

**Red, White and In-between: Identity Crisis in N.  
Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Leslie  
M. Silko's *Ceremony***

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato bakalářská práce pojednává o krizi identity hlavních hrdinů v románu N. Scotta Momadaye *Dům z úsvitu* a *Obřadu* od Leslie Marmon Silkové. Rozborem textu je postupně vysvětleno, jak určité faktory ovlivnily osudy a především vnitřní světy obou hlavních postav, co vedlo k jejich zmatení a problémům s uvědoměním si vlastní identity a co vedlo ke konečnému znovunalezení jejich duševní rovnováhy. Poslední část práce se věnuje objasnění, proč oba autoři své romány prokládají tradičními příběhy, mýty a rituály svých kmenů.

Klíčová slova: Literatura amerických Indiánů, Momaday, Silko, Dům z úsvitu, Obřad, mýtus, rituál, prolínání kultur, krize identity, Američtí Indiáni.

## **ABSTRACT**

This Bachelor Thesis discusses the identity crises of protagonists in novels *House Made of Dawn* by N. Scott Momaday and *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko. Using the text analysis it is explained which factors influenced main characters' lives and especially their inner worlds, what caused their confusion and problems with finding their own identity, and what led to the final retrieval of their mental balance. The final part of this thesis deals with the reasons, why authors mix the main story line with traditional stories, myths and rituals typical for their tribes.

Keywords: Native American literature, Momaday, Silko, House Made of Dawn, Ceremony, myth, ritual, mixing cultures, identity crisis, American Indians.

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## INTRODUCTION

“[The] Sense of identity provides the ability to experience one's self as something that has continuity and sameness, and to act accordingly.”

- Erik H. Erikson<sup>1</sup>

There are several reasons for an author to start writing a book. One of the common reasons might be, for example, to convey a message. To a group of people of the same profession, of the same social status, of the same financial situation, suffering from the same disease, searching for the same answer, or to the entire world. According to purpose of the particular book, also the messages can differ. Since there are books of different genres, it is usual that literary works of one genre contain a message with characteristic elements. Considering different genres, for example sci-fi literature is highly focused on warnings, meaning that an author tries to prevent some – mostly catastrophic – scenario by publishing their view of the future in a form of art. Authors who belong to an ethnic group tend to use themes and motifs from their environment, the message hidden inside these literary works is also connected with the given ethnicity.

The two books, *House Made of Dawn* by Navarre Scott Momaday and *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko, are very similar, as far as elements analyzed in this thesis are concerned. Both of the authors belong to the same ethnic group, both of them had to deal with similar issues in their lives and both of them wanted to speak to the world via literature. Protagonists of their books are both young Native Americans who have returned from white man's war. During their service in the Second World War their nature changed.

Through all the years when the Indian culture was under influence of the white culture, Native Americans probably experienced many different problems, and, according to Silko's and Momaday's works, mixing of cultures resulted to losing identity.

Identity crisis of young protagonists of these two novels was caused by blending two different cultures, which was most significant during their military service. Both Abel in *House Made of Dawn* and Tayo in *Ceremony* lost their identity because they found themselves on an unstable ground between white and Native American culture, and returning to their tribal roots was the only way to find their lost identity once again.

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<sup>1</sup> Finest Quotes, “Erik H. Erikson Quotes,” FinestQuotes.com, [http://www.finestquotes.com/author\\_quotes-author-Erik+H.+Erikson-page-0.htm](http://www.finestquotes.com/author_quotes-author-Erik+H.+Erikson-page-0.htm) (accessed April 28, 2013)

For the understanding of these novels, it is necessary to analyze several aspects of the text and, of course, to gain at least basic knowledge about the authors and to put them into the context of the period. Farther in this thesis, some of the main elements connected to the identity crisis of the two young Indians will be analyzed. As stated above, *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony* are in many aspects very similar. Protagonists are of the same origin, they had to leave their homes, communities and their way of life, they had gone to war, survived and lost their identity. It is important to have a closer look at their lives before the war (and before the change), the time when the change happened, their lives after the change, and then the search for the causes of both their crises and the final “recovery”.

## 1 ART THAT FINALLY FOUND RECOGNITION

There have been several artistic movements and trends, which had given a rise to literary movements. Some writers could find (and some of them may still find) themselves in a situation that they do not belong anywhere, at least as far as literature is concerned. In case of Scott Momaday and his literary work such a situation arose because there was nobody similar to him. He gave rise to a new literary trend.

Together with the publication of *House Made of Dawn* came the modern Native American literature. Of course, there have been some Native American authors before Momaday. For example, *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit* which was written by John Rollin Ridge, a part Cherokee, and published in 1854. Although this novel was written by an Indian, it definitely was not about Indians. So, *House Made of Dawn* (together with its author) took the metaphorical first place regarding Native American literature.<sup>2</sup>

Population of American Indians struggled, unfortunately mostly literally, with the white inhabitants of American continent ever since they met. The most violent and devastating was the removal of Cherokees from their ancestral lands in 1830's. Since this violent act, there have been several policies that governed the relationship between Indians and white Americans. Regardless the way a policy was applied, Native Americans have never been able, nor willing, to adapt to white man's culture. From time to time more brutal regulations appeared. Probably the most extreme example of an effort to destroy Indian culture was performed by Captain Richard Henry Pratt. In the name of civilizing them, Indians were forced to assimilate. As stated above, Native Americans have never adapted to the white culture. Later Indians were given freedom, they were given a piece of land in order to make them American citizens. This act failed, too. It had disastrous effect on the Indians and Native American population started vanishing slowly. An ownership of a piece of land was regarded a sign of American citizenship. The problem was that Indians were given grounds where the soil was very poor. They were unable to grow crops and their lives got worse instead of getting better.<sup>3</sup>

The struggle between two cultures is the matter of both *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony*. Momaday, known as a dean of Native American writers summarized the

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<sup>2</sup> See Steven Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices: Native American Writers*, (New York: Chelsea House, 2010), 8.

<sup>3</sup> See Carl N. Degler, "Indians and Other Americans," *Commentary* 54, no.5 (1972): 68 – 71.

feelings and thoughts and concerns of many of his people in the following sentence: “I grew up in two worlds and straddle between both worlds even now.”<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of majority of the literary movements stands either a person, group of people or an event so important that it had to be reflected in art. In case of the Native American Renaissance, it was N. Scott Momaday with all his success who “made the first move”. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the world of literature experienced an explosion of interest in the Native American literature. As mentioned, this era when American Indian literature started to be appreciated is described as the Native American Renaissance. This term was introduced by a scholar named Kenneth Lincoln. Before this rise, American Indian literature was rather on the literary margin.

Anthologies which followed after *House Made of Dawn* gave the Native American literature both shape and identity. Furthermore, publishers were suddenly presented a proof that Native American literature has a future and could mean profit to them. Thus it happened that Native American literature, which was up to that time not considered a literature but some kind of ethnography or anthropology, has become a part of a mainstream.<sup>5</sup>

Like their lives, also the literary works of Scott Momaday and Leslie Silko are to certain extent very similar. Both of the authors are of mixed origin and live between two different worlds, which intersect one another but will probably never function as one.<sup>6</sup> The protagonists of both novels are also of mixed origin and they have to deal with changes in their lives connected with cultural shocks they experienced. It is apparent that there are similarities not only between the authors but also between the protagonists and, moreover, there are similarities between the author and his or her protagonist.

## 1.1 N. Scott Momaday

When discussing Native American literature, Navarre Scott Momaday is definitely one of those who must be mentioned. Since his first novel was published, as stated earlier in the thesis his first novel was *House Made of Dawn*, Momaday has given several interviews and lectures about how it feels to be an American Indian writer. General public, both

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<sup>4</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> See Nancy J. Peterson, “Introduction: Native American Literature – From the Margins to the Mainstream,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 45, no. 1 (1999): 1 – 4.

<sup>6</sup> See Helen May Dennis, *Native American Literature: Towards a Spatialized Reading*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 18.

Indian and non-Indian, was understandably enlightened about both aspects of his works. It meant the new view of native literature and an insight to the core of American Indian culture.<sup>7</sup>

Mentioning the new view of native literature, it is necessary to point out that Scott Momaday together with James Welch were actually the founding fathers of an entirely new literary stream. Writers of the Native American renaissance were inspired by Momaday's writing and followed his steps to create their own style of literature.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1.1 Influence of Ancestors and Momaday's Path to Success

Novarro Scott Mammedaty was born in Lawton, Oklahoma, on February 27, 1934. Little Mammedaty's blood was from seven eighths Indian. His mother Natachee Scott identified herself as Indian, although she was only one-eighth Cherokee.<sup>9</sup> Natachee's ancestors include for example governor of Kentucky as well as her Cherokee great-grandmother. She was very proud of her origin and later she decided to enroll at Haskell Institute, which is Indian boarding school operated by Bureau of Indian Affairs.<sup>10</sup> Natachee was also educated at the University of New Mexico and Crescent Girls College. Her strong identification with her Indian background gave her son Scott sense of recognition his own tribal roots.

Alfred Morris Mammedaty, well-educated painter and teacher, was full-blood Kiowa. Alfred, who changed his family name from Mammedaty to Momaday, studied at Bacone College in Oklahoma, at the University of New Mexico and also at the University of California. Both of Momaday's parents were teachers and earned their living by teaching at a school on an Indian reservation.<sup>11</sup>

Short time after little Scott was born (exactly in 1936), the Momadays moved from Oklahoma to New Mexico and lived in various places of Navajo reservation. Young Momaday was exposed to the culture of the southwestern tribes, but later with the World War II new employment opportunities for his parents appeared. So, almost teenage Scott spent three years near the army air base in Hobbs, New Mexico, until they moved to the pueblo of Jemez in 1946. Living in Hobbs meant for young Momaday another important

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<sup>7</sup> See Sally L. Joyce, "N(avarre) Scott Momaday," *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies, Supplement 4*, Ed. A. Walton Litz and Molly Weigel, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> See Joyce, "N(avarre) Scott Momaday".

<sup>10</sup> See Helen Jaskoski, *Cliffs Notes on Momaday's House Made of Dawn*, (Lincoln: Cliffs Notes, 1994), 2.

<sup>11</sup> See Joyce, "N(avarre) Scott Momaday".

step in understanding differences between people. There he encountered the idea of race and racial discrimination for the first time. One part of Hobbs was so called “nigger-town”. And Momaday recalls himself being referred to as “Jap”. People frequently assumed that he was of Asian descent.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of education, Scott followed the path of his parents. In 1952 he graduated from high school. The last years of high school he spent at August Military School in Virginia.<sup>13</sup> Since he was interested in literature from an early age, in 1958 Scott Momaday earned B.A. at the University of New Mexico. Then he attended Stanford University in California, where he earned master’s degree in 1960 and finally Ph.D. in 1963.<sup>14</sup> For a short time he also attended Virginia Law School.<sup>15</sup> During his studies at Stanford University a significant moment of his life happened. Momaday met and studied with Yvor Winters, who soon became Momaday’s friend and mentor. It was Momaday’s American Indian descent which made Winters interested in his writing. Winters claimed that: “N. Scott Momaday can hardly drop a short phrase which does not haunt one.” This way he expressed that he supported Momaday because of the remarkable quality of his writing.

Having a degree in political science (University of New Mexico), master’s degree in creative writing (Stanford) and doctorate in English literature (Stanford) Scott was educated as well as his parents and he experienced a short period of teaching in Dulce, on the Jicarilla Apache reservation in New Mexico. Momaday’s career is, besides literature, based on teaching.<sup>16</sup>

He taught at several universities, such as University of California in Santa Barbara, Berkley, Stanford, New Mexico State University or the University of Arizona in Tucson. Apart from teaching at American schools, Scott Momaday spent several months of 1975 in Moscow and also acted as a Fulbright lecturer in American literature in the Soviet Union for some time.

Momaday’s biography and especially his literary works imply that he was significantly influenced by traditional life of Kiowa people. Substantial part of his

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<sup>12</sup> See Jaskoski, *Cliffs Notes on Momaday’s House Made of Dawn*, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 23.

<sup>15</sup> See Jaskoski, *Cliffs Notes on Momaday’s House Made of Dawn*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> See Joyce, “N(avarre) Scott Momaday”.

childhood Momaday spent with his paternal grandmother Aho and his paternal grandfather, who became a center to his poetic evocations of Kiowa traditions.<sup>17</sup>

In Jemez, Momadays were outsiders and they could not participate in the rituals of Jemez people but Scott watched and learned. He liked listening to Kiowa songs and learning about Kiowa cultural heritage. Scott spent his childhood summers with his father and Kiowa people in their sacred country – Rainy Mountain in southern Plains. This area became a major source of inspiration to Momaday’s prose, poetry and his visual art. However, the “hunt” for his tribal roots took Momaday much of his lifetime. It was some kind of physical and imaginative journey since Kiowa people consider their very being as a journey.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, Momaday made a journey to retrace the ancient Kiowa migration from the Northern Rockies to the Great Plains. His second “inspirational” journey, which was meant to be a source of inspiration to a Tosamah part in *House Made of Dawn*, was taken from Oklahoma to South Dakota. Momaday’s initiation into a Gourd Dance Society (a traditional Kiowa religious society) is regarded as a significant event, too.

Another important place in Momaday’s life is so called Devil’s Tower in Wyoming, a place sacred to Indians. In February 1934, a few months after his birth, Scott was solemnly given the Kiowa name Tsoai-talee. Translated into English it means “Rock-tree Boy”. This name is closely connected to the geological structure known as Devil’s Tower and has very significant meaning for Momaday’s inspiration and writing. The story of the formation of such features of the landscape is retold in some of the Momaday’s literary works including *House Made of Dawn*.<sup>19</sup>

### 1.1.2 Momaday’s Literary Works and Awards

*The Journey of Tai-me* was published in 1967 as Momaday’s first book. This book was lately revised as a multigenre book, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, published in 1969. This book included a story of Momaday’s Kiowa ancestors, myths and tradition, historical commentary and Momaday’s memoir. *House Made of Dawn* was his first novel. It was published in 1968 and was awarded Pulitzer Prize the following year. It was *House Made of Dawn* which brought Native American literature to the mainstream. Since then,

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<sup>17</sup> See Jaskoski, *Cliffs Notes on Momaday’s House Made of Dawn*, 3.

<sup>18</sup> See Joyce, “N(avarre) Scott Momaday”.

<sup>19</sup> See Jaskoski, *Cliffs Notes on Momaday’s House Made of Dawn*, 3.

Momaday has devoted himself to writing of a wide range of genres; in 1976 he published a memoir named *The Names: A Memoir*, and collection of poetry *The Gourd Dancer*. *The Indolent Boys* is a play, which was published in 1993. Momaday also wrote another novel, *An Ancient Child* (1990), nonfiction *The Native Americans* and *Indian Country* (1993) and a children's book named *Circle of Wonder: A Native American Christmas Story* (1994). His most recent book is a collection of poetry and dialogues called *In the Bear's House* (1999).

Moreover, Momaday has received twelve honorary degrees from various universities and was awarded a National Medal of Arts by President George W. Bush in 2007.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2 Leslie Marmon Silko

It would not be fair to claim that Scott Momaday was the only pioneer as far as Native American literature is considered. There were, of course, many other successful authors among Native Americans – for example James Welch, who has been already mentioned, Louise Erdrich, Gerald Vizenor and also Leslie Marmon Silko. Silko was one of those who after Momaday's breakthrough continued developing storytelling and language features which later became typical for Native American Renaissance. Together with Louise Erdrich's literary works, Silko's novels contain language elements such as multiple-voice narrations, nonlinear chronological structures, fractured narratives and stories within stories. Mixing the original stories of hers, fragments of letters, traditional stories of her people and even photographs of family and friends in her works, Silko managed to create her own distinguished style of writing both prose and poetry.<sup>21</sup>

### 1.2.1 Biography, Career and Critique

Leslie Marmon Silko was born on March 5, 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She grew up at the edge of Old Laguna pueblo. Leaving her family on the "outskirts" of the town, the Indian community of pueblo sent a clear message about who they meant to them. Leslie and her relatives are (or were) of mixed blood. Some of her ancestors were Laguna, some of them Mexican, and some of them also of English origin. Despite their white ancestry and partial marginalization of their family which was related to this fact, Marmons were actually quite prominent members of the community. Leslie's mother,

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<sup>20</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 24.

<sup>21</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 7 – 10.

Virginia, was a Plains Indian from Montana. And her father, Lee Howard Marmon, was Laguna and was once elected treasurer of Laguna pueblo. Silko's great-grandfather, Robert Gunn Marmon, was a white man who came to Laguna and married a Laguna woman, Marie Anaya. Because Leslie's mother had to work hard, she was brought up by Marie, who was a great storyteller. Virginia's (Silko's mother) relatives influenced her later career probably the most.<sup>22</sup>

As for education, Leslie Silko's list of attended schools is not as long as Momaday's. She attended Catholic school and earned B.A. at the University of New Mexico in 1969. In the same year, she married Richard C. Chapman. This marriage lasted three years, Richard and Leslie had a son, Robert. Their marriage ended in divorce. Two years later, Leslie married John Silko and had another son, Cozimir. Unfortunately, her second marriage ended the same way as the first one.<sup>23</sup>

For a short time, Silko taught at the Navajo Community College in Tsaile, Arizona. She also spent two years in Alaska (from 1976 to 1978) where she completed *Ceremony*. Soon after, she moved back to Arizona. This time she lived in Tucson, at the same time she began to teach at the University of Arizona.<sup>24</sup> In 1981, Leslie Silko was awarded a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" and finally could devote herself to writing.

In 1969, Silko's first short story was published. "The Man to Send Rain Clouds" appeared in *New Mexico Quarterly*. Later, her poems and stories, which had been published, were collected in her first book, *Laguna Woman* (1974). Another collection of short stories and poems was published in 1981 under the title *Storyteller. Delicacy and Strength of Love* appeared in 1986 and consisted of personal correspondence with Silko's fellow writer, James Wright.

Nevertheless, the most appraised and valued novel of all of her works is definitely *Ceremony* (1977). This novel is among the most critically praised novels of all Native American literature, it has also become a part of American literature canon. On the other hand, Silko's second novel, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), came across mixed reactions from critics. Silko has been accused from being positive about violent revolution described in this ambitious historical novel, and from taking an anti-homosexual stand. *Garden in the*

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<sup>22</sup> See Thomas K. Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko," in *American Nature Writers*, ed. John Elder, vol. 2. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1996).

<sup>23</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 63.

<sup>24</sup> See Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko".

*Dunes* is Silko's most recent novel. It was published in 1999 and deals with the history of women and slavery.<sup>25</sup>

### 1.2.2 Inspiration and Imagination

Similarly to Momaday, Silko's writing is also inspired by her ancestors and by the history and culture of her people. Leslie Silko says that living among "pure Indians" and knowing that she is of mixed origin caused her a lot of pain. However, she considers herself Laguna and so listening to folktales and traditional narratives of Laguna people became a source of inspiration for her literature.<sup>26</sup> Silko is in her works also concerned with nature and the relationship between people and the land. There is a sense of equality of human and other objects of nature, such as rocks or animals. Pueblos, in general, have a special relationship to the land and to the spirit world. All life is considered precious, everything has its place in the world and should not be taken for granted. These aspects of Laguna culture are reflected in Silko's works.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 63-64.

<sup>26</sup> See Naafesa T. Nichols, "Leslie Marmon Silko," Emory University 1997, <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Silko.html> (accessed September 28, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> See Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko".

## 2 IN THE NATIVE LAND

In the following chapter the lives of the two protagonists, Abel from *House Made of Dawn* and Tayo from *Ceremony*, will be analyzed. Both novels are structured similarly. The structure of them is not usual though. *House Made of Dawn* for example starts and ends with the same event, which is meant to be understood only after the reader finishes the book. The main story line is intentionally interspersed with myths and traditional stories. Myths and legends of Indian tribes are frequently used also in *Ceremony*. Flashbacks and “jumps” in time are typical for both novels. By using different linguistic means such as alternating narrators (typically in *House Made of Dawn*) or stories inside other stories (in *Ceremony*) the authors achieved artistically interesting effects.

Since one of the major motifs of the two novels is confusion, their unusual structure may serve the purpose and make the readers themselves feel confused. To avoid the confusion (which some readers might have experienced while their reading) in this analysis the lives of the two main characters will be presented in chronological order. Meaning that regardless the original structure, Abel’s and Tayo’s stories will be re-organized from their childhood years and life before they went to war to their return to the native land.

Myths, legends and traditional stories will be analyzed separately. This re-organization of the text is necessary for clear understanding of the changes in protagonists’ minds, and also better portrayal of the crisis they had to face. In other words, chronological order of events helps to show when and how the important events happened.

As mentioned above, Abel and Tayo are very similar – as for their personalities, and also their stories. However the perception of the world outside their culture is different. As opposed to Abel, Tayo seems to be scared of white people. Their varying attitudes to white Americans can be influenced by the way they lived before they were enlisted in the army. This difference will be analyzed separately for each of the two characters.

*House Made of Dawn* is set partially in the pueblo of Walatowa (Jemez), New Mexico, and the middle part of the book is set in Los Angeles, the story takes place between July 20, 1945, when Abel returns from the World War II, and February 28, 1952, when he returns to the village again. The main story is preceded by a prologue which describes a running man. At the end of the novel a reader ascertains that last part is as a matter of fact the same event which is the book opened with.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See Jaskoski, *Cliffs Notes on Momaday’s House Made of Dawn*, 4 – 5.

Unlike Momaday, Silko does not specify the exact dates in *Ceremony*, but from reading this novel it is possible to learn when the story takes place, because it begins when Tayo returns from the World War II. Place of setting is Laguna Pueblo reservation, New Mexico.<sup>29</sup>

## 2.1 Abel

Abel has lived in Walatowa since he was born. Walatowa is a native name for Jemez, and it literally means “people in the canyon”. Due to their geographical isolation, Pueblos were able to keep their language, customs and traditions despite being close to cultural pressures of Spanish and Anglo-Americans. Therefore, Abel also grew up in a world where traditions, rituals, ceremonies and religion were valid. Abel and his brother Vidal were taught to live the same way.<sup>30</sup>

Abel’s childhood is for the first time mentioned in the second chapter (excluding the prologue) of the first part of the novel, which is called *Longhair*. In the portrayed passage, he and his brother were riding a horse with other people from the village to a field, where the other members of their community were supposed to work. Abel was five years old and Vidal, his older brother, took him to red mesa and canyon. Brothers watched their grandfather working and listened to him singing songs.

These images show how important his brother was for Abel. Also the text highlights the relationship of Native Americans, their homeland and especially the nature as a whole.

Although Francisco, Abel’s grandfather, was respected member of community, Abel and his brother felt like strangers: “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 him and his mother and Vidal somehow foreign and strange, Francisco was the man of the family, but even then he was old and going lame.”<sup>31</sup>

Abel’s mother died soon, exactly as he expected, and he would not go near her grave. She was “beautiful in a way that he as well as others could see and her voice had been as soft as water.”<sup>32</sup> Not long after his mother’s death, Abel’s older brother Vidal died as well. Here the metaphorical seed of Abel’s isolation was planted. He was left with his

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<sup>29</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 64.

<sup>30</sup> See Matthias Schubnell, “The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*,” in N. Scott Momaday: *The Cultural and Literary Background*, (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 101 – 103.

<sup>31</sup> N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1985), 15.

<sup>32</sup> Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 15.

grandfather Francisco. Matthias Schubnell argues that “Abel is struggling to find an identity within his own tribe long before he comes into direct contact with the culture of modern America”<sup>33</sup>. As he was growing up, Abel found it more and more difficult to accept the traditional way of life.

When he was an adolescent he happened to see an eagle with a rattlesnake in its talons. Eagles have a strong religious value for Abel’s people. Their feathers are used in ceremonials and it is believed that eagles have supernatural powers. For Abel himself it was a view of pure freedom.<sup>34</sup> After watching eagles Abel had become a member of Eagle Watcher Society and had participated in a hunt. His hunt was successful and celebrated properly. That day, two eagles were caught. Abel’s bird was a female, big and beautiful. The second bird was a male, poor in comparison, and because of it he was allowed to keep his freedom. It was a great victory but Abel felt ashamed and disgusted. Suddenly the strong and free animal he admired was unable to fly, so he decided to kill the bird instead of letting it live in captivity.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding killing animals, Abel usually shows some signs of remorse, which shows his feeling of respect for other creatures in our world. This attitude is typical for American Indians. However, after the animal is hunted down and killed the respect is shown through rituals. Knowledge of these principles is what Abel missed. Source of Abel’s alienation may be the fact that the old generation of Native Americans, who were trying to preserve the old values, failed to communicate well with the younger generation.<sup>36</sup>

Although Abel had suffered from problems with his own identity even before he encountered the white culture at war, from the book it is apparent that the significant change in perceiving the world around him happened after he came back from the war.

Alan Velie points to the fact that Abel feels disoriented throughout the book, but he claims that it was the war and the close encounter with the white people:

“For instance, Abel in *House Made of Dawn* is lost and alcoholic after returning from World War II. He serves eight years for killing an albino Indian before finally adjusting to life in his tribe.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Schubnell, “The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*,” 102.

<sup>34</sup> See Schubnell, “The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*,” 106.

<sup>35</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 18 – 25.

<sup>36</sup> See Schubnell, “The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*,” 101 – 103.

<sup>37</sup> Alan R. Velie, “American Indian Literature in the Nineties: The Emergence of the Middle-Class Protagonist,” *World Literature Today* 66, no. 2 (1992): 264.

This idea is supported by Marion Willard Hylton. Hylton argues that Abel was forced to leave his environment and was taken to a strange world he did not understand. On the other hand, Schubnell and Hylton both agree that Abel's relationship with Francisco, which is sometimes described more like dependence, and the old ways of tribal life are as a matter of fact a burden for him.<sup>38</sup>

Either way, Abel as a child or adolescent did not show any signs of the identity crisis. He was, of course, isolated from others due to his uncertain status within his community but the problems with alcoholism and his unstable state of mind, which are to be described later, are depicted after the direct contact with completely different culture.

However, Abel had been influenced by the impact of white men and their "manners" before he left Waltowa. It is not expressed directly in the text but both his mother and brother died young, and the cause of their premature death was the consequences of alcoholism.<sup>39</sup>

## 2.2 Tayo

Tayo's struggle with the white man's culture in *Ceremony* is much more significant than Abel's problems in *House Made of Dawn*. There are several factors which make him likely to suffer from identity problems. He was born as a "halfbreed" to a Native American mother, while his father, whom he never met after he had left them, was white American. Since he was a child, he was disregarded and even neglected by his own relatives. These factors caused, that Tayo found himself in a situation when the white world was somehow close to him, but also very distant, reachless or even threatening due to the attitude of his relatives.

As mentioned, Tayo is a mixed-blood Indian. Particularly, he belongs to the people of Laguna Pueblo, New Mexico.<sup>40</sup> His father abandoned his family soon after Tayo's birth, and his mother, Laura, had a life in which having a child was undesirable.

"He was four years old the night his mother left him there. He didn't remember much: only that she had come after dark and wrapped him in a man's coat – it smelled like a man

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<sup>38</sup> See Marion Willard Hylton, "On a Trail of Pollen: Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*," *Critique* 14, no. 2 (1972): 60 – 61.

<sup>39</sup> See Joyce, "N(avarre) Scott Momaday".

<sup>40</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 64.

– and that there were men in the car with them [...], and he had dozed and listened, half dreaming their laughter and the sound of a cork squeaking in and out of the bottle.”<sup>41</sup>

Laura was a prostitute and could not take care of her son herself. Although she was “the black sheep” of her family, she took little Tayo to Laguna to leave him there with his only relatives, who could raise him. Tayo was growing up in Laguna with the older sister of his mother, who he called “Auntie”, her son Rocky, Auntie’s brother, Josiah, Robert and “Grandma”. Auntie was apparently very hostile to her nephew, whose mother tarnished the name of their family. She raised her son, Rocky, to be successful in both environments – white American and Native American – to get back at least a little respect, which was according to her lost after what Laura did. So, Rocky has become an A student, enthusiastically supported by teachers and a football coach.<sup>42</sup> In Auntie’s eyes, he was the one who could “open the gate” to the white world without becoming a part of it. Auntie’s hostility and disrespect is evident, for example, in her unwillingness to accept Tayo as Rocky’s brother.

“Auntie had always been careful that Rocky didn’t call Tayo ‘brother’, and when other people mistakenly called them brothers, she was quick to correct the error.

‘They’re not brothers,’ she’d say, ‘that’s Laura’s boy. You know the one.’”<sup>43</sup>

At first, Rocky also refused Tayo to be his brother, or like his brother, but later he started addressing him so.<sup>44</sup> Josiah’s approach to raising Tayo as his own son was different. Josiah was a guardian for the boy, he was a source of support, which Tayo as a child had lacked. As a bastard, moreover a bastard of a prostitute, Tayo was alienated and lost since his childhood. Josiah functioned as a footing for him, taught him the old ways and tribal traditions, and made him feel equal to Rocky.<sup>45</sup> Josiah’s closeness to the tribal rituals, ceremonies and beliefs, partially influenced Tayo and gave him the basis for understanding the Laguna culture. On the other hand, this perception of the world is confused by his education. At school Tayo is presented facts and taught to think logically according to the modern educational patterns.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*, (New York: Penguin, 1986), 65 – 66.

<sup>42</sup> See Dean, “Leslie (Marmon) Silko”.

<sup>43</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 65.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>45</sup> See Dean, “Leslie (Marmon) Silko”.

<sup>46</sup> See Ellen L. Arnold, “An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 72.

Tribal believes and an approach to them is a matter that separates Rocky and Tayo. Rocky is much more reluctant to live following his tribal heritage. His attitude is apparent, when he and Tayo hunted a deer, and Tayo showed respect to the prey by performing an old ritual. Rocky mocked everyone who had tried to explain it to him and called it a superstition. After they had gutted the animal, Josiah and Robert (Auntie's husband) performed one more ritual used to honor a killed animal. They sprinkled the cornmeal over the deer's nose to feed its spirit, Rocky felt ashamed and turned away. He was simply pragmatic and could not see any sense in their action.<sup>47</sup>

Another problem in the family was an undefined way of living. They lived on the reservation, Josiah and Grandma believed in the old ways, while Auntie regularly went to Christian church. She wanted to look like a virtuous woman, and to show that she was nothing like her sister, the prostitute. This factor indicates that Auntie is a hypocrite and cares about her image a lot.

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<sup>47</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 50 – 52.

### 3 THE WATERSHED MOMENT: FAREWELL TO MESAS

After spending their childhood years among their people, both protagonists had their reasons to leave the reservation. In both novels it was the war, specifically the World War II. From reading about Abel's time on the reservation readers are familiar with his relationship with Francisco. Abel might have felt bound, imprisoned in Walatowa. Therefore, that could be the reason for him to leave and, as other soldiers perhaps hoped, to become a hero. Tayo, on the other hand, might have left Laguna simply because his admired cousin, Rocky, did so.

Having read *House Made of Dawn* the reader does not know much about Abel's time at war. Neither his location, nor any particular events, that had happened. What is obvious and expressed are the changes that happened in his mind. Unlike *House Made of Dawn*, in *Ceremony* it is directly stated where Tayo was and what happened. Tayo fought in the World War II as well as Abel. His particular location was Philippine Islands. Despite the difficult language Silko uses in her novel, it is easy to "complete" the untold parts of Tayo's story while reading it. And so the passages where Tayo's war experience is described can help with analyzing the changes in Tayo's personality.

#### 3.1 Longhair at War

Abel remembers almost nothing from the time he was at war. What he remembers is depicted roughly and in fragments. Fragments are actually everything he remembers. The last thing he could see clearly before he left was that it was the first time he had been in a motorcar.

"He had been ready for hours, and he was restless, full of excitement and the dread of going. It was time."<sup>48</sup>

Francisco has not been comfortable with Abel's idea of going to fight for the United States in the white man's war. He did not even come to say goodbye to his grandson and therefore Abel was left alone in a bus. Since he had left the reservation there was nothing more than loneliness and confusion waiting for him in the strange world.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 25.

<sup>49</sup> See Jaskoski, *Cliffs Notes on Momaday's House Made of Dawn*, 12.

“It was the recent past, the intervention of days and years without meaning, of awful calm and collision, times always immediate and confused, that he could not put together in his mind.”<sup>50</sup>

This passage indicates Abel’s loss of memory. He remembers everything from the day before, as it happened yesterday, but the “recent past”, which surely is the war, is for him a sequence of days with no end and no beginning.

Nevertheless, there is at least one memory, a fragment of some event he recalls from the battlefield:

“He didn’t know where he was, and he was alone. No, there were men about, the bodies of men; he could barely see them strewn among the pits, their limbs sprawling away into the litter of leaves...”<sup>51</sup>

This section continues with description of a machine, a “great iron hull”, coming towards him, while he was lying on the ground among the dead soldiers. Abel was scared and he kept lying in the wet leaves until the tank was gone.<sup>52</sup>

The vision of this enormous human-made machine bringing destruction may be according to Michael W. Raymond a source of Abel’s suffering during the war. Raymond argues that all of his problems are connected to modern machines and technology, and notes that Abel was not able to accept neither the vehicles such as bus or the enemy tank, nor the assembly line which he came across in Los Angeles. All of these belong to the white people and are considered evil among Indians.<sup>53</sup>

The German tank was portrayed in other scene, which chronologically followed the image of the battlefield with dead bodies and living Abel among them watching the passing tank, in which Abel was performing a war dance on the “metal monster”. This event is described by Abel’s fellow soldier at the court. From his speech it is obvious that the other soldiers who survived the battle were impressed by his actions, but they still referred to Abel as to “chief”.<sup>54</sup> Abel had been stereotyped and misunderstood by the other soldiers. His individuality was denied and the conflict between cultures continued.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 25.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>52</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 26 – 27.

<sup>53</sup> See Michael W. Raymond, “Tai-me, Christ, and the Machine: Affirmation through Mythic Pluralism in *House Made of Dawn*,” *Studies in American Fiction* 11, no. 1 (1983): 63 – 64. Rpt. in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Brigham Narins and Deborah A. Stanley. Vol. 95 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1997).

<sup>54</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 107 – 108.

<sup>55</sup> See Schubnell, “The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*,” 112.

### 3.1.1 Necessary Changes in Young Indian's Nature

Abel left Jemez already confused, unsure about who he was. After leaving the reservation he directly encountered the different culture and the struggle in his mind became a conflict between two cultures: Native American which is based on the tribal roots and traditions, and modern American. Fighting on the battlefield and all the horrible events he had tried to forget hurt his confused mind even more. From the information stated earlier it is possible to assume that Abel's identity was unsure before he left the Native American world, but this kind of crisis was within his own people. After he appeared between two different environments, this crisis started to be a problem of mixing cultures.

Schubnell in his book distinguishes between Abel's identity crisis before leaving Jemez and after, it means in the context of the two cultures, which reflects that there were two sources of influence. One was the uncertain origin of Abel's father and an early death of his relatives, and the second one was the modern American culture.<sup>56</sup>

Seen from the different perspective, the war must have changed Abel's personality and destroy completely his identity also for another reason. It has already been mentioned that Abel's attitude to all the living creatures was very significant as for understanding death. He felt disgusted and ashamed when some animal was killed. At war it was not animals he had to kill, those were human beings. Killing had not been a part of Abel before the war. Changing this approach perhaps meant changing his entire inner world.

## 3.2 War, Captivity and Rain

Tayo was already born with the burden of being mixed-blood. From his early childhood he was neglected by his own mother, and after she abandoned him, he had to deal with disrespect. But after he was left in Laguna, Tayo had something he could consider a family. Even if he had never been supported by his relatives, there was at least the second boy, his cousin. Tayo and Rocky grew up together with their differences, though with brotherly love. And together they decided to enlist in the U.S. Army to fight alongside the white men. Rocky always wanted to leave the reservation and to achieve something somewhere in the city, Tayo was there to accompany him. Suddenly, there was no difference between them and those white soldiers.

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<sup>56</sup> See Schubnell, "The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*," 101 – 139.

“White women never looked at me until I put on that uniform, but then by God I was a U.S. Marine and they came crowding around. [...] I mean those white women fought over me. Yeah, they did really!”<sup>57</sup>

Being an Indian made no difference, therefore being a halbreed made no difference either. This situation was for Tayo comfortable. At that time, before they were sent to Pacific, Rocky and Tayo were in Los Angeles and Oakland. They were seen as heroes, saviors and protectors of America. Nevertheless, Tayo has seen the truth beyond people’s eyes looking up on them with admiration.

“The first day in Oakland he and Rocky walked down the street together and a big Chrysler stopped in the street and an old white woman rolled down the window and said: ‘God bless you, God bless you,’ but it was the uniform, not them, she blessed.”<sup>58</sup>

The events and images of the war are more frequent in *Ceremony* in comparison to *House Made of Dawn*. Tayo, even though he suffered from mental problems after his return from Pacific, remembers everything. He left Laguna with signs of alienation, but it was both his origin and the war, which led to the final loss of identity.

Tayo stood at the border between “white American” and “Indian American” right from his birth and also during the war. He had to struggle with the view of Japanese soldiers as his own people. The enemy he was supposed to exterminate was not much different from the Native American population.<sup>59</sup>

“That was the first time Tayo had realized that the man’s skin was not much different from his own. The skin.”<sup>60</sup>

After the Japanese soldiers had been captured, sergeant gave the order to kill them. They were lined up in front of the cave on “some nameless Pacific island” and were waiting for Tayo and other soldiers to shoot them. Tayo suddenly started shivering, he was not able to push the trigger. They were not only Japanese soldiers he saw, there was also his uncle Josiah among them. This vision continued when soldiers opened fire, Tayo watched his uncle die. When the fire was over, Rocky showed the dead soldier to Tayo and told him it was not Josiah, but he started screaming because the dead soldier’s face was Josiah’s face.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 40 – 41.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> See Arnold, “An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*,” 72.

<sup>60</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 7.

<sup>61</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 7 – 8.

This incident was the first horrible event that happened to him in Philippines. Tayo had already been ashamed of his mixed-blood origin, the guilt he felt for being responsible for Josiah's death made his mental state worse.<sup>62</sup> Apparently, it was not Tayo's fault that Josiah died, but he was really dead after Tayo returned.

Soon after killing those Japanese soldiers, Tayo and his fellow soldiers were taken captives by Japanese. Rocky did not survive.

"He [Japanese soldier] pulled the blanket over Rocky as if were already dead, and then he jabbed the rifle butt into the muddy blanket."<sup>63</sup>

These were two beloved people of whom Tayo thought that died because of him. His perception of events was distorted by his perception of himself. The "final blow" to his unstable mental state was when his prayers had been answered and it stopped raining. Captured American soldiers were on their way to Japanese prison camp, and rain was so hard that it was "chocking their lungs as they marched; it soaked into their boots until the skin on their toes peeled away dead and wounds turned green"<sup>64</sup>. And so Tayo prayed for the rain to stop, for a hundred years without rain. It stopped raining in the Philippine jungle, but at the same time Tayo's homeland experienced several dry years. Coincidentally the drought started short after his prayers.<sup>65</sup>

Regardless the fact that he had been taken captive, Tayo survived the war in Pacific and managed to get back to America. He was psychologically and emotionally shocked and suffered from "battle fatigue", which is in modern medicine called post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.2.1 Deep Faith and Death of "The Promising Son"

Rather than the causes of Tayo's mental and spiritual problems, *Ceremony* is focused more on the healing. To summarize the major causes of his alienation, and the crisis of identity to some extent, there were two "stages" of the process. First stage was Tayo's childhood, and the second one was the World War II. Tayo's alienation was caused by both. His aunt made him think he was something less than others. He had been frequently

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<sup>62</sup> See Arnold, "An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*," 73.

<sup>63</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 44.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>65</sup> See Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko".

<sup>66</sup> See Arnold, "An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*," 72.

compared to Rocky, the one who would be successful among Native Americans, among white Americans, Mexicans and everywhere in-between.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, Tayo had loved Rocky as he had been his brother, which was later reflected in Tayo's feeling of guilt and shame for Rocky's death. These strong feelings of responsibility for all the wrong events led to his final mental collapse.

Rocky died because he had been seriously wounded by Japanese grenade, but Tayo believed that Rocky's death, drought and even Josiah's death are somehow his fault. Even though Josiah was not in the Philippines and died on the reservation, Tayo had seen him in there and believed it was him. His problem is also his great love for his people, and he is also strongly against killing. So, his hallucinations and visions, together with his shame and feeling of guilt may seem as a mental illness from the European (or Euro-American) point of view.<sup>68</sup>

As far as the drought is concerned, from Tayo's perspective it is understandable that he felt responsible for it. He had prayed for it and it really happened: "So he had prayed the rain away, and for the sixth year it was dry; the grass turned yellow and it did not grow. Whenever he looked, Tayo could see the consequences of his praying; the gray mule grew gaunt, and the goat and kid had to wander farther and farther each day to find weeds or dry shrubs to eat."<sup>69</sup>

It was Josiah, who told him that people are responsible for the drought. They cause it because they are swearing at the wind and the dust. "The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave."<sup>70</sup>

Considering the "second stage" of Tayo's alienation, Rocky's and Josiah's death and the drought (which came naturally from the European perspective, but according to the Native American believes it could have been caused by the Reed or Corn woman)<sup>71</sup> are crucial for the further development of the story and also for Tayo's search for identity. These were the causes of his mental illness and its consequences.

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<sup>67</sup> See Arnold, "An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*," 72.

<sup>68</sup> See Elizabeth N. Evasdaughter, "Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*: Healing Ethnic Hatred," *MELUS* 15, no.1 (Spring 1988): 83 – 94.

<sup>69</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 14.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>71</sup> See Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko".

## 4 COMING BACK TO NATIVE LAND

Both of the novels begin when both main characters return from the war. All the previous events and experiences are depicted only by flashbacks. Momaday uses flashbacks more often. In case of *House Made of Dawn*, as the story continues the fragments of Abel's past follow chronologically one another, at least in each part of the book, and are usually somehow connected with the present event. In other words, Abel experiences something, some event or feeling, which brings his memories back. And these memories are to be revealed to the reader. Flashbacks in *House Made of Dawn* are less complex than in *Ceremony*. Silko describes longer passages from Tayo's childhood and military service. Silko's flashbacks are not ordered as they followed one another. For example, Tayo's memories from the war are introduced at the beginning of the novel, while his unhappy childhood is outlined later in the book.

Although the stories of these two war veterans are to some extent different, they are also very similar. It is possible to summarize and compare the reminiscences from their past which was communicated by flashbacks before the actual beginning of the novels. Both of them lost their mothers very early and they had never met their fathers. Then they were raised by their closest relatives who could not understand them well. It is also the military service what they have in common. What follows after they are back on the reservations may seem different for the first look. The common theme leading the readers through the two novels is the same, and it is finding the lost identity by returning back to the tribal roots.

### 4.1 Abel's Alienation

"The door swung open and Abel stepped heavily to the ground and reeled. He was drunk, and he fell against his grandfather and did not know him. His wet lips hung loose and his eyes were half closed and rolling."<sup>72</sup>

Besides an extensive description of the landscape, this scene opens the *House Made of Dawn*. Before Abel arrived by bus, Francisco had prepared the wagon and mares to bring him back home. He looked forward to his grandson, who did not even recognize him for being drunk. After his arrival, Abel slept the whole day and night.

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<sup>72</sup> Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 13.

As soon as he got sober, Abel started to realize where and who he was, in terms of geography and culture. Recalling his past has brought peace to his mind, at least for a while.<sup>73</sup>

Another stranger who arrived to the town was Angela St. John, a wife of a doctor from Los Angeles. Similar to Abel, also Angela has been hurt by life and did not see the meaning of her existence.<sup>74</sup> Father Olquin, the local priest, sent Abel to help Angela with chopping the wood. She was impressed by his strength, but Abel finished his work and left.<sup>75</sup>

On the following day, the pueblo celebrated the feast of Santiago. A part of this feast was a traditional contest of men from pueblo. They were supposed to pull a white rooster, buried to its neck, out of the ground while riding a horse. Abel tried to become a part of the society again and he decided to participate in this contest. Unfortunately, he failed and the man, who defeated him, was an albino Indian called Reyes.<sup>76</sup>

Reyes had been seen by Francisco in the cornfields under strange circumstances, and was considered evil. Corn represents a life and for Indians it is a sign of danger to hear an evil spirit whispering and breathing in the corn. Albino Reyes was a serpent, a dangerous snake in Abel's eyes.<sup>77</sup>

Since the chopping of Angela's wood had remained unfinished, Abel came back to Benevides house, where she was staying, to finish it. She could not stop thinking about him, which made her seduce him.<sup>78</sup> They had sexual intercourse but Abel was not able to establish any relationship with her, partially maybe due to the lack of intimacy during his childhood. He had problems to communicate with her and also with his grandfather, which was a failure from his point of view, because words are very powerful for Native Americans.

Neither could he enter the ceremonial, ritual and traditional life of his tribe. The sexual encounter with Angela had no meaning for him, which is another sign of his lost and uncertain identity. Moreover, he had been defeated by the snake, the evil albino Reyes.

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<sup>73</sup> See Hylton, "On a Trail of Pollen," 62.

<sup>74</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 25.

<sup>75</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 33 – 36.

<sup>76</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 25.

<sup>77</sup> See Hylton, "On a Trail of Pollen," 62.

<sup>78</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 58 – 62.

This disappointment led to the event, when Abel's aggression "exploded". He had to kill the white man, the serpent who was evil.<sup>79</sup>

"He leaned inside the white man's arms and drove the blade up under the bones of the breast and across. The white man's hands lay on Abel's shoulders, and for a moment the white man stood very still. (...) Abel was no longer terrified, but strangely cautious and intent, full of wonder and regard."<sup>80</sup> This scene can be understood in a way that Abel associated the albino Indian with evils of the white culture. Or it can be explained by Abel's fear of witchcraft. Reyes identity is for Abel unclear, because regardless the color of his skin, he is an Indian.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Los Angeles and the Night Chant

Killing the albino, as a possible symbol of cultural clash, is a climax of *House Made of Dawn*, and also the end of the first part called "Longhair". The following two parts of the novel, "The Priest of the Sun" and "The Night Chanter", are set in Los Angeles seven years later, after the trial and the time that Abel had spent in prison. Despite what Alan Velie wrote in his essay about the time spent in prison, it could not be eight years but maximum seven years.

Abel was convicted and sentenced, but in his view the "murder" of Reyes was a ritual act and he would have done it again. His crime could not have been judged only by American law, according to the tribal law Abel had the right to kill him. Nevertheless, he needed to be punished. At the court, Abel did not defend himself and showed no remorse.<sup>82</sup>

"The Priest of the Sun" section opens with introducing other Indian character who needed to cope with mixing cultures. Reverend John Big Bluff Tosamah is a self-proclaimed pastor of Holiness Pan-Indian Rescue Mission and Priest of the Sun, who preaches in the basement of some Los Angeles company.<sup>83</sup> Tosamah's sermons are about Christian meaning of words from the Native American perspective, and combine Kiowa and Navajo believes. Later in the novel, one more Indian character with similar problems but different story, is introduced. Ben Benally is Abel's friend in Los Angeles, with whom he would go to listen to Tosamah's sermon. Ben is a Navajo and has been relocated to Los

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<sup>79</sup> See Schubnell, "The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*," 118 – 120.

<sup>80</sup> Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 77 – 78.

<sup>81</sup> See Schubnell, "The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*," 120 – 121.

<sup>82</sup> See Joyce, "N(avarre) Scott Momaday".

<sup>83</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 84.

Angeles as well as Abel.<sup>84</sup> Both Ben Benally and John Big Bluff Tosamah represent American Indians who managed to live on a fringe of modern American society.<sup>85</sup>

Abel has been relocated to Los Angeles after about six years in prison. The change of environment was not a relief for him, it meant exactly the opposite. This part of the novel contains mostly flashbacks describing the events from the court and prison. It also shows Abel's state of mind.<sup>86</sup> He was lost between two cultures, two fundamentally different spiritual worlds, and he was willing to die rather than living in such uncertainty. But he has found the strength to keep on going.

After he was released from prison, Abel met Milly. Milly, a woman hurt by life very badly by early loss of her husband and child, together with Ben Benally became the most important people for him in Los Angeles.<sup>87</sup> They tried to help Abel several times to find a job, because he was fired from the factory where he had worked with Ben. He had a love affair with Milly and she told him that she loved him, but Abel's feelings were not so strong. On the other hand, Milly had to be somehow valued by him. Throughout almost the whole part of the book, Abel was lying on the beach, beaten nearly to death by Martinez, a corrupt policeman. Milly's name very often separates passages, which are Abel's memories and those, which are set in present while he was lying near the sea.<sup>88</sup>

Abel saw a fence on the beach, he could not reach it, but finally he managed to get to it. This fence might have a symbolic meaning. It represents a barrier between mainstream society, which he was not able to overcome, and him. But finally he reached the fence and it helped him stand up. Thus, he was suddenly able to understand that he was lost.<sup>89</sup> Finally, he decided to return home, which is suggested at the beginning of the next section.

"The Night Chanter" is also set in Los Angeles but it tells Abel's story from Benally's point of view. Benally provides the readers with information about his, Abel's and Milly's lives in the city, but primarily he focuses on Abel. Unlike Milly, Benally understood Abel's situation:

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<sup>84</sup> See Joyce, "N(avarre) Scott Momaday".

<sup>85</sup> See Hylton, "On a Trail of Pollen," 63 – 64.

<sup>86</sup> See Schubnell, "The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*," 121 – 124.

<sup>87</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 26.

<sup>88</sup> See Momaday, "The Priest of the Sun" in *House Made of Dawn*.

<sup>89</sup> See Schubnell, "The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*," 124.

“He was unlucky. You could see that right away. You could see that he wasn’t going to get along around here. Milly thought he was going to be all right, I guess, but she didn’t understand how it was with him. He was a longhair, like Tosamah said.”<sup>90</sup>

Abel would have had to change, if he had wanted to live in Los Angeles. But according to Benally, he did not know how or he did not want to. Tosamah’s opinion was that Abel was “too dumb to be civilized”.<sup>91</sup> After he had survived the attack of Martinez and reached the “fence”, Abel was ready to accept his old way of living. He realized that the only place he can find his identity, a place where his life would have some meaning, is back on the reservation. Due to this cognition, Abel allowed Benally to sing a ritual healing song, the Night Chant, over him. Here he has found the way to belief in power of the old Indian rituals and ceremonies again. His inner harmony was re-established. To become certain about his place in life, he must find the unity of body and soul and “the power of words” again. That night he had spent lying on the beach, in some moments conscious, in other moments unconscious, helped him together with the Navajo ceremony regain his balance, his control over his body and spirit and words.<sup>92</sup>

The last part of the book, “The Dawn Runner”, is very short and describes Abel’s second return to the reservation or to his home as he had realized. When he came back to Walatowa, his old grandfather Francisco was seriously ill. Abel knew he was dying and he cared for him, he kept him warm and stayed with him. There were moments when Francisco was strong enough to talk, so he told Abel the story of his first bear hunt which was considered a rite.<sup>93</sup> Long before that day, Francisco was one of the dawn runners, too. But one morning, before the dawn, Abel found him dead. He went to see Father Olquin, the local priest, to ask him to bury Francisco according to the tribal ceremonials. Abel dressed his body into bright ceremonial clothes, sprinkled meal in four directions, exactly according to the old rituals, and wrapped old man’s body in a blanket.

After the mission, Francisco’s funeral, he did not come back to his house. Abel headed south, he reached the last house of the town and took off his shirt. He rubbed his arms and chest with ashes and joined the dawn runners in their ritual run singing the words of the Night Chant.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 135.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> See Schubnell, “The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*,” 124 – 134.

<sup>93</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 26.

<sup>94</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 189 – 191.

Abel returned home, his body was still badly injured, but his soul was healed, his identity was found. He finally found his home, his house made of dawn, the end of the struggle for finding the place in life. Once again, there is a harmony of body, soul and the nature, the power of words, once lost, is back.<sup>95</sup> Abel finally believed in power of the Night Chant, which contains the words written below, but also continues with sections about healing both his (or anybody's over whom the song is sung) body and soul. The Night Chant represents the moment, when Abel realized that he belonged in Walatowa, not Los Angeles, and he let this ceremony help him to start a new life.

“House made of dawn,  
House made of evening light,  
House made of dark cloud,  
House made of male rain,  
House made of dark mist,  
House made of female rain,  
House made of pollen,  
House made of grasshoppers, (...)”<sup>96</sup>

## 4.2 Tayo's Guilt and Healing His Insanity

The healing process is the main focus of *Ceremony*. Similarly to *House Made of Dawn*, also *Ceremony* begins when Tayo returns from the war. Unlike Abel, who has lost his tribal identity, Tayo suffered from both losing the tribal identity and mental disorder caused by the traumatic war experience. Tayo's healing must contain the psychological healing, as well as finding his communal identity. Moreover, Tayo felt alienated not only from his relatives, but also from the entire humanity, nature and even his own soul.<sup>97</sup>

Tayo's military service was over and he had to spend some time in a hospital for war veterans in Los Angeles before he was able to go back to New Mexico. He remembers himself being a white smoke, an invisible entity trapped somewhere in the hospital facilities. If doctors tried to speak to him, he would reply that they were not allowed to speak to the invisible being. Furthermore, Tayo denied his consciousness, maybe in order to resist the pain and the feeling of guilt.

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<sup>95</sup> See Schubnell, “The Crisis of Identity: *House Made of Dawn*,” 137 – 139.

<sup>96</sup> See Momaday, *House Made of Dawn*, 134.

<sup>97</sup> See Arnold, “An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*,” 73.

“For a long time he had been white smoke. He did not realize that until he left the hospital, because white smoke had no consciousness of itself.”<sup>98</sup>

Although the doctors in Los Angeles agreed that he was ready to return back to normal life, Tayo has not been psychically all right yet. He could still see the Japanese soldiers everywhere. As he fainted at the L.A. train station, he woke up lying on a concrete floor, and he thought he was in the jungle again.<sup>99</sup>

His health conditions did not get better after he had arrived to Laguna either. With shaky legs and permanent nausea, Tayo was not able to get out of the bed. For Auntie he was all she had left, but a new “portion” of shame as well. And she would remind him of it every time she could. She kept changing bed linen on Josiah’s and Rocky’s bed as they were still alive. Apart from incidents like this, Tayo was rather overlooked or ignored by her. Behavior of Auntie is to some extent understandable considering she has lost her own son recently. On the other hand, Robert, her husband and Rocky’s father, is not so hostile to Tayo. He admits he is glad that Tayo is back home.

Since the L.A. hospital did not help him with his psychological problems, Grandmother came to conclusion that Tayo needs a medicine man. Grandmother told Auntie about the idea to use traditional methods of healing, but Auntie did not agree. According to her the ceremony would not work due to Tayo’s mixed blood. And she was afraid there would be rumors again, as there were about Laura and Josiah (who happened to have relationship with a Mexican woman called Night Swan)<sup>100</sup>. Regardless Auntie’s urges to avoid such a mistake Grandmother had asserted hers and sent for a medicine man, whose name was Ku’oosh.<sup>101</sup>

Ku’oosh came to see Tayo and performed the expected healing ceremony. Unfortunately, the effect of Ku’oosh’s ceremony was not strong enough to expel the haunting powers from Tayo’s mind. Therefore, Ku’oosh advised Tayo to go to Gallup and see a different kind of medicine man. Old Betonie was, so to speak, expert on war veterans.<sup>102</sup>

It is important to realize the impact of civilization on traditional life of Native Americans. Betonie lives outside the city, specifically on the Gallup Ceremonial Grounds,

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<sup>98</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 14.

<sup>99</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 16 – 18.

<sup>100</sup> See Dean, “Leslie (Marmon) Silko”.

<sup>101</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 29 – 33.

<sup>102</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 65.

and he is like Tayo of mixed origin. Betonie's place is surrounded by garbage, or by things, which are generally seen as garbage, like empty bottles and cans, old newspapers and books and brochures. For the medicine man all these things have a different meaning, they were a memento, a reminder of white civilizations. White man came there to destroy the land and left those things there. Because the world has changed over time, old ceremonies would not work for him, Betonie educated Tayo. New ceremonies have to be invented in order to adjust them to the new world.

Tayo wanted to trust the old medicine man, but he could not. Betonie was saying that ceremonies could stop white men from destroying the land and everything they had taken from Indians. It was impossible in his mind to use a ceremony or ritual to stop wars or fighting. Witchery was the evil in accordance with Betonie's words, and whites were the tool.<sup>103</sup> In his speech, Old Betonie accuses Europeans (who are equal to witches in his mind) from causing all the evil that happened to the land and Native Americans.

After he had explained the necessity of inventing new ceremony, Betonie took Tayo to the mountains, and together with his assistant performed the healing ceremony. The medicine man's healing power aroused in Tayo the willingness to heal himself. Betonie's ceremony was not enough to put everything in order. He told Tayo that it was his responsibility to find balance in his life, and that stars, cattle, woman and mountain would play the role in the process.<sup>104</sup> Tayo's sickness is partly healed, but he was also informed that the mental problems were a part of a larger issue. The healing must be found in something greater.<sup>105</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Ritual Journey towards Wholeness

Betonie's healing ceremony had similar function as the Night Chant in *House Made of Dawn*. The difference was that Abel had to get through the difficulties connected to his identity crisis, and the Chant was the final solution to it. Tayo, on the other hand, had his difficulties, but the ceremony did not put an end to them. Everything that followed the ceremony was the second part of the healing process. According to Ellen L. Arnold: "The completion of the ceremony remaps Tayo's identity as an individual, clearing a space within which he can reintegrate the splits – between his white and Indian identities, mind

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<sup>103</sup> See Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko".

<sup>104</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 65.

<sup>105</sup> See Arnold, "An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*," 73.

and body, vision and reality – that have divided him internally, leaving him hollow and longing for death.”<sup>106</sup>

Betonie’s remark about the cattle was clear to Tayo immediately. Before the boys left Laguna, Josiah purchased a herd of Mexican cattle, because he had predicted the dry years. The cattle were tough but very stubborn and wild. So, short after they had been brought to the reservation the herd set off the journey back home to Mexico. Josiah tried to find the herd, but he has never been successful. Therefore, Tayo understood that finishing Josiah’s quest was going to be the final part of the ceremony.<sup>107</sup>

“He was drawing in the dirt with his finger. ‘Remember these stars,’ he said. ‘I’ve seen them and I’ve seen the spotted cattle; I’ve seen a mountain and I’ve seen a woman.’”<sup>108</sup>

Old Betonie left Tayo with this vision. Following the sign, Tayo left for the mountains to search for the herd. On his way there, he arrived to a farm and met its owner, Ts’eh, but she did not tell him her name at first. She invited him inside and started talking about stars. Tayo had been watching the sky every night since he left Betonie’s place. As Ts’eh was talking about stars, Tayo looked up to the evening sky. Betonie’s constellation was there, and his vision suddenly became clearer. The vision of a woman was clarified soon after, when Tayo made love to her.<sup>109</sup>

Sexual intercourse with Ts’eh made sense to words, which Night Swan once said to Tayo after they had this kind of encounter, too. She said he needed to remember the night. Making love to Ts’eh, whose name is also Montano, as she would admit later, symbolized befriending the feminine element of the universe as well as making love to Night Swan. Reconciliation with the Mother brought rain and nurtured the Earth again.<sup>110</sup>

Tayo continued in his search for the cattle. He found the herd on pastures behind a barbed wire; it was property of white cowboys. Two of them caught him and, ready to bring him to the hands of justice, made him return to the town. On the way, they came across a wild mountain lion. The animal seemed too dangerous to the cowboys and they have left Tayo behind. Having set the cattle free, he took the rest of the herd to the house of Ts’eh. Her ranch was on Mt. Taylor, and it was the vision of a mountain, which was still

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<sup>106</sup> Arnold, “An Ear for the Story, an Eye for the Pattern: Rereading *Ceremony*,” 74.

<sup>107</sup> See Dean, “Leslie (Marmon) Silko”.

<sup>108</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 152.

<sup>109</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 176 – 181.

<sup>110</sup> See Dean, “Leslie (Marmon) Silko”.

missing in the otherwise complete “pattern”. Tayo and Ts’eh/Montano spent summer together, she taught him about the old ways of living and warned him about bad people, the other war veterans, who were about do harm to him.<sup>111</sup>

Regarding Ts’eh a purely human character could be inaccurate. She identifies herself with rocks and mountains: “‘I’m a Montano,’ she said. ‘You can call me Ts’eh. That’s my nickname because my Indian name is so long. All of us kids did that.’” There is an obvious resemblance between the word “mountain” and “Montano”; moreover the word “tse” means “rock” in Navajo. At the end of their time together, she was slowly fading as she was leaving him, like a pictograph of elk they had seen in a cave.<sup>112</sup> She left Tayo and the ceremony was almost complete.

The destroyers, who Ts’eh talked about, were veterans; Tayo had known them since his childhood. At the end of summer uncle Robert came to ask Tayo to go home. There were rumors about him becoming crazy again, and his family was concerned that he would need a doctor or a medicine man again. Robert as a reasonable man did not believe those veterans; especially he did not believe Emo, who was some kind of self-proclaimed leader of them.<sup>113</sup>

Tayo escaped Emo, who was searching for him. Emo was a violent war veteran and he hated Tayo. The final part of the novel combines the view of evil influence of Europeans, seen as destroyers, and evil of Emo, who represents the devastating impact of war on people’s mind, because his brutality emerged after he had identified killing as pleasure. So, Tayo managed to avoid meeting Emo, but watched him and others from the back of an old pick-up truck. Later he went back to the Grandmother’s house.<sup>114</sup>

The ceremony was over, the universe and Tayo were back in balance. He entered an old uranium mine (proof of European evil forces) and “[h]e cried the relief he felt at finally seeing the pattern, the way all the stories fit together – the old stories, the war stories, their stories – to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time.”<sup>115</sup> Tayo himself could feel that his identity, which has never been sure, was whole and solid.

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<sup>111</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 65.

<sup>112</sup> See Erica Olsen, “Silko’s Ceremony,” *The Explicator* 64, no. 3 (2006): 182.

<sup>113</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 227 – 229.

<sup>114</sup> See Dean, “Leslie (Marmon) Silko”.

<sup>115</sup> Silko, *Ceremony*, 246.

From the old mine, Tayo watched a horrible scene: Harley, who was Tayo's friend but also one of the destroyers, was being tortured by Emo and his companions Leroy and Pinkie. Tayo, hidden but expected to be there, could have stopped them by killing Emo, but he decided to let destroyers destroy themselves. They would have wanted Tayo to go back to mental institution for being involved in such incident, and so he left the place. It was the plan of witchery to make Tayo kill Emo.<sup>116</sup> Leroy, Harley and Pinkie were found dead, Emo was alive; nevertheless, Tayo escaped him and the evil. Tayo finally identified Laguna to be his home. Furthermore, Auntie started respecting him, she changed her approach to him and regarded him the true member of family.<sup>117</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The Halfbreed and Them

The mixed origin made Tayo's life uneasy. Not only from the perspective of his relatives (the attitude of Auntie has already been discussed), but also from the perspective of the other veterans. From the reaction of white society it is possible to deduce, that white Americans cared about Native Americans only as long as they were wearing uniforms. The story about the interest of white women, which Tayo was telling to veterans, continued: "I'm a halfbreed. [...] I'll speak for both sides. [...] The war was over, the uniform was gone. All of sudden that man at the store waits on you last, makes you wait until all the white people bought what they wanted."<sup>118</sup> As soon as they left the war, America left them behind. Due to this, Tayo may have felt betrayed because he in fact was a "halfbreed", which means he was half white.

Tayo's position among other veterans, namely the ones who accompanied him in pubs after they returned from war, was weakened because of his mixed blood. Harley, Leroy, Pinkie and Emo found relief in alcohol. Tayo was drinking with them for some time. The reason was that "[l]iquor was medicine for the anger that made them hurt, for the pain of the loss, medicine for tight bellies and choked-up throats."<sup>119</sup> Emo, who was considerably changed by the war, mocked Tayo, called him halfbreed and boasted about killing. Emo and the others somehow hated and admired the white culture at the same time. Harley for example admired the bright city lights, the cars and music and food.<sup>120</sup> Emo was proud of

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<sup>116</sup> See Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko".

<sup>117</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 258 – 259.

<sup>118</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 42.

<sup>119</sup> See Silko, *Ceremony*, 40.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 204.

killing people at war, he had teeth of dead soldiers in a small bag, he was still wearing the GI hairstyle, but he also hated white people. He was disgusted by fighting in their war for them, whites, and they, whites, took everything. They took the land, and according to Emo, Indians had the right to take white women. Because of his opinion on whites and because he had mocked him, Tayo attacked Emo and almost killed him.<sup>121</sup>

The war had changed Tayo and the others in different ways. Tayo was devastated, turned to drinking but realized it was making it all worse. Emo, Harley, Leroy and Pinkie became alcoholics, who were ambivalent in their relationship to both Native American and white culture. While Tayo managed to find balance in the world, nature and found his identity, the other veterans remained ruined. Alcoholism and the misbalance of their souls killed them.

### 4.3 Native Americans and the Evil of Spirit

In both novels, there are frequently portrayed Indian characters under influence of alcohol. Abel arrives to pueblo so drunk that he is not able to recognize his grandfather, in Los Angeles they were drinking alcohol also very often, according Benally's narration. But while Benally was aware of its bad influence, Abel seemed to ignore it. Alcohol probably offered him a short escape from confusion and the internal conflict.<sup>122</sup> Tayo himself was not defeated by liquor, but many other war veterans he was in contact with were. He tried to find relief in drinking with veterans but he has never been caught in metaphorical cage of alcoholism.

Alcohol abuse among tribal population in America is a serious problem. "Firewater thesis" suggests that Native Americans have genetic predispositions or weakness to alcohol. Gerald Vizenor claims this "thesis" is racist and false. On the other hand, the National Institute of Mental Health has reported that, at the time their research was done, alcohol related deaths were four to five times higher among Indian population than among general public. Vizenor provides several explanations, one reason may be inability to adjust to modern world, second reason can be social disorganization, third is denial of tribal values by the dominant culture and fourth reason for an Indian to start drinking may be showing positive approach to social integration.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 55 – 57.

<sup>122</sup> See Otfinoski, *Multicultural Voices*, 27.

Solution of this problem is not easy to define. For example, Ron Wood, a Navajo who works in public health, believes that the more acculturated an Indian is, the more similar his drinking pattern is to the Anglo pattern.<sup>123</sup>

Since the arrival of Europeans to the New World, Native American population experienced an encounter with alcohol, but they could not develop any social context in which drinking alcohol would be appropriate. Many tribal leaders perceived the negative influence of drinking, and from 1832 to 1953, there was a prohibition for Indians.

Roland J. Lamarine presents three theories explaining the high consumption of “firewater” among Native Americans. Historical theory indicates that Indians were not prepared to accept alcohol and therefore its effect was so devastating. The second theory points to physiological factors of Native Americans and resembles the “firewater thesis” to some extent. Nevertheless, this theory contains confirmed metabolic differences which support it. The third theory discusses how social factors affect drinking patterns of Native Americans.<sup>124</sup>

Although the theories of high consumption of alcohol among American Indians vary, there is one fact they all can agree on. Alcohol was brought to America by white Europeans, and its devastating influence on them is perceptible even today. Regardless the reasons why Native Americans are prone to alcohol addiction, white Europeans are the ones to blame.

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<sup>123</sup> See Gerald Vizenor, “American Indians and Drunkenness,” *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 11, no. 4 (1984): 84 – 86.

<sup>124</sup> See Roland J. Lamarine, “Alcohol Abuse Among Native Americans,” *Journal of Community Health* 13, no. 3 (1988): 143 – 148.

## 5 ROLE OF MYTHS AND RITUALS IN THE TWO NOVELS

Both novels, *House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony*, contain several sections which are not parts of the main story line. These sections are recognizable because of the different style of writing or different text layout. In *House Made of Dawn*, stories which are traditional oral heritage are highlighted by italics, while in *Ceremony* the mythic story, which stretches through the whole novel, is in a form of poetry. Either way, placing myths into the structure of the novels, mingling the “reality” and “mythic world”, serves its aimed purpose in both of the books.

*House Made of Dawn* combines two different styles. It mixes Euro-American literature and Native American style of story-telling. The novel opens and closes with formulas, which are used in all Jemez Pueblo narrations to indicate the beginning and the end of the story. The linear story of a character, who abandons his life somewhere and leaves to search for luck somewhere else in the world, is the Euro-American approach. While the search for identity, which is complex, not for individual, and the power of language together with the special art of story-telling, are the Native American approach. Momaday created a narration which is understandable for European or American modern reader but does not suppress Native American narration principles.<sup>125</sup>

For example, the Night Chant, the ritual healing song sung by Ben Benally, serves the purpose of some kind of a “bridge” between cultures. Therefore, all the readers, whether American, European or Indian, feel as a part of the tribal ritual or ceremony. Furthermore, in the novel there are depicted different creation or emergence stories, which also contribute to the strong and pervasive spiritual impulse of the whole book. In *House Made of Dawn*, story-telling is connected with facts and myths are connected with the current events. The main story mingles with mythical stories and Abel undergoes those rituals, such as the Night Chant or joining the Dawn Runners, because it keeps the “gates” to both worlds open.<sup>126</sup>

From Abel’s perspective, rituals, ceremonies and myths function as a re-connection with his tribal origin. At the end of the book, Abel joins the ritual run for good harvest and hunt, which may indicate his full accepting of the tribal ways of living. This ritual was

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<sup>125</sup> See Phyllis Toy, “Racing Homeward: Myth and Ritual in *House Made of Dawn*,” *Études anglaises* 51, no. 1 (1998): 27 – 31.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 36 – 37.

together with the Night Chant the most significant move towards the complete identity recognition.<sup>127</sup>

Similarly to Momaday, Silko incorporated a lot of traditional myths and rituals into the novel. In fact, it is obvious from the title that *Ceremony* probably contains a content related to ceremonies. Unlike in *House Made of Dawn*, in *Ceremony* the myth, or the collection of myths, which guide the reader through the whole story, seems to be central to the whole novel. Tayo's path to search for his identity and healing his mind is portrayed as he follows the events depicted in this set of myths. At the beginning of the book, the Thought Woman starts telling the story. Later, there is a myth about drought, which corresponds with the drought. This myth is in some parts interrupted with other stories, but continues throughout the whole novel. As well as the problem with the lack of rainfall was solved in the myth, Tayo was healed in the end.

Not only is the myth central to *Ceremony*, but the whole novel can be seen as a story of a mythic character. At the very beginning of the book, there is a fraction of a creation story. Ts'its'itsi'nako is also known as Thought-Woman or as Spider-Woman in Laguna mythology, and whatever she thinks, comes true. This introductory part of *Ceremony* closes with a verse that she is "thinking of a story now."<sup>128</sup>

Like in *House Made of Dawn*, there is also a combination of two approaches to literature. Silko had to create a story, which is understandable for reader of any of the two cultures. Thus, the lines, which seem to be according to the Euro-American culture poetry, are connected to the Native American discourse. It is Silko's way how to interface the reality and myth, indicating that both discourses originated from the same components, and that the mythic part structures and complements the "real" part.<sup>129</sup>

For Tayo, the myths and rituals are very important in the process of healing. First ritual he had to "undergo" was not successful, but the second ritual performed by Betonie helped him. The ceremony performed by Betonie was done partly by telling myths and traditional stories. The healing effect lasted beyond the actual ceremony, and together with the mythic narrations and chants, it was necessary for Tayo to form his own identity as a "halfbreed."<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> See Momaday, "The Night Chanter" and "The Dawn Runner" in *House Made of Dawn*.

<sup>128</sup> See Dean, "Leslie (Marmon) Silko".

<sup>129</sup> See James Ruppert, "Dialogism and mediation in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*," *The Explicator* 51, no. 2 (1993): 129 – 130.

<sup>130</sup> See Dennis, *Native American Literature*, 48 – 49.

The purpose of myths and rituals in both books is similar. For the readers, it is there to link the two different cultures, to combine two different approaches to literature and understanding of storytelling. For the protagonists, it is there to give them the essential connection with their lives among their people, according to the tribal ways.

## CONCLUSION

*House Made of Dawn* and *Ceremony* are very similar as for the main theme and motifs. Abel and Tayo are in the same position. Their quest for identity was long and full of trouble, they had to go through it all to finally find home. Even though their lives before war were different, they both have been alienated since they were born. Abel did not have the feeling of belonging anywhere. His father was a stranger, even if he was of Native American origin, and that fact created barriers between Abel and the other people from Walatowa. Tayo's father was also a stranger, moreover, he was white American. Combined with the harm his mother caused him by leaving him and Auntie's approach to him, his identity was determined to be lost.

The crucial moment came when these two Indians encountered the white culture directly. Their identity was unsure even before, but it was the white man's war that changed their nature. Abel remembered almost nothing from there, Tayo remembered too much and has fallen sick, which can be to some extent compared to Abel's amnesia. Their behavior changed after they had returned. They turned to drinking. Unlike Abel, Tayo has stopped soon enough. Abel had to experience a lot of problems before he has quit. In the end, it was a ceremony, which helped them find their way to the tribal life again. It helped them understand who they were. Abel realized that Walatowa is the place where he belonged, not the white world. Tayo found the common thread linking the white culture to witchery and evil. They finally accepted their identity, Abel accepted being one of his people, and Tayo found harmony in his mind. He was no more concerned with being a "halfbreed".

These two stories convey a warning to all the American Indians. They should not try to adjust to the white culture and to the white way of living, because it is nature and the traditional living what is good for them. Mixing of cultures leads to problems with body and soul, such as mental imbalance, alcoholisms or the feeling of insecurity. Tayo and Abel had to experience it to realize it.

Native American Renaissance has built a firm ground for other Native American writers. Before *House Made of Dawn*, Native American literature was not "taken seriously". N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Marmon Silko presented the traditional storytelling, rituals and myths to the white world in a way we, whites, are able to understand. They managed to "open the gate", exactly as Rocky in *Ceremony* was

supposed to do so. Their message was conveyed. Now the gap between our cultures may shrink.

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