

**"ALL OF A PIECE":  
NATIVE REPRESENTATION AND VOICE  
IN AMERICAN FICTION**

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RICHARD DEAN MONTURE, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

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MASTER OF ARTS (1996)  
(English)

McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: "All of a Piece": Native Representation and Voice  
in American Fiction

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. Sylvia Bowerbank

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 129

## ABSTRACT

The oral literature and traditions of North American Indian peoples have sustained Native cultures since the beginnings of time and will continue to do so. However, American literature written by non-Indian authors has been responsible for the "image" of the Indian as we know it today. The purpose of this thesis is to study the emergence of the Indian as a literary figure in American literature, as portrayed in selected works by James Fenimore Cooper and William Faulkner. It goes on to discuss how these often stereotypical representations are now being challenged and recreated by two contemporary Native American authors, N. Scott Momaday and Louise Erdrich, who embody their own uniquely North American understanding of their peoples' experience. In this way, a First Nations perspective on literature is distinct from that of the Western academic and cultural tradition. The thesis will illustrate this difference by examining the issues of representation, voice, and identity. Finally, it will suggest possible approaches for the study and appreciation of Native literature from a Native perspective, since it is only in recent times that words spoken and written in English have provided a means of communication among Indigenous nations. Our stories, past and present, can now be shared in a way that was not available to our ancestors. Therefore, it is now the responsibility of this present generation to ensure that these voices and words are understood and respected.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Because this thesis was done on "Indian time," there are many people to acknowledge and to thank. I will do my best ...

My sincerest appreciation and gratitude goes to my supervisor, Dr. Sylvia Bowerbank, without whose tireless enthusiasm and tremendous support this project, quite simply, would not have been completed. Throughout it all, she has been a teacher, a friend, and an ally.

Thanks also to Dr. James Brasch, whose discussions, formal and informal, have continuously enhanced my interest and understanding of American literature, and America in general.

Thanks to the staff and students of the Indigenous Studies Program at McMaster and at Grand River Polytechnic at Six Nations, who all helped in a variety of ways, the least of which was to provide employment and a forum to discuss these issues. A special thank you to Lynn, who diligently navigated the computer in the ongoing effort to make this thing look "perfect" --despite my objections. Thanks also to Ima, David, and Tom for their knowledge and help with Mohawk.

A very necessary thanks also goes out to my "non-academic" friends, who offered much assistance in their own way and never let me forget that this stuff is not *all* that important. These people include: Paul, Carter, Brad and Cynthia, Rick, Dave, Ron and Beth, Norma, "Beany", Arnie, Mark, and all the rest of the crew back home on "the bush."

I extend my appreciation and sincere thanks also to my "academic" friends--Dawn, Theresa, and Patty--who lent me encouragement, advice, and support whenever I needed it, and sometimes when I didn't, and never let me forget that this stuff *was* important after all ... Nia:wen.

A very extra special kind of thanks to Elaine, whose companionship, charm, and wit will always be a source of inspiration and laughter. Nia:wen, "B.C."

Finally, Nia:wenkowa to my father, Don, my grandmother, Ruby, and all the rest of the Monture and Frohman families. Their good words, good deeds, and extreme good humour have provided an invaluable source of pride, motivation, and support for me over the years. This thesis would not have been possible without them all.

*In Memory of*

Carole G. Frohman-Monture

1940-1983

*Ake'nihsténha*

Charlotte Edith Anderson-Monture

1890-1996

*Akhsó'tha'*

Chaps Rusty Bill

1973-1996

*Iakohsá:tens*

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*It fell just once. For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man stride its back ... then the bear surged erect, raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps towards the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them, man dog and bear, seemed to bounce once.*

*William Faulkner  
"The Bear"*

*Northern lights. Something in the cold, wet atmosphere brought them out ... We floated into the field and sat down, crushing green wheat. We chewed the sweet grass tips and stared up and were lost. Everything seemed to be one piece. The air, our faces, all cool, moist, and dark, and the ghostly sky. Pale green licks of light pulsed and faded across it. Living lights. Their fires lobbed over, higher, higher, then died out in blackness. At times the whole sky was ringed in shooting points and puckers of light gathering and falling, pulsing, fading, rhythmical as breathing. All of a piece. As if the sky were a pattern of nerves and our thought and memories travelled across it. As if the sky were one gigantic memory for us all.*

*Louise Erdrich  
Love Medicine*

*An examination of several recent works in American letters tends to reveal that not only is the Indian-in-American-literature genre alive and well, but also that it has undergone something of an arithmetic progression, assuming a position occupying simultaneously both fictional and nonfictional frames of reference ... When fact and fiction fuse into an intentionally homogenous whole, mythology becomes the norm. However, those who read, write and publish American literature are unfamiliar with and quite unwilling to acknowledge their truth as myth: it is insisted upon in most quarters that the myth is fact.*

*Ward Churchill  
"Literature As Weapon in the  
Colonization of the American Indian"*



## INTRODUCTION:

### **Raotiweannahson'a tanon Onkwawannahson'a: Their Words and Our Voices**

North American Indians and American Literature have existed side by side for centuries. It could, in fact, be argued that the very first American literature was produced by Christopher Columbus and other early explorers to the "New World" who documented their encounters with "los Indios." Therefore, the connection between literature and the colonization of the American Indian is not lost on many Native scholars today. M. Annette Jaimes (Juaneno/Yaqui) is one such Native academic who writes, "Literature crafted by a dominating culture can be an insidious political force, disinforming people who might otherwise develop a clearer understanding of the struggle for survival faced by an indigenous population" (Churchill, *Fantasies* 1). Indeed, the belief and understanding of the "Indian" in American consciousness is greatly influenced by the image of the Indian as contained in American literature and art. It is a legacy of stereotypical representation. Furthermore, it is a legacy of assumed authority over Native people based on the perceived superiority of EuroAmerican culture and beliefs. Given these problems of literary image and their effects upon Native people today, this thesis intends to examine how the literary past has impacted upon the literary present as it pertains to the representation of Native characters in American literature and the emergence of Native voice in fictional writing. As a means of studying the issues of

stereotypes, misrepresentation, and voice appropriation, I have chosen James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans (1826) William Faulkner's "wilderness stories" section of Go Down, Moses (1942), N.Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn (1968) and Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine (1984). In addition, this thesis will briefly outline and discuss the marked differences between contemporary Native approaches to literature and criticism and Western perspectives on these topics.

The suspicion with which Native people regard Western knowledge and learning is nothing new. Consider the following response by a delegation of Six Nations chiefs in 1744 to the government of Virginia who had offered to educate their "Indian youth":

we know ... that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in those colleges, and that the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us good by your proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it; several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the northern provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counselors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged by your kind offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them (qtd. McLuhan 57).

Historically, it is clear that the values of Western education were at odds with what was considered useful and good to Iroquoian culture and society. Indeed, the times have changed

but Western learning is often still in conflict with what is important, and truthful, from a Native perspective. Tom Porter (Mohawk) asserts that non-Native academics have long been responsible for perpetuating false impressions of Native cultures due to their perceived positions of authority in mainstream society:

In the history books, in the television shows, and in the documents that have been recorded, the intellectuals who have observed our people throughout the years, studied us and tried to communicate to the outside world what we are and how we think, were successful maybe fifty percent of the time but the other fifty percent of the time they were way off track. So when you say anthropologist, archaeologist, or somebody who studied Iroquois, what we think, right away is, "Oh no! Not another one." I know that it is supposed to be a high professional matter to have a Ph.D. with doctor this and doctor that, but to an Iroquois when you say those words, it doesn't mean that at all, it just means, "Oh no!" (Barriero 12).

In contrast to North America's ever shifting views concerning Native people, these two statements, separated by over 200 years, demonstrate that our (Iroquoian) philosophies surrounding education and identity have not changed all that much. As Native people, we have been able to adapt and to educate ourselves within the "expectations" of the dominant society while maintaining our own set of values and beliefs. Do we really need others, therefore, to speak for and about us as Native "subjects," when we are perfectly able to do so for ourselves?

As a Mohawk, as a member of the Six Nations, and as a sometimes reluctant member of the intellectual community, I am directly affected by the passages cited above and often made aware of these issues on a daily basis within the University environment. I may not be a member of the non-Native academic disciplines that study and interpret Native culture and

society, but my position is still very tenuous. Do I approach literary representations of Native people as a Mohawk who happens to be an English graduate student? Or do I proceed as an English graduate student who happens to be Mohawk? As trivial as these questions may appear to some, the issues of identity, scholarly objectivity, and self-appointedness all have a tremendous impact upon approaches to the topic of literary criticism regarding Native content and Native literature. For example, as an Iroquois writing about William Faulkner's Chickasaw characters or N. Scott Momaday's depiction of Kiowa culture in House Made of Dawn, I am only slightly more "qualified" than a non-Native person, simply because my own culture is different than Chickasaw and Kiowa. The fact that Momaday and myself are both descendents of societies that existed on this continent prior to European arrival makes us similar in some regard, but to assume that we are interchangeable as a people is wrong. This type of objectification of Native people was, in fact, part of the process to dehumanize the Native populations of North America, making them seem less distinct and therefore more easily conquered. To be completely accurate then, the term "Native voice" could, and perhaps should, just as easily be replaced with the "Hopi voice", the "Cherokee voice", the "Sioux voice", etc. It is important to remember, however, that there are commonalities amongst Native cultures, and it is with these shared world views/belief systems in mind that my own "Mohawk graduate student voice" will attempt to enlighten.



Since the time of first contact between Natives and Europeans, the newcomers have sought ways in which to describe, in writing, the Indigenous peoples of the "New World".

At times depicted as gentle and peaceful, at others fierce and savage, Native Americans have long been objects of study and debate, subjected to whatever prevailing systems of thought were taking place in Western society at the time. After Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx, and a host of other Eurocentric thinkers were through, the image of the savage, both noble and ignoble, was thoroughly entrenched in the global consciousness. In his book, The White Man's Indian, Robert F. Berkhofer Jr. attributes this treatment of the American Indian to the dominant society's need to define themselves within a new context, a new place:

Since the description, interpretation, explanation, and manipulation of the Indian as image and person were and are inextricably combined in White minds, the scholarly understanding of past and present White images becomes but the latest phase of a centuries old White effort to understand themselves through understanding Native Americans and vice versa (Berkhofer xvi).

Given the popularity of 1992's Dances With Wolves and last summer's Pochahontas, it is obvious that the image of the generic, "Universal Indian" is indeed alive and well in the popular culture of North America.

Today then, Native people are still objectified, still living in the shadow of their noble or ignoble ancestors. As mixedblood writer Louis Owens states, "the Indian in today's world consciousness is a product of literature, history, and art, and a product that, as an invention, often bears little resemblance to actual, living Native American people" (Owens 4). With little awareness and no recognition for our contemporary cultural identities, Native people today are seen as somehow "inferior" to the more popular, mainstream conception of what an "Indian" should be. As a result, tribal names and Native symbols are appropriated freely. The names of sports teams (Washington Redskins, Chicago Black Hawks, Cleveland Indians),

automobiles (Pontiac, Jeep Cherokee, Cheveloret Cheyenne) and community colleges (Mohawk and Seneca Colleges) are just some of the more obvious examples of how Native culture is (mis)represented in contemporary times. Our names and images are exploited as if we no longer exist, except as "fair game" for marketing schemes, team mascots, and clever promotional gimmicks. Native people themselves are made invisible. Therefore, the issue of representation is an important one for Aboriginal people who feel that in order to define a voice and a contemporary identity, leftover images from the past must be examined, critiqued, and rejected in such a way as to allow for a more accurate representation of ourselves, written **by** ourselves for ourselves.

The movement to create our own cultural identity in popular culture signals an important shift in intellectual relations between Indian and non-Indian societies in America and, at the same time, promotes dialogue and communication in a diversified Native academic, and artistic, community. Aware of the role that academics, writers, and artists have played in shaping the Indian as "image", Laguna/Pueblo writer and critic Paula Gunn Allen states:

Whatever I read about Indians I check out with my inner self. Most of what I have read--and some things I have said based on that reading--is upside down and backward. But my inner self, the self who knows what is true of American Indians because it is one, always warns me when something deceptive is going on. And with that warning, I am moved to do a great deal of reflecting, some more reading, and a lot of questioning and observing of real live human beings who are Indian in order to discover the source of my unease (Sacred Hoop 6-7).

Suspicious of literary constructions of the Indian, Allen strikes a balance between academic and Native-derived approaches to analyzing the problem of misrepresentation. By placing equal importance on the "inner" aspects of the issue, without forgetting the scholarly procedures involved, she seeks to achieve a new found method of examining the Native's role in literature, one that is accessible to Native and non-Native alike.

The caution with which Indians, such as Allen, approach these literary representations is based upon a deeply rooted hesitancy to trust the dominant culture. This resistance owes more, perhaps, to enforced education via residential schools and "peaceful"--and ultimately broken--written treaties than it does to descriptions found in textbooks and fictional writing by non-Native authors. However, it is obvious that all written forms of "fiction" are intricately linked. Beginning with the earliest accounts of Native people by French and English explorers, and perhaps best typified by the captivity narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europeans seemed to take great delight in describing the "otherness" of the inhabitants of the New World. Mary Rowlandson, one of the first and best known of the captive narrators, set the precedent for "bad Injuns" in her emotional descriptions of their uncaring, uncivilized, and un-Christian ways:

Now away we must go with those barbarous creatures, with our bodies wounded and bleeding, and our hearts no less than our bodies...This was the dolefullest night that ever my eyes saw. Oh, the roaring and singing and dancing and yelling of those black creatures in the night, which made the place a lively resemblance of hell (qtd. Churchill, *Fantasies* 22-23).

Still later, the literature of the "frontier period" shaped America's perception of the Indian.

Settlers who migrated west encountered Indians first-hand, telling stories of Native trickery

and bloody skirmishes as various tribes struggled to maintain their sacred territories in the face of an ever encroaching white population. Subsequently, popular writing at that time often bordered on propaganda, with many of America's most influential authors--and many more lesser ones--chronicling the inevitable demise of the Native people (Maddox 10-11). Furthermore, as the United States began to fall under the spell of Manifest Destiny, "renegade" Indian bands who refused to succumb to God's will were seen as a menace to all of civilization, resulting in the ever present "Cowboys and Indians" motif in American consciousness.

According to Jane Tompkins, this attitude, strengthened as it was by the formation of an American literary canon, is endemic of EuroAmerican approaches to more than literature: "When classic texts are seen not as the ineffable products of genius but as the bearers of a set of national, social, economic, institutional, and professional interests, than their domination of the critical scene seems less the result of their indisputable excellence than the product of historical contingencies" (Tompkins xii). With the Indian "problem," American authors found an abundance of material on which to draw; however, they rarely demonstrated more than a passing acknowledgement of historical and cultural fact (Tompkins xvi). Hence, the "romantic" image of the doomed, stoic figure of the woods--an image popularized by the appearance of Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*--is one which still haunts us as if it were historical reality.

In contemporary times, many academics--Native and non-Native alike--feel that most representations of the Indian produced by EuroAmerican authors are inaccurate and therefore



misleading, if not dangerous. However, I believe that close examination of these (mis)representations are essential if we are to understand the role that Native Americans were expected to play within the larger design of an American literary tradition; in short, critiquing the images perpetuated by the "classic" works of American fiction. Particularly damaging were those texts that assumed the Indian voice in such a way as to pretend authority on Native culture, creating works in which fact and fantasy became one and the same. In examining such texts Native scholars are then able to "see where we have been" in essence, thereby allowing us to address mistakes and half truths in historical and cultural fact, challenge stereotypes, and gain a bona fide voice within the academic arena. This is the first stage in tearing down the literary misconceptions that have hampered us for centuries.

Along with the immediate problem of dealing with issues of representation, however, Native writers/critics must also grapple with the question of which branch of white, EuroAmerican literary theory is "appropriate" when approaching texts within which Native people are involved. We have been oppressed by their social theories (regarding "progress" and acculturation) for too long already; must we also be subject to their literary ones? Complicating the issue still further is the fact that, as Native people writing in the dominant society's language, are we not then setting ourselves up to be willing partners in their theoretical discourse (Ashcroft 38-40)? Such questions underline the problems of my own position as Native "critic" with regard to examining texts by both American and American Indian writers.

Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham sees such questions of scholarly involvement and criticism by Native people as vital--and also threatening to non-Native academic "authorities". Addressing the issue of written history and truth from an American perspective, he argues that certain principles of American integrity must be upheld, especially as it pertains to the treatment of American Indians:

America's narrative about itself centers upon, has its operational center in, a hidden text concerning its relationship with American Indians. That central text must be hidden, sublimated, and acted out. Native American artists, as artists and as persons responsible to our peoples, have traditionally attempted intervention, but even our attempts are seen as quite minor entertainment (qtd. Jaimes 425-426).

Such arguments are also echoed by Creek/Cherokee Metis scholar Ward Churchill, who believes that "the [stereotypes] of American Indians in American literature may be seen as an historical requirement of an imperial process" (*Fantasies* 29).

In the last decade, there has been a number of books written on these issues by both Native and non-Native authors and critics. Perhaps two of the best known Native writers dealing with these topics in the U.S. are Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa) and Paula Gunn Allen, while in Canada, Lee Maracle (Metis), Emma LaRocque (Plains Cree Metis), and Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan) have all written extensively on the subject. In the non-Native "outposts" of criticism, a wide array of texts have appeared that address various theoretical problems relating to literature concerning Native people, as well as the issues revolving around translation and representation of American Indian speeches and culture. These critics include Arnold Krupat, Brian Swann, David Murray, and Wernor Soller. While their texts

contain elements of insight concerning the problems inherent in literature involving Native Americans, they miss the larger issues primarily due to their dependence on non-Native critical theory. Ironically, the Indian is--to borrow a term from Murray--"textualised out of existence" (Murray 3). All this brings up the question, then, of just how useful is theory to the Native American academic and reader?

According to Lee Maracle, the "language" of theory and Western ideology is contradictory to Indigenous thought processes, due to its elite nature and removal from human interaction. Within such a system of written discourse there is little room for those who do not ascribe to mainstream concepts of knowledge and power:

For Native people, the ridiculousness of European academic notions of theoretical presentation lies in the inherent hierarchy retained by academics, politicians, law makers and law keepers. Power resides with the theorists so long as they use language no one understands. In order to gain the right to theorize, one must attend their institutions for many years, learn this other language, and unlearn our feeling for the human condition. Bizarre ("Oratory" 90).

Because of our marginalized role in the universities, very few Native people have earned the "right to theorize", or, for that matter, have wanted to. In most every Native culture, to criticize it to show disrespect toward another person, to view another's knowledge, opinions, and emotions as inferior to one's own. It has only been in the last decade that Native writers have taken up the role of literary critic, and even that has been with much hesitation. Addressing the issues of scholarly debate, Ojibway writer Ruby Slipperjack asserts that:

You don't question people. You don't make comments. That is why the lecture theatres are such a foreign environment in universities, the debates, and the discussions, the panels--those are totally foreign. It is just like

pointing a finger at somebody ... I know there are people out there who will read [my books] from beginning to end, just reading the words. Where is the plug? Where is the typical European format? Right? I am sorry, but you are not going to find it there because it's of a different culture. I am not going to try to pound a circle into a square (qtd. Lutz 213-214).

The most logical approach, perhaps, to literature in which Native people are involved, both as creator and created, would appear to be post-colonialist theory. But while such theory identifies the process, quite correctly, of "rereading and...re-writing of the European historical and fictional record [as] a vital and inescapable task at the heart of the post-colonial enterprise" (Ashcroft 11), Paula Gunn Allen and other Native academics take a decidedly different view of the American Indian's position as a literary figure and active participant.

Addressing the methods of feminist theorists, Allen states:

They're still pontificating, excluding, and power-tripping, while we're still resisting, dissenting, deconstructing, and subverting...[O]ur art is not, alas, privy to such alienation from human processes, and thus it must issue from the position of creativity rather than reactivity. Subversion, dissidence, and acceptance of self as marginal are processes that maim our art and deflect us from our purpose ("Border Studies" 312).

Like Maracle and Slipperjack, Allen refuses to see herself as a member of a marginalized group, asserting the existence and position of Indigenous peoples' place within the literary and artistic realm of the dominant culture. Not only does she view the language of the theorists as domineering, but also as "alien" to normal human interaction. Furthermore, she sees misrepresentation and exclusion in texts by non-Native authors, and points out the inadequacies of critical theories (i.e. feminist, post-colonial) developed by those who impose

a binary type of approach over all oppressed and colonized people, forgetting the effects and problems of history in a North American context.

This lack of awareness and understanding results in critical theories which seek to incorporate Native Americans into a kind of pan-Indian framework that, in the end, takes away cultural identity all over again in yet another subversive, literary tactic. A sentiment which is expressed by Native writer Thomas King in his statement regarding the imposition of academic categorization: "I cannot let post-colonial stand--particularly as a term--for, at its heart, it is an act of imagination and an act of imperialism that demands that I imagine myself as something I did not choose to be, as something I would not choose to become" ("Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial" 16). Aware of the myriad difficulties inherent in the analysis and understanding of Native American literature--and Native Americans in literature--Chippewa writer and scholar Gerald Vizenor concludes, "There can never be "correct" or "objective" readings of the text or tropes in tribal literatures, only more energetic, interesting and "pleasurable misreadings" (Narrative Chance 5).

For the purposes of this thesis then, I propose to develop my own "Native-centred" approach, as opposed to a Eurocentric literary one, in dealing with the issues of Native representation and "voice" in American literature. As alluded to previously, it would be quite difficult--if not impossible--to develop a critical paradigm that would effectively address the concerns of all North American Native people when it comes to literary discourse. Each of our nations has a unique culture, history, and experience with the dominant society and therefore different stories to tell, with different ways in which to tell them. However, we as

Indigenous people are not without our common value systems and survival strategies in facing the encroachment of EuroAmerican society; and it is from these shared concepts that I will attempt to position my arguments.

A foremost example of this shared North American Native worldview is our tremendous respect for the power of words and symbols, that not necessarily written, convey a full range of meaning far beyond what the printed page is capable of. "Oral literature," as it has been called, is no less a contradiction than using the term "voice" to denote discourse in writing. In fact, "voice" is closer to the Native concept of truth, for it is first spoken and then heard directly without the distant removal of an author/reader relationship. To illustrate further, the Mohawk word for "voice" and "word" is the same: owenna. Therefore, the concept of "voice" will be (re)examined in each chapter of the thesis, paying close attention to how EuroAmerican authors perceive the importance of silence and speech in their Native characters. In addition, the last chapter will discuss how Native authors, in particular, view this relationship in contemporary times. Throughout the thesis, the implications of an "assumed" voice and the question of what is an "authentic" Native voice in (written) literature will be discussed.

Another component of this Native-centred approach will be the issue of Native spirituality and how it is portrayed within the texts. According to the captivity narratives and other early American literature, Indians were pagans and savages who had little or no religious belief systems. Although James Fenimore Cooper imbues his "good" Indians with a certain amount of morality and restraint, it is understood that this is largely a result of their

contact with white civilization. Consequently, the effect is one of the importance of missionizing the Indian people as a means of "civilizing" them rather than attempting to recognize and respect the sacred values already inherent in their belief systems. While there is a somewhat more understated presence of spirituality in William Faulkner's characterization of Sam Fathers, Faulkner also falls prey to a simplistic perception of Native beliefs and relationship to the land. The issue of spirituality in the works by Native authors leans more towards its loss and the need and/or attempt to regain it somehow. This essential fact is then directly related to the issue of contemporary identity and the problems that occur when cultural identity is lost through assimilation and alienation from non-Native society.

The last two concepts that make up this emerging Native-centred approach will be the importance of place and community for all Native people. Geography has forever been uniquely intertwined with Indigenous people's spirituality and has maintained a sense of belonging to the land, of being a part of the natural terrain without the need to dominate it (Deloria 267-282). In Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans and in Faulkner's Go Down, Moses, the authors appear vaguely aware of this connection, but both are more concerned with chronicling white America's inevitable "takeover" than they are with allowing their Native characters to voice this relationship or the injustices involved. By the time we arrive at N. Scott Momaday and Louise Erdrich, two contemporary Native authors, the place, or land, which their Native characters occupy is a reservation landscape, far removed from mainstream society. However, and this is important, the reservation resonates with the feeling of home, family, community, and belonging.

In literature by Native writers, the survival and well being of Native peoples is linked to family, identity, and tradition. In *Momaday*, the protagonist Abel undergoes a realization that perhaps his home--however devoid of modern opportunity--provides the key to his identity and self-realization. For Erdrich, the narrative contained in her novel rarely occurs off the reservation and, therefore, is rooted in place and community, thus indicating the historical, emotional, and cultural power located there. It is precisely these bonds--to family, to history, to place--that white, EuroAmerican writers such as Cooper and Faulkner do not recognize and do not address. Furthermore, it is the absence of these empowering Native social structures that leave their Native characters isolated from both their own people and the white civilization which surrounds them, doomed to quiet extinction.

With these concepts in mind, what follows is a wide ranging approach to Native voice and representation in American literature. It is by no means a definitive study. Rather, it is one in which texts from three distinct time periods are used to represent American thought regarding Native people at the time during which they were produced. In all cases, I will examine the authenticity of Native voices in relation to the issues of spirituality, place, and community as outlined above.

Beginning with James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans, I will demonstrate how Cooper used poetic license in his portrayal of Native people, most notably in their history, culture, and belief systems. What began as a romance narrative quickly became the standard by which other stories about Natives were measured throughout much of the nineteenth century and beyond. Therefore, the lasting effect that this novel had on the



literary consciousness of the country, and, in particular, its image of the Indian, will be discussed in Chapter One, paying close attention to the ways in which Cooper lamented the loss of Native culture, while at the same time inventing and reinforcing Native stereotypes and the belief that their demise was inevitable.

Chapter Two will examine the work of William Faulkner, specifically, the character of Sam Fathers in Go Down, Moses. It is clear that Faulkner was embedding some "code of the wilderness" into Sam that echoed the character of Chingachgook, and that Isaac McCaslin was a young, Southern version of Hawk-eye (Dabney 118). While Faulkner pays close attention to the theme of the vanishing wilderness, the theme of the vanishing Indian is also predominant. Therefore, this chapter will examine some of Faulkner's more stereotypical treatments of Native people and provide some alternate interpretation of events from an American Indian perspective. In addition, a comparison with Cooper allows the reader to notice a distinct difference in the way in which the two authors handle their Indian subjects--despite their common belief in the superiority of the dominant culture. This does not alter the fact, however, that one hundred years after Cooper, Faulkner recognizes within Native people a distinct spiritual connectedness to the land that did not exist in literature about Indigenous societies previous to the 1930s, except in a most superficial, stereotypical manner. Consequently, there is a noticable progression in American literary thought regarding Native people and their place upon this continent, that, although flawed, allowed the way for others to follow and expand upon.

As the twentieth century progressed, America appeared to forget about the Native population, however. Other than the popular "Lone Ranger" T.V. series and various John Wayne movies, the American Indian was a thing of the past, an historical artifact relegated to reservations, museums, and anthropology departments of universities. In short, not that far from what Cooper had envisioned over a century before. With the advent of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, however, a growing consciousness also emerged within the Native community, influencing younger generations of Indian students and activists. In addition to this growing awareness, texts such as Ken Kesey's One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest (1964) and Leslie Fielder's The Return of the Vanishing American (1968) served to bring the American Indian "back to life" in literary circles. Although the re-emergence of the Indian in American literature was a discussion controlled by the white academic segment of society, it became evident that Native subject matter was now a viable and popular topic for discussion.

This domination of academic discourse all changed in 1968 with the publication of N. Scott Momaday's House Made Of Dawn. Although filled with the imagery, rituals, and cultural belief systems of the Indian communities of the southwest United States, Momaday's modernist style also appealed to the literary community, earning him the Pulitzer Prize in 1969. All at once, academics, critics, and readers alike had to contend with a work of fiction that was not only a prize winning book about American Indians, but most importantly, was written by a Native person. Other such novels had appeared previously--Mourning Dove's Cogewea, the Half Blood (1927), D'arcy McNickle's The Surrounded (1936)--but none

garnered the attention given to Momaday's work. Coming as it did at the height of the civil rights struggle, as both blacks and Indians asserted their identity within American society, House Made of Dawn was evidence that the Native voice had finally impacted upon the literary arena. Consequently, Momaday's novel is considered by many to be the "official" beginning of Native American literature, a work in which Native traditions, stories, and culture are interwoven with white literary traditions, genre, and most importantly perhaps, language.

Although primarily about, if not for, Native people and their struggle to regain an identity amidst white American values, Momaday's story is significant for it gained wide acclaim with a non-Native audience. Abel's dilemma is a predominantly personal, spiritual one that does not always reflect the problems faced by Native communities as a whole, and as a result seems to reflect the modern condition more so than it does "life on the rez," a theme which is considerably more accessible to a Native readership. While the novel is by no means without its positive thematic issues and insights into the Native "condition," Momaday appears at times to have written mostly for an academic audience, utilizing literary convention and style in favor of a more direct approach to addressing the larger concerns of the Native American community.

Some fifteen years after Momaday's breakthrough novel, Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine (1984) appeared, also becoming a best seller and sparking a renewed interest in Native American fiction. Although several other significant books by Native authors had been published throughout the 1970's (James Welch's Winter in the Blood (1974), Leslie Marmon

Silko's Ceremony (1977)), they too were much like Momaday's in that they focussed on an individual's perspective rather than a community based one which is so empowering to First Nations people. Therefore, Erdrich's approach is significant for it allows a communal voice to relate the stories which form the novel and ultimately affect all the characters. As the first of a trilogy, consisting of The Beet Queen (1986) and Tracks (1988), Love Medicine is also significant in its setting and portrayal of contemporary reservation life. While her narrative is rife with humour, wit, and wisdom that is readily accessible to a large Native audience, it is also a novel that deserves closer academic study due to its use of conventional literary forms and references that effectively merge within a Native American context.

The third and final chapter of this thesis will therefore be an examination of the impact that House Made of Dawn and Love Medicine have had, and continue to have, upon the study of Native voice and representation in American literature. In addition, I will "compare and contrast" the two novels in such a way as to highlight the important shift away from an individual to a communal voice in articulating the present day realities of American Indian society, as well as how such a communal voice effectively addresses a belief system shared by Native people across North America.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### **""Tis Indian Nature":**

#### **The Last of the Mohicans and the Problems of Representation**

*Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pokanoket, and many other once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the White Man, as snow before a summer sun.*

*Tecumseh (Shawnee)*

*The main design of [The Last of the Mohicans] is manifestly to exhibit the characteristics of savage rather than civilized life, as they exist or once existed in the wilds of North America. The Aborigines of our soil constitute the great machinery of the piece, and a few civilized whites, who appear to take an active part in the plot, are in fact introduced merely as objects on whom the Indians may operate to advantage.*

*W.H. Gardiner (1826)*

*Underneath all the conflicting images of the Indian one fundamental truth emerges: the white man knows he is alien and he knows that North America is Indian--and he will never let go of the Indian image because he thinks that by some clever manipulation he can achieve an authenticity which can never be his.*

*Vine Deloria Jr. (Sioux)*

In the summer of 1957, a young English writer came to visit me in the little town in upstate New York in which I have since childhood spent many of my summers. As we were driving back one day from the county fair, I retailed to him, with an air of authority, a scrap of information which I had only lately acquired: that the name Adirondack meant, "They eat bark," and had been applied by certain Indians to other Indians that lived in the mountains which were visible, as we drove, in the distance. My visitor asked me what had become of the Indians, and I replied that there were only a few of them left, scattered in reservations. He inquired about the Mohicans, and I told him they were the same as the Mohawks.

Edmund Wilson  
Apologies to the Iroquois

Edmund Wilson's comment, while seeming innocent enough, is interesting for it contains several examples of inaccurate historical, cultural, and literary fact. As Wilson provides a translation of an unnamed (unknown?) Indian tribe's language "with an air of authority" to his English guest, he also ignores their very presence in the vicinity, other than a few "scattered in reservations" (much like one is placed "in" jail). More important, however, is his response to the English visitor's question concerning the Mohicans, i.e. "they were the same as the Mohawks." Not only is this blatantly incorrect, it also shows the lasting influence of James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans on those with a literary background and their subsequent impressions of Natives in America as an extinct, or at least, an unimportant group of people in twentieth century society. Much like Cooper had done

over one hundred years before, Wilson also places himself as an authority on the Natives in his area, assuming their voice--in this case, literally--in their supposed absence.

There is little doubt that Cooper's work was pivotal from a literary perspective, laying a foundation of representation that went beyond captivity narratives and placed Natives within a fictional framework--in more ways than one. Cooper's novel is predominantly concerned with Indian society and its gradual, but inevitable, disappearance amidst the New England wilderness. In his preface to the first edition, the author makes it clear as to which nation of Indians are GOOD (Lenape, or Delaware--to which the Mohicans belong) and which are BAD (Mengwe, Hurons, and Iroquois--to which I, as a Mohawk, belong), indicating to the "uninformed" reader which side to cheer for as the story unfolds. While much has been made of Cooper's misguided historical accounts of his Indian subjects, he was aware of such problems and subtly, yet effectively, "covers himself" by stating "it is a very unsafe experiment either for a writer or a projector to trust to the inventive powers of any one but himself." Further along in the preface, however, he contradicts himself by conveying his indebtedness to George Heckewelder, the leading authority on the Lenape nation and from whom Cooper--rather selectively--culled almost all of his (mis)information pertaining to the Delaware/Mohican people.

The overall effect is then one of fictional "history" on Cooper's part, who was especially careful to distinguish between his role as author and that of historian. While space limitations do not permit an analysis of the historical problems inherent in the novel, suffice it to say that if Cooper had done a more thorough research on the various Indian nations

portrayed, a completely different text would have emerged. Then, as now, half truths and an assumed authority on the part of non-Native authors when writing about Native subjects can result in a lasting, and negative, impression of Native people. Due to the absence of any real Native voice, these misinformed, biased perceptions often remained fixed in the minds of the dominant society.

Written shortly before President Andrew Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Owens 30), Cooper's novel can be considered a literary reflection of the dominant society's larger design for the American Indian, since its prophetic title hinted at the disappearance of the Native populations (Romero 385). According to Creek/Cherokee Metis scholar Ward Churchill, the representation of Native characters in writings produced at this time were highly influential since "stereotypes [in historical novels] assume a documented 'authenticity' in the public consciousness" (*Fantasies* 28-29). Consequently, Cooper's dichotomy of the good and the bad Indian as an image, regardless of historical fact, had both an immediate and lasting effect on the American consciousness and continues to do so today, as witnessed by the success of such films as *Dances With Wolves* and a remake of *The Last of the Mohicans* as well, both of which appeared in 1992.

Addressing the influence that Cooper's novel had on the American literary tradition, Roy Harvey Pearce feels that the "double image" of the noble/ignoble savage was already in place prior to the publication of *Mohicans*, and that "[p]laced in the context of the whole life of American society, [the native's] life could not be said to be one totally superior or totally inferior to that of a civilized man" (Pearce 199). According to Pearce, what Cooper did



achieve, in effect, was not so much a further analysis of Indian character as it was a "model" which other writers of fiction simulated:

Cooper ... did not create the savage of nineteenth-century American fiction, but he brought him forth. However much writers after him were constrained to show that his Indians were not sufficiently true to reality, they never forgot that in the long run their own Indians had to be exactly what his were, images of creatures who symbolized savagism. If the details of savage life had to be further explored, its general form was known once and for all. Such knowledge made that exploration possible (Pearce 210).

Under such an "anxiety of influence," American writers in the wake of Cooper were, therefore, caught in a pattern of thought as to what constituted Indian behaviour. While Pearce argues that Cooper's foundation of the "Indian" made "exploration possible" for other writers and scholars, it is quite obvious that after the novel's publication very little "exploration" was done--outside of "Indian Removal Policies" and "salvage anthropology." Consequently, America's perception of Indigenous people remained quite static throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century.

It is not surprising, then, that the issues revolving around the representation of Native people were of significant debate during Cooper's time, much as they are today. Upon its publication in 1826, The Last of the Mohicans met with a critical reception, that, while agreeing on certain weaknesses in plot structure, was divided in regards to Cooper's portrayal of the American Indian. One anonymous reviewer wrote that: "Never was the character, the original and interesting character, of the native Indian so well, so truly, and so visually drawn as in his pages" (Dekker 102), a statement in sharp contrast to W.H. Gardiner's review which saw Cooper's novel as "presenting altogether a false and idealised view of the Indian

character" (Dekker 113). A few decades later, these views were somewhat reversed, with many critics lauding the author's characterization of the Natives (and the whites) but now finding fault with Cooper's creative sense of history. Responding to such criticism, Mark Twain published his now famous essay, "Cooper's Literary Offences" (Twain 377), which documented his own distaste with both Cooper's style and his romantic descriptions of the American Indian. Significantly, this essay has also been widely anthologized despite its containing openly racist attacks on native people, almost as if racism, disguised as "literary criticism," is an acceptable mode of commentary so long as it was produced by a respected man of American letters. In the twentieth century, D.H. Lawrence (Studies in Classic American Literature [1926]) and Leslie Fielder (Return of the Vanishing American [1968]) provided two more influential readings of Cooper's work, reviving critical interest in a novel that many had considered to be "children's literature" for a time, evidence that literary studies did not recognize Native subjects as anything other than of marginal interest to academics.

Cooper was apparently aware of the debate surrounding the authenticity of his Indian characters and, in the 1831 edition of Mohicans, he elaborates on his historical account of the Native to include a description aimed at critics who addressed his characterization of the Native, both favorable and otherwise. However, such a commentary centred around yet another stereotype, the Indian "warrior":

Few men exhibit greater diversity, or, if we may so express it, greater antithesis of character, than the native warrior of North America. In war, he is daring, boastful, cunning, ruthless, self-denying, and self-devoted; in peace, just, generous, hospitable, revengeful, superstitious, modest, and commonly chaste. These are qualities, it is true, which do not distinguish all alike; but

they are so far the predominating traits of these remarkable people, as to be characteristic (Cooper 5).

Since we now know that Cooper had very little first-hand experience with native people, other than the "half-civilised beings of the Oneidas" (mentioned in the preface) who lived on reservations near his home, we can assume that Cooper continued to draw on outside, "scholarly" sources for information, thereby creating representations based on observations other than his own. When Cooper has his native characters speak or engage in dialogue, then, what we are receiving is not any kind of authentic Indian voice, but rather one that is imagined by the author after being filtered through second or third hand-information. Therefore, Cooper's quest for authenticity of Native thought processes, belief systems, and cultural practices, regardless of an assumed "understanding" of Native people of North America, is a flawed one at best. Such examples of academic, social, and cultural arrogance on Cooper's part lends itself to an examination of how non-Native perceptions impact upon Native discourse in the novel. Such a study of Native voices or dialogics would then be undertaken, in the words of David Murray, "not to judge their accuracy but to reveal what they say about white ideological investments" (Murray 3). This method of examination is in line with what Native scholars such as Churchill have argued; however, space limitations do not permit such a study here. Suffice it to say that in moving beyond the literary and into the political, we quickly notice that Cooper's "romance narrative" begins to speak volumes about racial relations as they existed in the early nineteenth century, a relationship made much easier, of course, by the American Indian's "endangered status."

In order to impress upon his readers such a feeling of "us" and "them," Cooper wastes little time in establishing a quality of civilization versus savagery. Magua, the first Indian character introduced in the novel, is a silent figure described in foreboding, stereotypical terms familiar to readers of the early nineteenth century. Contrasted with the historical information and the description of English military activity contained in the opening chapter, this "Indian runner" appears all the more ominous due to his highly pronounced "otherness" within the scene:

Although in a state of perfect repose, and apparently disregarding, with characteristic stoicism, the excitement and bustle around him, there was a sullen fierceness mingled with the quiet of the savage ... the colours of the war-paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive, than if art had attempted an effect, which had been thus produced by chance (17-18).

By alluding to the fact that this figure appears more sinister than that which an artist could represent, Cooper makes it known to his readers that this is indeed an evil character the likes of whom they have only encountered within the pages of captivity narratives. In addition, the "characteristic stoicism" which white writers like to invest their Indians with, in this case, comes to represent deceit and trickery rather than patience and virtue.

At the end of the first chapter, as the frightening figure of Magua darts past the party of Heyward, Alice, and Cora, Cooper subtly prescribes the emotions that white civilization should feel in the presence of such a savage, vanishing race, namely, "pity, admiration, and horror." In The Ignoble Savage, Louise K. Barnett argues that such contradictory sentiments were common within American society during this time period, as reflected in both journalism

and literature of the day: "Although the desirability of white dispossession of the Indian and the necessity of doing so violently were assumptions shared by most writers of the [nineteenth century], it did not follow that they should be utterly heedless of the Indian's passing" (Barnett 188). Cooper, being no exception to this confusing thought process, tempers even Magua's savagery with a discussion between the three young people regarding their Indian companion's trustworthiness, a debate that ends with Cora's seemingly anti-racist statement: "Should we distrust the man, because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark!" (21).

Previous to this, however, Cooper implies that within Magua's silence there does indeed exist a treacherous design. When Alice admonishes Heyward to speak to Magua "that I may hear his tones," Heyward replies: "It would be in vain; and answered, most probably, by an ejaculation. Though he may understand it, he affects, like most of his people, to be ignorant of the English" (21). In such a relationship, where communication and understanding become both a game and a weapon that the Indian may use against the white man, Cooper is aware that the Natives have an upper hand maintained by their silence. However, he is quick to undermine this empowering ability with his constant reminders that, despite this particular superiority of language manipulation, Magua is, after all, a savage who will eventually fall prey to his own base nature--a fate which the dominant, EuroAmerican society expected of all Natives when confronted with a higher civilization. Silence is therefore a method employed by his Native characters in their dealings with the white men and is a pattern that recurs throughout the novel, thus necessitating the white-guy-raised-by-

Indians Hawk-eye's ultimate role as cultural "mediator" throughout the Leatherstocking Series.

In contrast to Magua's described "otherness" within the first chapter, Cooper is careful to introduce his "noble" savage Chingachgook in his natural habitat, the woods. While their physical descriptions are similar, Cooper's noble and ignoble figures are differentiated by the environment in which they appear and the language that they speak. Therefore, when Chingachgook first appears, he is typified "by the calm but expressive gestures of an Indian, engaged in debate" (29). Immediately following this genteel description, however, we learn that "[his] body, which was nearly naked, presented a terrific emblem of death, drawn in intermingled colours of white and black" (29). In maintaining this dichotomy of appearance, Cooper reinforces within his reader the contradictions inherent in the savage figure. Despite Chingachgook's seemingly close relationship to the whiteman Hawk-eye, Cooper implies that they are forever separated by this tattoo which represents a permanent stamp of death, branded upon the Native's body.

Significantly, Cooper lingers over the description of the two men, red and white, placing them in an idyllic setting while in the midst of a debate carried on in the Delaware language. The overall effect then becomes one of a primordial time and place in which communication is allowed regardless of racial differences. Although we are not given the context of their argument, Hawk-eye's first words appear as the voice of the colonizer--in the language of the colonized--alongside of Cooper's own narrative voice.

"Even your traditions make the case in my favour, Chingachgook," [Hawk-eye] said, speaking in the tongue which was known to all the natives who formerly inhabited the country between the Hudson and the Potomack, and of which we shall give a free translation for the benefit of the reader; endeavouring, at the same time, to preserve some of the peculiarities, both of the individual and of the language. "Your fathers came from the setting sun, crossed the big river, fought the people of the country, and took the land; and mine came from the red sky of the morning, over the salt lake, and did their work much after the fashion that had been set them by yours; then let God judge the matter between us, and friends spare their words!" (30).

From the argument that Hawk-eye appears to present, we can assume Chingachgook has raised his concerns regarding the Europeans constant encroachment of Native lands by violent means, and Hawk-eye's defensive response. It is important to note here that Cooper does not allow his Native figure to actually articulate this concern in the text. Rather, the EuroAmerican becomes the single voice of authority in this one sided debate, as reported by the author. (In the process, such a debate bears a striking resemblance to the issues of Indian rights and land claims negotiations during this century.) Hawk-eye's speech systematically entrenches white interpretations of history, assumes authority, blames the victim, and addresses Christian theology, all in the "native voice," or in Cooper's words, a "free translation" of the Delaware language.

Given such "translations," readers have little choice but to believe the dominant society's version of events that occurred before European arrival, simply because the Native people do not have a written--and therefore an "official"--history, merely the "traditions" which Hawk-eye refers to. In this way, Hawk-eye, via Cooper, becomes the one figure who is knowledgeable in the ways and the history of the Native people, a sort of "frontier academic"

if you will. After all, despite "the mask of his rude and nearly savage equipments," Cooper assures the reader that Hawk-eye's "brighter, though sunburnt and long-faded complexion [is] of one who might claim descent from a European parentage" (28). Therefore, Cooper makes it clear in the initial description of Hawk-eye that, although this is a figure who has indeed "gone native," his status as European gives him authority with regards to Indian customs and beliefs. Of course he is a fictional character, however, with a fictional interpretation of history.

Addressing Hawk-eye's blurred identity in the novel, Leslie Fiedler describes him as a "backwoods American neither Red nor White" that Cooper envisioned as the "New Man" created by America, an ideal construct in opposition to that which was European (Fiedler 121). Regardless of this ambiguous status, Hawk-eye reasserts, at every opportunity it seems, that he is a man "without a cross" of blood, and therefore pure, devout, and loyal to his own "kind." Keeping this concept in mind, what we have then is a white man who has infiltrated the ranks of the savages to learn their ways, beliefs and customs, comment on them in the pages of Cooper's novels, and in the process, validate white ideology concerning Native peoples by becoming historian, anthropologist, and philosopher.

Historian Bruce G. Trigger argues that "Native cultures were better understood by European traders and ordinary people who lived on a day-by-day basis among Amerindians than by the priests and administrators who tried...to change their ways of life" (in Sioui xii). Although the fictional Hawk-eye could hardly be called an "ordinary" person by any means, he does fit Trigger's description of a more suitable commentator on Native people to some



degree for it is through him that Cooper attempts to get at the essence of American Indian life from a perspective of one who is neither educated nor particularly religious, thereby giving the effect of an unbiased or objective opinion. Such sentiment is contained in Hawk-eye's following response to David Gamut's question concerning Christian education:

"Book!" [exclaimed] Hawk-eye, with singular and ill-concealed disdain..."what have such as I, who am a warrior of the wilderness, though a man without a cross, to do with books! I never read but in one, and the words that are written there are too simple and too plain to need much schooling; though I may boast that of forty long and hard working years...I have heard it said, that there are men who read in books, to convince themselves there is a God! I know not but man may so deform his works in the settlements, as to leave that which is so clear in the wilderness, a matter of doubt among traders and priests" (117).

Hawk-eye's rejection of both "book larin" and civilized society in favor of the education and knowledge provided within nature is both significant and contradictory for it simultaneously holds up the benefits of Native culture (i.e. living harmoniously with nature) while undercutting its wisdom and validity in the face of EuroAmerican civilization (Romero 396). The wisdom and the "words that are written" in nature are described as superior to books yet are also referred to as "simple" and "plain"; as if such knowledge is now outdated and unnecessary given scientific progress and development. Significantly, Hawk-eye alludes to the Native knowledge of the wilderness as being challenged by "traders and priests," as if to demonstrate that Native culture, and therefore nature itself, is being threatened by Christianity and materialism.

For Fielder, this would be considered further evidence that not only the Indians, but Hawk-eye himself, are vanishing Americans in Cooper's stories since both adhere to a belief

system that upholds nature over science and civilization (Fielder 121). As the American "frontier" advanced in the early nineteenth century, the questions of land, nation building, and the Indian "problem" were coming to the fore. Because these issues were prevalent in Cooper's time, Henry Nash Smith sees Cooper attempting to comment on the "issues of the rough equality of all men in a state of nature as against social stratification based on unequal distribution of property; and of formal institutional religion versus the natural, intuitive theology of [Hawk-eye]" (Smith 62). For Iroquois scholar John Mohawk, these themes of race, religion, and materialism are also further evidence of the attitudes that the dominant culture began to uphold during the time which Mohicans was published:

Beginning about 1830, you find Europeans suddenly starting to believe that the reasons things are as they are, the reason Europeans are everywhere successful in conquest, is not just because they are spiritually and militarily superior to those they encounter, but because they are biologically superior as well. We begin to see books that talk about an evolutionary development of humankind as though societies are to be qualified and quantified. Europeans begin to look about and see "primitive" societies as less than "civilization."... On this side of the ocean, the 19th century saw the West's Eurocentrism aimed squarely and practically at Indians (qtd. Jaimes 441).

Throughout the story, the wilderness serves as the environment which parallels the Indian and "primitive" American society which is gradually, but inevitably, being replaced by European civilization. Therefore, the arguments presented by Fielder, Smith, and Mohawk are related; Chingachgook and his "student" of the wilderness, Hawk-eye, are threatened by Eurocentric ways of thinking, viewed as primitive by EuroAmerican society, and ultimately displaced from the land by social progress.

Along with Cooper's constant reminders that Hawk-eye is aligned with the Indians, despite his untainted and therefore superior heritage, there are instances wherein the character is careful to delineate the differences between the two societies as he sees them, or more precisely perhaps, as the author does. As Hawk-eye explains to Chingachgook the advantages of oral versus written communication, a curious subtext emerges:

"I am not a prejudiced man, nor one who vaunts himself on his natural privileges, though the worst enemy I have on earth, and he is an Iroquois, daren't deny that I am genuinely white," the scout replied, surveying, with secret satisfaction, the faded colour of his bony and sinewy hand: "and I am willing to own that my people have many ways, of which, as an honest man, I can't approve. It is one of their customs to write in books what they have done and seen, instead of telling them in their villages, where the lie can be given to the face of a cowardly boaster, and the brave soldier can call on his comrades to witness for the truth of his words" (31).

This illuminating passage becomes a "meta-dialogue" that Hawk-eye appears to have with himself regarding what is truthful. In the process it can also be seen as a statement on authorship itself, with Cooper apparently struggling with the concept of what is truth. The answer of course, to the academic, is the written form of scholarship, whether it be fiction, ethnology, or history. Hawk-eye recognizes this Western concept, as does Cooper, who writes that "as an honest man" Hawk-eye "can't approve" of his own people's ways; however, he continues to abide by them because to do otherwise would violate the laws of Indian and white "natur." In this fashion, Cooper places Hawk-eye in the position of informed commentator but in no way is he actually "one of them," a distinction that would cause readers to mistrust and disregard his statements concerning Native society.

As evidence of his superior moral character, Hawk-eye is also allowed to judge the actions of his Native comrades and define what constitutes "proper" conduct from their perspective in yet another appropriation of voice. Although he is cognizant of the distinct cultural "gifts" that distinguish identity between Indians and EuroAmericans, Hawk-eye is still guilty of racist comments based on perceived notions of Western superiority. When Uncas kills and scalps a young French soldier as the party attempts to sneak through their lines, Cooper tells us that Hawk-eye observes while "musing in profound silence... then shaking his head in a mournful manner" says

"Twould have been a cruel and an unhuman act for a white-skin; but 'tis the gift and natur of an Indian, and I suppose it should not be denied! I could wish, though, it had befallen an accursed Mingo, rather than that gay, young boy, from the old countries!" (138).

Notwithstanding that the practice of scalping was a European "innovation" introduced among the Natives of North America, and therefore neither "gift" nor "natur" of the Indigenous population, Hawk-eye shows his stripes here in his assertion that he would rather have seen a Mingo (Iroquois) dead than a white soldier. The significance here is that, although both the French and the Iroquois are enemies in this tale (another false representation of history), Hawk-eye places more value on the life of a white European than he does on that of the Native people caught in the middle of a war being waged on their traditional homeland.

While the close relationship between Hawk-eye, Chingachgook, and Uncas is made clear, it is also apparent that there are certain levels on which the Indian and white man can never converge (and, as stated by Hawk-eye throughout the Leatherstocking novels, those

which they would not want to). In The Last of the Mohicans, the reader is made to understand that Chingachgook is an honorable Indian who does not speak much, but when he does it is understood that he is truthful. Consequently, he fits the model of the noble savage quite faithfully, although it is interesting to note that his name translated means "serpent" or snake, as if Cooper was alluding to the inability of any Indian to be trusted regardless of appearances.

As the anti-thesis of Chingachgook, Magua is the "trusted" Indian scout who exhibits all the outer characteristics of the noble savage to the British. Cooper is quick to counter this facade for his readers, however, by demonstrating Magua's true self in the following exchange with Heyward:

"Enough, Magua," said Heyward; "are we not friends! why should there be bitter words between us? Munro has promised you a gift for your services when performed, and I shall be your debtor for another... We have a few moments to spare; let us not waste them in talk like wrangling women. When the ladies are refreshed we will proceed."

"The pale faces make themselves dogs to their women, muttered the Indian, in his native language, "and when they want to eat, their warriors must lay aside the tomahawk to feed their laziness."

"What say you, Renard?"

"Le Subtil says it is good" (42).

This kind of double talk that occurs between Magua and Heyward is indicative of the colonial master-servant relationship. In having Magua "mutter" in his own tongue, Cooper forces this interpretation on the reader and demonstrates that this Native character is disrespectful, deceitful, and violent, all the while pretending a faithful alliance to his British charges. This is, of course, in direct contrast to the relationship between Chingachgook and Hawk-eye, one

in which there is a mutual admiration and respect demonstrated by their direct communication in the Indian's language. However, this too is certainly problematic for the "Delaware" language in which they speak at times is only a literary construction devised by Cooper, and in no way resembles authentic thought processes or patterns of speech.

Throughout the novel, Cooper's constant interplay of the noble and ignoble savage often manifests itself in regards to the female figures of Cora and Alice. As Magua demonstrates his disregard for women in the passage cited earlier, and as his revengeful plot involving them is made clear as the story progresses, Cooper associates such attitudes with decidedly savage and incomprehensible behaviour. The young and attractive Uncas, on the other hand, is the exact opposite, at times demonstrating compassion and emotions that, according to the author, "elevated him far above the intelligence, and advanced him probably centuries before the practices of his nation" (115). Examined in a larger context, this seemingly inconspicuous description becomes significant for it serves to generalize the "unadvanced" state of all Native people--past, present, and future.

As has been demonstrated, Cooper's constant reliance on good versus bad images of the Native character is indicative of nineteenth-century writing in general, combining lots of fantasy with little reality in order to arrive at an image of the Indian that is more convenient and easily understood by the dominant culture. While the author strives for a degree of "authentic" dialogue and behavior, with plenty of "Hughs!" and other "Indian-isms," it is evident that he falls short of any sort of real understanding of what Native people were about during the period in which he sets his story. David Murray argues that such a construction

of Indian dialogue within literary texts was "produced for, and shaped by, the cultural expectations of a white readership" (Murray 36). For this reason, Native culture becomes reduced to warring bands of half-naked men who, strangely enough, speak quite eloquently on their own demise, yet are given little opportunity to express any sense of their own cultural beliefs and philosophies. Murray sees such literary portrayals as further evidence that American society felt that the fate of the Indian was a foregone conclusion, and that "even as the Indians nobly and eloquently complained, that very nobility and eloquence was confirming the inevitability of their disappearance" (Murray 36).

Perhaps Native readers should be thankful that Cooper avoided further misrepresentation of the Native voice and decided to qualify his Indian characters speeches with translations in "simple," romantic English as much as possible. Perhaps even he knew his limitations with regards to his "inventive" capabilities when portraying Indigenous people. However, it is obvious that he could not resist commenting on some of the more common traits of Indian life, as he saw them, that were shared by all regardless of noble or ignoble status. Physical appearance, eating habits, vengefulness, and religious practices are just some of the more peculiar characteristics described in the novel, most usually as "understood" by Hawk-eye, who becomes a useful figure when Cooper wishes to impose his own views on these subjects to his readers.

Native spirituality, for example, is an issue that is addressed in the novel only on a very superficial level. Like many academics of the nineteenth century, Cooper regarded Native religion as little more than superstitions that further demonstrated their savage state.

Consequently, his descriptions of Native religious practices conform to racist attitudes regarding the undeveloped nature of Native society, therefore contributing to the dehumanization of Indigenous people. This is especially evident when David Gamut, the Christian "voice" in the novel, remarks to Hawk-eye in Chapter 22 that the Natives "never join their voices in praise, and it would seem that they are among the profanest of idolators" (226). To which Hawk-eye replies,

"'Tis a wicked fabrication of the whites, and I say it to the shame of my colour, that would make the warrior bow down before images of his own creation. It is true, they endeavour to make truces with the wicked one--as who would not with an enemy he cannot conquer--but they look up for favour and assistance to the Great and Good Spirit only" (226).

Once again, we see an instance wherein Cooper attempts to "clear up" white misconceptions of Native people while at the same time reaffirming certain notions concerning their propensity for evil. Even if we allow for the lack of knowledge and understanding during this time where American Indian religions are concerned, such "wicked fabrications" disguised as authority reinforce the belief that Indians need to be missionized and brought out of their primitive state somehow. Despite Hawk-eye's "shame" over such white attitudes towards the Indians, Cooper makes it clear that Native religion is inherently "other" and dangerous.

In addition to this misguided sense of Native spirituality, Cooper also glosses over another essential component to Native culture: connection to the land. While his narrative frequently contains lavish descriptions of the landscape which surrounds the action of the story, it is often implied that such territory is now the military domain of a European power struggle rather than a place that contains centuries of history and religious validation for the



Native people located there. Perhaps such a colonial approach to land appropriation is to be expected from writing of the nineteenth century, but what makes Cooper's tone in the novel interesting is Hawk-eye's constant commentary on the faults of such a way of thinking. It is his voice, as the "new American," that is raised against European dominion of the land rather than the displaced Native people directly involved. Consequently, Native characters are once again marginalized to the position of silent onlookers to their own demise.

Throughout the novel, it is evident that such a substitution of voices, Hawk-eye for the Native, occurs in situations where the Aboriginal perspective would "complicate" matters somewhat. Therefore, Cooper's Indians can become instantly stoical in situations where their views would be most appropriate, and conversely, can become quite articulate in matters concerning white views on how Indians should speak when confronted by a superior race. In the midst of this racial non-dialogue, Hawk-eye's position of "cultural referee" establishes a "counterfeit" sense of understanding and fairplay between Indians and whites in the novel, and ultimately in nineteenth-century America as well.

Or does it? By placing Hawk-eye in a "fictional" position of authority, perhaps Cooper felt he could better explain Indians to his readership. However, it is clear that he also did not fully understand Native culture enough to portray or comment on it effectively. Therefore, critic Geoffrey Rans feels that Hawk-eye's ongoing commentary regarding racial differences is "not a satisfactory one to the reader", and that "Cooper, as narrator, sometimes seems uncomfortable with the issue" also (Rans 128). Rans goes on to state that "[t]o reduce the matter to one of cultural--religious and racial--difference, white gifts and Indian gifts, with

a sign that Indians, in effect, know no better, endorses the difference as well as roughly explaining it, as Natty [Hawk-eye] intends" (128). As a result, Hawk-eye's statements concerning what is "good" for Indians and what is "good" for whites are often "self-contradictory, and his actions likewise do not accord with his racial position" (128). Such a statement is quite correct for Hawk-eye himself cannot come to terms with the double image of the Indian, much like Cooper certainly could not. The imaginary Hawk-eye then, unfortunately, is only as close as he, or any other writer at this time, could come. As a white man with untainted bloodlines, Hawk-eye is set up to be the sole possessor of the voice of truth in the novel. Although he was "raised" by Indians, Hawk-eye's opinions can only be formulated, of course, on the basis of Cooper's own "inventive powers" (Cooper 1).

Not only is the author/character relationship indicative of Cooper's larger design, but it is also evident in his use of The Last of the Mohicans as a "elegiac" title (Slotkin, "Preface" xxv). As there is no one to contradict his authorial power, there is also no one to contradict either Chingachgook or Uncas regarding their culture and belief systems. The title and the narrative can then be seen to go beyond a mere "last of his race" motif to point out yet another basic misunderstanding of Native people in general and that is the strength that lies in community and a shared belief system. In portraying such a figure as Chingachgook, it is evident that Cooper needed to place his central Native character outside of his society in order to shape him more effectively as a literary construct of the noble savage. Depicting Chingachgook as a man without a people allowed the author unlimited authority over how such a tragic, doomed figure should carry himself in the face of a higher civilization, and in

the process, permitting the Euro-Indian Hawk-eye to be his anthropologist, mouthpiece, and eulogist.

Equally significant is the fact that Cooper makes it known to the reader that the demise of the Mohicans as a race was caused by other tribes of Indians and not the white man. Such an explanation effectively leads the reader to assume, once again based on a "creative" history, that Indians as a race were constantly at war with one another and that they were indeed savage enough to kill off an entire race as noble as that to which Chingachgook belonged. Only Hawk-eye, as the faithful white friend, can recognize the goodness of the "last" Mohican since both are men "without a cross" and therefore pure in intent and purpose. However, true to form, Cooper qualifies such a relationship within Hawk-eye's dialogue, and in the process lets his character voice his opinions regarding his Indian allies, a sentiment most effectively conveyed when Hawk-eye tells Chingachgook "you are a just man for an Indian!" (33). Chingachgook, in turn, permits such a remark to go unchecked almost as if he were aware that such a statement is true, that he is indeed "just" for an Indian, implying, of course, that other Indians are not. This back-handed compliment is indicative of the themes running throughout the novel and which manifest themselves most directly in Hawk-eye's running commentary and Chingachgook's stoical acceptance of his white friend's understanding of his Native history and culture.

In Cooper's novel, the noble savage, as depicted in Chingachgook and Uncas, is as damaging a construction as the ignoble Magua, for both characterizations allow for no basis of reality from a Native perspective, no real sense of a Native voice. Although many

generations have passed since The Last of the Mohicans first appeared, non-Native perceptions and understanding of Native North American people are still very much influenced by fictional writings produced a century and more ago. This comes as no surprise to Native authors and academics, who see such written accounts and literary portrayals as part of the process by which Native people were dehumanized as a means of justification for their displacement. To Native scholar M. Annette Jaimes, American literature that deals with Native people was filled with misrepresentations that were often used as a "weapons of genocide" with which to subjugate Indians. For non-Native critics who examine such texts in which Native subjects appear, various critical theories are applied that explain certain literary aspects of the novel pertaining to analysis, technique, and form yet are ineffective in dealing with any kind of Native response or perspective. Therefore, critical theories such as post-colonialist and feminist are often meaningless to Native people who read works of fiction with Native content and simply see errors, half-truths, and false representations of themselves and their ancestors. Although these depictions may be products of another era, it is a sad commentary that, in the 1990's, we continue to find ourselves answering to Cooper's depiction of the American Indian in The Last of the Mohicans, and in our attempts to educate non-Native society, confirm the sentiments of one reviewer who wrote in 1826: "There is a power and fearful interest in these descriptions, which, it needs no prophet to predict, will excite the feelings, and entrance the attention of generations to come long after our own" (Dekker 96). So while the debates regarding representation, racism, and appropriation

continue it is important to remember that Native people are still here, that we have a voice, and that much work remains to be done.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### "Vanished and Forgotten"?: Sam Fathers and the Language of the Land

*There are a few [Chickasaws] still in Mississippi, but they are a good deal like animals in a zoo: they have no place in the culture, in the economy, unless they become white men, and they have in some cases mixed with white people and their own conditions have vanished...*

*William Faulkner (1957)*

*Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe. Even the rocks which seem to lie dumb as they swelter in the sun ... thrill with memories of past events connected with the fate of my people...*

*The white man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not altogether powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.*

*Chief Seathe (Duwamish)*

*It is the story of all life that is holy and is good to tell, and of us two-leggeds sharing in it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green things; for these are children of one mother and their father is one Spirit.*

*Black Elk (Oglala Sioux)*

Despite the vast amount of critical material devoted to William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha "world," remarkably little attention has been paid to his Indian characters. Outside of a few journal articles and one book (Lewis Dabney's The Indians of Yoknapatawpha (1974)) devoted specifically to the topic, most critics seem to regard Faulkner's Indians with only marginal interest in comparison to the larger race issue of black/white relations. However, it is clear, that in a handful of short stories ("Red Leaves", "Lo!"), Faulkner attempts to bring the Chickasaw and Choctaw Indians of the South into a clearer focus, if only to provide some background and context for his Yoknapatawpha legend. While these stories are somewhat problematic due to the stereotypical representation of Native characters and inaccurate historical and cultural fact, they do introduce us to Sam Fathers, the Chickasaw character who is the most prominent Indian figure in Faulkner's fiction and who plays a central role in what is perhaps Faulkner's best known short story, "The Bear." Although Sam is portrayed in a stereotypical manner at times also, his role as "spiritual guide" within Faulkner's writing signals a progression from the Indian figures who inhabit Cooper's novel primarily due to Sam's more complex characterization and closer connection to the land, to the animals, and his awareness of the "natural laws" of the wilderness. According to Lewis Dabney, Sam "represents the wisdom of the peoples Faulkner's own race has suppressed" (Dabney 121).

Humanity's relationship to land is an important theme in Faulkner's fiction, and "The Bear," along with "The Old People" and "Delta Autumn," comprise what John Pilkington has termed the "wilderness romance" section of Go Down, Moses. He writes

If a romance is defined as a story in which the writer seeks to reveal spiritual truths by blending with reality an element of poetry, the marvelous, and often, ambiguity, Faulkner's stories properly belong to this form (Pilkington 259).

Throughout these stories, Faulkner describes the wilderness as an environment superior to any settled area, a place where humankind can come to know and appreciate the land, and ultimately, truth. Recognizing such descriptive language, Pilkington also points out that Faulkner's storytelling "forms a romance of the American wilderness after the manner of James Fenimore Cooper" (Pilkington 259). Indeed, it is quite evident that Faulkner's fiction does resemble Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales, occasionally recalling Chingachgook and Hawk-eye in his portrayal of Sam Fathers and the young Isaac "Ike" McCaslin. Like Cooper, Faulkner laments the loss of the American wilderness to social progress and development, and with it, humanity's relationship to nature. Unlike Cooper, however, Faulkner strives for a transcendental sense of reality that exists outside of normal human interaction to a spiritual level of understanding that takes place between Sam, Ike, the land, and the animals. This is what Pilkington defines as the "marvelous," stating that "although the poetic quality of Faulkner's prose has been widely admired, his use of the marvelous in the wilderness stories has received considerably less attention" (Pilkington 259). I believe that the "marvelous" which Pilkington refers to is what Sam Fathers brings to these stories.



In both "The Old People" and "The Bear," Sam is a central character, "the mouthpiece of the host" (171) who guides Ike to an understanding and respect for the wilderness and the laws that govern it. While flawed in certain respects pertaining to Chickasaw culture, Faulkner's stories which revolve around Sam still command attention for they contain language and symbols which sometimes resonate with American Indian philosophies regarding the natural world. My discussion of these two stories will thus reflect a balance between a close literary reading of the text and a North American Indian understanding of some of the elements which arise in Faulkner's narrative, examining the issues of land, the relationship between man and animals, and the concept of representation and "voice" as it pertains to Sam Fathers.

With the opening line of "The Old People," "At first there was nothing," Faulkner establishes a biblical tone that continues throughout Ike's "section" of Go Down, Moses (Utley 222-252). Not only does such language recall the title of the novel, it is also important for it demonstrates the significance of Ike's "birth" as a hunter. This opening scene is crucial for it immediately moves from "nothing" to depict how Ike's "life" as a hunter began with the sighting, and killing, of his first deer:

Then the buck was there. He did not come into sight; he was just there, looking not like a ghost but as if all of light were condensed in him and he were the source of it, not only moving in it but disseminating it, already running...

"Now," Sam Fathers said, "shoot quick, and slow" (163).

It is significant that it is Sam's instructions which allow Ike to become a hunter and that his contradictory statement embodies a balance between animal-like quickness and respectful

consideration for what he is about to do. Critic Daniel Hoffman calls this the "language of sacrament, of vision" (Hoffman 137) that characterizes Ike's initiation by Sam into the wilderness and the "brotherhood with both the slain buck and all the hunters--Sam's ancestors--who have gone before" (137).

The passage of time, as a narrative device which Faulkner uses repeatedly and with precision, is also evident here as demonstrated by an immediate "fast forward" to the present.

The boy did not remember that shot at all. He would live to be eighty, as his father and his father's twin brother and their father in his turn had lived to be, but he would never hear that shot nor remember even the shock of the gun-butt (163).

The effect of this passage, coming immediately after Ike sees, shoots and kills the buck, evokes a timeless connection between Ike's personal past and personal present. Interestingly, the memory of that shot is lost, as if the shot itself is inconsequential in comparison to the physical presence, and death, of the deer. Throughout the three stories revolving around Ike, Faulkner addresses a central theme: that of the continuity of the land and the animals regardless of man's attempts to own and control the environment. This too is connected to the concept of time and the primordial nature of the wilderness. Therefore, Ike's prime role in these stories is to serve as the link between past, present, and future. He alone is the one white character who demonstrates a deep respect and appreciation of nature along with a knowledge of his own history and that of the Chickasaw "fathers" whom Sam tells him about (Taylor 98). In this way, he also resembles Cooper's Hawkeye as the non-Indian figure who becomes the repository of Indian beliefs about the land. Of course, such a depiction becomes

problematic in its ignoring of an actual living Native culture, and it is further proof of the romantic tone of the stories.

Throughout "The Old People," Faulkner appears to be striving toward the theme of a Native American sense of the woods and the timeless nature of the hunt, not as a sporting event but as a necessary means of human survival. Within this story, an underlying sense of spirituality is evoked, most usually through the teachings of Sam and Ike's acknowledgment and acceptance of them. Sam Fathers is the knowledgeable one, and yet Faulkner portrays his wisdom as silence, never allowing the reader inside of Sam's consciousness the way we are provided with Ike's inner thoughts. Furthermore, Faulkner does little talking for Sam, who is depicted as a man of action rather than words. While this is perhaps a stereotype of the stoic Indian, we are led to understand that Sam does communicate with Ike regularly through stories.

[Sam] would talk to the boy, the two of them sitting beneath the close fierce stars on a summer hilltop...or beside a fire in the November or December woods...The boy would never question him; Sam did not react to questions. The boy would just wait and listen and Sam would begin, talking about the old days and the People whom he had not time ever to know and so could not remember (171).

Once again, time and memory are emphasized, with Sam's stories serving as Ike's initiation into the wilderness and the hunt. The effect of such narrative technique, which places importance on the act of storytelling, echoes with an essence of Native spirituality at times with regard to animals and the respect that they command when man enters their domain, and therefore, places himself under the "rules" of the wilderness and the hunt. These rules are

what Sam teaches Ike, through words, stories, and action. Significantly, Sam talks to Ike not as a grown man to a small boy, but as equals: "He [Sam] taught the boy the woods, to hunt, when to shoot and when not to shoot, when to kill and when not to kill, and better, what to do with it afterward" (170). This sentence, which echoes Ecclesiastes in its structure, also parallels Native approaches to wildlife conservation and the rule to never take more than what one needs. It also identifies a fundamental principle behind hunting from a Native perspective, that of respecting and making use of the slain animal for the benefit of the hunter's community, not merely as a trophy or badge of individual accomplishment. Elaborating on these themes, Oren Lyons, an Onondaga Faithkeeper from New York State, recalls his own childhood:

My father would give me one shell. If I missed, he'd send me home. If I killed, he'd let me stay. The discipline of the hunt is very important. You've got to eat. You learn to respect skill. And you stay in touch with everything around you ("R.I.P. Tonto" 44).

Although Ike is a boy when the events in "The Old People" occur, Faulkner occasionally reminds us that the actual narration of the story takes place sometime closer to the present, as if the lessons which Ike has learned have shaped his life right through to adulthood and old age (seen most clearly in "Delta Autumn"). This shifting narrative style causes the reader to understand that Ike has entered manhood upon the killing of his first deer. Immediately after Sam wipes Ike's face with the "hot smoking blood" of his first kill, time telescopes into the future and beyond, as if this ritual has been played out before:

They were the white boy, marked forever, and the old dark man sired on both sides by savage kings, who had marked him...joining him and the man forever,

so that the man would continue to live past the boy's seventy years and then eighty years, long after the man himself had entered the earth as chiefs and kings entered it (165).

As readers, we recognize at this point that Sam "marks" Ike both literally and figuratively, not only as one race to another but also as a member of the brotherhood of hunters.

Such distinctions of race and family are important to Faulkner, who places much emphasis on the issue of bloodlines and descent throughout "The Old People" and "The Bear," most notably the differences between Sam Fathers and Boon Hogganbeck, reminiscent of Hawk-eye's oft repeated boast of being a "man without a cross". Faulkner tells us that Sam was "the son of a Chickasaw chief" and that "Boon Hogganbeck's grandmother had been a Chickasaw woman too, and although the blood had run white since and Boon was a white man, it was not chief's blood" (170). For Faulkner, such lineage plays an especially dominant role with regard to family, history, community and the land itself. He sees Sam as the true "owner" of the wilderness since his ancestors belonged to the land with no thought of "possessing" it until the coming of the Europeans and the rise of slavery and materialism. Such a "corruption" of the Chickasaw was the beginning of their downfall, and Sam is the last of his race to occupy and understand the land. According to Faulkner, he is

the old man past seventy whose grandfathers had owned the land long before the white man ever saw it and who had vanished from it now with all their kind, what of blood they left behind them running now in another race and for a while even in bondage and now drawing toward the end of its alien and irrevocable course, barren, since Sam Fathers had no children (165).

Like Cooper, Faulkner provides no explanation, no historical fact, as to how Sam's ancestors have simply "vanished" from the land. Such lack of information is common to literature of

the time and is further proof of the dehistoricization of Native people in the literature and history of America. Since historical details might detract from the stories at hand, for Faulkner, it is only important that Native people are gone and that Sam is the last of the Chickasaws. One cannot help but to be reminded of Faulkner's attitude regarding Indian history and authenticity: "Long as they don't say 'Ugh' or 'How' I think I make 'em real" (Taylor 98), he has said. Furthermore, it is ironic that Sam's original Chickasaw name is Had-Two-Fathers, one of which was a Chickasaw chief, the other a slave, but that he himself is childless. It is interesting to note that Faulkner describes this process as Indian blood running on an "alien and irrevocable course" toward extinction as if he himself were unaware of a stable American Indian population at the very time that he was writing. Such uninformed attitudes towards Native people of North America were prevalent during much of the nineteenth century, and to a lesser extent in Faulkner's time as well. It is significant, therefore, when we later learn in "The Bear" that both Ike and Old Ben have fathered no children. Since his main characters remain childless, Faulkner seemingly points to the end of an era of men and animals and above all, the land. It too has become "barren," desolate of life and devoid of meaning to men other than Sam and Ike, victimized by men who wish only to extract its materialistic value.

For Faulkner, man's ideal relationship to the land and the wilderness as embodied by Sam is at odds with white American society. Recognizing the divisions between Indian and white societies and attitudes in the story, James Early writes that "Sam's aloof and dignified bearing toward all white men in "The Old People" is in keeping with his noble lineage"

(Early 13). Even as a child, Ike is cognizant of Sam's superior bearing: "He thought ... Sam was the chief, the prince; Boon, the plebeian was his huntsman" (222). Sam's name is important then, because "as it lost its original significance, Sam's name came to suggest his role as father to young hunters, an embodiment in an alien world of the almost forgotten ways of the Indian inhabitants of the great wilderness" (Early 13). Sam is therefore a figure who is prominent in two cultures, a character whose name takes on meanings of the past, Chickasaw social history, and the present, as a "father" to Ike and other non-Indian men. Such a character proves to be problematic at times for Faulkner, however, since Sam did not easily fit into Southern society, made up almost entirely of white and black populations.

Although not his biological father, Sam is described as Ike's "spirit's father" who raises him to be aware of the wilderness and the animals who reside there as living entities who are governed by the rules enforced by the "ancient and immortal Umpire" (181). It is this respect for life and the rules of the hunt which Sam instills in Ike and which comes close to a Native-centric approach to the natural world, certainly more so than that which Ike is taught by his white Southern upbringing. Although it is clear that Sam is a type of role model throughout the two stories, an ideal representation of the relationship between man and the wilderness, it is difficult, if not impossible, to gauge whether Faulkner deliberately set out to expound the virtues of Native American philosophies regarding man and his natural environment.

Unlike Cooper, who often tempers his Native characters' dialogue with his own interpretive analysis, Faulkner does not comment on Sam's discourse. Consequently, Ike is privy to Sam's stories of the past and the wilderness while we as reader never are. The effect

is one which further binds Ike and Sam, as if the knowledge that is transmitted to Ike is of an oral nature that is to remain unspoiled by "translation" to a written text.

And as he talked about those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either that the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become a part of the boy's present, not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening, the men who walked through them actually walking in breath and air and casting an actual shadow on the earth they had not quitted. And more: as if some of them had not happened yet but would occur tomorrow, until at last it would seem to the boy that he himself had not come into existence yet ... (171).

The impact of such stories on Ike is overwhelming. Perhaps Faulkner was more concerned with the description of a young boy's imagination than with the value that Native people regard stories and storytelling, but nevertheless he has touched on an important element of Native culture. As Ojibway writer Lenore Keeshig-Tobias states, "Stories are not entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture thinks" (Keeshig-Tobias 98). With this in mind, it becomes possible to understand how Ike internalizes Sam's stories to the point where the "vanished men of another race" come to life, simply because they were once living people, alive in memory so long as the stories are told. Of course, the upshot is that all Native peoples are to be viewed this way, as if there is no place for a contemporary Native culture and society. Critic Susan V. Donaldson also sees a marked difference in the stories which Sam relates to Ike and those stories of family history and Southern society with which the boy grew up. Donaldson sees Sam's oral narratives as "submerged or forgotten tales" within the short stories themselves that open up for Ike the



"possibility of a world completely different from the one created by L.Q.C. McCaslin [Ike's grandfather] and his descendents" (Harrington & Abadie 140). This "alternate world created by Sam's storytelling" gives Ike "a glimpse of much different versions of masculinity and race" (140) from that which he sees all around him.

It is this "alternate" understanding of his own world (i.e. Southern agrarian society) that sets the stage for Ike's repudiation of his family's legacy in Section IV of "The Bear". Sam's stories which involve the land and the telling of history from a Chickasaw perspective provide Ike with insight into the true nature of "ownership." Once again, Faulkner appears to prepare him, and the reader, for what is to transpire since it is the stories which Sam tells that causes Ike to understand the meaning of land and man's fleeting hold over it:

although it had been his grandfather's and then his father's and uncle's and was now his cousin's and someday would be his own land which he and Sam hunted over, their hold upon it actually was as trivial and without reality as the now faded and archaic script in the chancery book in Jefferson which allocated it to them and that it was he, the boy, who was the guest here and Sam Father's voice the mouthpiece of the host (171).

Here, Faulkner is careful to distinguish between words on the page that delineate the ownership of land that grow old and meaningless from spoken words that come alive, "welcoming" Ike into the wilderness through stories which Sam tells as caretaker of the land, not as owner but as "host." It is clear that Faulkner is aware of the power of language and storytelling as spoken words that transcend the concept of business transactions. Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr. feels that within Sam's stories, "Ike disappears, erased by the narrative" (Harrington & Abadie 213), and that in becoming so, he "becomes alive to the spirit, to the

universal history of the ... wilderness" (213). Such a sense of Ike's giving over to or coming alive within the wilderness is embedded into Faulkner's language. Upon Ike's entering the wilderness, which "closed behind his entrance as it had opened momentarily to accept him", Faulkner tells us that "It seemed to him that at the age of ten he was witnessing his own birth" (195). As readers, we understand that such feelings on Ike's part are a direct result of Sam's words of preparation for the woods. Moreover, it is Sam's teachings that make Ike understand that the "tremendous, attentive, impartial and omniscient" (181) wilderness cannot "belong" to any man save those who understand and respect it.

While Sam is the primary Indian character in all of Faulkner's fiction, there is another present in "The Old People": "the other a full-blood Chickasaw, in a sense even more incredibly lost than Sam Fathers. He called himself Jobaker, as if it were one word. Nobody knew his history at all" (172). Since Jobaker is introduced, quite literally, as the "other" by Faulkner and described as "incredibly lost" because he is a full-blood, the reader may tend to see this character as a shadow, with no real impact on the story. However, I believe that Jobaker appears here as the one "true" Indian figure, the one thread that connects Sam to his roots and an understanding of who he is. The fact that he calls *himself* Jobaker is significant, demonstrating that he knows and understands his identity. He does not need a white man to give him one. Also important is the fact that no one knows his history "at all" even though his history is directly connected to the land itself since his people are indigenous to it, something which Ike comes to understand through Sam's teachings. Interestingly, such a description also seems to hold true for most of North American society with regard to Native

people even today since there is a lack of awareness when it comes to understanding history from a Native perspective. Jobaker can then be seen as the symbolic, stereotypical reservation Indian of yesterday and today, with no real place in non-Native society. Faulkner tells us that Jobaker "consorted with nobody, black or white; no negro would even cross his path and no man dared approach his hut except Sam" (172). Such a foreboding figure presents an image of the stereotypical "ignoble savage" to everyone save Ike, who as a child is unafraid of Jobaker:

And perhaps once a month the boy would find them in Sam's shop--two old men squatting on their heels on the dirt floor, talking in a mixture of negroid English and flat hill dialect and now and then a phrase of that old tongue which as time went on and the boy squatted there too listening, he began to learn (172).

Here, Faulkner refers once again to language and the spoken word without allowing the reader access to the conversation, as if the oral nature of Sam and Jobaker's discussions are somehow mysterious and unintelligible. Ike, however, as listener is also active participant in that he too assumes the squatting position of the old men and picks up their language in the process of listening. Traditionally in Native culture, children learned by observing and listening, much in the same manner as Ike learns both the "old tongue" and the woods from Sam.

Several times throughout both "The Old People" and "The Bear" Faulkner makes reference to education and the knowledge of the wilderness. When Sam tells Ike, "I done taught you all there is of this settled country" (174), it as if the boy has "graduated" from the domestic life of his community to the larger world of the wilderness. Shortly after this

conversation, and the death of Jobaker, Sam leaves to live in the woods for good, to what Ike "believed ... was his loneliness and solitude" (177). Faulkner, however, repeatedly makes us aware that the wilderness is anything but desolate and inanimate. After Ike's first hunting trip at the age of ten, he returns "solitary and alone to the settled familiar land ... having brought with him, even from his brief first sojourn, an unforgettable sense of the big woods--not a quality dangerous or particularly inimical, but profound, sentient, gigantic and brooding" (175). It is important that Faulkner describes Ike's return to civilization as "solitary and alone" while Sam stays behind in the woods, a reversal of how Ike perceives the situation. Furthermore, upon Ike's exit the narrator tells us that the boy is now changed by "the wilderness whose mark he had brought away forever on his spirit" (177). The woods are described as "secret" and "almost inattentive," as if they are cognizant of man but unconcerned with his attempts to own and control. At the same time, the wilderness is described as "brooding," as if contemplating a bleak future of encroaching development, a theme most clearly shown later in the novel in "Delta Autumn."

It is apparent that Faulkner is concerned with the issue of land and the disappearance of the wilderness, certainly something which he saw in his own lifetime. What makes "The Old People" that much more engaging then is the scene in which Ike encounters what some critics have called the "spirit deer" (Kuyk 83). What is Faulkner trying to achieve here? Obviously, this is a defining moment in Ike's life and it is no coincidence that Sam Fathers is present to produce this vision. Is Sam to be seen as a shamanistic type of character, or more simply as one who is aware that animals are more often smarter than man? Daniel Hoffman

believes that Sam is a "shaman" who "knows better than anyone where the game is, what the deer or bear will do, where they will go, for his spirit is kin to theirs" (Hoffman 141). Such a clichéd characterization of the "Indian" offers too simple an explanation. It is evident that Faulkner is not above resorting to stereotypes; at times, however, in this sequence of events, he is striving for something more, a spiritual quality of the "marvelous" and "other" reality that exists in the wilderness. Therefore, when Sam tells Ike that he has taught him all he can of the "settled country," it can be interpreted to mean more than hunting, becoming a reference to the idea that within society there is no longer the willingness to believe or accept that which is not immediately explainable from a "civilized" perspective. This is made evident when Ike's cousin McCaslin tells him that when Sam "was born, all his blood on both sides, except the little white part, knew things that had been tamed out of our blood so long ago that we have not only forgotten them, we have to live together in herds to protect ourselves from our own sources" (167). Faulkner's hint at the recognition of "other" types of Indigenous knowledge borders on exclusion for it establishes white society's knowledge as "civilized" and "good" while alluding to all other forms of cultural knowledge as somehow "untamed," and less than acceptable.

For Faulkner, the connection between an individual and the land is something which only Indian people seem to have, a somewhat stereotypical relationship that is depicted as rather mysterious yet honorable. Above all, it is a way of life that is soon to be lost since Indian people themselves were widely believed to be on the verge of extinction at the time of

his writing. Such a connection to the land is apparent within Ike's consciousness as he and Sam lay in wait for the buck, reminiscent of the opening lines of the story:

there was a condensing, a densifying, of what he had thought was the gray and unchanging light until he realised suddenly that it was his own breathing, his heart, his blood--something, all things, and that Sam Fathers had marked him indeed, not as a mere hunter, but with something Sam had had in his turn of his vanished and forgotten people (182).

Here, Faulkner depicts a certain transferral of identity onto Ike when Sam "marks" him, as if he is all that remains of the Chickasaw people. What must be kept in mind is that the Chickasaw have neither "vanished" nor have they been "forgotten". However, in the effort to show the timelessness of the land itself, Faulkner relies on the image of the "vanishing American" that has "given up" the land to white society. In this case it is Ike, who we are told is a worthy successor, one who knows and respects the wilderness, but a white boy nonetheless.

Regardless of the ownership of the land, Faulkner continuously reminds us that the wilderness itself is alive, "leaning, stooping overhead with its breath held, tremendous and impartial and waiting" (182). Such a personification of the land is what Faulkner is ultimately concerned with, demonstrating its own sense of consciousness that is oblivious to human affairs. When the great buck moves closer, it as if the wilderness itself acknowledges the animal: "it had merely stopped watching [Ike] and was looking somewhere else, even turning its back on him, looking on away up the ridge at another point" (183). When Ike and Sam hear Walter Ewell's rifle, "which never missed," Ike is crushed, feeling that he has missed the opportunity. But Sam knows otherwise, telling him to wait, and almost instantly the buck

appears: "It was not running, it was walking, tremendous, unhurried, slanting and tilting its head to pass the antlers through the undergrowth" (184). It is important that, at this point, Faulkner tells us that Ike is "standing with Sam beside him now instead of behind him as Sam always stood" (184) indicative of their equal status in the presence of the buck.

Then it saw them. And still it did not begin to run. It just stopped for an instant, taller than any man, looking at them; then its muscles suppld, gathered. It did not even alter its course, not fleeing, not even running, just moving with that winged and effortless ease with which deer move, passing within twenty feet of them, its head high and the eye not proud and not haughty but just full and wild and unafraid (184).

At this point, Sam acknowledges the buck, "his right arm raised at full length, palm-outward, speaking in that tongue which the boy had learned from listening to him and Joe Baker...`Oleh, Chief, Sam said. `Grandfather'" (184). Once again the "old" language is spoken by Sam--with Faulkner providing the "translation" of a greeting that is not in fact, Chickasaw (Taylor 107, Dabney 132). Addressing the buck as both leader and elder is a sign of respect within Native cultures, although Faulkner is certainly taking liberties with his use of Indian speech and custom. Along with the title and the references to Sam and Jobaker's ages, as well as the "grandfather" deer and Old Ben in "The Bear," it is apparent that Faulkner depicts all things having to do with the wilderness as nearing their end, all things that is except perhaps the wilderness itself. It is therefore important that Ike himself understands and uses the same phrase, as we will see, later in "The Bear."

Native culture has always viewed animals with great respect due to their ability to adapt and survive within their natural environment. Although Faulkner places more emphasis

on the symbolic importance of Old Ben's place within the wilderness in "The Bear," for many Native cultures, the deer is just as important since it has powers and abilities of a different variety. Cayuga Chief of the Six Nations Confederacy, Jake Thomas, says that a deer's antlers are like antennae for receiving messages that humans are not aware of:

The points help to tell them what is happening over here and over there. All these points join back into the power of one. That is why the deer and the moose stand still--to receive the vibrations around them. They know much more than we give them credit for. This is why many great leaders wore antlers as part of their headdress (Thomas 130).

An analogy such as this would help to explain, from a Native perspective, why the great buck was able to evade the other hunters while allowing itself to be exposed to Boon, Sam, and Ike. It is why it does not immediately flee from them in fear, but stops, looks at them and then runs, "wild and unafraid." Using Thomas' analysis, a distinctively Native perception of this event could be evident, one quite different from that offered up by Kuyk, who sees the buck as a reincarnation of the deer that Ike had killed earlier that day (Kuyk 83).

Following Ike's encounter with the buck, he attempts to describe it to McCaslin later that night. "'You don't believe it,' the boy said. 'I know you don't--'" (186). At this point McCaslin offers up his interpretation of another reality beyond the here and now:

Think of all that has happened here, on this earth. All the blood hot and strong for living, pleasuring, that has soaked back into it...And all that must be somewhere; all that could not have been invented and created just to be thrown away...And the earth don't want to just keep things, hoard them; it wants to use them again (186).

Once again, Faulkner appears to be writing very close to a Native belief in the circular nature of existence and the idea that the earth uses all things in nature and that all beings have a



place, including the presence of spirits. In addition life is being acknowledged as "invented and created," not to be discarded but used again. Such word usage would appear to denote belief in a higher power, or quite literally, a Creator, that has placed things on this earth, of which man is but a small part. It is this notion which McCaslin addresses, explaining to Ike the possibility of another reality beyond death that might account for the appearance of the buck, evoking a spiritual dimension that both are cognizant of. Their discussion, which ends "The Old People," is significant for it demonstrates McCaslin's understanding of what Ike has experienced:

"And they ... they dont want it, need it. Besides, what would it want, itself, knocking around out there, when it never had enough time about the earth as it was, when there is plenty of room about the earth, plenty of places still unchanged from what they were when the blood used and pleased in them while it was still blood?"

"But we want them," the boy said. "We want them too. There is plenty of room for us and them too."

"That's right," McCaslin said. "Suppose they dont have substance, cant cast a shadow--"

"But I saw it!" the boy cried. "I saw him!"

"Steady," McCaslin said..."Steady. I know you

did. So did I. Sam took me in there once after I killed my first deer" (187).

From McCaslin's analysis, it appears that he has spent some time reflecting on these matters since he himself had a similar experience with Sam and provides the possible explanation that he relates to Ike. The question of reality and illusion is brought to bear, although we are only exposed to McCaslin and Ike's perspective and not Sam's "explanation." Since there is no real Native "voice" to expand upon Ike's experience in the woods, the reader is left only to ponder the opinions of Faulkner's white Southern, male characters.

As readers, we can understand Sam's silence as indicating Faulkner's reluctance to assume any kind of Native perspective on issues such as these. Sam is Faulkner's creation and in many ways he remains a mystery to the reader. Therefore we are only able to view him, and his teachings, through Ike. Judith Lockyer states that "although Sam is not given to explanation, Ike invests his few words with great significance" and that Sam's stories and "language becomes the key that will lead Ike into the past and to the original, absolute truth" (Lockyer 103). Truth is what Faulkner, and Ike, is concerned with in these stories and it is what Sam teaches the boy, through action, not words, that form the basis of truth in the wilderness. His silences are not interpreted by Faulkner but we are to understand them as wisdom. Such characterization is a cliché to be sure, abiding "by the popular stereotype of the inscrutable savage who utters only "How" or other monosyllabic grunts" (Kinney 129). However, such "backing away" from Sam's consciousness can also be seen as respectful to some degree. Faulkner understands that, as a Southerner, he can relate and interpret Ike for us, but Sam's perspective is an alien one. It becomes, therefore, the responsibility of the reader to interpret what it is that Ike encounters, just as he himself searches for an understanding between what is real and what is illusion within the wilderness.

In setting, time, and action, the lines between "The Old People" and "The Bear" become quite intertwined at times as both stories chronicle Ike's experience within the "slow and shifting yet constant walls" (179) of the wilderness. Critics all seem to agree that "The Bear" is a story which chronicles the "death of the wilderness" but not all agree on the symbology that occurs within it. John Pilkington states that, "No one...can be absolutely

certain of what Old Ben and Lion in "The Bear" actually represent as symbols, though almost all readers will agree that they do have a symbolic function beyond the actual events of the story" (Pilkington 263). What then to make of Sam's role as "symbol" in the story? Does his death signify the death of his people, the wilderness, or both? Pilkington's statement is correct so far as the animals involved are concerned, but he goes on to say, "Few readers...would question that Faulkner attributes special qualities to Old Ben, Sam Fathers, and Lion that identify them as inhabitants of the world of romance" (Pilkington 263). Following this analogy, are we to understand that Sam, as the central Indian figure in the story, is also a romantic inhabitant of a kind of "lost" or vanishing world? This comparison between man and animal, as pointed out by Pilkington, is made evident in the opening lines of "The Bear":

There was a man and dog too this time. Two beasts, counting Old Ben, the bear, and two men, counting Boon Hogganbeck, in whom some of the same blood ran which ran in Sam Fathers, even though Boon's was a plebian strain of it and only Sam and Old Ben and the mongrel Lion were taintless and incorruptible (191).

It is evident from the first line that Faulkner is establishing a relationship to "The Old People," which begins "At first there was nothing." By referring to the preceding story in the novel, the reader is led to make the connection between Sam and Boon once again, with a reminder of their bloodlines. We are also introduced to Old Ben and Lion, who along with Sam are the only honourable ones due to their unmixed blood--they too are "without a cross." It is now six years later, and like "The Old People," Faulkner continues to address the concept of time,

intermixing the past and memory with the present action which centres around the annual hunting of Old Ben, the "yearly pageant-rite of the old bear's furious immortality" (194).

Sam is still the focus of Ike's wilderness experiences and most of the story's events are filtered through Ike's consciousness, describing certain events that take place in the time after he has seen the buck. Since Faulkner tells us that Ike is now sixteen years old, we are to understand that his perception of the wilderness, the hunt, Old Ben, and Sam's wisdom has increased, to the point that Ike is aware of something inevitable: "He realized later that it had begun long before that" (192). There is a certain vague finality to these words that as reader we are not yet prepared to understand. Significantly then, at this point Faulkner introduces Old Ben as the boy's legacy, and responsibility, as a hunter:

[Ike] had already inherited then, without ever having seen it, the big old bear with one trap-ruined foot that in an area almost a hundred square miles had earned for himself a name, a definite designation like a living man ... It loomed and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print...not malevolent but just big..too big for the very country which was its constricting scope (192-93)

Not only is Old Ben personified with a name, he is also described as Ike's birthright, an almost innate presence that "ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it" (193). Such description elevates the narrative to a certain transcendental level of understanding that is soon confirmed by Sam's foreknowledge of the events that will unfold in the story.

Throughout the first section, we learn of the hunters' encounters with the bear and their futile efforts to bring him to bay, much less kill him. Old Ben is described as "not even a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a

phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life" (193). Like Sam, Old Ben is seen as something "left over" from the past, and like Sam, the bear is also "solitary ... and alone; widowed childless" (194). Such language causes the reader to understand that this is not your "average bear," but rather a symbol of something larger. Sam says that Old Ben "don't care no more for bears than he does for dogs or men neither ... Because he's the head bear. He's the man" (198). Again, Faulkner aligns Old Ben with Sam himself as well as Jobaker and Lion, all figures who have a unique, individual identity within the story. We are to understand that they do not fit into accepted social structures and are therefore paralleled with the land itself, "that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness" (193).

It is this fear which Faulkner describes, in relation to the hunt, that causes man to strike out against that which he doesn't know. In this way, Jobaker and Sam, as Indians, and Old Ben and Lion, as symbols of the wild, are feared and for this reason their death is depicted as inevitable. Sam tells Ike, "[b]e scared. You can't help that. But don't be afraid" (207). This advice, on how to conduct oneself in the woods, is important for it cautions Ike to remain alert and aware but to not live in fear. These are the words that remain with Ike as he enters into the "soaring gloom of the markless wilderness" alone in search of Old Ben. When he realizes that he is "tainted" by civilization, he discards first his gun, then his watch and compass, and "relinquished completely to it" (208). He soon becomes lost but by following the bear's tracks, Old Ben seemingly leads him back to his watch and compass, symbolic instruments of "time and space" that are alien to the woods:

Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear; it was just there, immobile...not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him...Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion (209).

Such an event would appear to contradict Sam's statement about Old Ben's disregard for any thing other than himself, but such an incident is proof of Ike's "acceptance" into the wilderness. Sam has initiated him to the "rules" and Ike is effectively rewarded with Old Ben's acknowledgement and assistance.

Because of Ike's debt to the bear for possibly saving his life, Faulkner tells us that "he should have hated and feared Lion" (209), a foreshadowing of the role that Lion is to play. It is significant then that Faulkner soon describes how it is Sam who catches and prepares the great dog for the showdown with Old Ben. Ike, as observer, is now aware that Sam is preparing for something more.

There was something in Sam's face now. It was neither exultation nor joy nor hope. It had been foreknowledge...`And he was glad' [Ike] told himself. `He was old. He had no children, no people, none of his blood anywhere above earth that he would ever meet again. And even if he were to, he could not have touched it, spoken to it, because for seventy years now he had had to be a negro. It was almost over now and he was glad' (215).

Ike's inner thoughts not only provide more clues regarding the confrontation to come, but also point out Sam's "otherness" once again. Mostly Indian, but neither black nor white, Sam's mixed blood made "himself his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment and the mausoleum of his defeat" (168). Faulkner, well known for his portrayal of racial issues between black and white societies, appears to have a little more trouble in the description of

mixed-blood Indians within this passage. This is understandable since it is quite possible that he did not know any. We as readers are only to recognize that Sam, having to live his life as something he is not, views the appearance of Lion as somehow signalling an end to his alienation. Sam is doubly marginalized, neither black nor white, and therefore seeks some kind of escape from his solitary, peopleless existence. Faulkner is ambiguous as to how Sam understands this, relying only on Sam's mysterious wisdom that Ike is aware of but unable to articulate.

It is significant, and fitting then, when Ike assists Sam in the training of the "great blue dog" and tells McCaslin, " We've already named him. His name is Lion" (219). Lion's name is vital in this context for it signifies an animal not indigenous to the North American wilderness. He is described as being a "strange color like a blued gun-barrel" and having eyes that had a "cold and almost impersonal malignance like some natural force" (218). It is apparent that the dog is symbolic of an "outside" force that will take on and destroy the (North American) wilderness as symbolised by Old Ben. Sam and Ike name Lion for they are the two characters most connected to the meaning of the inevitable confrontation between the dog and the bear. At the end of Section Two, Faulkner reiterates Ike's awareness of Sam's design:

So he should have hated and feared Lion. Yet he did not. It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage (226).

The reference to drama and dramatic elements (i.e. the constant foreshadowing) is something that many critics have pointed out as being evident within "The Bear." Using this analogy the reference to the last act is to be the final, climactic hunt for Old Ben. At this point in the story we understand that Ike's anticipation and awareness of this fact is borne out by Lion's presence: "it was the beginning of the end of something" (226). Faulkner goes on to tell us that "[Ike] would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be part of it too or even just to see it too" (226), proof that after years of Sam's tutelage Ike is prepared to be a man, a hunter, and most importantly, to take part in the final hunting of Old Ben.

The description of the days leading up to the last running of Old Ben and his actual death are filtered through Ike's experience. It is interesting that Faulkner has representatives from all three races in attendance at the death of the bear: Ike, Tennes's Jim, Boon, and Sam, as if each race is witness to the end of something that has united them all. It is also important that the mixed-blood Boon is the actual hunter who kills the bear, not with a gun, but a knife, largely in defense of Lion. Such an heroic act demonstrates not only bravery but seems to have an element of ancient hunting prowess to it, primitive skills necessary before the invention of guns. Moreover, in describing the death of Old Ben Faulkner alludes to the relationship between man, animal, and the natural environment:

the bear surged erect, raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps toward the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them, man dog and bear, seemed to bounce once (241).



It is evident that Faulkner is attempting to articulate more than just the "fall" of Old Ben, but the imminent "fall" of humankind in the wake of the destruction of the land as well. Man and animal do not "collapse" but fall "all of a piece, as a tree falls" Faulkner tells us, conjuring up images of widespread environmental destruction. "If the wilderness dies, so too does man," Native elders have been saying for years, something which Western ecologists are beginning to recognize and understand as well (Knudtson & Suzuki 20-62). This is what Sam Fathers comes to represent in this story at times: a Native elder who signifies the end of an era, straddling both the wilderness and the white man's world of development and urbanization.

As our closest connection to Sam Fathers, it is Ike who provides the perspective on Sam's death. After Old Ben is killed, Ike notices Sam "lying motionless on his face in the trampled mud" (242). Such an image conveys the sense that Sam himself has been "run over" in the haste to bring down Old Ben. Immobilized, he can only speak "in that old tongue which he and Joe Baker had used to speak together" (242). Therefore, his words and his reaction to the death of the bear are not understood or conveyed to us as readers. He is effectively silenced and his reaction is, and remains, unknown to us, spoken in a language that conveys his emotions in a way that English is incapable of. It is not until he is brought back to his "dark little hut" that he is finally able to communicate, after speaking "again in the tongue of the old fathers...he said clearly: "Let me out. Let me out" (245). As Sam tries to struggle to his feet, he says again, "Let me out, master... Let me go home" (245). Because Faulkner has made it clear that Sam had never considered himself as servant to anyone, we understand that he is not addressing any of the white men present, but his own Maker, or

master. With the death of Old Ben Sam's life's "work" is completed. He had provided the instrument of the bear's death and, therefore, there is nothing of the wilderness left worthy to pursue, or to live for. In an interview, Faulkner himself said that Sam "knew he was finished, he was tired of his life" (Faulkner in the University 10).

Because of Ike's connection to Sam and his awareness of the old man's design, Faulkner tells us that the boy is able to imagine, without being present in Sam's hut, that "Sam's eyes were probably open again on that profound look which saw further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and the dying of a dog" (245). Once again, it is Ike's relationship to Sam that allows him an insight into the fact that Old Ben's death signals something final and irretrievable, as if Sam's ability to see beyond the here and now has now been transferred to Ike. In this case, Sam as looking towards both death and a future that sees the death of the wilderness itself. Furthermore, as he lays on his bed Sam is described almost as if he is placed on display in a museum exhibit on Indian people.

He lay there--the copper brown, almost hairless body, the old man's body, the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, peopleless--motionless (246).

This description, immediately following the death of the bear, indicates that Sam has aged all at once. He is described previously as having "hair like a horse's mane which even at seventy showed no trace of white and a face which showed no age until he smiled" (167). His death is then a spontaneous, almost inevitable reaction to the death of Old Ben, and for which Faulkner, via Ike, has prepared us. What is curious is the manner in which he dies, an event that does not take place in the text but one to which Ike is present and Boon is most likely

responsible for. Faulkner tells us that when McCaslin travels back to the camp he finds Ike and Boon guarding a "platform of freshly cut saplings bound between four posts and [a] blanket wrapped bundle upon the platform" (252).

When McCaslin approaches them, Boon warns him to "Stand back" and tells him, "'This is the way he wanted it. He told us. He told us exactly how to do it. And by God you ain't going to move him'" (253). Sam's instructions to Ike and Boon are important here since they indicate his acceptance and preparation for death. Although his "traditional" burial is not consistent with Chickasaw cultural practice, it is surely a more "romantic" image for readers since it describes popular perception of a Indian death rituals. It is important, however, that Boon fights to keep McCaslin and others away who would attempt to give Sam a Christian burial which would have gone against his last wishes. While the circumstances surrounding Sam's death are not disclosed, it would appear that Boon was involved somehow despite his denial when McCaslin asks, "Did you kill him, Boon?" (254). Death at the hands of Boon would be a fitting end for Sam, since Boon was responsible for the killing of Old Ben and for the fact that Boon shares with him some of the same blood. If Sam has been behind the "grand design" to bring down Old Ben, as Faulkner has alluded to, it is reasonable to assume that he knew his own demise was also an inevitable conclusion in its wake. He had had very little control over how he was to live his life, but his death provides an opportunity for autonomy. In this way, Sam continues to be a man of action rather than of words even in death.

The dichotomy between words and action seems to be one of the themes running throughout Section Four of the story. Although it has been five years since the death of Old Ben, Sam, and Lion, they are still within Ike's consciousness. McCaslin, sensing Ike's confusion over what happened with the death of Old Ben, reads from Keats' "Ode On A Grecian Urn" in order to place some perspective on the event. Similar to the ending of "The Old People," it is McCaslin who offers up what appears to be Faulkner's authorial voice, a literary reference to death, time and immortality. However, Ike, as the non-literary student of Sam Fathers, struggles to reconcile poetry with his own feelings behind hunting and the deaths of Old Ben, Sam, and Lion. To him, "it had seemed simpler than that, simpler than somebody talking in a book about a young man and a girl ... He had heard about an old bear and finally got big enough to hunt it and he hunted it for four years and at last met it with a gun in his hands and he didn't shoot" (297). Once again, Faulkner refers to the written word, which in this context means little to Ike as a woodsman and still less to the animals and the wilderness which had formed him. It is also interesting to note that the number four is mentioned, a number with deep significance in Native cultures (i.e., four directions, four races of man, four seasons, four stages of life). Four is seen as completion, and in this case, four years marks the death of Old Ben in Ike's experience. Again, one can only question whether Faulkner knew of such connection to Native philosophy, although a Native reader would recognize a significant pattern.

After much description of the everlasting wilderness, Faulkner is now pointing to a time in which man and animal will never share the same relationship since the wilderness itself

has become a commodity, a thing to be bought and sold. Such a relationship is in defiance of the "ancient and unmitigatable rules" of the wilderness, and it is this change which forms the foundation of what is to transpire in the Section Four of "The Bear." Much of this section is a conversation between McCaslin and Isaac, and unlike the dialogue between Sam and Ike, we as reader are often privy to their discussion. Their debate is largely centred around the family's legacy and Ike's repudiation of the land he has inherited through the corruption and scandal of his grandfather's acquiring of it. McCaslin attempts to explain to Ike that it is Sam, not their own family, from whom he receives his "rightful" inheritance:

"You said how on that instant when Ikkemotubbe realised that he could sell the land to Grandfather, it ceased forever to have been his. All right; go on: Then it belonged to Sam Fathers, old Ikkemotubbe's son. And who inherited from Sam Fathers, if not you? co heir perhaps with Boon, if not of his life maybe, at least of his quitting it?"

"Yes. Sam Fathers set me free" (300).

Ike's reply is significant for it echoes Sam's plea after Old Ben has been killed, as well as the title of the novel itself. It is clear that Faulkner is defining a theme in which the hunt, the wilderness, and the South's legacy of slavery is interconnected in some way. To put it quite simply, Ike, as inheritor of his family's legacy, has been changed as a small boy by Sam, a half Indian, half slave, who teaches him an alternative to the corruption of ownership, whether it be of land or another human being. In turn, Ike's whole life is influenced by the teachings and the values that Sam, as the progenitor of Indian values regarding natural laws, had taught him in the woods. Many critics agree that Sam, as an oral authority on history and truth within the wilderness, stands in opposition to the written word of Ike's own history and inheritance.

According to Lockyer, "Sam speaks for the original dwellers of the wilderness, and Ike invests his words with enough power to disallow his own family's claim on the land. Sam's words take Ike out of the confines of his own present and make him a part of a timeless, paradoxical "truth", that the wilderness cannot be owned yet exists for men's use" (Lockyer 102).

Section Five of the story relates Ike's return to the woods two years after the death of Old Ben, but three years before the "present" of Section Four. Such a shifting time frame is effective in bringing about a closure to the story of Old Ben, while providing insight into Ike's response to the woods following the death of Sam and the bear. Faulkner tells us that Ike "went back to the camp one more time before the lumber company moved in and began to cut the timber" (315), evidence that development of the land begins almost immediately after Old Ben's death. Ike's response to the lumber camp and the railroad, as signs of civilization, is to see their presence presaging the "doomed wilderness." Faulkner tells us that even before he entered back into it, Ike "who had had to see it one time other, would return no more" (321). The finality with which Faulkner invests this scene is both eulogistic and prophetic for it foretells of a time that is to come in America. However, the one constant which Ike appears to be aware of is the change of seasons and the timeless ordered pattern of the earth itself:

summer, and fall, and snow, and wet and saprife spring in their ordered immortal sequence, the deathless and immemorial phases of the mother who had shaped him if any had toward the man he almost was, mother and father both to the old man born of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief who had

been his spirit's father if any had, whom he had revered and harkened to and loved and lost and grieved (326).

Here, Faulkner uses the language of Native systems of belief regarding the earth as "mother" and nurturer. Although such terminology is not new, it has become its own type of "New Age" cliché recently, and it is interesting that Faulkner would use this analogy during his own time, an era on the brink of technological breakthroughs, as a means to describe the relationship between the land and humankind. In addition, the extended family motif that runs between Sam, Ike, and the wilderness becomes that much more profound when we understand that both Sam and Ike have no real parents or family other than each other.

This relationship is elaborated upon when Ike visits the graves of Lion and Sam among the four concrete markers that designate the lumber company's tract, "lifeless and shockingly alien in that place where ... death did not even exist" (327). Despite his wishes we are to infer that Sam has been buried, Christian style, after all, as if white society can only impose its will on him after he is dead. Faulkner achieves this effect subtly, only telling us that "after two winters' blanketings of leaves and the flood-waters of two springs, there was no trace of the two graves anymore at all" (327), as if Lion and Sam's remains are taken back into the earth, and reminiscent of McCaslin and Ike's discussion at the end of "The Old People." As he nears Sam's grave, Ike thinks, "He probably knew I was in the woods this morning long before I got here" (328), evidence of Ike's belief in a spirit world beyond this reality from which Sam watches him, and one which many Native cultures would recognize. Also in line with Native cultural beliefs in attending to the dead, Ike leaves an offering. In

an axel-grease tin nailed to a tree, "weathered, rusted, alien too yet healed already into the wilderness' concordant generality" (328), he places a "twist of tobacco" (considered a sacred plant to Native Americans), a "new bandanna handkerchief," and "the peppermint candy which Sam used to love." Faulkner tells us that the objects then disappear "almost before he had turned his back, not vanished but merely translated into the myriad life which ...breathing and biding and immobile, watched him from beyond every twig and leaf" (328). At this point, Ike's inner thoughts replace the narrative as he becomes consumed with thoughts on the circular nature of the wilderness in which "there was no death" since Lion and Sam were

not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in their immutable progression and, being myriad, one (329).

Ike's reflections on the continuous cycle of life are at this moment interrupted with the appearance of a large snake, "the old one, the ancient and accursed about the earth, fatal and solitary" (329). The appearance of the snake as "symbol of death, fatality, and the destruction of paradise" (Turner 230) is evident here, Faulkner once again alluding to the edenic wilderness as "doomed" and tying this theme in with the larger novel as a whole (Utley 209-212). It is important then that Ike acknowledge the snake, not with any fear or sense of danger but with the respect for all life that Sam had taught him:

standing with one hand raised as Sam had stood that afternoon six years ago when Sam led him into the wilderness and showed him and he ceased to be a child, speaking the old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: 'Chief, he said: 'Grandfather'" (330).



At this point, Ike can be considered an initiate and "heir" to the wilderness which Sam has quitted. His unconscious greeting of the snake demonstrates his internalization of the "rules" of the wilderness as taught by Sam while at the same time recalling the symbology of the snake to his own Christian upbringing. But rather than "fear and hate" the snake (like Faulkner tells us he should have felt towards Lion), Ike acknowledges the destructive forces of nature along with the positive forces of life and growth that Sam has shown him. Such a balance between the good and bad within the universe is what all Native cultures recognize and acknowledge. Ike's response to the snake also serves as a counterpoint to Boon's demeanor in the woods. Boon, as the plebian, or mixed blood character, has a distinct though somewhat muted role in the two stories. It is significant then that the final words of "The Bear" are his, as if he is the voice of a "new breed" of hunter. As Ike approaches the Gum Tree where he is to meet Boon, he hears a "steady savage somehow queerly hysterical beating of metal on metal" (330). Faulkner's description points out the alien and ironic nature of such a sound in the woods, metallic noise as being a "primitive" form of disruption. Ike finds Boon beneath the tree "sitting, his back against the trunk, his head bent, hammering furiously at something on his lap" (331) while "frantic squirrels" rush all around him. It is a chaotic scene which is in stark contrast to the gravesites of Lion and Sam and the woods in general, indicative of what is to come after the death of Old Ben. Boon is hammering at his "dismembered gun" as Ike approaches, and shouts "at the boy in a hoarse strangled voice: 'Get out of here! Don't touch them! Don't touch a one of them! They're mine!'" (331).

Faulkner has repeatedly set Boon and Sam apart from the beginning of the story and we are once again reminded of their differences, despite the blood they share, at the end. Such a circular movement is symbolic of the way attitudes towards the wilderness and all that it contains have been inverted from the time of Sam's ancestors to Boon's pronouncement of "they're mine," indicative of greed and ownership of the woods. Boon has literally "turned his back" on the wilderness as he protects "his" tree. Furthermore, he doesn't talk gently to Ike the way that Sam had, instead he shouts with a "strangled" voice, proof that his efforts to communicate his dominion over the woods are both irrational and constricted. In the end, Faulkner is telling us that Boon has come to believe in the materialistic concept of land ownership, despite his bloodlines, and is therefore "corrupted," while Ike, as a "student" of Sam Fathers, represents an alternative ideology concerning the wilderness, despite his.

Like Cooper more than a century before, Faulkner understands that, traditionally, Indian people have a certain relationship to the land which they as non-Indians could never entirely comprehend. Both authors attempted to portray such a relationship as filtered through Hawk-eye and Ike respectively, but ultimately failed since they could only offer up what little bits of Indian culture they knew as writers of fiction. What sets Faulkner apart from Cooper is his concentration on the land itself as a living entity that, whether he knew it or not, was getting getting closer to an actual commentary on American Indian belief systems. As we read his work today stereotypes are apparent and many, although we can better appreciate his attempts to portray a wilderness that is vanishing for not only Indian people but for all people. Therefore, his universal message, that man, animal, and the land which

contains us, are "all of a piece," is now more readily apparent than it was five decades ago when he wrote. Native people have always understood themselves as a people of vision who respect the land and are now being recognized as such and consulted with regard to the North American environment (Knudtson & Suzuki 178-201). Sam Fathers is depicted as just such a visionary in Faulkner, although Faulkner himself could only describe Sam's final vision as a "profound look which saw further than the death of a bear." Possibly, Sam saw a future in which Native people were not "vanished and forgotten," a future which Faulkner himself could not see.

### CHAPTER THREE:

#### "Where You Were and Had To Be": Place, Tradition, and Identity in House Made of Dawn and Love Medicine

*Some major efforts must be made by the Indians of this generation to demonstrate the view of the world that their tradition teaches has an integrity of its own and represents a sensible and respectable perspective of the world and a valid means of interpreting experiences...*

*Sacred places are the foundation of all other beliefs and practices because they represent the presence of the sacred in our lives. They properly inform us that we are not larger than nature and that we have responsibilities to the rest of the natural world that transcend our own personal desires and wishes.*

*Vine Deloria, Jr.*

*I have an idea that American literature really begins with the first human expression of man in the American landscape, and who knows how far back that goes; but it certainly antedates writing, and it probably goes back a thousand years or more. So we have to admit it now, and always think in terms of it. We cannot think of Melville without thinking of American Indian antecedents in the oral tradition, because the two things are not to be separated logically at all.*

*N. Scott Momaday*

*The thing that [American Indian writers] have in common is that English is a language which has been imposed on Indian people through a whole series of concerted efforts. Almost all American Indian writers speak English as their main language, as their first language, but they all come out of a different heritage, background, a different worldview, a different mythology.*

*Louise Erdrich*

When N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn appeared in 1968, literary audiences were taken largely by surprise, confronted with a novel steeped in EuroAmerican language and style yet strangely "American Indian" in theme and content. Many Western critics were quick to label the protagonist, Abel, as symbolic of the "modern man"--and a figure who just "happened" to be Indian. But others, namely American Indian readers and scholars, saw Abel as the embodiment of the displaced American Indian, no longer of the frontier, but of the reservation. Similarly, the characters in Louise Erdrich's Love Medicine, published fifteen years later, are reflective of what it is to be an American Indian living on a reservation in the 1980s. In contrast to the "vanishing American" themes of Cooper and Faulkner, Momaday and Erdrich present novels which centre around the survival and empowerment of Native people through their culture and traditions. What then to make of these "new" kinds of Indian characters in American literature, as portrayed by Native American authors? This chapter will address this central question by comparing and contrasting Momaday's work with Erdrich's in the attempt to illustrate commonalities as well as distinct, cultural nuances in content, themes, and characterization.

Four years previous to Momaday's breakthrough work, Ken Kesey's One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest became a best selling novel that featured the narrator Chief Broom as the stoic but compassionate Indian who befriends and ultimately kills the hero, Randall McMurphy. Such a silent, humourous yet somehow menacing character exhibits more than a passing resemblance to the (ig)noble savage of Cooper's time; yet he was considered by the literary establishment as a "progressive" step for Native characters in contemporary American

literature. Momaday's novel becomes especially important within this context, then, since it successfully combines Western literary convention with the portrayal of contemporary Indian characters who are free from stereotypical description. Momaday, aware of the alienation and confusion felt by Native people in post World War II America, has stated that he created Abel as a composite of young Indian men he knew while growing up on different reservations in the Southwest in the 1950s (Schubnell 102). Therefore, Abel's individual struggle to re-establish his identity and place within his community can be seen as symbolic of the struggle faced by many Indian people in the mid-twentieth century.

In comparison, Love Medicine concerns itself with the issue of how individual identity is defined by, and intricately linked to, contemporary Native community values and identity. In this way, Erdrich's characters come to represent the need for acceptance within community, demonstrating how it can sustain a person, and also, the tragic results of displacement from its protective bounds. While Abel's inner conflicts and struggle for reintegration into his own cultural identity move him from despair to spiritual reawakening in an almost linear, chronological fashion as the novel unfolds, we as readers are left with an individual's story. Erdrich's movement away from the individual to the collective voice is significant then, for the six first-person narrators of the novel illustrate more fully the process of contemporary Native life within and amongst one's own community, tribe, or nation. Therefore, her characters move back and forth through time, telling their stories in an holistic way that allows the reader to understand how the past has shaped the present and will shape the future. But most important, it is also a work that shows how the shared history of time and place has

unconsciously strengthened the community's sense of collective self and identity. In this way, Erdrich's fictional reservation in North Dakota comes to represent the sense of strength that is derived from family and community that is found on many reservations throughout North America (Swann & Krupat 582). What is significant about both novels is that they convey a more realistic sense of contemporary Indian society than that which had been known previously in American literature. No longer confined and marginalized to fulfill stereotypical representations, Native people have now gained a literary voice due in large part to the works of Momaday and Erdrich as two writers who bridge the gap between "accepted" narrative technique and the continued presence of Native people's belief and reliance on the power of spirituality, place, and community.

House Made of Dawn begins with a prologue that establishes what Momaday terms as "a sense of place" (qtd. Coltelli 91) that permeates the work as a whole: "the land was very old and everlasting ... The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around" (1). Against this timeless backdrop Abel is introduced as a solitary figure "alone and running, hard at first, heavily, but then easily and well" (1). To an American Indian reader, such a description of a man running in the first light of day is filled with the symbology and language of a ceremonial nature. Moreover, the notion of him running with difficulty at first but then with assurance becomes symbolic of the path that Abel will take as the story progresses. Momaday tells us that Abel "seemed almost to be standing still, very little and alone" (2). Such an image is reminiscent of Faulkner's description of Ike's entrance into the woods, movements that are "dwarfed by that perspective into an almost ridiculous diminishment ...

as a solitary small boat hangs in lonely immobility" (Go Down, Moses 195). Like Faulkner, Momaday positions humans as a insignificant presence within nature; however, as an American Indian author Momaday is also aware of the power that the landscape contains (Nelson 41-42). Not only is this power of a spiritual nature, but also one which defines identity. Commenting on this aspect of Native relationships to the environment, Lawrence J. Evers writes that

by imagining who and what they are in relation to particular landscapes, cultures and individual members of culture form a close relation with those landscapes...A sense of place derives from the perception of a culturally imposed symbolic order on a particular physical topography (in Wiget Critical Essays, 212).

Given this interpretation of the importance of place to an American Indian worldview, it becomes apparent that Momaday deliberately sets one half of the novel on the pueblo, or reservation, and the other in Los Angeles as a means to illustrate the alienation that is felt in the city. Such a dichotomy of setting conveys the sense of displacement experienced by Abel and many other American Indians under the Relocation Acts of the 40s and 50s (Owens 31). For this reason, Matthias Schubnell sees Abel's situation as one of intense confusion brought on by the collision of cultures:

Abel cannot simply adopt the traditional customs of his tribe as would have been natural in a community unaffected by the encroachment of an alien culture. He turns his back on the Indian world and enters modern America. Here, under the influence of an unsympathetic environment, Abel's conflict is aggravated (Schubnell 103).



Therefore, it is only when Abel returns home at the end of the novel that he regains himself through a ceremonial identification with his own physical self in relation to the world around him, the world of his ancestors.

Whereas both Cooper and Faulkner could only romanticize about their Native characters' relationship to the land in a fictional way, Momaday presents this relationship as a central theme. Unlike Ike McCaslin, Abel is not confined to a "lonely immobility" within nature, rather, he is moving, both physically and spiritually. This is an important shift away from the vague spiritual sense of connection to the wilderness that Faulkner imbues *Sam Fathers* (Schubnell 70). Aware of the importance and place of ceremonies within southwest Native cultures, Momaday is simply better equipped to write about them in a respectful, articulate manner that conveys a more realistic account of the spiritual connection between Native belief systems and the natural environment.

Like the Prologue, Section 1 also begins with an extended description of the land and the movements of the animals and the seasons amongst it:

Now and then in winter, great angles of geese fly through the valley, and then the sky and the geese are the same color and the air is hard and damp and smoke rises from the houses of the town. The seasons lie hard upon the land. In summer the valley is hot, and birds come to the tamarack on the river (5).

The section of the southwest in which the story takes place is mostly desert and arid plain, but is also the area of some of the oldest known villages in North America, something Momaday hints at when he writes, "[t]here is a town in the valley, and there are ruins of other towns in the canyon" (5). Such a textured, timeless sense of place is introduced as if it too were a

character in the novel, a presence which will also play an important part of Abel's spiritual and physical journey. Francisco, Abel's grandfather, is introduced as part of this landscape, travelling by horse and wagon on the "old road" which follows the bank of a river, a road "now used only by the herdsmen and planters" (7) while the new highway runs on a "higher parallel" and contains the sounds and movement of the twentieth century. The year is 1945 and we learn that Francisco is travelling to meet Abel who is returning from war. However, when Abel's bus pulls up he steps "heavily to the ground and reeled" (9), as if the earth and his people's land is now alien to him and he is unsure of his footing. Furthermore, "he was drunk, and he fell against his grandfather and did not know him" (9), further proof of his alienation and loss of awareness and identity. According to Native writer Louis Owens, such action is ominous for "in a world in which identity is derived from community, to not know one's grandfather is dangerous" (Owens 97). Momaday effectively sets up Abel's story as one of confusion, displacement, and despair. Abel can no longer speak the language of his grandfather and the community, rendering him "inarticulate." Not only is he unable to communicate to his own people, he cannot define his own experience even to himself: "everything in advance of his going--he could remember whole and in detail. It was the recent past, the intervention of days and years without meaning, of awful calm and collision, time always immediate and confused, that he could not put together in his mind" (23). In this way, Abel's dislocation is described as an individual dilemma that differs somewhat from Edrich's story of community and connection. In both novels, however, the need to regain and retain an identity amongst one's own people is essential.

Love Medicine also begins with the movements of an individual as told through an omniscient third person narrator. But when we are introduced to June Kashpaw, she is not seen in relation to the landscape but "walking down the clogged main street of oil boomtown Williston, North Dakota" (1), an image which invokes a sense of separation from the land, most notable when Erdrich tells us that June is "killing time before the noon bus arrived that would take her home" (1). June is described as "a long-legged Chippewa woman" who moved as "easy as a young girl on slim hard legs" (1), conjuring up images of both the urban Indian as well as the "Indian princess" myth of the docile, attractive Native woman. Erdrich is fully aware of her choice of words and it is this popular stereotype which she seeks to destroy as she continues to tell June's story, one that establishes a context for those marginalized Indian women like June who find themselves on the streets of American cities searching to find a place within society. June, who often serves as the central, silent protagonist in the novel, and Abel are similar as characters in many ways. Both are portrayed as being "lost" to their community and both are seeking to find their way back. They are both associated with biblical themes, Abel with regard to his name, and June's death taking place over the Easter weekend. In addition, they appear at the beginning of their respective novels engaged in actions that are taking place in the present, while the remainder of the text is concerned with explaining how they got to that point, both through first and third person narrators. While Abel is "brought back to life" through ceremonies which re-connect him to his identity and place within the world, June's death is described as a kind of "heroic" suicide, something which we as readers are aware of while the characters within of the novel are only

left to speculate about. Consequently, her story becomes a kind of modern day "oral history" within the novel.

The resolve which Abel demonstrates as he runs and June's own determination as she walks across the prairie is also remarkably similar, although with completely different results.

Momaday writes

And Abel was running. He was naked to the waist, and his arms and shoulders had been marked with burnt wood and ashes. The cold rain slanted down upon him and left his skin mottled and streaked. The road curved out and lay into the bank of rain beyond, and Abel was running (1-2).

Erdrich's language conveys another sense of movement that shifts from the physical to the spiritual, establishing June not as a victim but as a woman of great strength and conviction.

Even when it started to snow [June] did not lose her sense of direction. Her feet grew numb, but she did not worry about the distance. The heavy winds couldn't blow her off course. She continued. Even when her heart clenched and her skin turned crackling cold it didn't matter, because the pure and naked part of her went on. The snow fell deeper that Easter than it had in forty years, but June walked over it like water and came home (7).

It is important that both authors describe these images of movement within the elements as difficult and physically challenging, but neither character is portrayed as "fighting" against them, rather, they move with them in a way that demonstrates confidence in their journey. In addition, Erdrich utilizes biblical imagery once again, elevating June to Christ like status with her ability to "walk over water," which is fitting since her "return" recurs frequently throughout the novel in the minds and the stories of the various narrators.

While Momaday establishes a sense of place as described by the third person narrator, Erdrich's characters often comment on the land and the community directly. The effect is one

of immediacy and insight into the social environment within which the characters relate to one another. June's niece, Albertine Johnson, is a young medical student who returns home following the news of her aunt's death. Like many young Native people, life becomes a series of commutes between the city with its opportunities, and the reservation with its sense of family. Albertine's narrative then serves as an introduction to the reservation as setting and place. As she drives home she describes the landscape:

All along the highway that early summer the land was beautiful. The sky stretched bare ... Driving north, I could see the earth lifting. The wind was hot and smelled of tar and the moving dust. At the end of the big farms and the blowing fields was the reservation. I always knew it was coming a long way off. Even in the distance you sense hills from their opposites--pits, dried sloughs, ditches of cattails, potholes...The highway narrowed off and tangled, then turned to gravel with ruts, holes, and blue alfalfa bunching in the ditches. Small hills reared up. Dogs leaped from nowhere and ran themselves out fiercely. The dust hung thick (11).

While this description conveys a sense of the land that is less romantic than the southwest as depicted in *Momaday*, it is a realistic one in that it typifies reservations on the northern plains, places where the best lands were sold to non-Indian farmers by the U.S. government (Deloria 30). As a result, most reservations on the plains are on lands that are barren and unusable, a fact that causes Albertine to remark, "The policy of allotment was a joke. As I was driving toward the land, looking around, I saw as usual how much of the reservation was sold to whites and lost forever" (12). However, Albertine also recognizes the significance of this patch of land: "Just three miles, and I was driving down the rutted dirt road, home" (12). Like *Momaday*, Erdrich pays close attention to the land as both background and physical presence. In an interview, Erdrich has said, "When you're in the plains and you're in this

enormous space, there's something about the frailty of life and relationships that always haunts me" (qtd. Owens 193). It is no surprise then that Love Medicine is a novel that depicts a variety of personal relationships that are played out against a continuous background of family conflict, community history, and a search for Indian identity in twentieth-century American society.

Commenting on this aspect of the novel and its popularity amongst a larger, non-Indian audience, Louis Owens has written:

Erdrich does not ignore the racism and brutality of Euramerica's dealings with Indian people, but for the first time in a novel by a Native American author, she makes the universality of Indian lives and tragedies easily accessible to non-Indian readers...These tangled lives are not so radically different from the common catastrophes of mainstream Americans...yet no reader can come away from Love Medicine without recognizing the essential Indianess of Erdrich's cast and concerns (Owens 205).

Such an analysis is correct, I believe, for Erdrich has written a novel that is not as steeped in Native American culture and philosophies as House Made of Dawn, nor is it as concerned with an American Indian's sense of alienation. Therefore, it is relatively straightforward and "guilt-free" for the average non-Indian reader.

What makes it effective as a work of Native American literature is its ability to relate a perspective of collective voice in which the "I" is replaced by the "we." The effect is one of immediate connection to a community, a place of shared experience that most Native American readers can relate to. Commenting on this aspect of her work, Erdrich states that "My first audience that I would write for ... is American Indians, hoping that they will read, laugh, cry, really take in the work" (qtd. Coltelli 47). Such a desired effect is evident

throughout the novel in a way that does not appear in Momaday's work, House Made of Dawn being centred around an individual character in a specific place and time, closely following the structures of Western literary forms. Erdrich has instead created a fictional community whose stories are told over the course of many years. Such a technique is both effective and is attractive to many Native people, something which was on Erdrich's mind, who has said that she "wanted the reservation in Love Medicine to kind of ring true to people from lots of different tribes" (qtd. Coltelli 47). The sense of community, family, and place that is established in her work is what sets it apart from the Indian characters in Cooper, Faulkner, and to a lesser extent, Momaday as well.

It must be kept in mind, however, that a novel such as Love Medicine might be viewed as Pan-Indian literature that generalizes Native culture at times. Indeed, Erdrich has stated that "there is a whole rich mine of Pan-Indian culture people circulate, and I am sure literature is certainly one of those things" (qtd. Coltelli 47). While I have made much of the fact that the community in Erdrich's novel is one that is accessible to a Native readership, there is also a certain danger in a non-Native reader assuming that all Indian communities are alike. Addressing the issue of audience, James Ruppert feels that all texts by Native American authors are exercises in "mediation" between two cultures, Native and non-Native. He defines mediation as "an artistic and conceptual standpoint, constantly flexible, which uses the epistemological frameworks of Native American and Western cultural traditions to illuminate and enrich each other" (Ruppert 3). Such a definition is correct of both Momaday and Erdrich who are well trained in Western literary tradition but who also direct their work to

Native audiences. The question then becomes one of balance, or to use Ruppert's term, mediation, between what is Indian in content and what is Western in understanding.

Momaday's novel is steeped in Southwestern Native culture, with language, symbols, and ceremonies that reflect the belief systems of Navajo, Kiowa, and Jemez peoples. Erdrich's work, on the other hand, is "generic" in the sense, that although it is set in North Dakota on a Chippewa reservation, there is little else to distinguish it from any other reservation in North America. Therefore, while Abel's story is one of individual dislocation and subsequent healing, it is also one that is decidedly Southwestern in its cultural tradition, with very few of the Pan-Indian elements that appear in Love Medicine at times. In both novels, identity is the primary, although largely unstated, issue which affects the characters. Ruppert states that Erdrich's use of multiple narrators is what allows us insight into each character in her novel in such a way as to discern how they view themselves both on and off the reservation or community:

For both Native and non-Native implied readers, the stories Erdrich tells address, clarify, and define the various ways that identity exists in both cultural frameworks. As she layers these identities in the text, they become visible through the merging of epistemological codes that are used to signify psychological, social, communal, and mythic senses of identity. The mediational actions of the author serve to protect and celebrate culture by a continuing recreation of the multiple facets of identity through multiple narratives allowing negotiation to replace simple concepts of identity in either system (Ruppert 132).

For many non-Native readers, and perhaps a few Native ones, such questions of Indian identity within the reservation community is certainly new terrain. While the issue and image of the displaced urban Indian is a familiar one to many, there is less awareness of the "politics"



of identity on reservations today (Owens 7-8). This is the experience that Momaday and Erdrich elaborate upon, each in their own distinct way. While Momaday is more concerned with the Indian experience in post World War II America and the effects of the Relocation Act, Erdrich realizes that another story needs to be told, one that emphasizes the significance of Native families today. When Ruppert indicates that Erdrich seeks to "celebrate culture," I hasten to add that such a celebration is of a contemporary "reservation culture" and not one that is concerned with traditional ceremonies and methods of healing such as is evident in Momaday.

Many readers and critics, Native and non-Native alike, have made much of Abel's process of spiritual restoration and reintegration into his culture and community. In her text, Landmarks of Healing: A Study of House Made of Dawn Susan Scarberry-Garcia defines healing as

the process of achieving wholeness or a state of physical and spiritual balance, both within a person and between the person and his or her social and natural environment. In House Made of Dawn healing occurs when the characters internalize images of the land by means of the symbolic acts of singing and storytelling (Scarberry-Garcia 2).

Such a process of personal and social healing is significant for Abel is a person whose parentage, and therefore identity, is unknown since "he did not know who his father was" (11). Instead, he must rely on the community to assign him an identity based on their own preconceived opinions: "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" (11). In addition, because both his mother and brother are dead, Abel is orphaned in a sense, and must

struggle to understand who he is in relation to his community. This dilemma is further compounded by his war experience and subsequent return, a condition which then makes him doubly estranged to the people of his Pueblo. It is, therefore, only the presence of his grandfather and his knowledge of the ceremonies surrounding the land and healing that allow Abel to maintain his connection to place and tradition. While Abel is oblivious to this relationship throughout much of the story, we as readers are made aware of it as a result of the Prologue. Clearly, Momaday is stressing the cyclical nature of the healing process of running and the fact that such traditions have existed before memory, and, because the story ends as it begins, with Abel running, the effect is one of the cyclical nature of "ceremonial time" itself.

Like Abel, June Kashpaw and Lipsha Morrissey are also seen as marginalized figures within their community in Love Medicine. June, abandoned as a child after the death of her mother, is reluctantly taken in by Marie Kashpaw, one of the first-person narrators within the novel.

I didn't want June Morrissey when they first brought her to my house. But I ended up keeping her the way I would later end up keeping her son, Lipsha, when they brought him up the steps (85).

Marie, as one of the "links" between the past and the present in the novel, also serves as the figure who most effectively represents the importance of family and compassion. Her acceptance of both June and Lipsha into her home demonstrates her unselfish nature as well as providing another point of view from which we are to understand June and the troubled events of her past. In addition, Marie's relationship as surrogate grandmother to Lipsha,

June's son, is referred to, thus allowing the reader another moment of insight into the often confusing nature of family and relations that permeate the story. Since both June and Lipsha can be considered protagonists in this text, it is vital that we as readers understand their personal history and connection to the other characters as we attempt to unravel their stories. This undertaking is made all the more poignant in June's case, for her death is the action which opens the novel and by which we are drawn to make sense of as the story progresses back and forth in time.

Another important factor which unites Abel, June, and Lipsha in the two novels is the absence of a mother. Commenting on the relationship between identity and the role of the maternal connection to one's community, Paula Gunn Allen explains:

Failure to know your mother, that is, your position and its attendant traditions, history, and place in the scheme of things, is failure to remember your significance, your reality, your right relationship to earth and society. It is the same as being lost, isolated, abandoned, self-estranged, and alienated from your own life (Sacred Hoop 209-210).

Such a dislocation from community and self is certainly evident in the characters of Abel and June, who both demonstrate feelings of alienation and loneliness as a result of not fitting into either their cultural surroundings or the conventional, white world around them. Lipsha, on the other hand, is a more contemporary character who is of a generation perhaps a bit more adept at dealing with the issues of Indian identity and the subsequent relationship to mainstream society than older generations of Native people. Although Lipsha undergoes his own struggles with regard to his parentage and his place within the community, he is fortunate to have a foundation of extended family which understands his problem as illustrated when

his grandmother, Lulu Lamartine, tells him "I never thought you was odd ... Just troubled. You never knew who you were" (337). Such statements cause Lipsha to reflect upon his own identity, and in doing so he begins to reach an awareness of the concept of self and place within a family: "I could not help but dwell on the subject of myself ... Lipsha Morrissey who was now on the verge of knowing who he was" (337). This understanding is more fully represented by the reunion with his blood father, Gerry Nanapush, which takes place as the novel reaches its conclusion. It is this reunion and connection to his personal, familial past which, in fact, allows him to forgive June, his own mother, for abandoning him as a child. Speaking about his mother, Lipsha realizes the sense of her actions and concludes, "I tell you, there was good in what she did for me, I know now" (366). Lipsha, unlike his mother, is eventually able to acknowledge the past and, with the help of his grandmother and father, heal the pain and bitterness of abandonment and loss. In this way, the sustaining power of family and belonging can be seen to parallel the healing powers of tradition contained in Momaday's text.

As I have stated above, June's "death walk" across the prairie and Abel's running across the landscape are the two scenes which inform and resonate throughout the respective novels. In Erdrich's work, the death of June is offset by Lipsha's understanding of and reconciliation with the past. The shifting time frame of the narration in Erdrich's text and the manner in which the past informs the present is then somewhat similar to Momaday and how he negotiates the issues of memory and identity. Abel is ultimately empowered through the past by allowing traditional ceremonies of healing to guide his own "recovery" of self while

Lipsha is assisted by family members who care for him and about his past--a past that they all share and have played a part in (Swann & Krupat 587). Consequently, in Erdrich the concept of healing and reintegration is handled quite differently than in Momaday.

As proof of this, one need look no farther than the titles of the novels themselves. While critics have long been aware of the significance of House Made of Dawn as a title which refers to the Navajo Night Chant, thus evoking the themes of culture and oral traditions, critics seem to be less concerned with the meanings conveyed by Erdrich's choice of Love Medicine. Rather than examine how the chapter "Love Medicine" fits into the novel as a whole, or Lipsha's discussion which surrounds it, literary critiques usually ignore its significance. More important, perhaps, is that when critics do engage in a discussion on how love medicine informs the text, it is one that arises from a Western perspective on Indian "superstition." One such critic, Louise Flavin, refers to Lipsha's attempt to use his "healing touch" on family and friends as "restoring the primitive art of witch doctoring" (Flavin 61), and that in doing so Lipsha is resorting "to the superstitious rites of the past" (61). Such an interpretation is in complete contrast to how most Native American cultures would understand Lipsha's character and Erdrich's use of love medicine as a theme in the story. Again, we see an incomplete understanding of the text and the story when it is subjected to a EuroAmerican analysis. Certainly, Erdrich intended love medicine to take on an ironic level of meaning when placed in conjunction with the stories of love and relationships, both good and bad, that occur in the novel, although I believe that to ignore its cultural implications is to miss a significant aspect of the work itself.

To an American Indian reader, Lipsha's ability to heal people through his touch is recognized as a "gift" that is not uncommon amongst certain members of Native society to this day. Lipsha himself is aware of this fact when he asserts,

I know the tricks of mind and body inside out without ever having trained for it, because I got the touch. It's a thing you got to be born with. I got secrets in my hands that nobody ever knew to ask...The medicine flows out of me (231).

If anything, Lipsha's over confidence in his ability indicates his need to learn modesty and how to use his gifts in a way that benefits the community and not just himself. Again, this is a characteristic that a Native reader might recognize, and one that also plays an important part of the scene in which he administers a love medicine to his grandfather, with tragic results.

Love medicine, as described by Lipsha, is something which is approached with much trepidation since its effects are enormous and life long:

when [Grandma Kashpaw] mentions them love medicines, I feel my back prickle at the danger. These love medicines is something of an old Chippewa specialty. No other tribe has got them down so well. But love medicines is not for the layman to handle. You don't just go out and get one without paying for it...You got to think it over. Choose the right one. You could really mess up your life grinding up the wrong little thing (241).

Such description would be recognized by many Native readers, but could prove to be problematic for a non-Native reader due to the "superstitious" nature of such medicines. James Ruppert terms such aspects of Native beliefs in the novel "cultural codes" which "produce a doubling of narrative textures as distinct as the two implied readers Erdrich tries to reach" (Ruppert 144). He goes on to argue that "[both] implied readers must actively work to read the narratives in a unified manner, never completely sure they are reading it right

or reading it completely" (Ruppert 144). I believe, however, that this is not entirely the case as it pertains to the passage cited above nor to the novel as a whole. Love medicine, as understood by a Native American readership, becomes the central metaphor which defines a belief in the "old time" knowledge of the past existing within the present (Thomas 32-33). In addition, it alludes to male/female relationships and the positive and destructive powers of love. Such an understanding could be absent from non-Native literary approaches to the novel since these traditional cultural aspects, or "codes", are largely alien to mainstream society.

In fact, when Lipsha himself falls prey to such Western notions of love medicine as being merely "old superstitions" and "strange beliefs" in a moment of weakness, he takes an "evil shortcut" that causes the medicine to "backfire" (245). By devising a love medicine made from the hearts of two store-bought geese that "was dead and froze," rather than two that he had killed himself, Lipsha feels responsible for the death of his grandfather, who chokes on the heart that is given to him as part of the love medicine that would reconcile him and his wife. At this point, Lipsha is filled with remorse and acknowledges that his "touch had gone worthless" (245), evidence of the loss of his healing capabilities due to his lack of respect and belief in the power of the medicine itself. Erdrich, aware of the cultural nuances contained in the text, effectively plays on themes that convey deeper meaning for a Native audience while at the same time never completely alienating her non-Indian readership.

Similarly, Momaday quotes at length from the Navajo oral tradition which gives his novel its name, demonstrating the depth of Abel's condition and the process by which he is

healed, while at the same time providing non-Native readers with an example of Indian, oral literature:

Tsegihi  
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,  
Dark cloud is at the door (146-47).

The Night Chant, from which this passage is taken, is specific to the Southwest whereas Erdrich's reference to love medicine is familiar to most Native cultures across North America. As I have pointed out earlier, Momaday establishes his cultural focus within a specific time and place, careful to maintain continuity between Abel's search for identity amongst the traditions and the land of his ancestors. In this way, the Navajo Night Chant is well suited to Abel's condition, as explained by Lawrence Evers:

[the] words from the Night Chant for Abel are particularly appropriate, since the purpose of the Night Chant is to cure patients of insanity and mental imbalance. The structure and diction of the song demonstrates the very harmony it seeks to evoke. Dawn is balanced by evening light, dark cloud and male rain by dark mist and female rain. All things are in balance and control, for in Navajo and Pueblo religion good is control (qtd. Scarberry-Garcia 98).

Momaday's use of the Night Chant does not result in a sense of cultural exclusion or "elitism." Rather, it serves to celebrate the powers of healing and wellness that exist within one specific Native cultural belief system--power that is understood and recognized to be inherent in every Native society.



In her extensive study of the novel, Susan Scarberry-Garcia comments at length on the problems that non-Native readers and critics often undergo when attempting to understand Momaday's work. She asserts that while some critics "either disliked the novel or utterly failed to comprehend it, or both" others "still persist in wanting to rethink, reteach, or rewrite their views of it" (Scarberry-Garcia 113). Referring specifically to the Night Chant section, and its importance within Navajo culture, Scarberry-Garcia writes

All of us together face the critical dilemma of needing to know more about the religious dimensions of the text in order to understand the unique literary qualities of the novel. The ritual patterns in the novel are based on mythological stories from oral tradition, and these stories are grounded in religious views of the universe (distinct within each tribe) wherein the land is the fundamental reality. Everything comes from, and returns to, the land (Scarberry-Garcia 113).

Such a discussion on the cultural aspects of the novel are essential then, if only to delineate what is understood and acknowledged from a Native American view and what is interpreted from a non-Native one. Scarberry-Garcia underlines the important role that the land plays within this novel but is also aware that such knowledge is almost always hidden since "some obviously ritualistic events have no oral text in the novel to "explain" them (i.e., running after evil), [and] that a good deal of this "religious material" is culturally sensitive and therefore not available to outsiders" (Scarberry-Garcia 113). In the end, however, she concludes that "Momaday has provided, within the text, sufficient context to understand the basic elements of the novel adequately" (Scarberry-Garcia 113). While I would not argue with this assessment, it is still clear that the understanding that most Native American readers, particularly those from the Southwest, would come away from this text with is decidedly

different than those with a EuroAmerican background. Therefore, House Made of Dawn is effective as a title for it fulfills a certain, almost stereotypical, criteria that a Native American text have a "Native sounding name." Moreover, the title would have other levels of meaning for knowledgeable Native American readers, many of whom would recognize elements of culture and tradition inherent within it.

Apart from the elements of culture and tradition, both Momaday and Erdrich are also aware of the many social problems faced by Native Americans in contemporary society. Their treatments of religion, the returning Indian war veteran, alcoholism, relationships between whites and Indians, discrimination, and unfair treatment within the justice system, amongst others, are all manifested within their texts. Such issues serve as further evidence of the common features that would be recognized by Native American readers due to their direct experience with them. While not every North American Indian would be familiar with either the healing properties of the Night Chant or aware of the power of love medicine, all would be aware of any one of the above social problems.

Both authors, highly conscious of the effect that Catholicism has had on Native American communities, place figures representing Christianity within their text. In Momaday, Father Olguin is the often bewildered priest who lives on the pueblo but is never able to fully comprehend the meaning of the rituals and traditions which continue around him. Sister Leopolda serves a similar function in Love Medicine, although her religious fanaticism borders on the irrational and insane. Both texts, however, balance the intrusion and presence of Western religion with a firm underlying sense of traditional, sustaining beliefs that are still

prevalent amongst the younger generations. This is seen in Abel's eventual understanding of the power of traditions at the end of House Made of Dawn, as well as in Lipsha's understanding of the differences between Western and Chippewa concepts of faith:

Our Gods aren't perfect, is what I'm saying, but at least they come around. They'll do a favor if you ask them right. You don't have to yell. But you do have to know, like I said, how to ask in the right way. That makes problems, because to ask proper was an art that was lost to the Chippewas once the Catholics gained ground. Even now, I have to wonder if Higher Power turned it back, if we got to yell, or if we just don't speak its language (237).

Although written in a humourous tone which underlines the gravity of the situation, Lipsha's comments are no less significant for they describe the differences between then and now, a past he was not a part of, but is aware of all the same. Especially important is his reference to language as a cultural component that has been lost and has resulted in the inability to communicate with either a Higher Power, or to be fully understood by the dominant society (Baker 59-60).

The theme of communication and language is also a prevailing factor in the issue of justice and Native American people. In both novels there is a courtroom scene in which Native people are subjected to a process that is heavily weighted towards the dominant society's understanding of right and wrong. As Abel is being tried for the murder of the albino, who represents evil, or witchcraft, within the novel, Momaday tells us that he sits "like a rock in his chair, and after a while no one expected or even wanted him to speak" (102). Silence, for Abel and in the understanding of many Native American cultures, represents confidence or truth. Conversely, the lawyers are silencing him by speaking for him,

burying the truth in the process, and causing Abel to reflect and feel a certain pity for them:

Word by word by word these men were disposing of him in language, their language, and they were making a bad job of it. They were strangely uneasy, full of hesitation, reluctance. [Abel] wanted to help them. He could understand, however imperfectly, what they were doing to him, but he could not understand what they were doing to each other (102).

Here, the notion of justice is being likened to the manipulation of truth by the mainstream society. For Momaday, such manipulation of words itself is a crime since they are intended to be used for good, as evidenced in the oral nature of the Night Chant. Such philosophy is also suggested in the novel through the character of Tosamah, the "Priest of the Sun," who preaches on "The Word" as it understood in a Christian context:

"And [John] said...`In the beginning was the Word'...and that was the Truth, the whole of it...[but] he couldn't let the Truth alone...He tried to make it bigger and better than it was, but instead he only demeaned and encumbered it (93).

This "sermon" elaborates upon the division between understanding within an oral culture and from a written one, using humour as a way to convey the trickster quality of Tosamah's character. It is therefore significant when readers also understand that it is Tosamah whom Momaday most identifies with in this novel, as if he is the character who best voices the author's concern with language and the concept of truth as perceived within Native and non-Native society (Woodard 124).

In a similar vein, I would argue that in Love Medicine, the character of Albertine Johnson is perhaps closest to Louise Erdrich's voice. Therefore, when Albertine describes the courtroom proceedings of Gerry Nanapush's trial for assaulting a "cowboy," her tone

becomes humourously ironic. Commenting on the expectations of the dominant society's systems of justice, Albertine explains that "white people...are terrible witnesses to have against you, almost as bad as having Indians witness for you" (201). In addition, she points out Native American ways of communication which are in direct contrast to Western concepts of conveying the truth:

Not only did Gerry's [Indian] friends lack all forms of identification except their band cards, not only did they disappear (out of no malice but simply because Gerry was tried during powwow time), but the few he did manage to get were not interested in looking judge or jury in the eyes. They mumbled into their laps. Gerry's friends, you see, had no confidence in the United States judicial system. They did not seem comfortable in the courtroom, and this increased their unreliability in the eyes of judge and jury (201-202).

Louis Owens has pointed out that Gerry Nanapush, who was also rumoured to have "shot and killed ... a state trooper" (211), is a character reminiscent of American Indian activist Leonard Peltier. Erdrich, who was present at Peltier's trial, stated in an interview that she was shocked at the decision: "It was a real dislocation growing up thinking there was justice, and then seeing this process and knowing they were wrong in delivering that verdict" (qtd. in Owens 200). For both Momaday and Erdrich, the issues of language, values, and justice are intertwined within their novels. Their characters, unfortunately, then become all too realistic for a segment of the Native American population who are too often victims of these barriers of understanding.

As another common theme in the novels, much critical attention has been placed on Abel's return from service in the war and the subsequent "post-traumatic stress disorder" that further complicates his separation from his community. Likewise, Henry Lamartine Jr. in

Edrich's work is the returning Vietnam veteran who also cannot readjust to life back on the reservation. According to his brother Lyman, who narrates the chapter describing Henry's inability to function:

When he came home ... Henry was very different, and I'll say this: the change was no good ... He'd always had a joke ... and now you couldn't get him to laugh, or when he did it was more the sound of a man choking, a sound that stopped up the throats of other people around him. They got to leaving him alone most of the time, and I didn't blame them. It was a fact: Henry was jumpy and mean (186).

Such a characterization parallels Abel's dysfunctionality and failure to express himself socially within his community upon his arrival back home. Both figures are then representative of the irony of Native Americans serving "their country," only to return back home to reservations and communities which offer little promise of a future. Both authors are aware of this and it is within this context that the two characters, Abel and Henry, struggle to reconcile their existence as anonymous soldiers fighting a white man's war with their identities as Native Americans belonging to a community of their own. In both texts, such struggle takes on life and death proportions as the need to achieve identity within one's community becomes the central message of each novel. In the end, Abel is only saved through traditional means of song, prayer, and ritual while Henry commits a kind of suicide by drowning in a river, unable to find meaning in either Indian or white society.

Many critics, Native and non-Native alike, have recognized the circular nature of House Made of Dawn and the manner in which Abel is portrayed at both the beginning and ending as running a "ceremonial race" in his journey towards self-identity and reintegration

into his culture and community. Momaday himself has said that "I see the novel as a circle. It ends where it begins and it's informed with a kind of thread that runs through it and holds everything together" (qtd. in Schubnell 137). The same circular pattern is evident in Love Medicine, as Lipsha thinks of his mother June as he crosses over the bridge of the "boundary river" close to the reservation. It is "near dawn," a time of great power and significance in an Indian world view, as Lipsha remembers "how the old ones used to offer tobacco to the water" (366), evidence of his awareness of traditions. Like the opening sequence, water plays a significant role in its association with June and what she represents as the "dark," mysterious, and "twisting" force that runs throughout the lives and memories of Erdrich's characters. Lipsha, who has forgiven his mother and reconciled with his past and identity, is now able to confidently take his place within the community, realizing that "there was nothing to do but cross the water, and bring her home" (367), echoing the omniscient narrator of the opening scene and recalling the image of his mother in the process.

Although House Made of Dawn and Love Medicine are separated by a mere fifteen years, the changes that occurred during that time for American Indians--and American society--were significant and many. These included a growing movement of awareness regarding Native issues, the formation and rise of the American Indian Movement, as well as an escalation, and end, to the Vietnam War (in which many young Indian men took part). Most importantly, for the focus of this work, was the emergence and publication of Native American writing. Following in the path of Momaday, young writers discovered that their own oral cultures, histories, and traditions contained vast amounts of material from which to

draw upon and articulate within a contemporary environment. Therefore, the past becomes combined with the present in order to voice distinct cultural identity through literature. This is demonstrated within both Momaday's House Made of Dawn and Erdrich's Love Medicine, works which often reflect the "cultural climate" of their respective sense of place and the communities which they write about that are uniquely Navajo/Jemez of the Southwest and Chippewa of the Midwestern plains. While the cultural differences in time and place, as presented in these novels, are not always conducive to drawing "simple" conclusions or parallels based on their narratives, what is significant is that authentic and empowering Native voices must now be heeded in their wake.



## CONCLUSION:

### **Tewakaratónnion ne Onkwakara'shon'a: We Are Telling Our Own Stories**

*I will tell you something about stories,  
[he said]  
They aren't just entertainment.  
Don't be fooled.  
They are all we have, you see,  
all we have to fight off  
illness and death.*

*You don't have anything  
if you don't have the stories.*

*Their evil is mighty  
but it can't stand up to our stories.  
so they try to destroy the stories  
let the stories be confused or forgotten.  
They would like that  
They would be happy  
Because we would be defenseless then.*

*Leslie Marmon Silko  
Ceremony*

Throughout this thesis I have sought, using a good Iroquoian metaphor, to "bundle up" my thoughts on the issues of representation of Native people and Native voice in three chapters covering a span of more than 150 years in American literature. As pointed out in the Introduction, my primary aim is to introduce the issues of image and stereotype as they pertain to Native characters in fiction, examine how these representations impacted upon a literary consciousness, and finally, to present these images alongside of writings produced by contemporary American Indian authors in order to demonstrate the necessity of Native Americans writing their own stories. While I have attempted to avoid a revisionist critique of Cooper and Faulkner, I found that certain, stereotypical aspects of their work were just "too good" to pass up and were therefore subject to some critical, highly biased, commentary on my part. In any case, I understand that the "jump" from Cooper to Faulkner is a long one, and that to attempt to fill in the historical, social, and political blanks would be an impossible task far beyond the reaches of this project. Similarly, the attempt to compare and contrast Momaday and Erdrich proved to be equally challenging since they too wrote in markedly different eras with regard to American Indians and their relationship to the United States, not to mention the differences in their cultural environments. In order to address these issues more effectively one would need a larger forum than this thesis allows. What remains important, however, is the fact that their simple act of writing about Native Americans has changed forever the understanding and response to Native people and their place in American literature.

Within this thesis I have also discussed the themes of land, spirituality, and identity as they emerge within the texts. While I have stated that the relationship between Native cultures and the land has become a kind of "New Age" cliché in recent years, the truth is that such a connection does exist. What I have tried to demonstrate is that the attempt to write about this connection has always proven to be painfully inadequate within American literature, especially when it is voiced from a non-Native writer's perspective. As a result, Cooper's and Faulkner's Indian characters often appear culturally "hollow," with little choice but to "vanish" within the text. Faulkner's stories had traces of a vague, nature-based spirituality within them, but it wasn't until Momaday wrote about Abel and his reclaiming of identity in relation to the land and the traditions of his people that for the first time in American literature authentic Native voice was heard. Abel was able to "come alive" in effect, through his acknowledgment and connection to the land. This combining of written literary form with oral traditions which centred around the land resulted in the true beginning of what is now known as Native American literature. This thesis has also shown that in addition to the emergence of this form, the multiple-voiced narratives of Erdrich's fiction further enhances the sense of community prevalent within American Indian society. When looked at geographically, then, this thesis moves in a circle from the East (Cooper), to the South (Faulkner), to the (South)West (Momaday), and finally to the North (Erdrich)--another good Native American metaphor of balance and completion.

### Image and Substance

Beginning with Cooper, the Native as literary figure rose in prominence, if not in popularity, and became the yardstick by which other Native characters in literature were measured. While it may be argued that Cooper was only marginally interested in the actual history of Indian people and their fate, there is no denying the dramatic, resonant tone which The Last of the Mohicans evokes as a title. Despite this direct reference to the Indians, it is clear that Cooper was probably more concerned with the character of Hawk-eye as a new kind of frontier American hero while the language and commentary surrounding Chingachgook, Uncas, and Magua is of defeat and resignation to the encroachment of white civilization. Interestingly, Hawk-eye is also affected by the disappearance of the woods since he too is a figure that, although white, exists on the margins of British settlement in the New England wilderness. In essence, he too is dispossessed of the land and therefore reflective of Cooper's own concern with the concept of land as property and the dangers of commercial enterprise even in his own time.

Echoing this theme of loss, Faulkner places his Indian character, Sam Fathers, in the Mississippi wilderness, where he too is the "last" of his race. Knowledgeable about the woods, the animals, and the power of nature, Sam is mysteriously aware that the wilderness itself is "doomed" by civilization's need to exploit the resources it contains. Therefore, "The Bear" is not a story about hunting or Indians so much as it is about the loss, or death, of the wilderness as symbolized by the killing of Old Ben and the part that Sam plays in bringing it on. Ike McCaslin then becomes the symbol of the white man who must learn to live in the

absence of an indigenous, natural environment. As stated earlier, both Cooper and Faulkner were conscious of American Indian cultures' connection to the land and it is for this reason that their Native characters are little more than convenient "props" within the texts, one-dimensional representatives of the vanishing wilderness. Given such a role, the voices of these Native figures are often silenced, and when they do engage in dialogue it is inauthentic and inappropriate.

These representations all changed in the late 1960s when the emergence of American Indian writers and Native voices upon the literary scene signalled an end to non-Native writers and academics assuming authority on Native issues as they appeared within American literature. After the success of House Made of Dawn, the door was opened to Indian writers across the continent who wrote from the perspective of their individual tribes and nations, chronicling both the history and contemporary social realities of their people. No longer were Indians relegated to the popular image of the Plains warrior on horseback, but could now begin the timely and essential work of educating the mainstream about who we are as a people in the twentieth century.

This is where my thesis fits in, however small in scope, in relation to Native Literature, tribal literature, North American Indian Literature, or however one chooses to define it. I am not Mohican, Delaware, Chickasaw, Navajo, Jemez, or Chippewa, nor am I considered an "American." I am engaged in an academic discourse, however, which in many circles gives me the right to argue and critique on these peoples' behalf and how they have been subject to false representations in literature or represent themselves through literature. This is the

part which I find difficult, since I can only position myself as a Mohawk, born and raised at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, and have attempted to discuss these issues from that perspective. The fact remains though, that all Native people on this continent have felt the effects of colonization, stereotyping, and racism and it is that common ground which has influenced this thesis.

As Native people within the university, many of us struggle with how to articulate our thoughts and responses to issues which pertain to not only our immediate community, but to all Native people in North America. This is especially problematic for we are often perceived as instant "experts" on all things Indian simply due to our very presence at the institution. Although this is certainly a progression from the not so distant past when the non-Native "expert" on Native issues was the authority figure in the university, it is still a precarious position. Aware of academia's expectations of Native students and scholars, regardless of tribal background or academic discipline, one of the best known Native authors/critics in the United States, Paula Gunn Allen, writes of the process with which she handles such situations:

my method is somewhat western and somewhat Indian. I draw from each, and in the end I often wind up with a reasonably accurate picture of truth. And in that context I would caution readers and students of American Indian life and culture to remember that Indian America does not in any sense function in the same ways or from the same assumptions that western systems do. Unless and until that fact is clearly acknowledged, it is virtually impossible to make much sense out of the voluminous materials available concerning American Indians (Sacred Hoop 7).

Like Allen, I often find myself performing my own kind of "balancing act" between what I have learned at university and what I have learned at home within my own Iroquoian

community. Since the two kinds of learning and knowledge don't always fit, it is necessary, as Allen states, to "draw from each" as a means of dialoguing between the two systems. This thesis has been very much a product of this method of thinking. What follows then is a brief "high wire" act that will attempt to summarize the problems inherent in grafting Western critical conventions onto Native American literary forms.

#### Cowboys and Critics: The Indian as Authority

With the recent rise in works produced by Native American writers, a distinctive literary voice has begun to emerge from the First Nations of this land. Slowly, these voices and texts are finding their way into the same institutions that once served to silence them, using the language and style of the "enemy" in order to reassert identity and to establish a better understanding between Native people and mainstream society through literature. This movement is subject to many pitfalls, however, for as Native writers struggle to be heard, they must also struggle to articulate and reconcile their own values and traditions--historical and contemporary--with those of the non-Native, academic world. When these writings are then subjected to analysis by Eurocentric, academic modes of thought, the struggle is often lost; the message is often misinterpreted.

The power and sacredness of words and stories has long been recognized and respected by First Nations people. Our oral traditions serve as a constant reminder of who we are, where we came from, and most importantly, of our roles and responsibilities in this world. Literature, as a written form, is a relatively new concept for us. It is also an alien one

for it removes the speaker (writer) from the listener (reader) and in this way decreases or alters the power of the message. In Western tradition, this is the point at which the literary critic often operates, as kind of "medium" between author and reader. In most recent times this is also the position of the non-Native television reporter and journalist, the one who dissects, analyses, and presents information on Native issues, largely shaped from the dominant society's perspective and made more consumable for the average North American household. In Native cultures there was, and is, no such need for this type of critical positioning of authority for most members of the community share in the understanding of the message, the story, or the ceremony, and are often present when it is spoken or performed. Therefore, the audience is able to observe the speaker or storyteller first-hand, in such a way as to distinguish fact from fiction, truthfulness from falsity, omission and inclusion. This "live and interactive" knowledge, for Native people, is then much more meaningful than the "dead and passive" nature of the knowledge contained in books and Eurocentric ways of thinking.

Unfortunately, however, the understanding of our Native languages, and the teachings they contain, is diminishing. It has been said that "language is culture, culture is power." But for an overwhelming majority of Native people today, their own language is something that has been taken from them through a long and sometimes aggressive process of assimilation and ethnocide via missionization and residential schools. Because so many Native people have been affected by assimilation and acculturation, live apart from their communities, and receive their education in institutions that promote Western learning and values, their own thinking and writing sometimes struggles with the issues of tradition and identity, concepts



of language, oral literature, and more specifically, the validity of writing in English (Baker 62). For some Native writers in Canada, such as Ruby Slipperjack and Tomson Highway, it is necessary first to think or write in Ojibway and Cree, respectively, and then to translate into English. For others, writing becomes a question of what American Indian poet Joy Harjo has called "recreating the enemy's language" in order to be accepted, to be understood, and to gain an audience. All Native writers are quick to recognize the irony of the situation, but see the necessity of writing in English as a means to undermine and subvert the power and authority that the language of the colonizer has had over us (Brant 18).

As part of the de-colonization process, and in the effort to break down stereotypes, playwright Tomson Highway and many other Native writers are gaining increasing status within the literary and academic community, subverting the educational institutions that were once the primary tool of assimilation. These Native American writers see the reclaiming of representation as a process that embraces many forms, many techniques. Since the popular, "acceptable" image of the Indian is an impossible one to live up to, Highway celebrates the Native people of today, while effectively disempowering the negative stereotypes which exist within North American society. He states,

I started writing plays, where I put together my knowledge of Indian reality in this country with classical structure, artistic language. It amounted to applying sonata form to the spiritual and mental situation of a street drunk... As an Indian person in this country, you are aware, like it or not, that that is the first and only way most white people see Indians. It's an indictment. That's our national image. ("Nanabush in the City" 8)

The bridging between Western literary traditions and contemporary Indian reality which

Highway speaks of is vital to the emerging field of Native Literature today. However, even as a term, "Native Literature" is problematic since it implies Pan-Indianism and results in the generalization of all Native writers into one category, regardless of nation, tribe, or background. This in turn leads to ghettoization and questions of applicable literary theory. Consequently, all Native writers become conveniently slotted under one heading and expected to write in a certain, "Indian" way (LaRocque xix). Such expectations are not that far removed from the stereotype of all Indian people living in tipis and paddling canoes.

These theoretical issues of criticism and voice have gained increasing attention ever since the publication of Momaday's House Made of Dawn in 1968 and Maria Campbell's Halfbreed in 1973, when Native authors in the United States and Canada, respectively, found themselves in a highly paradoxical position. They are now "allowed" to be Native people, after years of assimilationist policies in both countries, permitted to be writers and to tell their stories for themselves, after years of having others, i.e. non-Native academics, do it for them, and have even gained a sizable non-Native audience. Ironically, these new-found freedoms and new-found voices have also resulted in an entry into the arena of Western criticism that serves as a constant reminder that as Native people we remain under the tutelage of academic ideology; we merely trade in our status as "wards of the state" to become "wards of the institution."

The question remains, then, of just how useful theory is to Native academics. While this thesis does not allow the space in which to provide any kind of extensive answer, I have attempted to describe how the notion of "criticism," as it exists in the Western world, is far

removed from Indigenous worldviews which recognize that all are equal and that every person deserves to be heard, understood, and respected. However, Native writers and scholars also recognize that, in order for a more complete understanding to take place, we must establish our own, uniquely Native, critical paradigm. While there is no definite, agreed upon model of Native literary theory as yet, or if ever, I envision that such an approach to Native literature may be likened to a "non" Western approach, involving much word play, a few inside jokes, self-deprecation, humour, anger, sadness and elation--all in equal amounts in order to bring about a balance of literary voice that speaks to, and for, all people. Whatever form it takes, I trust that it will not be written in a "language that no one understands."

While Native people may remain at the margins of the literary establishment, looking in on, but never quite accepted within either the walls of academia or on the best seller lists, our writings will continue to educate, amuse, and survive. In the words of Daniel David Moses, a Delaware from Six Nations Territory, "My image of the mainstream is that it is pretty wide, but its spiritually shallow. I don't think that we as Native writers are worried about being 'subsumed'. If we become part of that mainstream we are going to be the deep currents" ("Two Voices" xiv).

Our stories, old and new, are like us. Our stories are resilient and everlasting.

TA NE'THO

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