

The Restoration of Native American Identity in N. Scott Momaday's
House Made of Dawn: The Quest for Harmony with the Land

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House Made of Dawn (1968), a masterpiece of Navarro Scott Momaday, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1969. It spearheaded the rise of the Native American Renaissance—a term which critic Kenneth Lincoln has coined. It is widely regarded as the cornerstone of contemporary Native American literature that is created from the wellspring of imagination arising from the tribal traditions and ethics.

Since *House Made of Dawn* received the Pulitzer Prize, it has been regarded as a classic of American literature. Due to Momaday's background of studying English literature and American poetry, critics have compared it to works of modernist literature and it has often been interpreted from the Christian perspective. However, I focused on the theme of cultural diversity in *House Made of Dawn* and interpreted it from the tribal perspectives of Kiowa, Navajo, and Jemez tribes.

In Chapter I, I discussed Momaday's linguistic view, circular concepts of Native American culture in the structure of the story, and the means of storytelling applied in the writing. The idea of storytelling is to learn the meaning of human existence, and it is inseparable from self-identity. It deeply influences the development of Abel's identity as well. The attitude of the Native Americans toward words in storytelling is the very stance of Momaday on words. I pointed out that it is portrayed in the methods of the storytelling that effectively exert the sacred power of words. With the virtue of the power of words enhanced by the techniques of storytelling, Abel restores his voice as a symbol of his tribal identity.

In Chapter II, I focused on the mythic elements of *House Made of Dawn* and explored the similarities between the novel and the healing ceremony—the Night Chant—and the myths associated with the ceremony. The motif of the injured twins making a journey to search for their father, the Sun, is frequently recreated in the healing process of Abel. Moreover, the conception of the harmonious world maintained by the co-existence of good and evil is symbolized by eagles and snakes. Abel's reactions to them reflect the

discordancy within himself. Considering that the Stricken Twins recovered through the Night Chant, I indicated the elements of the healing ceremony embedded in the novel and asserted that the whole book itself demonstrates the patterns of a healing ceremony.

Finally, in Chapter III, I showed that Abel's self-healing has a close connection to tribal identity based on the tribal land and stories, and healing ceremonies associated with the land. Focusing on the idea which land and identity are inseparable, Chapter III demonstrated how this idea is represented in Tosamah's sermon and the grandfather Francisco's teaching: the Native Americans have myths and racial memories rooted in their land. Therefore Abel's self-acknowledgement is closely related to the land. The separation from his homeland causes him a loss of identity. For his self-recovery, he needs to merge with his homeland Walatowa. Therefore I focused on the healing ceremony to establish the relationship with the land, examined a myth associated with Beautyway, and finally revealed that what Abel needs to complete his wholeness is the Snake medicine dwelling in the land.

As discussed above, *House Made of Dawn* coming from the land of Walatowa, by means of storytelling and applying the motifs of myths, evokes the sacred power inherent in words and the land as shaping the ritual form as a whole. The story of Abel, which restores harmony in the world and brings his identity back, aims to bestow healing powers on a number of readers including the Native Americans.