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Native American Values and Traditions and the Novel : Ambivalence Shall Speak the Story

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July, 1996

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of

Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfilment of the requirements

of the degree of

Master of Arts

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0-612-29564-8

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Abstract

The commitment to community shared by Native American authors such as N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, and Louise Erdrich is partially evinced by each author's readiness to inscribe in novel form the values and traditions of the tribal community or communities with which he/she is closely associated. Many students of the novel will attest to its pliant, sometimes transmutable nature; nevertheless, as this study attempts to make clear, there are some reasons why Native American authors should reconsider using the novel as a means to express their tribal communities' values and traditions. Unambivalent prescriptions, however, seem more suited to the requirements of law or medicine; and so this study also examines some of the reasons why Native American authors should continue to embrace this relatively "new" art form persistently termed the novel.

Résumé

Le dévouement à la collectivité que partagent les auteurs autochtones d'Amérique tels que N. Scott Momaday, James Welch et Louise Erdrich se manifeste en partie par la façon dont chacun de ces auteurs est prêt à fixer sous forme de roman les valeurs et les traditions de la communauté ou des communautés autochtones avec lesquelles il ou elle est étroitement associé. Nombreux sont les étudiants du roman qui témoigneraient de la nature souple, voire transmuable, de celui-ci. Cependant, comme cette étude tente de le démontrer, il y a certaines raisons pour lesquelles les auteurs autochtones devraient reconsidérer leur usage du roman comme véhicule d'expression des valeurs et des traditions de leur communauté tribale. Les conclusions tranchantes semblent cependant appartenir plutôt aux domaines de la loi ou de la médecine; c'est pourquoi cette étude examine aussi certaines des raisons pour lesquelles les auteurs amérindiens devraient continuer à épouser cette forme d'art relativement "nouvelle" qu'on continue à nommer le roman.

Contents

Acknowledgements:

The penury that exists on nDaki-Menan (the tribal homeland of the Teme-Augama Anishinabai) is not of the human resources kind. On Bear Island, the band administrator for the Temagami First Nation, Linda George Mathias, was able, with the help of B. Shad from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs office in Sudbury, to access the necessary funds that made possible the completion of this thesis. In Temagami, a local artist, Judy Gouin, drew out of her hat the names of two other key individuals: Emmanuelle Gunter from North Bay who, on fairly short notice, graciously agreed to translate the abstract and Carolyn Laronde, also from Temagami, whose impressive skill and assiduity helped transform frequently minuscule printing into the readable text you have before you.

The man who, knowingly or unknowingly, kept the candle of hope burning at one of the tall windows of the Arts Building at McGill was Professor Peter Ohlin. As thesis supervisor, Professor Ohlin knew how to commingle the balm of supportive words with the cool waters of reason, a not unremarkable feat, particularly since he was being asked to negotiate simultaneously more than one cultural difference.

This circle of support may not have begun with these words but it will end with them: miigwich, chi Manitou.

Introduction:

As the body of Native American written literature published in English continues to grow in quantity and degree of acceptance by a readership that crosses tribal and non-tribal borders, a question pertaining to authenticity and purpose arises: should the novel, a decidedly untraditional art form for Native Americans, be used by Native American authors to lend sustenance to values and traditions they consider important to their communities? Anyone familiar with the novels of N. Scott Momaday (Cherokee - Kiowa), James Welch (Blackfeet - Gros Ventre), and Louise Erdrich (Chippewa), the three Native American novelists whose work will be alluded to in various sections of this study[1], apprehends that House Made of Dawn, Fools Crow, and Tracks offer support to an affirmative response to this question. In this era of pervasive ambivalence, however, such a response can only be half-acceptable. Nay is a possibility that must be explored too. Therefore, the first part or the "Birrs of Repulsion" portion of this study will be consigned to the scrutiny of some of the reasons why Momaday, Welch, and Erdrich should reconsider using the novel as a means of sustaining and affirming Native American values and traditions. In the second part or the "Forces of Attraction" portion, an effort will be made to make exoteric some of the reasons why

Native American authors should continue to use the novel in this affirmative way. The final part or conclusion will be devoted to syncretism, a process not strictly consonant with ambivalence, except in its demands to be attended to.

Birrs of Repulsion

1. The Secularity of the Novel:

Can novels by entrusted with the sacred, or are the more secular demands of the novel too overwhelming? In House Made of Dawn, Momaday grafts a number of sacred "texts" from the Kiowa, Navajo, and Pueblo oral traditions onto his narrative. Many of those readers who are familiar with the sacred "texts" may feel as strongly as most of the novitiates that Momaday has been able to promulgate the sacredness of those "texts". The sacredness, the healing power of the Navajo "Night Chant" in part three of the novel does not seem diminished when it is associated with the strength of Francisco's recollections in part four, particularly his "reenactment" of his initial experience as a ceremonial drummer in his community (207- 08). The reshaping of sacred "texts" to make them more amenable to plot requirements is not unproblematic, however, especially for a Navajo traditionalist who believes that words are profoundly efficacious. Years of study are devoted to ceremonials such as the "Night Chant". Words misplaced or misspoken can bring an entire ceremony to a halt because it is understood that a cure will only happen when the words and vocables one uses are aligned in a pattern that reflects the healing forces in the world. Though some may not

want him to be, it seems that, as with his Kiowa Priest of the Sun, J.B. Tosamah, Momaday is as enmeshed as most everyone else in the web of irony surrounding words. It would have been difficult for the author of House Made of Dawn to have written a meaningful novel about Native American life without some reference to sacred "texts". Nevertheless, to abridge those "texts", even for good novelistic reasons, can be construed as a defilement (Watkins 170).

The novelist who attempts to forsake metaphor will soon macerate his/her muse. Yet, the Native American novelist who does not try to restrict his/her use of metaphor will have a difficult time accommodating a Dwamish Elder who believes that the "sympathetic touch" of the soil he is standing upon is not a figure of speech signifying the ones who have gone ahead but that it is the touch of his ancestors (Dunsmore 63). Traditional Native American oral literature features a relatively low level of "striking metaphors", which Karl Kroeber attributes to the desire to assure high levels of participation amongst listeners (qtd. in Ray 119). However, the paucity of "striking metaphors" may also be ascribed to the bonds that exist between traditional Native American oral literature and the sacred.

2. The Novel as Artifact:

Usually, one associates artifacts with the work of archaeologists. Novels and recently unearthed shards of a tenth-century cooking vessel do not seem compatible, yet both are cultural artifacts in that they are expressions of particular ways of thinking and of living.

Longus and Lucius Apuleius, Greek and Latin writers from approximately the second and third centuries AD, were inditing "novels" when Longus set out Daphnis and Chloe and Apuleius The Golden Ass; however, eighteenth-century British writers such as Henry Fielding, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Laurence Sterne are perhaps more accurately the grandfathers of the novel form now being used by Native American authors. Were this lineage more direct there would perhaps be less concern about the heterogeneity and, consequently, the viability of the offspring, particularly with regard to the offspring's role as spokesperson for the other grandfathers. Between Tom Jones and Tracks, though, are values and traditions that seem almost irreconcilable. In Imagine Ourselves Richly, Christopher Vecsey divides the "stories" from the oral tradition of the Ojibwa [the Chippewa] into two categories: "news" or "tidings" about human beings and "myths, tales about the manitos ... and past living humans". Vecsey further mentions that "the Ojibwas [the

Chippewas] considered both the tidings and the myths to be true; they had no category of fiction" (65). A novelist's claim that his/her story is true may occasion some mirth and, if he/she persists, some doubt as to his/her perspicacity. Indeed, the question of truth in fiction is a major one that artists and their readers have been grappling with for some time. Henry James held that "only through unnatural ordering can art achieve an intensity not to be found in life", and "he [was therefore] ... willing to sacrifice both structure and literal truth to an intense illusion of truth" (Booth 45). H.G. Wells, as E.M. Forster points out in Aspects of the Novel, did not agree with James that the pattern enclosing the "intense illusion of truth" should be preferred to "the immense richness of material which life provides" (112). Yet, it remains a matter of contention as to how effectively Wells was able to approximate "the immense richness of material" in his own work. In an observation that applies to the historian but one that could equally apply to the novelist, Harold Toliver postulates that "the quandary of a would-be truthful narrator lies in his inability to verbalize a subject without transforming it" (100). This is the kind of "transforming" or contextualizing of the "Real" that Fredric Jameson refers to as implicit in any "literary or aesthetic act" (81), and one that leads him to conclude that "a symbolic

expression of a truth is also, at the same time, a distorted and disguised expression" (70).

If, as Wayne Booth and many of his fellow students of the novel would concede, "all fiction requires an elaborate rhetoric of dissimulation" (44), how enthusiastically should Native American artists embrace this artifact? Is it enough to believe as Toliver that "paradoxically, we sometimes grasp things of indisputable reality best in the enclosures of artifice and get at truth more handily through lies" (106)? A Cheyenne Elder, Chief Buffalo Long Lance, mentions that "someone who used language without 'absolute correctness' ... was 'relegated to an outcast in the tribe', and was never allowed to speak in public" (Swann xi). "'[A]bsolute correctness'" and "an elaborate rhetoric of dissimulation" could conceivably be enjoined[2], but not so smoothly if one attends to another passage form Brian Swann's introduction to Smoothing the Ground:

> A truly sacramental sense of language means that object and word are so fused that their creation, the 'event', is itself creative, bringing into this time and place the enduring powers which truly effect that which the event claims, and such action cannot be undone. Its only aim and intent is truth, not manipulation. 'Correct' form, in such a context, is

> the fundamental moral dimension of the human engagement with words. Lies destroy correct form. They destroy the real relationship between man and the natural order. (xii)

The traditions of the Midewewin are built around this "sacramental sense of language"; and so it is in Tracks that with words and other sounds Nanapush is able to "hunt" with Eli and bring him safely home while not actually leaving his own bed. Are those who perceive fiction as "an intense illusion of truth" or as a "distorted and disguised expression" liable to readily acknowledge the veridicality of the traditions of the Midewewin, or are they more likely to decide that, while Nanapush's actions are true to the "pattern" Erdrich has established in her novel, they are probably not literally true? How can such actions be true when everyone knows that "all fiction requires an elaborate rhetoric of dissimulation"?

Perhaps one of the bases for Paula Gunn Allen's warning that "the Native American [short fiction writer] who sticks to the 'well-made story' is courting disaster" (1063) is to be found in one of Clyde Kluckhohn's observations that "as the word 'design' in our definition implies every culture has organization as well as content" ("The Concept" 70). To be a truly relevant advocate of certain Native American values and traditions, it is not sufficient

only to transfer Native American content to a story or novel (as H. David Brumble III describes it, this is writing "about Indians" rather than "as an Indian" [31]); this transference must occur in particular, tribal ways. The novel as cultural artifact may be able to subsume reams of Native American content but can it be, for example, a ceremonial? Roger Dickinson-Brown comments that House Made of Dawn, which sometimes reads as a Navajo or Jemez Pueblo ceremonial, is "a reflection, not a novel in the comprehensive sense of the word" (32).

3. Reception:

The about-to-be-published Native American novelist who leaves the publisher's office deeply satisfied that he/she has done much to ensure the perpetuation of some of his/her community's values and traditions should spend a little time with Robert Scholes. In Protocols of Reading, Scholes states that "to read rightly we must start to write ourselves. We shall have to add something to this text in order to read it" (5). Later he asserts, "I must invent the author, invent his or her intentions, using the evidence I can find to stimulate my creative process". Even though Scholes acknowledges the "restrictions on that process" (9), presumably a reference to the text with which one is dealing, his words suggest that the Native American

author's novel is not complete even after publication. Roland Barthes refers to a similar state of incompletion when he comments that "'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination'" (qtd. in Clifford 52).

If "unfinished" novels were read only by "unfinished", highly impressionable readers, then perhaps the about-to-be-published Native American novelist could forego his/her meeting with Scholes. The critical consensus seems to be, however, that readers bring much more than their attention to novels and other texts: "readers do not transcend beliefs, interests, assumptions, points of view, and allegiances; they are situated in highly specific ways" (Leitch 116). So "highly specific" in fact that one may find it impossible to engage in any kind of "surrender of sovereignty" (Scholes 109). As Booth admits:

> We may exhort ourselves to read tolerantly, we may quote Coleridge on the willing suspension of disbelief until we think ourselves totally suspended in a relativistic universe, and still we will find many books which postulate readers we refuse to become, books that depend on 'beliefs' or 'attitudes' ... which we cannot adopt even hypothetically as our own. (138)

Kathleen Donovan's recent rereading of Momaday's novels illustrates the kind of reader resistance referred to above. From the feminist perspective "adopted" by Donovan, Momaday is a misogynist who "consistently represent[s] contemporary women as negative forces" (52). Donovan supports her challenge to Momaday's "phallocratic" (53) depictions well. Still, to write of Momaday's "refusal to even attempt to sympathetically articulate the experience of his women characters" (54) is to impede, ironically, an empathic and fair rendering of Momaday's work, particularly in the instance of Angela in House Made of Dawn. Both the Kiowa and the Navajo have traditionally placed a high value on the warrior. Momaday expends a substantial amount of effort to establish Abel's warrior status. The sometimes pathetic, broken man struggling for life in the "Priest of the Sun" section seems to belie such a substantial effort, but it is nevertheless there and ongoing, subtly ongoing. In keeping with the Navajo belief that "everything exists in two parts, the male and the female, which belong together and complete each other" (Kluckhohn and Leighton, The Navaho 230), warrior status is not reserved for Abel only; Angela assumes this role too.[3] Her aggressive, manipulative, sometimes fearless actions in the first part of the novel are all characteristic of a warrior who is in

"są'a naghái:" (the "mode of being ... associated with a state of maleness and long life" [Scarberry - García 32]). Balance is achieved when the warrior enters "bik'e hózhǫ́" ("the state of femaleness and happiness" [Scarberry - García 33]). For Angela, this state of equilibrium occurs when she reappears in the third part of the novel at home in Los Angeles. Momaday may very well seem to be culpable, at times, of a mortal authorial sin, i.e., impoverished characterization, but to view Angela as primarily a "negative force" is to misread House Made of Dawn. Some of the values and traditions upon which Momaday has built his novel do not appear to have made it through Donovan's reading.

There are other reasons to be concerned about reception. From very early on, an author's work is under evaluation (Leitch 111). That critical, sometimes encouraging, sometimes disruptive inner voice that each author must contend with is certainly not monological as literary theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin and Barthes affirm. Even while the words are struggling to reach the surface of the writing pad or the computer screen, the editors, agents, publishers, reviewers, and tribal, pan-tribal, and non-Native American readers are all shaping the text. Jerry Palmer, author of Potboilers: Methods, Concepts and Case Studies in Popular Fiction, relates that there are at least two common ways for publishers to try to deal profitably with the "commodity

'narrative' ...: maximise the points of contact between narratives and potential readers; and ... make narratives close to repetitive without sacrificing all individuality in them" (37). Neither way is appealing to a novelist concerned about values and traditions that are frequently specific to his/her community or region. Patricia Clark Smith, in pondering the work of non-Native American critics or reviewers, discerns that they "are often embarrassed or flat unwilling to deal with the reality of spirit-figures, visions, and other supernatural elements, even when the work itself gives the reader no grounds for assuming ambiguity" (146). Bearing this in mind, a Native American novelist, desirous of a favourable review, may limit those portions of his/her narrative that will appear to be too "other"; the very parts that may be most significant to his/her community (Watkins 143). Of course, such self-censure may have more to do with the sacredness of the matters under discussion and the secularity of the novel, but difference for Native Americans is not always synonymous with sacredness.

Another facet of this circumscription of which values and traditions will be reflected in print concerns the prevailing views of Native Americans by non-Native Americans. Values that seem too close to the dominant society's values risk being ignored (Vecsey 89) or dismissed as a sad illustration of cultural loss. It is

not only the non-Native American who circumscribes, however. Many of the Native American readers will probably not appreciate the novels of the author who focuses too strongly upon the ribaldry and scatology that is present in some of the traditional oral literature. During this relatively early stage of development of Native American literature written in English, there seems to be a greater emphasis upon spiritual, emotional, and philosophical truths than upon bodily ones; although the frequent, actual urination in Fools Crow and the frequent, potential urination in Tracks are changing this.

4. Orality and Literacy:

Establishing an identity continues to be important to many Native American authors. Access to that identity has been gained, in part, through the revivification and/or redeployment of the rich oral traditions of the authors' tribal communities. The bear legend from the Kiowa oral tradition helps Tosamah's "listeners" to understand the significance of the various forms of literature in Momaday's House Made of Dawn. The traditional Blackfeet stories of Old Man (Na'pi) and Old Woman (Kipitaki) shape the characters and the actions of Lame Bull and Teresa in Welch's Winter in the Blood. Erdrich, the primary author of Tracks, reminds her

readers of the Chippewa's favourite trickster from the Anishinabe oral tradition, Nanabozho, when she names one of her narrators Nanapush. Native American authors are far from exhausting their inheritance even after decades of writing in English. Still, transferring the oral tradition to the written may not be as straightforward as these authors hope. A state of equipose would seem to demand that the attainment of another vehicle for expression, i.e., the novel, must be paid for. Is part of the settling of accounts an alteration of values?

While not addressing this question directly, linguist Marcia I. Macaulay, by noting the key differences between oral and written speech, makes possible some inferences about the effects one should expect in moving from oral to written narrative. The "long written narrative" (53) that Macaulay refers to in her work is not a novel. As two forms of writing, though, what is characteristic of the "long written narrative" is quite likely shared by the novel, at least at the elemental level that Macaulay is concerned with.

In one of her summary sections, Macaulay observes that the use of the passive voice in written narrative can lead to the perception that the main participant in the narrative is the cause of events (53). The emphasis in written narrative upon the main participant as the cause of events rather than upon the events or

action as the determiner of the main participant (52) is in keeping with the beliefs that "'character' is foregrounded" in written narrative and "action is foregrounded" (40) in oral narrative. By incorporating more and more of the texts from the oral traditions into the means of artistic expression in which "'character' is foregrounded", Native American novelists may be unable to prevent the recontextualized traditional stories and their own stories from focussing too extensively upon the individual or main participant or "character". Individualism is not a polite word in many Native American tribal communities, although perhaps this opinion should be qualified somewhat. A. Irving Hallowell writes:

> With respect to the Ojibwa [Chippewa] conception of causality, all my own observations suggest that a culturally constituted psychological set operates which inevitably directs the reasoning of individuals towards an explanation of events in personalistic terms. Who did it, who is responsible, is always the crucial question to be answered. (170)

In his chapter on "The Ojibwa Creation Myth", Vecsey notes "that the Ojibwas [Chippewas] were relatively individualistic .... [T]heir emphasis, perhaps based on a hunting economy which necessitated individual skills, was on the individual rather than

on the group" (85-86). Malcolm McFee, author of Modern Blackfeet : Montanans on a Reservation, avers that from ancient to modern times "one of the most persistent themes of Blackfeet life was the high value put on individual prestige" (45). Thus, given these observations about the cultural pathways of at least two Native American tribal groups, how disruptive will the increased use of written narrative be? As if they anticipated a similar kind of questioning of individualism, all three of the above ethnologists devote other sections of their texts to a depiction of how individualism is controlled in these societies. Hallowell, for example, realizes:

> The central goal of life for the Ojibwa [Chippewa] is ... pīmädäzīwin, life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of longevity, health and freedom from misfortune. This goal cannot be achieved without the effective help and cooperation of both human and other-than-human persons, as well as by one's own personal efforts. (171)

By returning to his close examination of the Ojibwa Creation myth (one of the primary sources, as he attests, of knowledge about "the vital principles of life [for the Ojibwa or Chippewa]" [64]), Vecsey is able to relate how the Ojibwa [Chippewa] would have "tempered" their individualism: "both Nanabozho and his

enemies demonstrated group solidarity and concern for 'relatives' and 'family'. Nanabozho's solitary nature was pitied by other characters in the myth" (86). McFee, during his sojourns to the Blackfeet reservation, notices that "generosity is a key value of Indian-oriented persons that has survived with the least amount of reinterpretation" (100). This "key value" manifests itself in a deep concern for even the most "low status troublemakers" in the community because "they are 'our people'" (116).

Now, if the emphasis upon the individual or main participant or "character" fostered by written narrative will also allow for an equal accentuation upon "cooperation", "group solidarity", and "generosity", and if it can do so more by "showing" than "telling" (a distinction made by, amongst others, Booth; and one which suggests that "showing", because of its immanent nature, is often more difficult than but preferable to mere "telling"), then surely those Native American novelists concerned about values can write with little expectation of dissonance.

5. Demands of the Novel:

With a few exceptions such as the one advanced by William J. Scheick (8), novels often rely heavily upon an interesting character or characters. Susanne K. Langer

believes that "the novel centers on the development of persons ... to such an extent, indeed, that people often lose sight of every other element in it" (299). Creating what many readers believe are interesting characters or people will normally necessitate a journey inwards to the psyche. Societies that do not manifestly encourage such burrowings[4] will nurture authors who practice a type of character minimalism. A seasoned observer in these societies will usually perceive the full three dimensionality of such characters, while the reader who is still familiarizing him or herself with the tribal communities may only see relatively dull, two dimensional figures. What values or traditions are challenged and compromised, though, when an author is expected to dig deeper to flesh out his/her characters? James Ruppert attributes the "apsychological manner" of character development in many works by Native American authors to more than the nature of orality (214) (a nature that Macaulay, as previously mentioned, understands as leading to a focus upon action instead of character; and one which will take centuries to change according to Janet L. Sutherland in her reinscription of Walter Ong's work [30]). Ruppert remarks that the fusion of "myth [from Native American oral traditions] and everyday reality" for Native American authors means that many of their characters have an external "source of knowledge" (214) to help

them learn their identities; and "while the protagonist must discover this identity, he does not create it. It has existed previous to the act of searching and was perhaps even preordained as an eternal source of identity and place" (215). If the price of becoming more psychological or more authorial is to become less mindful of the inappropriateness of interference or of the sense of belonging and empowerment instilled by the bear ceremonialism practiced by the Jemez Pueblo, then perhaps this is one expense to be concerned about.

For the Native American author who does acquiesce to the importunities of his/her editor and/or readers for "stronger" characterization, the position William Makepeace Thackeray found himself in with at least one of his characters, Barry Lyndon, may be instructive:

> It was not only Trollope who almost grieved; many readers were caught in the net of Barry Lyndon's rhetorical vitality. It baffled them to find themselves excusing his crimes, and they then complained about Thackeray's immorality. Presented with a kind of indomitable mental reality, and presented with it at first hand, they found themselves like Thackeray himself, 'filled full with those blackguards'. (Booth 323)

How many novels are conflict free? Typically, plots are advanced through the resolution of conflict.[5] Growth, or what may be described as positive change, often occurs because of conflict. What happens, though, if harmony and conservation and not conflict and change are understood to be the primary means of progression? In this paradigm, real progress involves alignment with the already existing forces associated with certain birds, certain rocks, certain sacred sites, the four directions, the sun, the turtle, etc. Harmony and conservation are inspirited by ways that evince respectfulness, cooperation, continuance, and reconciliation. Could this understanding form the bases of a novel? If not, will it still be possible to write most of a novel with the sorts of conflict that remain fascinating for many readers, and use the end to affirm that harmony and conservation are the primary means of progression? In Tracks, for example, all of the conflict between Fleur and Pauline, Pauline and Nanapush, Nanapush and Margaret, Fleur and the people who would deprive her of Pillager land, and Pauline and all of the other "sinners" could be interpreted as finally giving way to Nanapush's efforts at harmony and conservation. Traditional Native American oral literature, the repository of many of the values and traditions of Native American tribal communities, is certainly not conflict free (as Allen notes, however, "the

European-American pattern of tying significance to conflict resolution ... is largely an incidental feature in tribal narrative" [1059]). So why suggest that this apparently inherent demand of the novel could be problematic for Native American novelists? The difficulty with using a means of expression that relies so heavily upon the disjunctive features of existence is that one may, to cite just a few examples, eventually come to perceive wolves as the enemy, non-flowers as noxious weeds, and the advocation of harmony and conservation as the primary means of progress as fundamentally naive rather than as the means to pīmädäzīwin.

6. Whose Values and Traditions?

Despite one's inclination to believe hopefully that most Native American authors who are consciously making the effort to imbue their work with their tribal community's values and traditions are receiving much of their guidance and inspiration from living Elders, it may be fairer to accord at least a portion (and, in the case of those Native American authors who have, for a variety or reasons, found it difficult to live in their tribal communities, perhaps considerably more than "a portion") of the roles of teacher and muse to documents issued by such groups as The Minnesota Historical

Society, The American Ethnological Society, The Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology, etc.

The questioning of "the mysteriously durable Enlightenment dream of direct, uniform knowledge communicated easily — independent of cultures, eras (or galaxies)" (qtd. in Brady 265) by anthropologist James A. Boon and others, however, has resulted in a measure of suspicion being apportioned to the sometimes vastly intricate ethnographic reports that once seemed so authoritative. At the same time, postmodernism's "incredulity toward master or meta-narratives" (Hutcheon 6) has enabled James Clifford in The Predicament of Culture to query the authenticity of ethnographic texts, particularly since it is in the nature of these texts, in spite of their sometimes massive amount of detail, to be ultimately more exclusive than inclusive when they assume a written form:

> By representing the Nuer, the Trobrianders, or the Balinese as whole subjects, sources of a meaningful intention, the ethnographer transforms the research situation's ambiguities and diversities of meaning into an integrated portrait .... The actuality of discursive situations and individual interlocuters is filtered out. (40)

If, as Brady contends, "truth in ethnographic accounts is less discovered than invented", and if "ethnographic Others are always in part exaggerated creatures of our [i.e., ethnographer's and other readers'] own surmise" (Brady 262), then how confident should a Native American author such as Momaday feel about using ethnography to authenticate portions of House Made of Dawn[6] (according to Floyd C. Watkins that use was extensive indeed [153])?

How can an ethnographic report written in, for example, English adequately reflect the cultural values and traditions of, for instance, the Navajo? As Elaine Jahner learnt, "almost every scholar who collects oral texts has heard an informant explain that the old stories do not really translate into English. As one narrator said to me, 'their meaning disappears'" ("Cognitive" 32). It would be comforting to be able to stop here and advance this "actuality" as yet another reason why Native American authors should pause before incorporating material gleaned from ethnographic reports published in a non-Native language in their novels. However, the complexity of this issue of language and culture necessitates additional explanation.

In a quest "for evidence on human universals and uniqueness" (Osgood and Tzeng 236) that eventually involved over twenty-five communities in various parts of the world,

C.E. Osgood and his colleagues adduced a number of conclusions; one of the more pertinent being:

> these commonnesses [a reference, for example, to the similarity in world-wide evaluation of a certain colour as either "good" or "bad"], of course, are flatly contradictory to the thesis of 'psycholinguistic relativity' [psycholinguistic determinism?] espoused by [Edward] Sapir and [Benjamin Lee] Whorf — that how we perceive, how we think, and even how we formulate our implicit philosophies depends upon the structures of the languages we speak. I can say with assurance that we have no clear evidence in all of our data of language determining thought, although there is much evidence for culture influencing thought. (Osgood and Tzeng 264)

The loss of meaning, therefore, that the informants in the quote from Jahner's article refer to probably has more to do with the cultural matrices enmeshing the ethnographers/translators than with the differences between the English and the Chippewa, Blackfeet or Navajo languages. Undoubtedly, one's mother tongue occupies a place of prominence in the cultural matrices one can only hope to become more aware of, never free of; but the import of Osgood's observation is that language's position is

not one of primacy. Kluckhohn, although subscribing to a dissimilar interpretation of the work of Sapir and Whorf, maintains an affined view when he writes, "even after the content [presumably he includes language in this concept] of the culture of a group of American Indians has become completely European, its way of life still somehow retains a distinctive flavor" ("The Concept" 61).

Finally, then, heeding Brumble III's advice "to pay attention to the cultural and literary assumptions, the field methods, esthetics, translations, and editing procedures of individual ethnologists as well as to the cultural assumptions, esthetics, and narrative techniques of individual Indians" (Kroeber and Brumble III 359) seems to be an increasingly worthwhile task for Native American authors intent upon using ethnography to help lend credence to the understanding they have of their tribal community's values and traditions.

Generalizations, while occasionally permissable and useful in what some may consider the "bad" and others the "good" old days, seem now to be almost anathema. The writer who does not try to resist the adjuration of his/her text for integration (which, in its propensity for uniformity, is analogous to generalization) is probably the same one who may not have yet hypostatized that "Culture (with a capital C and in the singular) has become

cultures (uncapitalized and plural)" (Hutcheon 12). So it is fitting and to his credit that Native American author and teacher, Joseph Bruchac, attempts to prepare his students and prospective fellow teachers of Native American literature by informing them that "it [Native American oral and written literature] comes out of (in just the area now called the continental United States) more than 400 different languages and distinct cultures" (4). The postmodern processes of differentiation, which some would term individuation (McLuhan and Parker 248), are not content with mere multitudinous "distinct cultures", however. Thus, Gerald Vizenor, one writer from one of those "distinct cultures" (the Chippewa), observes:

> 'The oshki anishinabe with a college degree cannot comfortably use the first person pronoun we when talking about high school dropouts, nor can an affluent oshki anishinabe use the pronoun we when talking about the poor living on colonial reservations'. (qtd. in Eigenbrod 243)

It may be that "'the secrets of the heart from the tribal past'" (qtd. in Eigenbrod 243) shared, according to Vizenor, by all of the Chippewa may entitle Erdrich to believe that her understanding of the important values and traditions of the Chippewa is not hers alone, particularly since as Kluckhohn

notes, "culture is – among other things — a set of ready-made definitions of the situation that each participant only slightly retailors in his [/her] idiomatic way" ("The Concept" 42). However, a more propinquitous perusal of that "tribal past" brings to the fore some comments made by Vecsey concerning the "many contradictory elements" in "versions of myths told by members of different families, especially in different communities" (66). Moreover, as Vecsey expounds, traditional myths were not only variegated due to the "societal atomism" characteristic of a hunting people, but the bountiful diversity can also be attributed to the belief that "individual Ojibwas [Chippewas] drew major inspiration from individual visions" (66). Ake Hultkrantz, in Native Religions of North America, makes a similar observation when he acknowledges:

> North American Indian traditions emphasize a direct experience of spiritual power through dreams and visions; [and] as we have already seen, the sacredness and prestige of these striking revelations often results in the modification or replacement of previous traditional elements. (21)

For one author to claim that his/her depiction of a certain tradition or a certain value is representative of his/her tribal community must be accurate only in a general sense; and the

prognosis for a generalization, at this time, is usually not a good one.

The Pan-Indian movement may have been christened so within recent memory but it is not newly born. Harold E. Driver, employing a more technical term, remarks that "diffusion of one kind or another has been, without doubt, the most powerful process of culture change over the entire span of man's time on earth" (266). Tai-May and the tradition of the Sun Dance came to the Kiowa through a process of diffusion; the Crow-Water Society came to the Piegan (one of the Blackfeet tribes) through a process of diffusion (Thomas 436); dances such as "'the fish dance, the snake dance, the deer dance, the horse dance, and the corn dance'" (Hilger 113) came to the Chippewa through a process of diffusion. What appears to be new about the Pan-Indian movement is its breadth. Cultural diffusion is no longer primarily a regional process. As Erdrich observes, "'there is a whole rich mine of Pan-Indian culture people circulate'" (qtd. in Stripes 28). The force or pervasiveness of this "natural", seemingly inevitable movement is difficult to calibrate. Its puissance is sufficient, though, to cause Native American authors to be concerned about just whose values and whose traditions they are inscribing.[7]

Forces of Attraction

1. Empowerment:

The true nature of power, like the exercising of it, remains a mostly contentious topic. Some will argue that real power resides in the financial capitals of the world. Stephen C. Pepper suggests that power may be associated with "a political institution" or "the institution of irrational religion" or a fusion of the two (603). Swann, taking his cue from Native American Elders, believes that "power flowed; it was not wielded. As often as not, power itself does the choosing" (xi-xii). Mary Douglas conceives of power as the "'danger which is risked by boundary transgression'" (qtd. in Clarke 36). For Native American author Simon J. Ortiz it is by means of "prayer and song" (65) and "story" (67) that the people find the power necessary for "resistance" (66) because "story, whether in oral or written form, substantiates life, continues it, and creates it" (67). Catherine Houser may be willing to affirm the power of the published novel form of story, too, because, as she understands it, when there is no "Native American Studies program [in an institution of higher learning], Native American literature, culture, history, and social and political issues do not exist" (251). A corpus of Native American literature written in English, if it cannot resurrect or generate a Native American Studies

program, may, through other departments, still be able to form the bases of a relationship between those who work and study at institutions of higher learning and Native American tribal communities; and it is in this way, too, that life is substantiated. Finally, the process of writing, which for most authors is a long one indeed, may exact a not insignificant toll but it also bestows gifts: heightened awareness, articulateness, profundity. All prerequisites, albeit not the only ones some will contend, for those who are waiting for power to choose.

2. The Novel as a Source of Values:

A tribal community that "draws sharp boundaries around social groups, and stresses the in-group as opposed to the out-group" (Pepper 607) will not long endure, at least as a tribal community. Overwhelmingly, Native Americans, and those who seek to understand their ways, concur that it is upon the entire social group or tribal community that the sun will rise and shine or set and darken: Tom Holm refers to the "collective obligation" (350) and "the reaffirmation of group cohesion" (351); Nora Barry adverts to the "above all" as the "responsibility to the group over individual glory" (4); Dorothea Leighton and Kluckhohn, in an attempt to comprehend the actions of a Navajo worker, observe that "evasion of direct

personal decision and displacement of individual authority are essential to the localizing of authority in the group where, to the Navaho way of thinking, it belongs" (Children of the People 107); Judith A. Antell, in her reinscription of Allen's work, comments that "belonging is the basic assumption for Indian people" and "estrangement is seen as so abnormal that narratives and rituals that restore the estranged to his or her place in the tribal matrix abound" (215); and William Bevis acknowledges that "coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call 'regressing' to a place [a tribal community] ... is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good" (16).

This quintessential value concerning community does not seem to fare well in the novel, though, where, according to Bakhtin, "the voice of the author ... [eventually] assumes the hegemonic, 'deep-seated' intentionality of an unrelativized and unconditional individuality" (Pecora 25). In his effort to liberate his own self from Bakhtin's discourse, however,
Vincent P. Pecora turns to the work of Antonio Gramsci who believes that it is possible for a group (a tribal community?) to harness "intellectual production to its own uses" (26). Thus, a reader such as John Purdy is able to discern tribalism amongst the individualistic tendencies of Welch's The Death of Jim Loney. A novel built upon the individualism of Rhea, Kate, Ike,

and the two Jims, i.e., Loney and Welch; and yet one that is also a source of tribal value for the Gros Ventre. The bird that Loney repeatedly envisions "bears a number of similarities to Bha'a, one of the most powerful beings in the world of the Gros Ventre" (Purdy 69). The profound losses and isolation endured by Loney engage the compassion of all readers, but for the Gros Ventre there is another layer of meaning to keen to. As befits a Gros Ventre tribal narrative, there is an effort made to share this insight:

> the loss of material possessions and human companionship results in the gift of something immensely more valuable for individual and community alike: knowledge of new ceremonial actions and power derived from a relationship with a supernatural being. (Purdy 70)

Out of Loney's pain and dispossession arises the gift of Bha'a, and out of the other Jim's isolation (how many novelists work in the company of others?) there arises, too, the gift of The Death of Jim Loney, "something immensely more valuable for [the] individual [American] and [the Gros Ventre] community alike".

Unswerving devotees of the neoteric may not fully appreciate hearing the same story again or reading a novel more than once, but Kroeber believes "such repeating ... is valuable

(among other reasons) because it makes possible new meanings, renewed assessments, evaluations, judgments of the human meaning articulated" (82). The ability to return to a novel ameliorates its significance as a source of values for Native American authors and their readers. The value concerning one's responsibility to community, perhaps only partially grasped by the adolescent, will still be there waiting for the reassessment of worth that maturity will bring.

3. Mediation:

Though the full extent of the novel's impartiality and adaptability remains nebulous, the novel's lengthy exposure in many non-Native American communities and its growing enucleation in a number of Native American tribal communities enhances its feasibility as a source of mediation. Furthermore, the Native American novel, and all of the other forms of traditional Native American literature that are finding their way into the novel, can not only mediate on an intra and inter-tribal bases but they can interpose on a national and international bases as well. "Literatures", as Leitch observes, "are often harnessed to ambitious political and cultural programs" (103), and Native American literature need not be an exception.

In her interview with Katharyn Machan Aal, Allen comments that "almost every Indian writer I've ever read has a militant perspective" (158). Are novels grounded in militancy able to embrace mediation, whose ultimate aim is to educe some form of reconciliation, concurrently? The succinct answer is yes; but an assiduous reading of virtually any edition of the journals, magazines, etc. concerned with Native American literature will confirm that, while yes is a most appropriate answer, it is not appropriate in its succinctness. Scholars of Native American literature expend vast amounts of pith and paper examining the mediative potential of Native American novels and the other forms of Native American literature that find expression in novels; and although most of that learning may be topical, only a portion of it can be adverted to here.

Bruchac, to begin with, believes that "if you are teaching Native American literature well you are not just teaching literature, you are also teaching culture" (6). His opinion is corroborated by Robin Riley Fast when she admits that "each time I have taught the course [on Native American literature], I have increased the assignments of 'non-literary' background readings" (68). Heightening the understanding of tribal communities amongst non-Native American youth prognosticates "the solace of possible cultural reconciliation" (Scheckter 107).

Even the less conscientious or the more time constrained, i.e., the readers who only con the novels, can still anticipate the possibility of some "cultural reconciliation" because, as Kenneth Roemer states, "clearly ethnic authors are cultural translators. [If] Leslie Marmon Silko ... had written Ceremony ... just for Laguna Pueblo, the novel would have been only thirty pages long" ("The Nightway" 823).[8]

The "pervasive cultural diversity" (61) or pluralism that Michael W. Raymond observes in House Made of Dawn induces him to imply that, while this novel addresses the particular concerns of the Kiowa, Navajo, and Pueblo, it really "speaks" to all people because, in the end, "Momaday emphasizes the potential for [all] ... individual[s] to find a sense of place in contemporary life" (71).

In an article whose title alone is "... Good to Think ...", Joni Adamson Clarke refers to Erdrich's incorporation of traditional oral storytelling into her novels. For Clarke, the worth of this mediative act arises out of the "transforming [of] the old stories into new forms [that] can help answer urgent questions of social and practical concern [for the Anishinabek] and be, as Nanapush repeatedly affirms, healing [for all readers]" (42).

The "unmistakable hybridization" (26) of some of the language in Fools Crow that Louis Owens and others remark upon compels Welch's readership to attune themselves to the Blackfeet in ways that perhaps most would not find familiar, but which, nevertheless, makes the author's "Blackfoot heritage" more "whole and accessible" (Owens 26); and it is thus that mediation may occur.

Critics such as Allen and Christopher Norden do not only reflect upon how Native American novels currently mediate but they also suggest that these works are the progeny of an earlier cultural reconciliation. The "accretive rather than associative, achronistic rather than synchronistic" (Allen 1058) tribal literature became publishable as awareness grew that this "kind of written orality, or 'neo-orality' ... [was] directly related to the language of alienation invented by European and American modernists of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries" (Norden 95). The "paratactics" of modernists that David Hayman describes as facilitating "the conjunction of radically different materials" (14) is kindred to the "shifting narratives" (Houser 252) of Love Medicine and, to a lesser extent, The Death of Jim Loney; it also bears a strong relation to the "staggeringly difficult interrupted narrative" (174) that Baine Kerr encountered when he took up House Made of Dawn.

The familial resemblances tying Native American literature to modernism and even postmodernism cannot be sustained, however, since "many modernist writers succumb to a tragic view of community" (Norden 97) and many postmodernists, in their "obsession with private systems of meaning and interpretation ... [, yield to a similar] withdrawal from community" (Norden 97).[9]

Though looking a little less significant on its own, Native American literature still possesses sufficient mediatory capaciousness to inspire Malin Ray to conclude that the study of this literature in its various forms "is an opportunity for survival which we cannot afford to miss" (119); and David L. Moore to posit that "if non-Native or Native readers cannot finally read Indian texts to 'know' the other, or even themselves" (19), they can still read to gain "an intersubjective knowledge of how to participate with the other" (20).

Finally, at the conclusion of "American Indian Literature : A Tradition of Renewal", Peter Nabakov cites an illustration of how Native American literature mediates. In this instance, he is referring to an "eulogy" rather than a novel, but the "eulogy" is another form of literature that Momaday and other novelists could try to accrete:

> Simon Ortiz is especially gifted at combining traditional Indian forms and modern American

> contexts. His eulogy to an Indian victim of modern times, 'Beauty Roan Horse', is a masterpiece of spiritual renewal. As the chanted refrain builds in our ears, we are drawn together to the graveside of a man dead from alcohol and reservation hardship. While social outrage is here, our feelings move beyond. As Ortiz sings out for blessings upon this man's spirit, we look around at what we share with him. We find the world's wholeness strengthening as we appeal to it. We discover ourselves participating in a prayer. (28)

Although most of the remaining scholars referred to in the following pages were inditing their texts without much regard for how Native American literature can mediate, their views are still suggestive enough to be worth reiterating here.

Marshall McLuhan and Harley Parker, in assaying the role of an artist, remark that "he is ... the indispensable aid to action and reflection alike" because "whereas the ordinary person seeks security by numbing his perceptions against the impact of new experience, the artist delights in this novelty and instinctively creates situations that both reveal it and compensate for it" (238). The Native American artist in his/her novelist's guise has a crucial, mediatory role, then, in his/her tribal community; a role

that includes a clear acknowledgement of the "new" non-tribal ways and also one that insinuates the means to cultural continuation. Abel's inability "to enter into the old rhythm of the tongue" (House 58), Pauline's intemperate focus on self even at the moment when her child is seeking to be born ("if I gave birth, I would be lonelier" [Tracks 135]), and Jim's "solemn voice" dreamily telling Rhea "near dawn" that "you're the only friend I've got in the whole world" (Loney 32) all portray a movement away from community; but Abel's inarticulateness cannot withstand Ben's ritualistic invocations, Pauline's mad self-absorption is more than matched by Nanapush's healing words that find expression in both oral and written forms, and Jim's loneliness is compensated for by an inclination to dream and to envision.

Kluckhohn, seemingly without intending to since he was writing at a time when there were few Native American novels published, descried emotion as a force that might attenuate the Native American novel's role as a source of mediation. If, as Kluckhohn maintains, "no person is emotionally indifferent to his culture", and if, as a corollary, one's "emotional loyalty continues in the face of reason" (qtd. in Hatch 53), then Native American authors should expect resistence to those portions of their novels that are dissimilar to the cultures of many of their

readers. Indubitably, emotion's tenacious ties to culture has much to do with the likelihood of reader intolerance that was referred to earlier in a quote from Booth. Scholes's belief that "in every act of reading the irreducible otherness of writer and reader is balanced and opposed by ... [the] need for recognition and understanding between the two parties" (51) offers some encouragement because it seems so reasonable; but it is a primarily hopeful view advanced by Langer that refocuses attention on, for example, House Made of Dawn as a source of mediation: "the appreciation of new art is a development of one's own emotive possibilities" (391). Will not the less familiar art of the Native American novel be germane to the emotional growth of many of its readers?

Novels that are reputed to mediate between "those who lament the 'loss of meaning' in the world or in art" (Hutcheon 6) and a traditional literature that "sometimes place[s] man at the responsible center of things" or that encompasses the "recognition that all human activities have creative influence in the natural universe" (Ballinger 105) will never lack gainsayers. "Good", Toporov might say because, as can be inferred from his work, one studious gainsayer of Native American novels as a source of mediation is also one incipient proponent (35).

Conclusion:

Finally there was no place of refuge,
no personal retreat for peace of mind.
I was on the edge of the world,
but the pressures were still there.
Only personal imagination and visions,
memories of the past,
remained to free my spirits.
Only this memory kept my dignity alive.

- Monroe Tsatoke (qtd. in Boyd 27)

The Kiowa Elder Tsatoke would probably agree with Pepper when, in The Sources of Value, he concludes that the "survival value thus overarches the whole area of human values" (642). Those beliefs that will ensure the sustainability of a tribal community's sources of food, water, and shelter will always retain great significance. However, as Elder Tsatoke's words indicate, survival is not only a matter of fulfilling key physical needs. An almost equal emphasis is placed, by many Native Americans, on the values and accompanying actions that will preserve and/or strengthen the cultures of their tribal communities. Thus, the question of using the novel to sustain certain Native American values and traditions is perhaps, in the

end, most appropriately answered in terms that relate to cultural survival.

Focussing upon the establishment or reinforcement of a separate identity appears to be essential to the survival of any culture; however, the role of unity or integration must also be addressed since, with or without the approbation of a minority, "social integration" (Pepper 559) between dominant and minority cultures will occur.

How can the novel support Native American identities? How will it detract from such identities? How can a process of integration, such as novel writing, promote the cultural survival of Native American tribal communities? How will it hinder that form of survival? Delaying or fashioning an answer(s) by advancing questions with the potential to release vast quantities of information may not seem politic but it may bring this study closer to the syncretism promised earlier.

How can the novel support Native American identities? The Navajo Elder who told "a story about the historical origin of snow in Montezuma Canyon" (Tedlock and Tedlock xxi) knew, as Jane Austen knew when she wrote Emma, that stories are inherently value laden: "there is clearly at work here [in Emma] a ... detailed ordering of values" (Booth 262). Another story, one that is concerned with a relatively young man who believes that

it is principally through one's association with Elders that learning, growth, and meaningfulness occur in one's life, could be the story of almost any young Native American. The Gros Ventre readers of Winter in the Blood find this value much more compelling, however, when it is conjoined to their tribal community's tradition of encouraging a thirty-two year old man to go on a vision quest to seek a grandfather (Lincoln 212-13). Alfred Kroeber and Kluckhohn's distillation that "'the essential core of culture consists of traditional ... ideas and especially their attached values'" (qtd. in Kluckhohn, "The Concept" 73) should alert the Native American novelist to the usefulness of a means of expression that gives "voice" to "traditional ideas" and "their attached values"; the novel may indeed be capable, after all, of adumbrating the "essential core" of a tribal community's cultural identity.

When he acknowledged that "narrative works through emotion" (84), Karl Kroeber was primarily concerned with oral storytelling, but those readers who continue to pore over novels in states ranging from the horrific to the euphoric will readily admit that "[written] narrative [also] works through emotion". Though the assumption that different Native American novelists from different tribal communities and various non-Native American authors from various communities will assign differing

emotional significances to similar characters, objects, or events is not always a valid one, there are still some grounds for believing it. Tribal novelists, through their own particular "symbols of feeling", can pursue "the real education of emotion" (Langer 401). An "education" that will, for example, help the young Jemez Pueblo reader know how to respond well to his concern about his initial ceremonial drumming.

The actions and speech of Lame Bull and Teresa, the narrator's step-father and mother in Winter in the Blood, persuade Kenneth Lincoln that there is "a Blackfeet epistemology still operative for Welch". This theory about the attainment of knowledge centers on Old Man (Na'pi) and Old Woman (Kipitaki). In "one of the earliest Blackfeet creation parables, told and retold from ancient times", Na'pi, who has the initial say about how things should be, arrives at positions that are often humorous and quite impractical; Kipitaki, who speaks "second, making things-as-they-are", is the voice of common sense and practicality. An examination of the structure of Winter in the Blood illustrates how Welch has intentionally or unintentionally used the "wedded contraries" (Lincoln 211) of Na'pi and Kipitaki to encourage the growth of a Blackfeet identity. In Part Two, section 19 of the novel, Lame Bull pulls out onto the highway in spite of the fact that an Eddy's Bread truck was probably quite

close. Teresa observes that such driving may very well lead to their early deaths. As the conversation between Lame Bull, Teresa, and the narrator progresses, Lame Bull refers to Teresa as "old woman" and suggests that her comments are going to result in her having to walk. Teresa answers this with another statement about the way things actually are: "'you seem to forget that I own this car'" (Winter 71).

"Anthony Andreas, the tribal historian of the Agua Caliente" (490) band of the Cahuilla from Southern California, told Kerwin L. Klein that he believed that culture was really inside each person. A Cahuilla Elder, Francisco Patencio, who seems to have lived before Andreas, would probably have added, "'but the marks — they remain to remind us'" (qtd. in Klein 483). The "marks" that Elder Patencio was referring to are to be found "'on rocks on the highest mountains'" (qtd. in Klein 482) on Cahuilla lands; and they do not only demarcate those lands as Cahuilla territory but the "marks" were also used to delineate "the distribution of power within Cahuilla society" (Klein 482). The land figures prominently in all Native American tribal communities. Characters will often demand the most attention in novels, but, as Momaday has shown with House Made of Dawn, the novel's appetency for lengthy descriptions can be used to bring a tribal community's lands to life. Both Benally and

Tosamah (and, it is to be hoped, the Navajo and Kiowa readers of House Made of Dawn) are able to survive in cosmopolitan Los Angeles because they have found the words or lengthy descriptions or "marks" that keep their respective tribal lands firmly in mind.

How will the novel detract from Native American identities? Macaulay's observation that an oral narrative will enable "a multiplicity of perspectives, whereas the topically focused structure of long written narrative eliminates all but one central perspective" (53) suggests that the novel will bring a change in Native American identities. "The ethic of democracy, which underlies the ethic of non-interference, [and which] emphasizes the equality of all individuals" (Brant 2) is one of the determinants of Native American identities[10] that seems to fare better in the kind of narrative that enables "a multiplicity of perspectives" than in the more hierarchical kind that "eliminates all but one central perspective". All three of the Native American novelists whose work forms part of the focus of this study have certainly made determined efforts to project the democratic aspect of orality. Yet, if, as Booth proposes, "the emotions and judgments of the implied author are ... the very stuff out of which great fiction is made" (86), then Native American novelists, if they want to continue to be read, cannot

be too democratic. Of course, literary theorists such as Barthes and, to a lesser extent, Bakhtin hypothesize that, in an age of increasing prominence for orality, the "one central perspective" of a "long written narrative" is, to varying degrees, illusory. For Barthes, "a 'text is made up of multiple writings'" (qtd. in Leitch 28); and when Bakhtin focusses upon the novel, he initially perceives a "multivocal (heteroglossic) consciousness" (Pecora 18). As mentioned earlier in this study, though, Bakhtin goes on to postulate that the "multivocal ... consciousness" in a novel finally "assumes the hegemonic, 'deep-seated' intentionality of an unrelativized and unconditional individuality" (Pecora 25). Barthes's "multiple writings" may be able to provide a "multiplicity of perspectives" for the novel (Scholes would posit that those "writings" and "perspectives" are somewhat more secondary to the text in that they occur during reception or the reading process) and Bakhtin's attainment of an authorial "'deep-seated' intentionality" may also, paradoxically, "yield a breadth of experience" (Booth 199) just as "commenting narrators" will when they are "at their best". Thus, perhaps the novel can accommodate "the ethic democracy"; if not as well as an oral narrative, then at least tolerably well.

Still, a Native American tribal community's identity has many more components than "the ethic of democracy". Will any

of those other components constrain the use of the novel by Native American artists? Gainsaying a means of expression that has brought to life such memorable characters as Jim Loney, Lulu Nanapush, and J.B. Tosamah seems injudicious. Yet, it is the puissance of these very characters that may be the greatest impediment for those who hope to use the novel to support Native American tribal identities. The sense of community that weaves its way through every facet of tribal life will not typically nourish a star system,[11] a pattern of design that focusses upon the main characters as opposed to the ensemble. Every community will give rise to one or more extraordinary individuals and many will even encourage individual achievement, but there were and continue to be ambits to a tribal community's tolerance of individuality. For as Denise Panek and Michael Hilger observe, "our [tribal members'] singular purpose is not to succeed in this lifetime as individuals but as members of a community" (273).

How can a process of integration, such as novel writing, promote the cultural survival of Native American tribal communities? For their artists to abjure novel writing will, for many Native Americans, probably mean the abetment of any growth of indifference amongst their potentially, if not already, helpful non-Native American neighbours; and in the long term, it may be argued, indifference to any community's values and

traditions will be even more destructive than active opposition. Therefore, since the study of literature occurs in virtually every non-Native American community and at every stage in a non-Native American community's educational process, there is wisdom in ensuring that your tribal community has a "voice". The difficulties in reception, alluded to earlier, will not soon disappear, but if, through the multifarious workings that can lead to indifference, a Native American tribal community recedes to a pinpoint on the horizon of more than one non-Native American community, then fewer will hear (and possible come to know) Ben's "singing" (which really permeates all of "The Night Chanter" in House Made of Dawn) or Fleur's laughter ("rich, knowing ... full of sadness and pleasure" [Tracks 214]) or Raven's ability to counsel an embarrassed but receptive young man like Fools Crow (Crow 162).

How will novel writing hinder the cultural survival of Native American tribal communities? "Major literatures are made, not born" (Leitch 103). Perhaps most Native American writers are not overly concerned with the possibility of their published works achieving the status of a "major" literature. What may concern some of them, however, are the remaining words in the preceding quote. The making of a written literature, major or otherwise, requires lengthy training in the

language arts, particularly in reading and writing. Increasingly this apprenticeship for Native American writers is occurring in familiar surroundings with familiar texts that are taught by familiar teachers in familiar ways, but this happy scene seems still to be more the exception than the rule. Long years spent away from home, both literally and figuratively, will have an impact upon Native American artists who have traditionally been able to dance, drum, sing, stitch, carve, or speak their way to the emotional heart(s) of their tribal communities. Now, to write your way to the primarily oral heart of your possibly "distant" community will perhaps require a capacity to imagine and evoke unfamiliar to most of one's artistic predecessors; and the extent of the difficulty of such an enterprise will be of some concern to those seeking to use novel writing as a means for cultural survival.

Finally, even from the perspective of cultural survival, one is both repulsed by and attracted to the notion of Native American authors using the novel to lend sustenance to values and traditions they consider important to their communities. The American Indian Health Care Association's formulation of traditional health, "to be sick is to be fragmented; to be healed is to be whole" (Knox and Adams 287), implies that an ambivalent or fragmented stance is not viable. Taking a decision would seem

to be, if not inordinately easy, at least within the realm of possibility and conducive to pīmäd́äzīwin. Yet, living one's minority cultural "life in the fullest sense" can mean juxtaposing contradictoriness respectfully and discretely in order to achieve a measure of wholeness; and it is a life prolonged and enriched by the constant exhortation that this will help the People.

Notes

[1] When not presented in its entirety in the text, the title of House Made of Dawn will appear as House. Similarly, Welch's Winter in the Blood will be referred to as Winter, The Death of Jim Loney will appear as Loney, and Fools Crow will be documented as Crow.

[2] It would be, amongst other things, less than honest to imply that there is no rhetoric at work in traditional Native American oral literature. As Dell Hymes (and Long Lance) attests, however, it is a rhetoric that is perhaps more than a little self-effacing:

> In my own experience, the power of Native American [oral] literature seems often to lie, not in decorative elaboration, but in uncanny selection. Images often enough are not recognized as images at first because they are not invented, but chosen ... expressed in a selection of details so natural to the region and events of the story that the power of the images is not at first noticed. (25)

The above attestation is akin to Kroeber's observation concerning the absence of "striking metaphors" but it also bears a relation to a conclusion reached by Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction: "we may finally be forced to conclude, with Aristotle and with most

important modern critics that the author should use as little recognizable rhetoric 'as possible'" (109). Long Lance, and possibly Hymes and Kroeber, may find a close association with such company more agreeable, though, if "recognizable" was removed.

[3] While Navajo "women's military significance remains unclear" (Frisbie 22), there is some evidence from the traditional names given to or adopted by Navajo women that some of them followed the ways of the warrior (Frisbie 29). Angela, of course, is not a Navajo woman, but that did not prevent Momaday from associating her with Changing Bear Maiden from Navajo mythology (Scarberry - García 63).

[4] Gossip was and continues to be a means of social control in tribal communities. Some, particularly those who have felt its force, may question its fairness, but gossip does serve as an effective balance for one of the other means of social control: the principle of non-interference ("a high degree of respect for every human being's independence leads the Indian to view giving instructions, coercing, or even persuading another person to do something as undesirable behaviour. Group goals are achieved by reliance on voluntary co-operation" [Brant 1]).

[5] In Theory of Literature, Austin Warren writes that "it is customary to speak of all plots as involving conflict". Although,

to be fair, he does qualify this statement when he continues with "but then, like plot, the term [conflict] must be given much latitude .... [T] here are plots which it seems more rational to speak of in terms of a single line or direction, as plots of the chase or the pursuit" (Wellek and Warren 217).

[6] While not dismissing his numerous concerns with ethnography, in the interest of balance, Clifford also devotes part of his chapter, "On Ethnographic Authority", to an appreciation of the dialogical nature of ethnographic research when he writes that "enough has been said to make the general point that indigenous control over knowledge gained in the field can be considerable and even determining" (45). Can that "knowledge gained in the field" survive (re)inscription in the published ethnographic text, however? Some, perhaps much, of it can, but it will not be "unfiltered" knowledge, and to that extent Momaday will have to question its authenticity.

[7] Of course, the Pan-Indian movement can be a boon to Native American authors such as Erdrich and her husband-collaborator Michael Dorris when they seek to write a novel like Love Medicine that "' kind of ring[s] true to people from lots of different tribes'" (qtd. in Stripes 28). However, as the publication of Erdrich's third novel, Tracks, testifies, a Native

American author does not wander too far from home for very long.

[8] Vladimir N. Toporov offers this observation:

> translation is not merely an important fact and motive force of culture, an impulse and at the same time a method of 'fostering' culture, but it is a key principle of culture itself, its solid foundation. Wherever that principle does not work, culture dies, becomes degraded, or gives way to another culture. (29)

Admittedly, the translation occurring in the Native American novels does not usually involve two separate languages but it does enswathe at least two cultures; and if Toporov's perception is acute, those cultures should keep "translating". Any ensuing mediation will then yield to reconciliation instead of co-optation.

[9] Linda Hutcheon would contend that postmodernism reflects a withdrawal from the concept of one "centralized sameness [and the movement towards a] ... decentralized community" where "the local and the regional are stressed in the face of mass culture" (12). Ostensibly, this "decentralized community" is comparable to the tribal community that influences, for example, the writings of Erdrich. Where postmodernism and tribalism bifurcate, however, is at this posting in Hutcheon's A Poetics of Postmodernism: "no

narrative can be a natural 'master' narrative: there are no natural hierarchies; there are only those we construct" (13). The spirit of community that makes a tribe cohere is certainly a "'master' narrative" and its underpinnings have as much to do with the wind, air, water, and land as they do with the biota and the human.

[10] Nabakov's apparently contradictory opinion that "free speech and equality of different viewpoints were not the creeds of small-community tribal man" (24) bears some relation to Holm's belief that "the concept of having an authority in authority was basic to most tribal political[,] social[,] and economic systems" (350) and to Debra Holt's view that "for Native Americans in particular, the primacy of the spoken word endures" (152). As Chief Long Lance indicated earlier, not everyone was free to speak publicly. The well-being of a tribal community depended and continues to depend upon the respectful use of the spoken word, particularly by those who have been placed in positions of trust and authority by their community. Ultimately, the substratum, the "meta-narrative" of a tribal group is, as mentioned earlier, the spirit of community; "the ethic of democracy" contributes to the maintenance of that spirit but it is never permitted to overwhelm it.

[11] The trickster figures, Nanabozho and Coyote, are as recognizable in the tribal communities that fostered them as David Copperfield and Tom Sawyer are in many English-speaking, non-Native American communities. The "landscapes" are quite different for these "stars", however. Nanabozho and Coyote spend much of their time working their way across an external "landscape" while David Copperfield and Tom Sawyer expend more energy circumambulating an internal "landscape". The ostensibly apsychological nature of the tricksters' characterization seems to make them more amenable to fading in and out of the foreground and less likely to dwell in an ascendant manner in the psychic life of a community.

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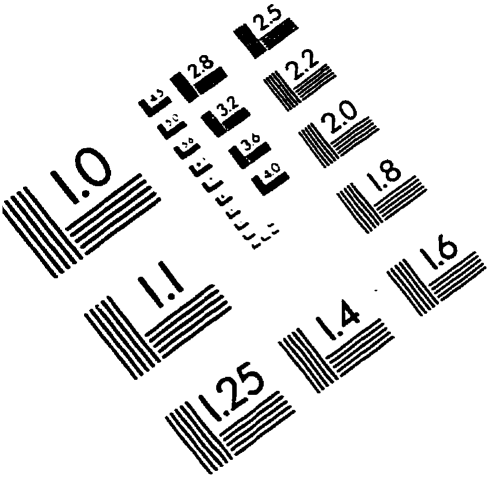

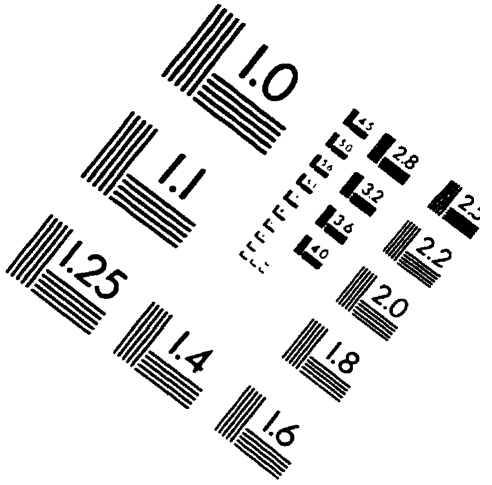

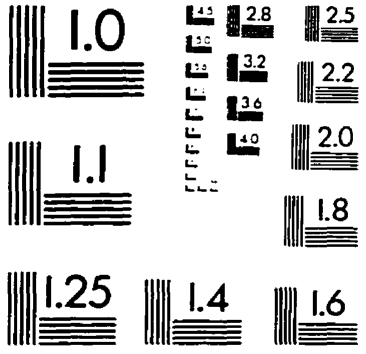

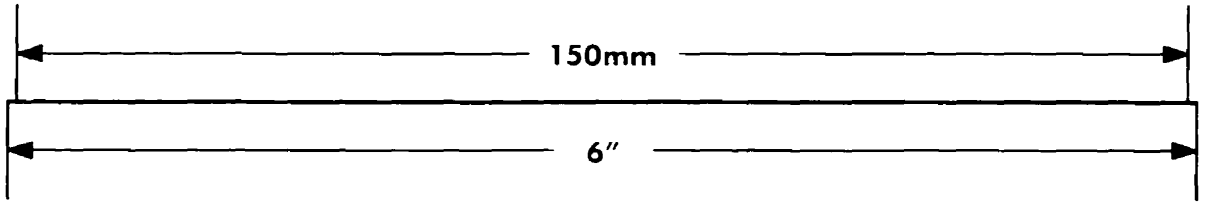

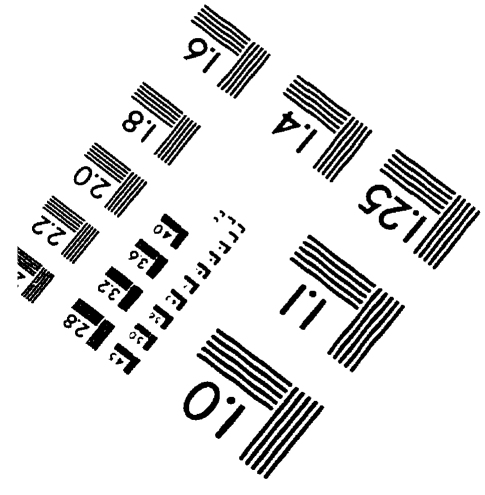

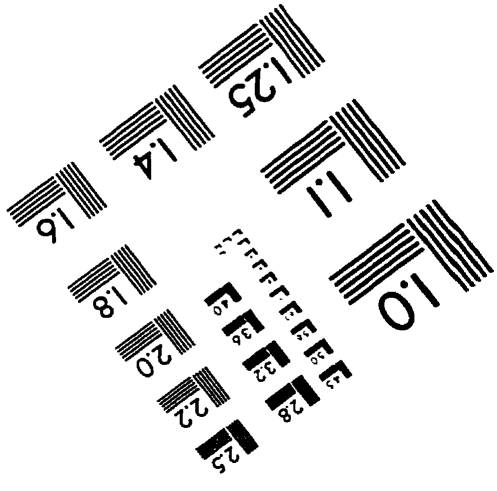

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