CHAPTER II

*IN BEAUTY IT IS FINISHED.*

**HOUSE MADE OF DAWN**

Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* has now come to be regarded as a major novel by a Native American writer, though initially it received only a qualified reception from reviewers and critics. They found the novel nothing but “a social statement rather than ... a substantial artistic achievement” (Bennett 69). They viewed Abel, the Native American protagonist of the novel as a noble red victim of the barbaric forces of white America. This impression was based on several factors. First, because Momaday was himself a Native American, they expected him to blame Abel’s failure on racial injustice. Second, they took Abel’s name as an obvious allusion to the Bible’s first victim and found the white society as the Cain who tried to destroy Abel. Finally, there was the inevitable comparison of Abel with the Native American war hero, Ira Hays. Hays was a hero during World War II but when he returned to his reservation after the war, he became an alcoholic and one evening, out of doors, he passed out and died from exposure. His death received a good deal of mention from the press and Hays’ story served as the basis of the Hollywood film “The Outsider”. The point of the movie was that Native Americans can die for their country but cannot live in it with dignity. Whatever the reasons for regarding HMD as a protest novel, this simplistic reading of the novel soon gave way and critics and readers began to consider it as highly complex, embodying the Native Americans’
vision and deep spiritual yearnings. Baine Kerr points out that Momaday has used “the modern Anglo novel [as] a vehicle for a sacred text,” and he has attempted “to transliterate Indian culture, myth, and sensibility into an alien art form, without loss”.(173)

Knowing about Momaday’s experiences as a Kiowa growing up among the Navajo and Jemez is needed for a proper understanding of HMD. Momaday belongs to a generation of Native Americans born when tribal communities had long ceased to exist as vital and supportive social organisations. His Kiowa ancestors shared with other plains Native Americans the horrors of disease, military defeat and cultural and religious deprivations in the course of the 19th century. Their only chance of survival was adaptation to new circumstances. Momaday’s grandfather, Mamedaty, for example, adjusted to changing conditions by taking up farming, a decision pressed upon him by the General Allotment Act of 1887. The decision must have been painful for him since the Kiowas never had a farming tradition but it allowed Mamedaty to establish the basis for his spiritual survival. He continued to pray in the Kiowa language and lived according to the old tribal ways. Al Momaday, Momaday’s father acquired formal education which allowed him to take advantage of modern American culture without relinquishing the essential features of his Kiowa identity. He became a well-known painter and a distinguished teacher deeply committed to his native heritage. Momaday’s mother Natachee Scott was removed by three generations from the Cherokee woman whose first name became her own. She too was a well-known painter and writer. However faint her Native American heritage was genetically, Natachee conceived of herself as a Native American. In *Names: A Memoir* Momaday writes of her thus:
She began to see herself as an Indian. That dim native heritage became a fascination and a cause for her, in as much, perhaps, as it enabled her to assume an attitude of defiance, an attitude which she assumed with particular style and satisfaction; it became her. She imagined who she was. This act of the imagination was, I believe, among the most important events of my mother's early life, as later the same essential act was to be among the most important of my own. (1977: 23)

When Momaday was six months old, his parents took him to Devils Tower in Wyoming—Tsoai—which the Kiowas passed on their migration from the Yellowstone to the Southern Plains. The Kiowas made a story to account for the monolithic. It tells of seven sisters and a brother; while they were playing the boy suddenly changed into a bear and chased after his frightened sisters who with the help of a talking tree, escaped into the sky where they became the stars of the Big Dipper. The bear in its futile pursuit left its claw marks on the bark of the tree which turned into the Tsoai, “rock tree”. Momaday was given his Kiowa name, “Tsoai-talice”, rock tree boy, 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-talice. (1977: 42)
In giving Momaday his Indian name Pohd-lohk formally rooted him in the Kiowa oral tradition. The importance of this event can be assessed from Momaday's contention that "when a man is given a name, existence is given to him too". (Schubnell 50)

Momaday's parents left Kiowa country when he was two years old. In later years Momaday used to be in Kiowa with his father only during the summer months. These sporadic reunions with the Kiowa people were of lasting significance in creating a sense of belonging to a racial past. Although he never learned the Kiowa language, he became familiar with the old tales and the history of his tribe. As his parents moved from place to place taking up teaching assignments, Momaday grew up in Navajo reservations in New Mexico and later in Jemez Pueblo. In large part HMD is a blending of Navajo, Jemez and Kiowa traditions.

His parents' academic background and their integration into Anglo-American culture, which did not sever their ties to their Kiowa and Cherokee ancestors, provided Momaday with a truly bicultural education. Unlike many Native Americans who find themselves trapped between two cultures he could draw on the benefits of both. He was proud of his Indianness at school without being able to define what it really was. His friends called him "chief" and he knew that he was different. Momaday tells in an interview, "I never experienced the kind of segregation that a lot of Indians do. I went to Indian schools but my position in all those schools was ambiguous...I had the best of both the worlds when I was growing up" (Schubnell 17).

In the following years Momaday became closely acquainted with Pueblo Indian culture and the unique landscape of the Rio Grande Valley. He writes:
Gradually and without effort I entered into the motion of life there. In the winter dusk I heard coyotes barking away by the river, the sound of the drums in the kiva, and the voice of the village crier, ringing at the roof tops. And on summer nights of the full moon I saw old men in their ceremonial garb, running after witches—sometimes I thought I saw the witches themselves in the forms of bats and cats and owls on fence- posts. I came to know the land by going out upon it in all seasons, getting into it until it became the very element in which I lived my daily life. (1972 2)

Momaday was at the same time witness to the fundamental changes which took place in Jemez after the War.

The mode of life in the Pueblo was increasingly influenced by the material culture of White America. Veterans returning from the War brought with them experience of a new life style and found it difficult to retain their places in the village community. Momaday has commented on these changes:

The forces of civilization and progress have moved across the Pueblo like a glacier and, in their path, nothing can ever be the same again. Convenience has brought the old attendant ills. Alcoholism has become a menace of frightening proportions. Juvenile delinquency, unknown to Jemez in 1946, is now a cancerous problem. (1964 40)

Many of the able members left Jemez to work off the reservations and were unavailable to fulfil their functions in the ceremonial life of the Pueblo. He met young
people who eventually lost their sense of place, escaped into alcohol and died in car crashes or fights or suicides. The human misery growing out of such cultural and identity conflicts, he later portrayed in HMD.

HMD borrows its title from a Navajo healing ceremony centuries old. “House made of dawn” is the first line of the chant sung on the third day of the healing ceremony called the Night Chant. The prayer is sung in the Night Chant as part of the purification section of the ceremony. It is accompanied by a rite in which a set of eight prayer offerings sacred to the gods of the shrine known as the house made of dawn are used to bless or purify the patient and are then offered to the sun. The title suggests that the novel is about sickness and disharmony; and about health and harmony.

Although HMD is more European in form and style and more urban in setting than most other Native American novels, it opens and closes with the formulaic words which enclose all Jemez Pueblo tales—“Dypaloh” and “Qtsedaba”—placing it consciously in the Native American oral tradition. Like many oral narratives, the novel is shaped around a movement from discord to harmony and is structurally and thematically cyclic.

The prologue which follows the formulaic opening has three paragraphs. The first paragraph shifts the actual landscape of Walatowa or Jemez into the timeless realm of myths:

There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different-colored clays and
sands. Red and blue and spotted horses grazed in the plain, and there
was a dark wilderness on the mountains beyond. The land was still and
strong. It was beautiful all around. (1)

Ending with a declaration suggestive of the healing ceremony of the Night Chant, the
first paragraph underscores a feeling of coherence and permanence. The voice is that
of oral tradition; the time and place are mythic. The reader is thus oriented away from
historic consciousness into mythic time. The second paragraph of the prologue
introduces the novel’s protagonist Abel. “Abel was running. He was alone and
running, hard at first, heavily, but then easily and well” (1). The third and final
paragraph of this section tells us: “For a time the sun was whole beneath the cloud;
then it rose into eclipse and a dark and certain shadow came upon the land. And Abel
was running” (1). The prologue is dominated by the race, a central theme in the novel.

Parsons tells us that racing is a conspicuous feature of Jemez ceremonialism
(118). At Jemez, there are running ceremonies for each season. The winter race Abel
runs in the prologue is the first race in the Jemez ceremonial season, an appropriate
ceremonial beginning. But the race itself may be seen as a journey, a re-emergence
journey analogous to the one in Navajo and Kiowa oral tradition. The Abel who runs
the race in the prologue is the Abel at the end of the story taking his grandfather’s
place in the race of the dawn runners, the runners after evil. Thus the novel begins
where it ends. Momaday himself has said:

I see [HMD] as a circle. It ends where it begins and it’s informed with
a kind of thread that runs through it and holds everything together. The
book itself is a race. It focuses upon the race, that’s the thing that does
hold it all together. But it’s a constant repetition of things too.
(1973 33)
As prologues are expected to do the prologue in HMD lays out the 'argument' of the novel. Because of the traditional invocation, we know the story is to be conceived as born from an older, timeless, oral tradition and bearing the responsibilities of the tradition. The allusion to the "house made of dawn" of The Night Chant suggests that a journey towards reintegration and healing will be part of the experience of the novel. The reference to the eclipse and "a dark and certain shadow upon the land" suggests that Abel's quest will not be without danger and difficulty. As in traditional storytelling we know the outcome of the story at the beginning, a fact that should shift our attention to the way the story is told.

The events of HMD take place within a seven year period. The novel is divided into four parts. Part 1 contains seven chapters. Parts 2, 3 and 4 together contain a total of seven chapters. Seven and four are powerful sacred numbers within Native American cultures. Four is the number of the seasons, the cardinal directions, balance, beauty and completion. Seven incorporates the cardinal directions as well as the centre, zenith and nadir. "With its careful numerology, the very structure of the novel is designed to move us inward towards wholeness and well-being, echoing the centripetal forces dominant in the Indian world" (Owens 96).

The novel begins during the "relocation" years, the most inglorious period in the history of the Native American. The choice of the period seems to suggest that before the whites "relocate" them Abel and his people must "relocate" themselves, must find their proper place and destiny. Just as the prologue allowed us to enter a timeless, mythic dimension, the first paragraph of Part 1 titled "The Longhair" uses present tense and "to be" verbs to re-create this sense of timelessness.
The river lies in a valley of hills and fields. The north end of the valley is narrow and the river runs down from the mountains through a canyon. The sun strikes the canyon floor only a few hours each day, and in winter the snow remains for a long time in the crevices of the walls. There is a town in the valley, and there are ruins of other towns in the canyon. (5)

In the third paragraph of the book, the prose shifts from the present tense to the simple past of the storyteller. "It is hot in the end of July. The old man Francisco drove a team of roan mares near the place where the river bends around a cottonwood" (6). We move suddenly out of mythic time into the historic time. Francisco has taken the "old road" to the village. The wagon road on which he rides is parallel to the modern highway on which Abel rides. The two roads serve as familiar metaphors for the conflicting paths they follow in the novel.

As the wagon road reminds Francisco of his own youthful race "for good hunting and harvests" he sings songs of harmony and balance. Confirming Francisco's status as a Longhair, a traditional Native American, we are told that he is riding on a path less traveled by people in 1945 than previously. It is used now only by the herdsmen and planters whose fields lay to the South and the West. We learn that as a young man Francisco ran the Winter Race on this same road, even having once won the race by "out-running" Mariano, who was everywhere supposed to be the best of the long race runners in the year 1889. Francisco has been honoured formally as a hunter, as a ceremonial drummer and as a runner. He is driving to meet his grandson Abel returning to Walatowa after World War II. He glances at the wagon
and the mare to be sure everything is in order. Order in the Jemez world signifies beauty and strength but when Abel appears all is not in order. "He was drunk, and he fell against his grandfather and did not know him"(9). In a world in which identity is derived from community, not to know one's grandfather is dangerous, a sign of sickness.

Early reviewers of the novel as well as some later critics propose that Abel's exposure to white culture during World War II is the cause of his dislocation and disease. But Momaday clearly establishes early in Part 1 that Abel’s disease pre-dates any of his recorded encounters with the Whites or the horrors of the war, though those encounters had aggravated his condition.

Abel's alienation is connected to his genealogy. He did not know who his father was. "His father was a Navajo, they said, or a Sia, or an Isleta, an outsider anyway", which made Abel “somehow foreign and strange"(11). The ties Abel does have to Walatowa are through his mother. Through Francisco, his maternal grandfather Abel is a direct descendant of the Bahkyush, a group of Towan-speaking Pueblos who immigrated to Jemez in the mid 19th century. Abel's obscure parentage weakens his sense of self, setting him alienated. It has been pointed out that Abel’s obscure genealogy strengthens his resemblance to the traditional culture hero, whose parentage is often obscure. Susan Scarberry-Garcia has discussed parallels between Abel and his brother Vidal and the Stricken Twins of the Night Chant. She notes:

Novajo story patterns reveal a hero or heroes (or occasionally heroines as in Mountain way and Beauty way), often "outsiders" from birth, forced by circumstances to leave home and combat numerous terrifying
obstacles that confront them for reasons unknown. After undergoing a symbolic death experience and being reborn through the aid of the Holy People or spirit helpers, the heroes return home to their people to teach the healing ceremonial that remade them. (18—19)

On the dawn of his first morning back to his homeland, after sleeping a day and night, Abel goes out into the hills, east of the Pueblo. As he walks through the village “all the dogs began to bark”(10), a response that underscores Abel’s alienation. Abel climbs the hill to re-establish in his experience the reality of the place called Walatowa. This thumb-nail sketch of everything in advance of his going is composed of six recollected incidents each of which involves some loss, uncertainty or source of pain.

The first incident records Abel’s experience at the age of five, of detouring on the way to the cacique’s fields to explore “a narrow box canyon which he had never seen before”(11). Moving up into this canyon, young Abel perceives the wall of the canyon closing over him as the surrounding red earth becomes “dark and cool as a cave”. The crooked lines of the sky as seen from this place are alive and moving. Abel is terrified and he cries. In another fragment, the boy Abel notices a “hole in the rock where the wind dipped, struck and rose”(12) an opening into the underworld. He hears a strange sound he has never heard. He is particularly afraid of the old Bahkyush woman Nicol’s teah-whau who had a white moustache and a hunch back. They said she was a witch. Once she screamed at him some unintelligible curse appearing out of a corn field when he was herding sheep nearby and he ran away. Later he dropped a loaf of bread for the snake-killer dog but the dog had quivered
and laid back its ears. "Slowly it backed away and crouched not looking at anything but listening"(12). The moan of the wind grew loud and it filled him with dread. "For the rest of his life it would be for him the particular sound of anguish"(12). Abel is afraid of his own powerlessness to resist the underground forces that influence human life. He has witnessed the powerlessness of his mother and his brother who succumb to death and his snake-killer dog which quivers in the presence of evil. As a youngster, Abel is unable to perceive the geese as his brother Vidal perceives them. He seems to be haunted and the death of his mother and brother intensify his preoccupation with the terrors of the unseen evil that seems to stalk him. Even his participation with the Bahkyush in their eagle hunt is flawed by his inability to accept the necessary pain. When the eagle has been captured he cannot bear the change that comes over the eagle and as a result he strangles it. Thus he violates the ceremony and separates himself from the ceremonial life of the tribe.

Abel's illness is aggravated by the World War II experiences. At the end of his memory fragments in the first dawn of his return, Abel recalls:

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

Abel is unable to unify past, present and future in a sentence and is unable to communicate even with his grandfather. Abel thinks about his condition:
His return to the town had been a failure ... He had tried in the days that followed to speak to his grandfather, but he could not say the things he wanted; 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 even the common place formula of greeting "Where are you going?",—which had no being beyond sound, no visible substance, would once again have shown him whole to himself; but he was dumb. Not dumb . . . but inarticulate.

(58)

Abel's inarticulateness is an indication of his failure to re-enter the traditional Native American world. Momaday believes that the Native American's relationship to the world is based on the power of the word. Native American culture is based on an oral tradition and maintained through the creative power of the word. If the word is lost, culture and identity are forfeited, as wholeness can only be established by the word.

Five days after his return, Abel takes part in the contest of the chicken-pull, dressing in his old clothes for the first time. But he can no longer read the signs of the community and he fails and is humiliated by the victorious albino. Abel fails because he is cut off from the ceremonial life of the Pueblo. Seven days later Abel kills the enemy with a knife. The Pueblos view the chicken-pull ceremony as the symbolic representation of planting and reaping. The scattering of the rooster’s feathers and blood are representative of rain and are believed to increase the fertility of the land and the success of the harvest. Abel's participation in this ancient ceremony offers him an opportunity of reconciling with his tribal culture. His effort in the game, however,
proves to be a failure. Obviously trying to force himself too quickly back into the ceremonial life of the Pueblo, Abel is uncomfortable and awkward. He is estranged from the old traditions and consequently fails to integrate himself into the cultural context of his community.

Another Pueblo ceremonial which could have been of help to Abel is the Pecos Bull Dance, which Jemez people perform on August first. Momaday witnessed the ceremony as a child. He describes it:

On the first of August, at dusk, the Pecos Bull ran through the streets of Jemez, taunted by the children, chased by young boys who were dressed in outlandish costumes, most in a manner which parodied the curious white Americans who came frequently to see the rich sights of Jemez on feast days. This “bull” was a man who wore a mask, a wooden framework on his back covered with black cloth and resembling roughly a bull, the head of which was a crude thing made of horns, a sheep skin, and a red cloth tongue which wagged about. It ran around madly lunging at the children. (1977 145)

Alfonso Ortiz notes that one purpose of burlesque and mock-violence in Pueblo ritual drama is catharsis, “the purgation of individuals or communities of rebellious tendencies so that they behave during the rest of the year”(151). The ceremony could have offered Abel a chance to vent his aggression in a ritual way rather than in the hostile manner he later employs against the albino. Francisco remembers the gravity and the difficulty of assuming the role of the bull who chases boys pretending to be
Spanish invaders during the least. Abel's reluctance to take part in the Bull Dance indicates his isolation from the tribal community.

Abel is aware of his inability to re-enter the ceremonial life of the tribe as he realises in his second reflection at dawn on July 28, 1945. The section opens with an explicit statement of the relation of the emergence journey and the landscape and is followed by a description of the ordered and harmonious existence of life in that landscape. Each form of life has its proper space and function in the landscape and by nature of that relation, is said to have "tenure in the land". "Man came down the ladder to the plain a long time ago. It was a slow migration"(57). Like the emergence journeys of the Kiowas and Navajo, the migration of the people of Walatowa led to an ordered relation to place which they expressed in their ceremonial life. As Abel walks in this landscape in the dawn he is estranged from the town and land as well.

He was alone, and he wanted to make a song out of the colored canyon, the way the women of Torre'on made songs upon their looms out of colored yarn but he had not got the right words together. It would have been a creation song; he would have sung lowly of the first world, of fire and flood, and of the emergence of dawn from the hills.(59)

Abel’s desire to make a song is an endeavour to restore harmony between himself and the universe. His creation song would have been a bid for the creative power that heals, restores harmony and provides wholeness. But he lacks words, ceremonial words, to express his relation to the cultural landscape in which he stands. Out of
harmony with himself and his community, he needs most of all the kind of re-emerging journey offered in Navajo Chant way.

Abel’s alienation is highlighted in his relationship with the white woman, Angela. After his failed attempts to find access to tribal rituals and ceremonies, Abel tries to acquire some kind of stability in an intimate relationship with Angela. This second endeavour proves to be as unsuccessful as the first. The insecurity he exposes in his relationship with Angela is a symptom of his confused identity. He avoids exposing himself to humiliation and chooses to remain himself in the shell of his own self. He is portrayed as the stereotype of the mute Native American, in his relationship with Angela. He avoids talking at length and frequently does not react at all to her questions. “His face darkened, but he hung on, dumb and immutable. He would not allow himself to be provoked. It was easy, natural for him to stand aside, hang on”(34). Angela grows aware of a kind of powerlessness in Abel. “There he stood dumb and docile at her pleasure, not knowing, she supposed, how even to take his leave”(34).

Abel’s killing of the albino highlights his inability to vent aggression appropriately. This act of violence reflects his inability to cope with the confusion he faces as a result of his personal and cultural isolation. The albino has intrigued critics of HMD perhaps, more than any other single aspect of the novel. The obvious reading is that he signifies the white man who has victimised Native American people and Abel in particular—a simplistic reading that tells little. Matthias Schubnell has suggested that “the killing of the albino is a symbolic representation of the cultural conflict which Abel is trying to resolve”(121). There can be little doubt that the albino
who in death "seemed just then to wither and to grow old"(83) is meant to be identified with the serpent and evil. Nor can the suggestion of witchcraft be avoided in the context. Momaday himself said: "He is a white man, or rather 'whiteman' in quotes, in appearance, but in fact he is neither white nor a man in the usual sense of those words. He is an embodiment of evil like Moby Dick, an intelligent malignity" (Schubnell 97). Abel regards the albino as evil, a witch. Abel attempts to destroy evil and evil is turned back upon him as a result. Some critics hold the view that Abel is acting within the Native American tradition when he kills the albino. It is clear that at the time of the murder Abel regards the albino as a snake. He feels "the scales of the lips and the hot slippery tongue writhing"(82). However, Abel's attempt to eradicate the albino-snake reveals an attitude toward evil more akin to the Christian attitude of Father Nicholas who refers to evil in his diary as "that Serpent which even is the One our most ancient enemy"(51). In the Native American world view, the universe from the time of creation has been a dangerous place balanced precariously between good and evil. Evil is to be acknowledged: it cannot be destroyed: to attempt to do so is to err seriously and dangerously. Abel's attempt at destroying evil instead of resorting to ritual defenses against it highlights his alienation from his community.

Part II of the novel, "The Priest of the Sun" opens with Abel lying broken, physically and spiritually on the beach in Los Angeles. A gap of about six and a half years lies between the end of part one and the beginning of the second. During this time Abel has served his prison sentence for killing the albino and, after the release has been sent to Los Angeles by the government on its Relocation Programme. However, the burden of the past proves too heavy and the pressure of life in the city too great for him to integrate into his new environment. As in part I at Walatowa, he
fails to establish a sense of place in Los Angeles. Not only is he separated from the white workers in the factory but even the Indians reject him. His sense of alienation is a major cause of his second futile and self-destructive confrontation with evil in the person of Martinez, a sadistic Mexican policeman who is also perceived as a snake. The process of degeneration in Abel reaches its climax in the beach scene. The narrative voice is centered in Abel's consciousness as he is lying, delirious from alcohol and the brutal beating received from Martinez. Without any apparent logical connections, fragmentary scenes from Abel's past alternate with blurred perceptions of his immediate environment. The flashbacks encompass scenes from his childhood, from the trial and his stay in prison, and finally his relationship with Millie, the white social worker and Angela, his friend at Walatowa. The intensity of the images, the apparent disjunction of time elements and the surface illogic, all typical of dreams and hallucinations, account for the haunting, nightmarish effect of this chapter.

Through multiple flashbacks, Momaday reveals the psychological situation of a man who is torn apart culturally and spiritually and drifting towards death. The symbols which surround these events suggest that what is actually happening in this powerful scene is a rite of passage in which Abel progresses from lack of understanding to knowledge, from chaos through ritual death to rebirth.

The scene's setting is in itself suggestive. Abel is "lying in a shallow depression" in which there are weeds and small white stones and tufts of long grass. It is a common feature of initiation ceremonies that the initiate is placed in a shallow grave from which he eventually rises as a new being. The beating Abel receives represents the initiatory mutilations which are frequent features of rites of passage. Abel's injuries are numerous. "His hands were broken, and he could not move them."
Some of his fingers were stuck together with blood, and the blood was dry and black"(100).

That Abel is lying on the beach close to the water, is of further importance in this context. Although there is no suggestion that he actually comes into contact with the sea, he is closely associated with it and shares the beach with the helpless grunion, a small silver-sided Californian fish. Water is traditionally a symbol of life, of creation and fertility—the element from which all cosmic manifestations emerge. Abel's connections with the fish reinforce his transformation. Like the grunion on the beach he too is a helpless creature, removed from the natural elements of his native culture. In his delirious state Abel's thoughts constantly return to the fish. He feels a kind of sympathy for the "small silver-sided fishes spawned mindlessly in correlation to the phase of the moon and the rise and fall of the tides. The thought of it made him sad, filled him with sad, unnamable longing and wonder"(98). Finally, Abel is directly identified with the fish. "He had the sense that his whole body was shaking, violently tossing and whipping, flopping like a fish"(115 ). The fish images not only reflect Abel's sufferings but also indicate the upward movement in his development after he has become aware of the situation.

Another symbol Momaday employs to denote Abel's regeneration is that of the moon. The moon is associated with the sea and the initiation ritual. The moon's reappearance after the three-day "death" has traditionally been read as a symbol of rebirth. Among the plains Indians it was customary to focus one's eyes on the moon in order to secure help in a moment of distress. (Wilson 88) Lying on the beach Abel observes the moon's control over the sea: "He could not understand the sea; it was not
of this 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” (98). This vision of moon as a ritual influence develops into a broader cosmic vision later.

And somewhere beyond the cold and the fog and the pain there was the black and infinite sea, bending to the moon, and there was the cold white track of the moon on the water. And far out in the night where nothing else was, the fishes lay out in the black water’s, 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. And far away inland there were great gray geese riding under the moon. (121)

Land, sea, man and animal are related in their connection with the moon. This new vision of Abel conforms to the Native American vision of the interrelatedness of all elements in the universe.

On the beach, under the moon for the first time Abel searches for the roots of his trouble. He feels that a bus has taken him away from the cultural landscape of Canon de San Diego to the beach where “the world was open at his back” (104). He knows his error now: “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” (104). On the beach then, Abel realises that he has lost his place. He is convinced that the Indian world of his boyhood is the only place where he can find a meaningful existence and an identity. As in a vision quest he receives a sign which shows him a way to personal wholeness.
It is his vision of the runners after evil that serves as a major step towards his restoration. Out of his delirium, as if in a dream, his mind returns to the central thread of the novel, the race and there at last he is able to catch a glimpse of the meaning of the tribal ritual and he becomes aware of its importance for the relationship between the individual and the universe:

The runners after evil ran as water runs, deep in the channel, in the way of least resistance, no resistance. His skin crawled with excitement; he was overcome with longing and loneliness, for suddenly he saw the crucial sense in their going, of old men in white leggings running after evil in the night. They were whole and indispensable in what they did; everything in creation referred to them. Because of them, perspective, proportion, design in the universe. Meaning because of them. 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 abroad in the night; they must venture out to the confrontation; they must reckon dues and divide the world. (103—104)

The ritual race is one of the methods the elders of the tribe employ to maintain control over the supernatural. The race is connected with the ceremony of clearing the irrigation ditches in the spring. Now Abel realises that evil is that which is not under control. In the ceremonial race, not in individual confrontation, the runners are able to deal with evil. He understands that it is through ceremonial songs, prayers, dances, and ceremonial races that an Indian maintains a balance between himself and the universe.
Tosamah’s two sermons describing the emergence journey of the Kiowas and the relation of words and places serve as a clue to Abel’s cure. John Big Bluff Tosamah, orator, physician, Son of Hummingbird, Priest of the Sun and Right Reverend of the “Holiness pan-Indian Rescue Mission in Los Angeles”, has all the characteristics of Coyote, the trickster figure in Native American mythologies. Alternatively wise and foolish the Coyote in Native American stories, is at once a buffoon and a companion of the people on their emergence journey. Benally compares Tosamah to Coyote and tells Abel, “He likes to get under your skin; he’ll make a fool out of you if you let him”(182). Like the traditional trickster, Tosamah is in dialogue with himself, embodies contradictions, challenges authority, mocks and ridicules every fixed meaning or static definitions. As a trickster he undertakes the appropriate trickster tasks of mocking and taunting Abel into self-knowledge, a process that prepares him for his return to the Pueblo.

Tosamah is heading the Los Angeles Basement Church attended by a community of relocated Indians including Abel and his Navajo friend, Ben Benally. In his capacities as “orator” and “physician”, Tosamah offers in his first sermon on Saturday an eloquent diagnosis of the contagious disease afflicting those who live in the “white man’s world”. According to Tosamah, the spiritual sickness afflicting most of western culture is caused by separation from “The Truth”. He portrays St. John as a man who once had a dawn vision. “Old John, see, he got up one morning and caught sight of the Truth”(92). St. John labelled what he saw as the “word” and went on to value the words about Truth more highly than the Truth itself. “The perfect vision faded from his mind, and he went on. The instant passed, and then he had nothing but memory”(93). According to Tosamah the white man’s, the Judeo-
Christian cultural tradition's, substitution of a world of words for the world of realities preceding all words is a very dangerous mass illusion. "The white man", says Tosamah, "takes such things as words and literature for granted...... He is sated and insensitive; his regard for language—for the Word itself—as an instrument of creation has diminished nearly to the point of no return. It may be that he will perish by the Word"(95). As participants in oral traditions, Indians, Tosamah tells, hold language as sacred. Words are, of course, a problem for Abel. He needs the ceremonial words—the words of a creation song—to express his relation to community and place.

Tosamah's second sermon on Sunday "The Way to Rainy Mountain" which Momaday has used in his book by the same title, addresses the relation of man, land, community and the word. In it he describes the emergence of the Kiowa people as "a journey toward the dawn" that "led to a golden age". It was a journey which led the Kiowa to a culture which is inextricably bound to the land of the Southern Plains. Tosamah talks about the journey he took in order to become a part of the landscape of Kiowa culture. He refers to Devils Tower, the landmark marking the place where the Kiowa "paused on their way" to make the transition from a mountain people to a plains people. "There are things in nature which engender an awful quiet in the heart of man; Devils Tower is one of them. Man must account for it. He must never fail to explain such a thing to himself, or else he is estranged forever from the universe"(131). According to Tosamah, the act of identification with Devils Tower changed the identity of the Kiowa forever. "Whatever they were in the mountains, they could be no more"( 131). As a gloss on Abel's condition in part II, Tosamah's sermon on Sunday suggests that life takes place in particular landscapes. True to his
role as "Son of Hummingbird" Tosamah in his sermon prepares the way for Abel's return to Walatowa.

While Tosamah furthers the disintegration that is a necessary step towards recovery for Abel, Benally, a relocated Navajo who befriends Abel in Los Angels, tries to help him to reintegrate into the new urban reality. Ben is compassionate towards Abel and from the time of their first meeting he is instinctively protective of him. He trains Abel for his new job, introduces him around and shares his home, his food and his clothing. Ben, a product of the Federal Relocation Policy of the 50s has become literally dazzled by the city lights. His monologue on the wonders of Los Angeles is a case in point:

It's a good place to live. . . . 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. Everything is here, everything you could ever want. You never have to be alone. (18)

Ben nonetheless retains enough knowledge of his Navajo identity to serve as a healer to Abel. About Abel, Ben says "He was a long hair, like Tosamah said. You know, you have to change. That's the only way you can live in a place like this. You have to forget about the way it was, how you grew up and all"(148). Yet it is obvious that he has not forgotten the way it was. His memories recapture his childhood wholly and vividly. He remembers herding sheep for his grand-father. It is Abel's presence that evokes memories of home. By telling Abel of the old traditions and teaching him the old songs, Ben not only provides him with spiritual sustenance in
a world unresponsive to spiritual needs but prepares him for return to Walatowa. On a hill overlooking Los Angeles, the night before Abel returns to the Pueblo, Benally prays, chanting the “House Made of Dawn” prayer from the Night Chant. The chant is a prayer for restoration and wholeness and balance. The chant is designed to attract good and repel evil. The structure and diction of the song demonstrate the very harmony it seeks to evoke. Journey metaphor is prominent in the song and the restorative sequence culminates with “restore my voice for me”. Restoration of voice is an outward sign of inner harmony. The songs Ben sings over Abel clearly serve a restorative function.

Abel’s healing has also been aided by the re-appearance of Angela St. John who comes to the hospital to see her battered and bruised former lover. She tells him the story, her son likes the best of all. It is the story of a young Indian who was born of a bear and a maiden, who had many adventures and finally saved his people. Hearing the story Benally marvels: “Ei Yei! A bear! A bear and a maiden” (187). The story reminds him of a similar story from a Night Chant he heard from his grandfather. Angela has triggered an awareness within Abel “of his own bear nature”. Earlier in their relationship together she used to refer to him as bear. The Bear appears in several Navajo myths having great healing powers. Parsons points out the existence of a bear curing society within the Pueblo (62). By bringing the healing force of the Night Chant into the hospital room, and reminding Abel of his own bear nature, Angela has joined with Benally in working to cure Abel.

The fourth and final part of HMD “The Dawn Runner” returns Abel to Walatowa. Though nearly seven years have passed, the landscape as depicted in the
opening paragraph of part IV unfolds as it does in the first paragraph of part I. First, there is the river, there the valley around it, then the mountains forming the valley and the town there. However, now the season is late winter rather than summer. The time of the year suggests of a moment of fragile equilibrium. The time of the day is just past sunset and Father Olguin is just settled down for his evening reading of Fray Nicolas' journal. By this time the white catholic priest has given up his struggle to integrate himself with the Indians. He has accepted a vision of "safe and sacred solitude"(194) and is separated from the life of Walatowa.

In contrast to Father Olguin's willed separation from the land and the people and consequent poverty of vision, Francisco continues in part IV to represent the Jemez tradition. Though he is like Olguin all but blind physically, Francisco's eyes continue to remain till the end "open and roving and straining to see"(196) and when impending death precludes any further perception he resorts to "seeing" in the form of his memories. For six days Francisco struggles against death uttering memories of his life during the hours of the dawn. Abel listens to his voice but initially fails to understand the meaning of his words. And yet "the voice of his memory was whole and clear and growing like the dawn"(197). Francisco is attempting to articulate and make whole the crucial experience of his life, passing the story on to his grandson. It reminds Abel of the secrets of the solar calendar which his grandfather had taught him and his brother many years ago.

They must learn the whole contour of the black mesa. They must know it as they knew the shape of their hands, always and by heart. . . . 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. (197)

Abel participates in Francisco's memories of the ceremonial races and festivities of Jemez, his bear hunt, the traditional hunting ways and rituals. Francisco's final recollections seem to remind Abel of the ancient ways of his people.

The final section of the novel, "Feb 28" opens just before the seventh dawn when Abel awakens to find that his grandfather has died. At this moment it seems that Abel has absorbed his grandfather's words. He knows what had to be done.

He drew the old man's head erect and laid water to the hair. He fashioned the long white hair in a queue and wound it around with yarn. He dressed the body in bright ceremonial colors: the old man's wine velveteen shirt, white trousers, and low moccasins, soft and white with kaolin. From the rafters he took down the pouches of pollen and of meal, the sacred feathers and the ledger book. These, together with ears of colored corn, he placed at his grandfather's side after he had sprinkled meal in the four directions. He wrapped the body in a blanket. (209)

Strictly adhering to the timeless practices of his tribe, he prepares Francisco's body for the funeral. In doing so he takes the role of Francisco. After preparing the old man ceremoniously for burial Abel goes to summon Father Olguin and delivers the body
to him. The two actions recall Francisco’s ability to merge both religions and worlds during his lifetime.

It is significant that Abel conducts the traditional funeral rites for his grandfather “a while still before the dawn” (209). Dawn images permeate the novel. The book opens and closes with Abel running across the land at dawn. Indian tribes hold in common the belief that they emerged to their present land after a migration through several underground worlds. Dawn marks the moment of emergence from the underworld, the beginning of tribal life and the creation of tribal culture. The following passage in part I about Abel’s longing to bring forth a creation song indicates the connection between dawn, creation and emergence. “He would have sung lowly of the first world, of fire and flood, and of the emergence of the dawn from the hills”(59). Abel’s celebration of the funeral rites of his grandfather just before dawn indicates a new beginning and creation. Like his ancestors, the Bahkyush people who had once journeyed “along the edge of oblivion” and recovered to become “medicine men . . . rain makers and eagle hunters”(16), Abel also returns from the edge of the void to start a hopeful beginning. As the Kiowas’ migration from the north of the continent to south and east was “a journey toward the dawn” which “lead to a golden age”(129). Abel’s journey too produces a positive outcome.

In order to complete the reintegration ceremony set in motion by his mission in Part II, Abel participates in the dawn race. He leaves Francisco’s house, rubs himself with ashes and walks in the dark to the place where an indeterminate number of others have gathered and stand “huddled in the cold together, waiting”(211). From the spot where the runners stand, the sun appears to rise out of the “saddle” of the
black mesa to the east. The runners fix their vision upon "the clear pool of eternity" (212) and Abel ends where he begins by running after them. "All of his being was concentrated in the sheer motion of running on, and he was past caring about the pain" (212). The very act of surrender, however, results in a transformation of his condition. His motion gradually moves him closer to the Middle that lies at the end of the road he runs. Of the figure of the runner with which the book begins and ends, Momaday has said "The man running is fitting himself into the basic motion of the universe... That is simply a symbolism which prevails in the Southwestern Indian world (Bataille 30). Abel has recovered his place in an Indian world. Schubnell points out that the novel's final scene is charged with mythological overtones (138). According to a Pueblo emergence myth the Corn Mother after creating the present world called on the people to emerge from the previous world underground. As they entered the new world the people were blind. The Corn Mother lined them up in a row facing east and made the Sun come up. When the Sun began to shine upon the eyes of the people they were opened and they could see. In the setting of the dawn over the Jemez valley, Abel too could see "at last without having to think. He could see the canyons and the mountains and the sky. He could see the rain and the river and the fields beyond. He could see the dark hills at dawn" (212). Abel's new vision indicates a reemergence, a regeneration.

At this moment Abel's vision is like the vision attributed by Tosamah to John prior to his over-verbalisation, a vision of "Truth", of the innate wholeness of the universe. Such moments carry the seeds of powerful songs and stories. As a dawn rain begins to fall, washing the ashes from his body, he recalls Benally's "House made of Dawn" prayer from the Night Chant, a song designed to celebrate all forms of life.
"There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song. And he went running on the rise of the song. *House Made of pollen, house made of dawn*" (212). Although, as yet he has no voice, he is no longer inarticulate, having found both words and the appropriate rhythm. The words and song rising in his heart as he runs towards the dawn signal his regeneration. Abel, at the novel’s end has recovered an identity worth singing about and sees the essential unity and harmony of everything in the universe.

The other major characters of the novel share in varying degrees the sense of alienation experienced by Abel initially and their struggles to overcome the disease of separation are worth considering. Momaday takes great pains not to stereotype the white characters. Except for the sadistic policeman Martinez the white characters in the novel are portrayed as engaged in a struggle to get out of their frustrating predicament. In spite of his hard struggle Fr. Olguin is not able to understand the Indians. He sees them variously as “degenerate squaws”, “sullen bucks” and “wizened, keepers of an old and sacred alliance”(69). When he drives through the Indian village, surrounded by Indian faces, he feels only fear and revulsion. Confusedly, when he stays on the car brakes, and as the dust settles, he hears “a shrill and incessant chant :padre! padre! padre!”(73) to which he is unable to respond. He fails in his attempt to explain the motivation of Abel’s killing the albino, though he has great sympathy for Abel. Near the end of the novel awakened from sleep by Abel’s announcement that his grandfather is dead, Fr. Olguin can only explain about being disturbed. After Abel leaves, the priest tries to express sympathy, by crying out after Abel in the darkness “I can understand . . . I understand, do you hear? . . . I understand! Oh God! I understand—I understand!”(210). But Olguin has never understood the
Indian. Like the earlier priest, Fray Nicolas whose journals he reads as something of a saint's life, he is blind to the mysteries of the Indian's spiritual life because of the spiritual pride and prejudices of his religion. Towards the end of the novel we learn that the priest has ceased to come to terms with the Indian world and finds shelter in isolation. "In the only way possible, perhaps, he had come to terms with the town, ... To be sure, there was the matter of some old and final cleavage, of certain exclusion, the whole and subtle politics of estrangement, but that was easily put aside. ..."(194).

Milly the white social worker who becomes Abel's mistress after his parole from prison is an equally displaced person. She first enters Abel's world as a social worker with questionnaires, tests and answers. She believed in Honor, Industry, the Second Chance, the Brotherhood of Man, the American Dream and him. ..."(107). After she stops bringing questionnaires, she begins to talk about her life to Abel, and it is her story rather than her physical love which enables Abel for the first time to share with her the memories of his own life. Their relationship thus starts Abel on the way towards regaining the power of the word. Her life is much like Abel's—a struggle with the land of her heritage, set against the pain and loneliness of urban living.

Similarly displaced and isolated is Angela St. John when at first we see her coming to Los Angeles to rest and await the birth of her child. Abel answers her enquiry for someone to split firewood; her physical attraction to him contrasts strongly with her alienation from the land and her own body. "She could think of nothing more vile and obscene than the raw flesh and blood on her body, the raveled veins and the gore upon her bone"(34). She feels an alien in Walatowa. She cannot see what the Indians see and is aware of her limitation. However, she demonstrates a profound
sensitivity to the mythical potential of appearances as when she thinks of Abel as a badger or a bear.

Once she had seen an animal slap at the water, a badger or a bear. 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. She went out of the house and sat down on the stone steps of the porch.

He was there, rearing above the wood (32—33).

This vision bodes well for her as badger and bear are considered by the people of Jemez to be brothers and powerful healer. Growing beyond her own “poverty of vision”. Angela is able to see the bear-power that came to Francisco during his youth. Later as they make love, she thinks of “the badger at the water, and the great bear, blue-black and blowing” (64). Years later, when she visits Abel in the hospital she comes to him not as a lover but as one who has transformed the mystery of their affair into a myth of a maiden and a bear. By triggering an awareness within Abel of his own bear nature she assists Ben in curing Abel. Her story indicates that she has learned through her experiences in Walatowa, to see into the mythic consciousness out of which is born the oral tradition.

Among the Native American characters in the novel, Francisco is the “balanced man” of the novel, who has successfully fused the two worlds he inhabits. He worships in the kiva and is a sacristan in the church. He knows that division or fragmentation causes illness and is able to bring the two worlds together into a vital, heterogeneous unity. Unlike Abel, he knows how to deal with evil. While hoeing corn
in the field Francisco experiences the presence of evil; a presence signified at first by whispers in the corn and the warning of a ringing in the ears. "He was too old to be afraid. His acknowledgment of the unknown was nothing more than a dull, intrinsic sadness, a vague desire to weep, for evil had long since found him out and knew who he was" (66). Francisco acknowledges the presence of evil and turns away neutralizing its power. He knows that evil cannot be destroyed and the universe is a dangerous place balanced precariously between good and evil, and it is through ceremonies and rituals that the harmony and delicate balance within the universe should be maintained. At the end of the novel lying on his death bed he passes the heritage of his vast experience on to his grandson through words. It becomes Abel's responsibility to grasp those stories, to respect their power and pass them on.

Inspite of the vital role he plays as the novel’s trickster, Tosamah is a character divided against himself. He is the Priest of the Sun and the Reverend of the Los Angeles Basement Church. But in contrast to Francisco, he fails miserably to fuse the two worlds he inhabits. He has a profound understanding of the tradition. He says about his grandmother:

My grandmother was a story teller; she knew her way around words. She never learned to read and write, but somehow she knew the good of reading writing; she had learned that in words and in language, and there only, she could have whole and consummate being. She told me stories, and she taught me how to listen... I was a child, and that old woman was asking me to come directly into the presence of her mind and spirit; she was taking hold of my 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. (94—95)

But despite his understanding of the power of word, he deliberately violates his grandmother's reverence for the power of word as he distorts and manipulates words, committing the sin of which he accuses St. John. Tosamah's dialogical tension finds further evidence in his relationship with Abel. As a trickster he taunts and mocks Abel into self-knowledge. Yet, his dismantling of Abel is at least in part out of envy. Bernard Hirsch has suggested:

Seeing Abel through Indian eyes Tosamah cannot help but admire him as a kind of modern-day warrior who refuses to give in meekly to the torment and tribulations of urban Indian life. But if Tosamah as an Indian is vicariously elevated by Abel's integrity, he is at the same time humbled by the lack of his own. (313)

Tosamah takes out his sense of loss and self-doubt upon Abel, for Abel has what Tosamah can never have. Unlike him Abel has a centre to which he can return. He is profoundly aware of the healing power inherent in the land's capacity to satisfy the human need for identity. Yet, at the end of part II Tosamah is still in Los Angeles, a thousand miles from the physical landscape he identifies with wholeness and harmony. Momaday underscores the pathetic aspect of Tosamah's character when he says: "He's a kind of riddle and he's extremely skeptical but has the kind of
intelligence that makes the most of it. But I think of him as being in some ways pathetic, too. He's very displaced" (Owens 112).

Where as Tosamah's identity as a Native American seems to be as much a product of articulation as of nature, Ben is presented as having been born into the landscape like Abel. Unlike Tosamah, whose public personae oscillates between "conviction caricature [and] callousness" (92). Ben displays a constancy of faith in traditional values. Ben's sympathy for Abel springs from his own ability to get along with Abel "We were kind of alike, though him, and me. After a while he told me where he was from, and right away I knew we were going to be friends" (153). Abel's presence evokes memories of home and the land where the events of his childhood took place:

It was bright and beautiful all around, and you felt like yelling and running and jumping up and down. You went in and put your hands to the fire. Your grand father scolded you and smiled, because you were little and he knew how you felt. He cut off a piece of mutton and put it down for you. You could smell the coffee and hear it boiling in the pot, even after he took it off the fire and poured it into the cups. . . . You were little and there was a lot to see, and all of it was new and beautiful . . . and you were little and right there in the center of everything, the sacred mountains, the snow-covered mountains and the hills, the gullies and the flats, the sun down and the night, everything—where you were little, where you were and had to be. (155—57)
Such a vision of harmony is out of place in Los Angeles where his vision of union with the land and family has been reduced to a memory. Ben sings a chant way episode for Abel and himself. His Night Chant is not able to produce the desired effect because the efficacy of the chant depends on the reality of the landscape it evokes. But Tse’gihi, the specific “place among the rocks” in the Night Chant is about a thousand miles away from Los Angeles. Clearly as with Tosamah, Ben’s ability to keep in mind such memories, is good for relieving the constant disease that comes, trying to live in Los Angeles. But it lacks the power to heal because it is disassociated in physical space from its empowering context. Healing is an event that can occur only if it takes place at Tse’gihi for Ben, Rainy Mountain for Tosamah and Walatowa for Abel. In order to cure, Momaday shows clearly that memories and words must be revalidated by the physical and cultural landscape.

The ending of HMD has been interpreted differently by some critics. They look at it as an example of defeat, annihilation, of spiritual suicide. Charles Larson, for example, holds the view that Momaday’s vision of the American Indian is essentially pessimistic. According to him Abel returns to the reservation because there is nowhere else for him to go. If there is a sense of recognition at the end of the story it is that death is the only escape. He views the run at the end of the story as “a run towards death, a kind of ritual suicide and not an act of renewal”(90—91). However, it is generally accepted that the end is positive, symbolizing spiritual renewal and cultural rejuvenation. In her article, “On a Trail of Pollen: Momaday’s House Made Of Dawn” Marion Willard Hylton comments: “After a long and bitter odyssey and much suffering, Abel has come home. . . . As he runs. . . . he becomes part of the orderly continuum of interrelated events that constitute the Indian universe. . . .”(68—69).
Similar views are held by Martha Scott Trimble, Carole Oleson and a host of other critics. Comparing Abel with some alienated characters in recent American fiction Schubnell comments:

Many alienated characters in recent American fiction—Ralph Ellison’s Invisible Man, Faulkner’s Joe Christmas in Light in August and John Updike’s Rabbit Angstrom in Rabbit Run—are running away from something and have no viable alternative to which they can turn. Abel is unique in that his running manifests an act of integration, not a symbol of estrangement. (138)

The cyclical structure of the novel justifies a hopeful reading of Abel’s future. At the close of the book Abel returns to personal wholeness and harmony with the universe. Indeed, the cyclical concept of tribal history and the cyclical movement of Abel’s personal history interconnect at the end. Momaday’s own comment on HMD points in this direction: “I see the novel as a circle. It ends where it begins and it’s informed with a kind of thread that runs through it and holds everything together” (Abbott 33). Structurally, Momaday reflects unity by concentrating the ending with previous allusions to running and to time. The novel has come full circle having begun with a brief glimpse of the ending scene. Initially, however, Abel had appeared isolated and insignificant in his running. At the end, he is seen to be participating in a perennial ritual, a communal race. His grandfather had run the same race decades ago. Abel’s running unites him with his ancestral past.
While running, the words that ring in Abel's ears are the words from Benally's Night Chant. Out of the pain and exhaustion of the race he regains his vision, a vision of the essential unity and harmony of everything in the universe which heals him and restores him to his land, community and traditions. It is a vision of wholeness and beauty. Momaday creates harmony and beauty out of alienation and chaos and the last line in Benally's Night Chant, "In beauty it is finished" sums up the course of Abel's journey as well as Momaday's artistic achievement in the novel.