself as the unique individual that he is. He seeks to an account for his identity not merely by referring to formative influences of various cultural environments, Kiowa, Jemez, Navajo, and Anglo-American, but by tracing less tangible, racial component which he believes to be determining force in his life.

While in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, mythical, historical and personal experiences were only loosely connected by an associative structure; they now appear as virtually inseparable, interlocking images in the fabric of Momaday’s consciousness. Past and present, reality and dream, the physical world and the imaginative world coalesce in his vision of existence. Chronological time dissolves as Momaday’s memories move back and forth across the plane of his experience. In the web of his imagination life appears as a temporal dimension in which tribal myths, ancestral stories, and personal experience or recollection
blend into unified whole. The notion of existence as a vertical rather than a horizontal configuration, as an upward surge from the roots of individual to consciousness rather than a movement from past to present, finds expression in this central passage of Momaday’s memoir:

The past and future were simply the larger contingencies of given moments; they bore upon the present and gave it shape. One does not pass through time, but time enters upon him, in his place, as a child, I knew this surely, as a matter of fact; I am not a wise to doubt it now. Notions of the present and future are essentially notions of the present. In the same way an idea of one’s ancestry and posterity is really an idea of the self.35

*The Names: A Memoir* rests on the tenets regarding language and the imagination which has been examined in these chapters. It is the clearest illustration of Momaday’s belief that existence is a function of the imagination. Life is illusory, and human existence finds its fullest realization in the medium of language. Momaday wrote “is simply an idea, an idea of having existence in the scheme of things”.36 He is not concerned with factual truth. He explores people and environments not to arrive some objective veracity but to come to a subjective understanding, to assess their meanings as they affect him personally. In this process of appropriating self, environment and history, Momaday invents and distorts
characters and incidents to create a larger, imaginative truth. In creating his own personal myth, “the bright legend of my youth,” Momaday follows the same impulse which moved his story telling ancestors to create the myths he had inherited.

According to Momaday, story telling has always been a matter of the life blood of a society. It is a kind of investment of ourselves and all our experiences in stories. Momaday portrays himself as growing up in a world of stories, the stories of his ancestors and his race. About his mother’s experience with the Kiowa’s, for instance, he says:

> It is a whole story, hers to tell; yet some part of it is mine as well. And there is a larger story. I think of where I am in it.

As the stories unfold gradually his personal and racial past, a unified impression of Momaday’s self-image emerges.

In two passages Momaday depicts his discovery of language as a means of creation and contour. The first of these episodes deals with man’s dependence on language to create order out of the continuous flux of sense impressions. While this process is normally not experienced consciously, its absence results in the loss of control and stability. Which Momaday dramatizes in his description of a childhood nightmare. He finds himself in a large, bare room without windows or doors. Gradually he grows aware
of a presence in the room, an object that before long time begins to come out. The initial acknowledgement of the phenomenon causes surprise and a certain fascination rather than fear. As the object grows and expands into a huge mass, reducing Momaday to significance and threatening to suffocate him, his terror has no end. He tries to cry out, but his voice fails him to reach.

This symbolic event shows the helplessness of an individual deprived of the power of language, an essential means of control over his experience in the world. Momaday’s reference to a phrase from Navajo ‘Night Chant’ is the best example of it. This traumatic experience seems to have had lasting impact on Momaday by illustrating the precariousness of human existence outside the controlling influence of language.

How many times has this memory been nearly recovered, the definition almost realized! Again and again I have come to that awful edge, that one, word, perhaps, that I cannot bring from my mouth. I sometimes think that it is surely a name, the name of someone or something, that if only I could utter it, the terrific mass would snap away into focus, and I should see and recognize what it is at once, I should have it then, once and for all, in my possession.

The crucial word may have been “Zeidl-bei” with which, as Momaday learned in the course of his growth, the old woman Ko-
Sahn the story of arrow maker, too, taught him the power of language.

The second crucial passage reveals the wonder Momaday experienced in his discovery of the creative power of language. He remembers a day from his childhood at his grandmother’s house. When he had draw the head of a boy on a sheet of paper. The creative act arouses his interest as a result he tries to imagine the world surrounding his creation. To bring its character into sharper focus and make its existence accessible to himself, he achieves this by attaching a name to his drawing:

This is someone. Maybe this is Mommedaty. This is Mommedaty when he was a boy.40

He takes his step unconscious by of its implications, but once the picture and the name have become an equation, he has overcome a sense of wonder:

I wonder at the words. What are they? They stand, they lean and run upon the page of a manuscript, I have made manuscript, rude and illustrious. The page bears the likeness of a boy, so simply crude the likeness to some pallid shadow on my blood- and his name consists in the letters there, words the other, likeness, the little, jumbled drawings of a ritual, the nominal ceremony in which all homage is returned, the legend of the bow’s having
been of his going on. I have said it; I have set it down. I trace the words; I touch myself to the words, and they stand for me. My mind lives among them, moving ever, ever, going on. I lay the page aside, I imagine. In this dual act of graphic and linguistic creation Mommedaty is resurrected in the likeness of a drawing and a name, and equally important, the artist’s relation to his personal and cultural ancestry is affirmed.

In *The Names: A Memoir* Momaday continues his search for Kiowa precedents, which he began in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. He also takes into account his Anglo-American and French ancestors, tracing the maternal side of his family tree back four generations to his forebears from Virginia, Kentucky, and Louisiana. Momaday combines the stories of the Galyens, Ellis’s Scotts, and McMillan’s with imaginative evocations of landscape they inhabited. In part three, the long stream of consciousness narrative illustrates the impact of modern American civilization on Momaday. It throws into the stark relief his growing up between two worlds. This passage is based on his memories of living as an Indian boy in a predominantly white community during World War II. It reflects Momaday’s awareness of being different from his peers without being able to define this difference. His conflicting loyalties to different cultural models and his problems in living up
to his own image of what he thought to be an Indian. He was supposed to highlight the demands of his ambiguous cultural situation. On the one hand he draws up lists of what he considers to be Indian: Kiowa names, songs, stories and the Kiowa language he heard at the rainy mountain. At the same time he attended and witnessed ceremonies, dance material culture. On the other hand he also saw television shows, motion pictures, and popular songs of the forties. American football and the legend of Billy the Kid feed his imagination and lead to confusion. His remarks, “I don’t know how to be a Kiowa” and “I am proud to be so American” are the only two hints of young Momaday’s difficulties in reconciling different cultural influences. He imagines himself as an Indian - hater and as a war hero and a football star. In the latter period he adopts the image of a superhuman Indian:

We must stop Momaday he comes from nowhere from the sun I tell you he’s not human they say he’s an Indian that he wears an eagle feather, has the eyes the heart of an eagle he must be stopped the song of the rising sun.

This is not the only ironic use of the stereotyped Indian. Momaday remembers his own frustration resulting from his inability to live up to the image because of his nearsightedness:
The Indians didn’t wear glasses not the Kiowa’s how can you hunt buffalo with glasses on I broke my glasses.\(^{45}\)

Momaday’s adolescence among the Jemez and Navajo people of New Mexico added yet another cultural context to his Kiowa and Anglo-American experiences. Much of part four of *The Names: A Memoir* reveals the autobiographical elements which entered into the world of *The House Made of Dawn*. While the Jemez, Navajo, and Anglo-American components are given great weight in *The Names: A Memoir*, the prevalent thrust is towards Momaday’s Kiowa background. He complements his understanding of individuality as a result of one’s immediate and singularly personal experience in the world with a belief in a racial determinant of identity. His search for a reconciliation of a modern, individualistic existence with a racial matrix is the pervasive undercurrent of his autobiographical work. Momaday’s conscious and symbolic act of immersing his modern individuality into Kiowa tradition signifies his particular place in history. He grew up without the support of the traditional living in Kiowa culture. In tribal societies the individual self is subordinated to a communal identity and to the natural and supernatural worlds. For Momaday as a self-conscious, modern individual, integration into a racial dimension is no longer a matter of course but the
result of a conscious choice. This finds expression in a poetic fabrication stressing the importance of communal and familial allegiance. Momaday faces here a paradox; the autobiographical form he chooses is a product of modern consciousness rooted in individualism and historicism. These three characteristics are, of course, alien the tribal world Momaday is harking back to, to accommodate this contradiction. Momaday emulates the tribal mentality by focusing on mythical and ancestral precedents before considering his individual existence.

The strategy of mixing modern and traditional elements together, Momaday chooses two classic Indian life stories, of Black Elk and Geronimo. Geronimo’s story begins with an account to Apache emergence, the creation of their homeland, and the meaning of the tribe. Only after the cosmism geologic, tribal, and familial histories have been established does Geronimo consider his individual existence.

Momaday’s dedication of *The Names: A Memoir* is kind of announcement that his story is told in the spirit of his people. His narrative of the ancestry, and the great weight he places on mythical implications of his Kiowa name are all designed to establish a communal and racial framework. He relates his individual existence to it. Unlike Momaday, Geronimo and
Black Elk emerge from intact native communities and their emphasis is on racial tribal existence in telling their life stories. For Momaday this tribal mentality remains accessible only in his artistic imagination.

The structure of the work is another reflection of the link between Momaday’s individual and racial existence. The prologue, relating the mythical emergence of the Kiowa’s, and the epilogue, which tells of Momaday’s return to the place of origin, the hollow log, form an outer circle of racial precedent which surrounds Momaday’s personal existence.

The four parts, too, are tied in a cyclical fashion. In two opening paragraphs of the first part Momaday sets out to conjure up his ancestors and their worlds by pronouncing their names. At the end of part four he makes explicit the meaning of names as carries of tribal precedent and personal memories. At this point the story comes full circle; the end refers back to the beginning. The winner circle demarcates a verbal dimension of reality in which a communal, tribal past has been merged with individual experience.

This is certainly true of *The Names: A Memoir*, in which Momaday takes great liberties with the autobiographical form. He employs novelistic technique to create events and experiences. He freely enters other person’s consciousness, and dramatizes
encounters with his ancestors. At the same time Momaday presents himself through the eyes of an omniscient narrator. As a writer Momaday explains this strategy that there is much margin in autobiographical narrative for speculation. It is the speculation, which represents facts and fiction in a very artistic manner.

Perhaps the most revealing experience or example of this speculative writing is his evocation of Pohd-Lohk an ancestral figure to Momaday. His relation to this man he is very special because he gave him his Indian name. In *The Names: A Memoir*, Momaday creates himself in the image of Pohd-Lohk, and the myths with which the old man identified him. Their kinship is not a matter of inheritance but it is a kind of shared racial imagination.

Most notably, Momaday’s journey of discovery of Kiowa had a precedent in Pohd-Lohk calendar history. It consists of records from an even older calendar painted on hide, the stories related to him by his elders, and finally the events he could recollect himself. Momaday describes Pohd-Lohk Chronicle as: “an instrument with which he could reckon his place in the world.”

His own memoir serves, of course, the same function. Moreover, both accounts appear as a manifestation of an
impersonal force which feeds the spirit of the Kiowa people. Momaday wrote about Pohd-Lohk:

It was as if he could see in (the chronicle’s) Yellow, brittle leaves the long swath of his coming of age and sense in the very nature of it the continuity of rude images in which the meaning of his racial life inherited a force that had been set in motion at the beginning.\textsuperscript{47}

Momaday, too, is conscious that his life is directed by a power, which connects him with the origin of his race:

I went on, further and further into the wide world. Many things happen. And in all this I knew one thing: I knew where the journey had begun, that it was itself a learning of the beginning that the beginning was infinitely worth the learning.\textsuperscript{48}

Towards the end of \textit{The Names: A Memoir}, a symbolic scene captures all the ramifications of Momaday’s relation to his past, both personal and racial. His full form a rock near Jemez implies not only his loss of innocence but also the birth of his consciousness. His skill of bridging the past of ancestors and their presence in the form of memory is very remarkable. Momaday writers:

It was strange thing in my life, and I think of it as the end of an age. I should never again see the world as I saw it on the other side of that moment, in the bright
reflections, and for some of them I have names.\textsuperscript{49}

In \textit{The Names: A Memoir}, Momaday has collected the reflections of the names, stories, and myths he has lived by.

Twenty-one years after the publication of \textit{The House Made of Dawn}, Momaday brought out another novel, \textit{The Ancient Child}. In it he returns to some favorite subjects, the nature of Indians, the aesthetics of painting, and the life and death of Bill the Kid. Momaday’s ambivalence about the ethnic identity is revealed in the two protagonists, Locke Setman, a painter of Kiowa descent, and Grey, a young, mixed blood (Kiowa and Navajo) woman who calls herself the Mayor of Bote, Oklahoma. \textit{Bote} is the Kiowa word for the innards of a cow or buffalo, a dish that the Kiowa prefers raw.

Set, as Locke is called, initially knows little of his Kiowa heritage. His parents died young, and he was raised in San Francisco by a white philosophy professor. Set has become a nationally renowned artist whose paintings are shown in galleries in New York and Paris. On a trip to Oklahoma to attend the funeral of a relative, Set, meets Gray, who gives him a medicine bundle, a collection of sacred objects that the tribe venerates. It begins to exert a strange power over him. Set returns to San Francisco but becomes increasingly disenchanted with his life. Although he is in love with a beautiful, talented woman and has
achieved great success with his painting, under the supernatural influence of the medicine bundle; he gets success but not the satisfaction, so he becomes more and more dissatisfied. Finally his dissatisfaction results into a nervous breakdown. When he recovers, he leaves San Francisco to live with Gray. In his desire to enter her Indian world he completely subjugates himself to her. What has seemed like a realistic, if occasionally strange, novel then shifts abruptly to a wholly different sort of narrative. At the climax of the book Grey performs a ritual that turns Set into a bear.

**The Ancient Child** combines the conventions of the modern novel with the Kiowa myth of Tsoai, the story of a boy who changes into a bear and chases his sisters up to a tree. The sisters become star of Big Dipper, the tree becomes Tsoai, Devil Tower. Momaday has been fascinated with the story, and the figure of the bear.

The use of mythology to add a symbolic dimension to a novel is of course nothing new, nor is the act of metamorphosis. He is not using symbolism or allegory, he is writing about different plane of reality. Set is the Kiowa word for bear, “Setman” is obliviously “bear man”. Momaday includes other myths in *The Ancient Child*. Set is the Egyptian god of the desert, regarded as the embodiment of evil. When Locke turns into the
bear, in the New Mexico desert, he feels the power of evil within him. Locke’s childhood nickname is “Loki”, the Nordic shop shifter. Other important character in *The Ancient Child* is Billy the Kid, Grey’s Fantasy lover. Momaday has long been fascinated with the outlaw. In 1973 he wrote series of columns for the *Santa Fe New Mexican* in which he described his imaginary adventures with Billy.

He later wrote a series of poems to go with the prose sketches, circulated the manuscript among friends, but did not published it. In *The Ancient Child* he gives his fantasies of Grey, adding a few amorous interludes.

Among other things *The Ancient Child* is a chronicle of the West, with the introduction of Billy. Momaday depicts a cowboy along with the Indians. Momaday’s Billy is a mysterious figure who represents what was best and worst about the frontier.

He kills without remorse and yet is capable of great kindness. He is chivalric towards women, not only Grey but also a nun, Sister Blandina. Resourceful and courageous, he is loyal to his friends. The historical Bill, William Bonney, began his career as an outlaw by killing three Indians, but Momaday never mentions that although he knows it. His Billy is more a victim than villain.
Witness to the cruel death of his mother, Billy is later abused by a sadistic jailer and killed by the treacherous Pat Garrett. Momaday’s Billy is thus more sinned against than sinning. In a way Billy is like the bear; there is a power of evil in him, but mostly he is just wild and free.

Momaday’s latest book, *In the Presence of the Sun*, is a collection of poems and the short prose pieces he calls it stories. Many of the poems were published in *Angle of Geese* and *The Gourd Dance*, but he adds twenty-seven new works to it. The volume also features sixty of his drawings. *In the Presence of sun* includes the original sketches and poems about Billy the Kid that Momaday reworked for *The Ancient Child*. Momaday reappropriates Billy, exercising Grey from the account. Billy is once again as if Momaday’s sidekick, a close friend. For Momaday, the life of the artist is a kind of sacred vision. A type of the quest resembling in the protagonists like Abel’s in *The House Made of Dawn* and Set in *The Ancient Child*. It is a quest for moral and intellectual clarity. It emerges slowly in connection with the personal and cultural icons. Studying one of his own barely begun paintings, Set remarks:

I want to believe that there are real forms there, unique, intricate forms straightly related to a deep field of receding
grounds, one after another, ranging to a black infinity, the definite forms of definite things, the very things I cannot comprehend by other names.\textsuperscript{50}

Set’s spiritual development reveals the task of the artist, to confront the mysterious “Black infinity”. He wrests out of it the forms and images that lead through contemplation to knowledge and wisdom.

Corroborating Set’s spiritually acquired knowledge are Momaday’s own paintings, which are much like Set’s as described in this partially autobiographical novel.\textsuperscript{51} Simple and slightly blurred images emerge out of vague backgrounds, as though the artist has coaxed them from a world of incipient form. Especially starting in their effects are Anthracite and Shaman. In the former, patches of shadows suggest that the spirit of coal bears a human-like face, and in the later, the Shaman appears in a foggy luminal space, as though suspended between material and spiritual worlds. Both paintings remind us of fundamental habits of perception suggest that there is much more in the world than we actually see. While \textit{The House Made of Dawn} is fairly subtle in its metatextual statements of looking at images, Momaday’s second novel, \textit{The Ancient Child}, overtly addresses the subject, primarily by focusing on a visual artist Set as a main character. Set’s interior monologues and dialogues often concern painting, perspective
drawing, and the implied interconnections between imaginative structures and the shape of reality. However, major clues to decoding Momaday’s self-conscious language of images in *The Ancient Child* lie in the easily overlooked references to “Painting” and dimensions that occur throughout the text. Reader’s potential experience involves noticing these authorial clues that underscore key images, which require careful interpretation. Momaday compels his reader to think analytically for interpreting the epistemic nature of images created by him.

Considering all these three strategically placed references to ”painting” in this novel, the first Billy the Kid’s humorous advice to Grey. When using a gun or instructing a horse, he says:

> You got to point.... How could he Know such things, she wandered... Ah, what sagacity perished here.\(^5\)

Initially, a reader probably laughs at Grey’s hyperbolic response. After all she is a young girl infatuated with a fantasy lover, and his “Sage” advice seems rather banal. However, subsequent references to “Painting” suggest that perhaps the visionary Grey understands further thought, at least in the context of this novel. A second reference occurs, once again, within one of Grey’s visions. She searches among a group of plains ancestors for her recently deceased
grandmother, Kope’mah, but does not see her. One of the ancestors, Mamanti, points to

Hundreds of trantulas” at Grey’s feet, presumably to suggest that Grey has not recognized Kope’mah in the guise of Grandmother Spider.\textsuperscript{53}

Nor has she recognized the flood all around her as a sign of “emergence “, the beginning of a new “calendar” or phase of existence.\textsuperscript{54} Mamanti, like Billy, instructs by pointing, directing and focusing Grey’s attention on what she looks at but does not fully see. Ultimately, Grey herself as a medicine woman learns how to “Point”: Kneeling, she (drew) lines on the red earth, describing where she and her man must go.\textsuperscript{55}

Her lines in the dirt points to Lukachukai in Navajo country, where Grey and Set begin the next phase of their spiritual journey together, a journey that unfolds in connection with a variety of sacred images. Grey for Set is the one who guides and instructs him. She teaches him to heed and interpret images like bear and centaur. Both Set and Grey encounter in dreams imagination and reality. On the artistic level they are close to each other.

To understand the pattern unfolding in the images emerging from Grey’s and Set’s visionary Liaison, a reader must heed Momaday’s instructions on “painting”, a new “Calendar”, a new
era represented through visual images that collectively tells a story which begins with Set and Grey’s union at Lukachukai. Momaday’s novel proceeds in Native American “Calendar” fashion as a series of memorable visual image. Mamanti and his ancestors in the flood, Set’s arrival, his ritual initiation with the “Centaur” and the bear paw and his transformation into the bear, and so on. The narrative draws to a close with an image of Set and Grey’s mutual transformation. Set is now Tsoai-Talee, and Grey is “the grandmother”:

Grey, sitting away in the invisible dark, heard the grandmother’s voice in her mouth, when Set raised the (bear) paw, as if to bring it down like a cub, she saw it against the window, huge and phallic on the stars, each great Yellow Claw like the horn of the moon.  

The reader, like Grey and Set, must look for the “pattern” that these images compose together. Mamanti points to the spiders, and Grey becomes the “grandmother”. She had sought outside herself perfect atone strikes Set with bear paw so that Set may, in turn, raise it to the stars and the moon. These Native calendar-like images “point” to one another, though they do not relate to one another.

In *The Ancient Child*, Grey is an indiscriminate and naive reader and viewer of art. She models herself after pieces of art as

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the Indian dolls she has seen in museums. When she writes in her journal, she describes herself based on a hodgepodge of popular fictional conventions. It includes picaresque description of Indian women typical to the westerns:

I am a bonny lass. I have enjoyed eighteen wondrous summers, all of them in the vastness of the wilderness, which is my incomparable elements. I am tall and limber and well formed. My mind is clear. I am as trim and graceful as a dove, and I am free to the strictures of “civilization.” So - called. I have dark, lustrous hair, gathered becomingly behind my shell-like ears, sparkling green eyes, an aquiline nose, a small, shapely, delicate mouth like Cupid’s bow, and a whole, symmetrical, and lovely face. My skin is olive and translucent and my bearing is graceful and dignified. My unpretentious attire is altogether appropriate beautifully made by hand, and a tunic, woven of wolf’s hair, similar to garments warn by kings and queens of yore. My small alabaster feet are encased in tiny moccasins, elaborately decorated with bright beads, and a strong of iridescent shells encircles my long, slender, curved, unblemished throat.57

Through Grey’s clichéd imagery, Momaday “points” to an array of texts that have structured her perceptions. Her writing calls attention to unavoidable intertextuality that unites all stories within the “one story”. It is a frame of reference that no writer can escape, due to this no writer can escape the cross-culturalization.
Through Grey’s knowledge, beliefs, ideas and images are inherited from and shaped by, western as well as American Indian Art. Indeed Momaday believes that to understand aesthetic form as episteme is to understand how the human mind works, according to his character Set:

Art-drawing, painting - is an intelligence of some kind, the hand and the eye bringing the imagination down upon the picture plane; and this is nearly perfect understanding of the act of understanding.58

The idea and image of the bears are so profoundly fixed in Set’s psyche that as a boy, he has no fear of “bee-wolves” (another name of bears). Moreover, when Set’s paternal (Indian) family eventually contacts him, the various pieces of his life as a “bear” begin to fall in place accordingly to an ancient, established pattern. Like Abel, Set is ill while he lives in the white world, and he grows as well as he heeds the promptings of his imagination, (and, of course, spirit and tribal memory) While he thinks and acts as a white man, Set describes himself as a piece on a checkerboard, an isolated, merely material pawn of some larger, vaguely sensed but unseen power. However thinking and acting as an Indian, he rejects this view. He feels guided by spiritual vision, onto a collectively meaningful path. On this path, many separate images come together to tell the story of a complete
rather than a fragmented self. His paintings themselves, requiring contemplation and interaction within his personality.

By writing, drawing and painting, Momaday has invented himself as the bear in response to an inner vision, an “idea” that he has about himself as an Indian. In his latest novel, *The Ancient Child*, he suggests that this process of self invention is similar to drawing and producing a complete and full dimensional narrative. As metacommentary on the narrative process, his section titles in *The Ancient Child* are compositely a major clue to Momaday’s thinking not only about the self but also about the narrative as an icon, epistemic source of identity.

N. Scott Momaday its the best example of an amalgam of modernity and traditional life. As an artist of the twentieth century America, he is the master of techniques of art. He is well aware of the happenings in the artistic world. He knows how to put in originality in the work of art. As a painter, poet and fictional writer he has inscribed his name in the history of American art. As a writer, he is honoured with number of prestigious prizes. The Pulitzer Award of 1969 is the feather in his crown.

Momaday being a writer of Kiowa tribe is fully aware of the history of his ancestors. At the same time the life style of the Native Americans before the European invaders and the sea-
change that took place after the European’s arrived in America. Momaday tries to capture all these moments in his writing. In the Poems, *In the Bears House* (1999), he passes a kind of grim note which is applicable to all the Native peoples in America. He asserts that ‘Home’ of these Native people has been turned into ‘House’ due to an arrival of the white people. They have lost their personal as well as social integration. This kind of irreparable loss has not only damaged the physical, materialistic condition of these people but also wounded deeply in their mind and paralysed their total growth. As an artist Momaday tries to describe the grim and sorrowful condition of these people. Being a learned man, although working with the highly educated people and living in the city like Oklahoma, he can not forget the conditions in which his other fellow people live. In fact, there is a strong feeling in him that along with him they are the part and parcel of the tribal history. Momaday, being a writer tries to shoulder the responsibility of portraying the life of these people. Most of his characters are put in the white man’s world, due to the domination of white people, Native characters are either totally suppressed or have lost their originality and are caught in the state of confusion. Their journey of life is meaningless in the world totally controlled by the white man. The life in this kind of world lacks liveness,
happiness and satisfaction. So most of the characters try to go back to their original, ancestral world to get their original identity.

In *The House Made of Dawn*, Abel’s identity crisis is based on the encroachment of white culture. Before the arrival of the white invaders in the virgin Native American land, everything had its own order and symmetry. The socio-cultural set up was accepted by these original inhabitants of this land. As soon as the whites entered their land, their power hungry nature and materialistic interests resulted into grabbing the land of these Native people. They destroyed the traditional beliefs of these people and the sacredness associated with it. The cruelty and inhuman behaviours of the whites created great confusion in the minds of the Native people. This multifaceted confusion resulted into the problems like:

1) loss of power of words, power of expression leading to the loss of language;

2) it has broken the traditional beliefs regarding their sacred places, religion, shamans, super power including their gods.

3) the socio-political system raised by the whites could not create any kind of respect in the minds of the Natives Americans. They had strong anathema against it.
Instead of living in this kind of world, they preferred to go back to their own tribal world. Momaday through his work of art encodes this type of message for his readers, his each and every character seeks this kind of salvation.

Abel is the most representative character created by Momaday in *The House Made of Dawn*. As he is caught in the powerful clutches of the white colonizers, he has to face the problems like.

1) loss of words-leading to the loss of language and it ultimately means a loss of everything;

2) the most severe problem in him is the upset in sexuality and

3) he is unable to vent the aggression. In short, Abel is not able to express his anger due to the confusion created by these ruling people.

Throughout the novel Momaday describes his problems at various level and ultimately he could resume his own identity after returning to his Native tradition. Momaday raises the hope that Abel may become the living link between the ancient past and promising future of his tribal culture. Abel’s returning action to his original tribal tradition is very symbolic. He is singing a song –*The House Made of Dawn* which is full of emotions and spiritual health.
The way to Rainy Mountain is a kind of journey of the Kiowa people from Yellowstone to the Washita river. All the characters in this novel intends to search their own identity with the help of their history, and their past. One can see an interlink between the protagonist of The House Made of Dawn, Abel, and the characters making their physical and spiritual journey in The Way to Rainy Mountain.

The Names: A Memoir is based on the autobiographical element of the writer N. Scott Momaday. It has a great link between the reflection on individual’s existence and the racial existence. As a writer Momaday recollects various names, stories and myths which are responsible in shaping his own personality. It has great significance in his life as an individual and at the same time it is representative example for all the Native American people.

In The Ancient Child Momaday comes out with his favorite subjects like the nature of Indians, the aesthetics of painting and the life and death of Bill, the kid. Momaday’s ambivalence about the ethnic identity is revealed in the two protagonists, Locke Setman, a Kiowa painter and Grey, a young mixed-blood woman. The story is fully charged with the mixture of modern life and traditional tribal culture. Set, a central character in the novel, initially knows little about his Kiowa heritage. His parents died
young, and he was raised in San Francisco by a white philosophy Professor. Set becomes a nationality reknowned artist whose paintings are shown in the galleries in New York and Paris. On a trip to Oklahoma to attend the funeral of a relative, he meets Grey. Grey being a follower of traditional Indian life, gives him a medicine bundle, a collection of sacred objects that the tribe venerates. It begins to exert a strange power over him. He achieves great success as a painter under the influence of the supernatural element of the medicine bundle. He gets success but it is without satisfaction. It is a kind of state of confusion for Set. He becomes more and more dissatisfied and finally his dissatisfaction results into a nervous breakdown. To recover from this kind of stage, Grey performs a ritual that turns Set into a bear. Here, one can see the interlink of the native tradition of Momaday’s writing. He combines the conventions of the modern novel with the Kiowa myth of Tsoai, the story of a boy who changes into a bear and chases his sister up to a tree. The sisters become star of Big Dipper, the tree becomes Tsoai, Devil Tower. Momaday has been fascinated with the story, and the figure of a bear. The use of mythology to add a symbolic dimension to a novel is of course nothing new nor it is the act of metamorphosis. He is not using symbolism or allegory; he is writing about different plane of reality. Set is the Kiowa word for bear, “Set man” is obviously
“bear man”. Momaday includes one more myth in *The Ancient Child*. Set gets his identity after returning to the ancestral world. Momaday depicts the world of Native Americans under white domination. He tries to search the root course of each and every sorrowfulness, confusion and dissatisfaction. It lies in the hegemony of white people. So every character in Momaday’s work of art tries to become free from this unholy world and wish as to return the tribal, ancestral world. Abel as a protagonist in *The House made of Dawn* he returns to Jemez Pueblo and recovers himself. Set, in *The Ancient Child* could not get these Satisfaction as a painter but when he surrenders himself to Grey, a native woman and she performs a Native ritual to accept him in native world as a bear he reaches to salvation. Same thing is there in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *The Names: A memoir*. All the characters make their physical and spiritual journey to return to their original world. Momaday’s other works like – *In the Presence of the Sun*, a collection of poems and the stories, and *In The Bears House*, a collection of poems, intend the same tone of going back to their original, ancestrial world. In short, Momaday as “a man made of words” uses his vigorous energy to emphasise the significance of his ancestral world. There may be name, fame and materialistic gains in the present world but what about the satisfaction? Momaday being a scholar of American Indian history
with artistic vision comes out with an alternative world. It is the ancestral world of Native Americans. After great suffering and suffocation his characters reaches to their original identity. It is a kind of state of salvation for them. It may be on their individual level but it is also a representative example for the others.

To sum up, all the major characters in the creative writings of N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko reclaim and regain their own tribal identity. They are not happy in the world of white domination and cultural hegemony. So, they wish to go back to their ancestral world and live happily. The creative world of Momaday day and Silko is full with such kind of feelings and experiences. Momaday’s protagonist Abel, in The House Made of Dawn, Locke Setman in the Ancient Child and the autobiographical world created by Momaday in The Names: A Memoir and the other writing including his poetry is not an exception to it. At the same time, Leslie Mormon Silko’s characters like, Tayo in the Ceremony all the major characters in her short stories in The Storyteller and the characters like Lecha, Zeta, Yeome and Angelita are very much interested to claim the ravished and impoverished land to restore it to its place of respect.
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