

The Hero's Search for Identity in Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*

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Abstract

Navarre Scott Momaday's novel, *House Made of Dawn* (1968), delves into the profound theme of identity loss and reclamation, encapsulated within Abel's journey who is the protagonist of the novel. This study explores the intricate layers of Abel's quest to rediscover his Native American heritage in the face of cultural assimilation and invasion. Through a detailed analysis, it investigates the pivotal role of place for identity reclamation and the significance of cultural diversity. Momaday's narrative not only portrays Abel as a culturally torn outsider but also offers a captivating lens to examine themes of cultural preservation, identity, and the enduring struggles of indigenous populations. Ultimately, the research highlights the importance of embracing cultural diversity while reconnecting with one's roots as a means to reclaim the lost national identity. *House Made of Dawn* emerges not only as a literary masterpiece but also as a compelling academic discourse, inviting scholars to explore its rich layers of meaning and significance.

Keywords: Identity Loss, Cultural Assimilation, Native American Heritage, Place and Identity, Belongingness

بحث البطل عن هويته في رواية "المنزل المصنوع من الفجر" لمومادي

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الملخص

تتعمق رواية "المنزل المصنوع من الفجر" (١٩٦٨)، للروائي (نافار سكوت مومادي)، في الموضوع العميق المتمثل في فقدان الهوية واستردادها، والذي يتلخص في رحلة (ابيل)، بطل الرواية. تستكشف هذه الدراسة الطبقات المعقدة لسعي (ابيل) لإعادة اكتشاف تراثه الأمريكي الأصلي في مواجهة الاستيعاب والغزو الثقافي. ومن خلال تحليل مفصل، يبحث في الدور المحوري للمكان في استصلاح الهوية وأهمية التنوع الثقافي. لا يصور (مومادي) في سردياته (ابيل) كدخيل ممزق ثقافيًا فحسب، بل يقدم أيضًا عدسة آسرة لدراسة موضوعات الحفاظ على الثقافة، والهوية، والنضالات الدائمة للسكان الأصليين. وفي النهاية، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على أهمية احتضان التنوع الثقافي من خلال إعادة التواصل مع الجذور كوسيلة لاستعادة الهوية الوطنية المفقودة. لا تظهر رواية "المنزل المصنوع من الفجر" كتتحفة أدبية فحسب، بل أيضًا كخطاب أكاديمي مقنع، يدعو العلماء إلى استكشاف طبقاته الغنية من المعنى والأهمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فقدان الهوية، الاستيعاب الثقافي، التراث الأمريكي الأصلي، المكان والهوية، الانتماء

Introduction

In Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, the leading aspect among the thematic elements is the hero's quest to loosen the complex layers of his own identity, a motif that echoes with profound importance. This quest serves as an affecting symbol mirroring the struggles of a colonized nation overwhelmed by a multitude of adversities, with the annihilation of individual and collective identity standing as a central concern. In this study, the researchers undertake an in-depth exploration of the events encapsulated within the novel. The primary objective herein is to divide and examine various aspects of the narrative that hold paramount significance concerning the central theme of this study.

As Lucic clearly argues in his (2015) analysis, the core of Momaday's narrative centers on the agonizing issue of identity loss and the passionate desire of

young Native American individuals to restore their attachment to their ethnic roots (p. 92). Consequently, the narrative's structure is fashioned around a character's strenuous journey, started in his keen pursuit of reclaiming an identity that had been lost as a result of cultural assimilation and invasion.

This wanderer, the strong protagonist of Momaday's narrative, bears the name Abel. In Momaday's words, Abel emerges as a lonely figure, profoundly estranged and culturally torn, in his relentless endeavor to rediscover his Native American heritage within a predominantly Anglo-centric society, saying: "Abel is certainly the lone, culturally divided outsider seeking his identity as a Native American in an Anglo society" (2018, p. 174). The author's portrayal of Abel, persistent in his pursuit of a great importance, not only echoes deeply within the structure of the novel but also gives the readers a chance to scrutinize and study the text thoroughly.

This narrative of the story, spun around Abel's journey, provides a raw material for scholars to conduct thorough textual analyses. Within the complex interplay of cultures and identities, the novel offers a profound and captivating lens through which to explore themes of cultural reclamation, identity preservation, and the enduring struggles of indigenous populations in the face of cultural erasure. In fact, *House Made of Dawn* stands as both a literary masterpiece and a compelling academic discourse, beckoning scholars to delve deeper into its layers of meaning and significance.

I. Loss of Identity

The concept of loss of identity can be characterized as the "destruction or denial of a particular, meaningful, and positively affective self-other bond which has constituted a central personal identity for self" (Weigert and Hastings, 1977, p.1171). According to this, it means that a person's sense of who they are is deeply tied to their connections with others, particularly those they identify with or consider part of their community. These connections play a crucial role in the process of self-recognition and the formation of a personal identity that imbues life with meaning and purpose.

On the other hand, when these connections are severed or disrupted, it can result in a profound sense of not knowing who one is. This rupture in the link between an individual and their surrounding environment can lead to a feeling of disconnection and self-estrangement. Various life events and processes, such as migration, dislocation, invasion, or any situation that damages an individual's ethnic and cultural bonds, can serve as catalysts for this sense of estrangement and the subsequent loss of identity. Changes in land ownership can have a significant impact on indigenous people's identity (Piatote, 2013, p.36).

Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* starts with a prologue in which readers see Abel running alone on a dirt road in the Indian Prairie. The significance of the events of the prologue lies in its time as it resembles the final scenes of the novel:

Abel was running. He was alone and running, hard at first, heavily, but then easily and well. The road curved out in front of him and rose away in the distance. [...] The road verged upon clusters of juniper and mesquite, and he could see the black angles and twists of wood beneath the hard white crust; there was a shine and glitter on the ice. He was running, running. He could see the horses in the fields and the crooked line of the river below. (Momaday, 1989, p. 1)

The author deliberately focuses on the act of running within the expansive natural setting. This act of running carries a deeper connotation, suggesting that Abel experiences a sense of liberation and freedom when he finds himself alone in a place he genuinely cherishes. Obviously, the prologue marks the period when Abel returns from his journey outside Walatowa. Therefore, it can be inferred that his act of running in this context holds a positive connotation, signifying a profound connection with the land.

Furthermore, the vivid description of the surrounding scenery serves as a crucial element in the narrative. Lucic notes in Momaday's novel that the land possesses its own distinct identity, a theme prominently emphasized in the initial sections of the story. This notion of the land having a unique identity that predates human habitation is underscored by the fact that the narrative's events commence in 1945, while the author accurately describes the nature of the area even before human settlement (2015, p. 93). Therefore, being emotionally attached to this land, which possesses its own specific identity, aids Abel in cultivating a profound sense of his own uniqueness and presence.

This sentiment is particularly evident towards the story's conclusion when Abel returns from Los Angeles and embarks on a new chapter of his life within the welcoming embrace of Walatowa. In essence, the act of running in the open environment serves as a powerful symbol of Abel's connection with the land and his journey towards self-discovery and reconnection with his cultural and geographical roots.

However, the initial feeling of being connected to a particular place, which is evident in the beginning of the story, can only be observed in the brief prologue. As readers move into the first chapter of the novel, they are being introduced to Abel, the central character, who is in a state of psychological turmoil. He has just

returned home after serving in World War II, but he finds himself unable to reconnect with his past and resume his life from where it abruptly paused. The mental and emotional state of the protagonist mirrors the harsh reality faced by numerous soldiers who participated in the devastating war.

The scene in which Abel appears in Walatowa after his return does not portray him as someone who rejoices in his homecoming after a long absence. Momaday (1989) writes:

The door swung open and Abel stepped heavily to the ground and reeled. He was drunk, and he fell against his grandfather and did not know him. His wet lips hung loose and his eyes were half closed and rolling. [...] On the way back to the town, Abel lay ill in the bed of the wagon and Francisco sat bent to the lines.
(p. 9)

Indeed, it is evident that Abel presents himself as a sick and drunk individual, potentially suffering from the fatigue of a difficult journey. From the researchers' perspective, it is reasonable to interpret the protagonist's current state as a manifestation of his post-war mental and emotional instability. Typically, when a person returns to their homeland, they often engage in a contemplative vision, enjoying the attractive landscapes and thinking about the fond memories associated with that place. However, the passages above starkly depict Abel's manner during the journey; he reclines throughout the entire ride, exhibiting no outward signs of joy or enthusiasm upon his arrival.

This noticeable absence of an expected emotional response raises questions about the depths of Abel's inner turmoil. It suggests that the scars of war have left him emotionally wounded, rendering him incapable of experiencing the common excitement associated with a homecoming. In this light, his coldness to the familiar scenery underscores the gravity of his psychological distress, serving as a poignant testament to the profound impact of his wartime experiences on his overall well-being.

Moreover, one realizes that Abel has difficulty coping with his post-war life in the Indian town. Also, he cannot identify himself with the new life in that place and believes that he does not belong at this time. Momaday (1989) writes:

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

The above-quoted lines serve as a clear reflection of the profound loss experienced by Abel in terms of his sense of self, stressing the considerable challenges he faces when struggling to establish a meaningful connection with his current existence in Walatowa. These words suggest that prior to his overseas journey due to the war, Abel possessed a deep-rooted attachment to this place, one that was intricately interwoven with his core sense of identity. Within the heart of his own community, he had cultivated a profound sense of belonging, untouched by the dangerous threat of estrangement. This was a land where distinct social groups, categories, or classes were defined by one or more distinguishing characteristics that were exclusive to all members of a particular category; as Ashcroft et al (2007) argue, "groups, categories or classes...[had] one or several defining features exclusive to all members of that category" (p. 73).

Consequently, the protagonist finds himself trapped in a relentless struggle, incapable of finding his genuine place within the post-war American landscape. The forms of his identity remain indefinable. The echoing truth is that Abel is adrift in a world that has undergone profound transformation, a world where the complex knots of his identity have untied, leaving him wondering the ways through which he can retain his identity.

It becomes apparent that the ravages of war have inflicted profound and enduring effects upon Abel, who, in response, has sought solace in the distressing embrace of alcohol, utilizing it as a means to escape the harsh realities of his contemporary existence. Nevertheless, beyond the real consequences formed by the war, the narrative, as presented by Momaday, unveils another intricate layer of Abel's identity. It is revealed that he has never had the privilege of knowing the identity of his own father, an affecting detail encapsulated within the text (1989, p. 11).

Abel's upbringing was shaped by the guiding presence of his grandfather, Francisco, who undertook the responsibility of nurturing and caring for him during his formative years, a role he shared with Abel's brother, Vidal. However, within this familial environment lies a problematic and deeply troubling aspect. Abel's family possesses only slight and fragmented information about the origins of his father. The text articulates this ambiguity, elucidating, "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" (Momaday, 1989, p.11).

This revelation serves as a clear evidence to the wide existence of identity issues that have entangled Abel's life from an early age. The mere fact that his father was deemed an outsider even within the context of their indigenous

community shows the profound sense of alienation and estrangement that pervades Abel's existence. It is a reflection of the complexities inherent in connecting the separated layers of identity within a society where belongingness is complexly intertwined with cultural and ancestral ties. Without those ties, finding a sense of belonging is a difficult task.

According to Lucic's insights, Momaday's novel takes a deep dive into the complicated interplay between the tribe's position and its profound connection with an individual's sense of national identity. It is a known fact that people, by their very nature, are social beings, finding their existence inseparably intertwined with the communities they inhabit. Solitude, for many, is not a bearable or fulfilling way of life (2015, p. 95). Consequently, tribal identity holds substantial effect over not only one's national but also their personal identity. In the case of Abel, the persistent uncertainty surrounding his father's tribal origin creates a lingering shadow of doubt over the core of his sense of self, raising significant questions about his belongingness within a specific community.

This is not a trivial matter, as Ashcroft et al. clearly discuss in their work firmly asserting that an individual's ethnic affiliation stands as a foundational pillar of their identity, a fundamental aspect of their existence that resists easy denial or negation (2007, p. 75). While it is undeniable that Abel recognizes his ethnic and racial ties to the Native American culture, the ongoing ambiguity regarding his father's tribal affiliation has the power to leave permanent imprints upon his psychological state.

These unresolved questions about his roots and tribal identity, echoing through the state of his psyche, further show the complexity of Abel's journey of self-discovery and belonging within the narrative. As he grapples with the puzzle of his heritage and tribal connections, he faces a profound and intricate task, the outcome of which carries substantial implications for his own understanding of his place in the world. Accordingly, the novel invites readers to embark on this provoking exploration alongside Abel, delving deep into the issues of identity, belonging, and the complex connection between individual and communal identity, all of which converge to shape the multilayered shape of human existence.

Moreover, Bhabha states that there is a potential solution for individuals who constantly grapple with the feeling of losing their identity. Bhabha suggests that one way to address this issue is by engaging in a process of cultural and historical reconciliation. Essentially, what Bhabha is getting at is that if someone feels like they have lost their sense of self, they can start to rebuild it by immersing themselves in a specific history that is intimately tied to their own life story (2004, p. xx).

So, in the case of Abel, one way for him to regain his lost identity is returning to the place where he originally comes from. Readers see this idea unfold in the final part of the novel when Abel makes the poignant decision to journey back to his homeland in search of healing and rediscovery. This narrative element can be seen as the author, Momaday, suggesting a remedy for those who feel disconnected from their true selves, caught in a state of self-alienation, and struggling to establish a meaningful connection with their core identity. In this way, Momaday's story highlights the idea that going back to one's roots can be a powerful means of restoring a deep and genuine sense of the self.

The feelings experienced by Abel during his time in Los Angeles provide a clear window into the ongoing struggles that define his life journey. It is significant to delve into the depths of these emotions to gain a profound understanding of his circumstances and to understand the reasons behind his persistent difficulty in adapting to the style of life in Los Angeles. His inability to forge a meaningful connection between himself and the environment he inhabits serves as an unambiguous evidence to the innate disconnection he feels from that particular place. This, in turn, underscores the notion that Abel does not truly belong in this geographical space and that attempting to restore his split sense of identity by continuing to reside there is a futile attempt.

The narrative presents an important moment when Abel is overwhelmed by an overwhelming sense of solitude and despair. In this vulnerable moment, he experiences an intense yearning to express his inner turmoil, a longing so deep that he contemplates crying out for comfort. "Then suddenly he was overcome with a desperate loneliness, and he wanted to cry out. He looked toward the fields, but a low rise of the land lay before them. The town had settled away into the earth" (Momaday, 1989, p. 105). He focuses his stare on the nearby fields, only to be met by the sight of a gentle rise in the land, obscuring his view of the town. It is as if the very town itself, with its unfamiliarity and its stark contrast to the landscapes of his past, has settled beneath the surface of the earth, leaving Abel in a state of profound isolation and disconnection from his surroundings.

This evocative passage serves as an effective illustration of Abel's inner turmoil and the deep sense of alienation that pervades his existence in Los Angeles. It encapsulates the profound emotional struggle that reinforces his quest for identity and belonging, a quest that remains intangible amidst the harshness of a place that feels foreign and unwelcoming.

The term 'Loneliness,' as highlighted in the preceding quotation from the novel mentioned here, carries profound significance in illuminating the clear reality of Abel's life. Loneliness stands as a pervasive and dominant presence that fills the

very essence of his existence. When Abel made the decision to depart from Walatowa after enduring eight years of imprisonment, his intention was to start a new chapter in life and to retain the values that had been lost along the way. However, the crowded urban landscape of Los Angeles appears to have fallen short in providing the answers to his persistent dilemmas, including the profound issue of grappling with a fractured sense of identity within this unfamiliar place.

II. Role of Place in Identity Reclamation

Los Angeles, a city shaped and developed by the dominant white and the colonizing forces of the past, finds itself unable to offer Abel the solutions he so desperately seeks. The city's foundations, rooted in a history of colonization, inherently carry with them the echoes of colonization's hostile effects on mental and psychological states. As articulated by Frantz Fanon, "[t]he truth is that colonization, in its very essence, already appeared to be a great purveyor of psychiatric hospitals" (Fanon, 2004, p.181). In simple words, colonization emerged as an effective contributor to the production of psychiatric illnesses and sent individuals to mental institutions. Therefore, by drawing upon Fanon's insights into the profound impact of colonization on mental health, one can grasp the inherent limitations of Abel's journey to Los Angeles in terms of addressing his complex issues and paving a path towards the reclamation of his lost identity.

In other words, the crowded city of Los Angeles, shaped by historical forces of colonization, presents an inherently challenging environment for Abel's quest for self-discovery and identity restoration. It is a place where the echoes of history continue to reverberate, and the overwhelming effects of loneliness blur his eyes during his journey.

It should be noted that fear is another emotion shown in Abel's life by Momaday. His feeling of fear has resulted from the danger of the situation he is in. This distress can be felt within the chapters which focus on Abel's life in Los Angeles. Thus, one can conclude that negative feelings are usually accompanying him while he is far from Walatowa, living in a big city. Focusing on the following lines from the novel, one can feel the fear which prevailed most of Abel's life like a swirling fog:

He was afraid. He heard the sea breaking, saw shadowy shapes in the swirling fog, and he was afraid. He had always been afraid. Forever at the margin of his mind there was something to be afraid of, something to fear. He did not know what it was, but it was always there, real, imminent, unimaginable. (Momaday, 1989, p. 116)

Delving further into Abel's emotional turmoil, it becomes increasingly evident that a pervasive sense of estrangement profoundly affects him during his time in the city. His struggle to adapt to the social norms and accepted behaviors prevalent in the urban environment worsens his profound sense of isolation. Abel's attempt to integrate into the daily grind of work, followed by indulgence in alcohol, serves as a futile experiment that fails to provide the solace and relief he so desperately craves.

Dobie appropriately suggests that a prevalent perspective among critics highlights the pivotal role of culture in shaping an individual's identity. It is widely accepted that the culture into which a person is born shapes their identity and fosters a profound sense of belonging (2012, p. 110). However, when geographical separation severs this vital connection, it inevitably gives rise to the feelings of powerlessness, loneliness, and a deep-seated sense of isolation. In essence, the termination of ties to one's cultural roots becomes a catalyst for these unsettling emotions, rendering one adrift in an unfamiliar world.

It is important to consider Bhabha's perspective, which highlights the historical identity of culture as a unifying force, deeply rooted in the past and perpetuated through a nation's enduring traditions, stating "the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the original past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people" (2004, p. 54). In light of these insights, it becomes clear that Abel's profound sense of helplessness in the unfamiliar terrain of Los Angeles is a true reflection of the deeply rooted impact of cultural separation. This dislocation from his cultural identity has left him struggling to find a sense of belonging and endeavoring to reclaim the essence of his lost identity in a world that remains alien to him.

Acclimatizing to a place where one cannot find any relation with its qualities and characteristics is always difficult. Being originally from a very big and open area, Able's psychology refuses to cope with life in a place that he thinks it does not belong originally. This can be perceived in following lines of the novel: "You know, it's dark down there all the time, even at noon, and the lights are always on" (1989, p. 140). In these lines, Ben Benally, Abel's roommate in Los Angeles, describes their room in the city during rainy weather criticizing its darkness even during the day. When compared to the open, sunny, light, and bright scenery in the Indian countryside, the idea of Abel's inability to belong to Los Angeles is foregrounded. Momaday focuses on the free nature of life within the Indian wild and compares it to the busy, compact, and crowded life in the big cities. Comparing it in this way, sends a strong signal to the Native Americans to stay connected with the roots of their culture because getting accustomed to another lifestyle which is basically strange and unfriendly to them.

The above-discussed argument gains further significance and prominence as it appears in various other segments of the novel, particularly in the interactions involving the character Ben Benally. Benally's warning to Abel about keeping their room's window open carries a subtle yet meaningful hint. As he wisely remarks, "it's the only window in here, you know, and it gets pretty stale if you don't keep it open" (Momaday, 1989, p. 142). Furthermore, Benally's comment that "[i]t was kind of hard for him, you know, getting used to everything" further stresses the challenges that both characters, and specifically Abel, face in adapting to the complexities of the city life (ibid, p. 157).

The researchers believe that the novel strategically emphasizes the protagonist's profound struggles with acclimatizing to the urban environment. This is achieved through the recurring presentation of contrasting images and experiences between the city and the serene countryside of Walatowa. This literary technique serves to amplify the stark differences between these two distinct settings and directs one's attention to the reality that Abel confronts. In essence, it emphasizes that it will be a difficult task for the protagonist to find a true sense of place and belonging within the busy metropolis of Los Angeles, especially given his formative years spent amidst the boundless and open expanses of Walatowa.

Accordingly, the novel tells a story that shows how different Abel's old life in the countryside is from his new life in the city. It points out the big problems he has in making these two very different worlds fit together and how hard it is for him to feel like he really belongs in the busy and confusing city. The comparison of his homeland, with its wide-open spaces, to the crowded and noisy city, makes his journey of finding who he really is and where he fits in even more exhausting and difficult.

It is of paramount significance to acknowledge that a thorough examination of the novel's various segments reveals a recurrent thematic aspect emphasizing the frequency of nature's depiction. However, a noticeable departure from this pattern is observed in the novel's third section, where the representation of nature is noticeably reduced. Critics assert that this deliberate omission of nature's portrayal in this part of the narrative serves as a deliberate narrative choice, symbolizing the protagonist's profound detachment from his tribal identity. The author employs this literary device to stress the harsh reality that the hero finds himself displaced from his native land, resulting in the loss of his tribal identity. As elucidated by Lucic, "[b]y leaving out the description of nature in the third part of the novel, the loss of tribal identity is highlighted" (2015, p. 95).

In simple terms, the story shows how much Abel's life has been turned upside down and how he has lost his connection to his tribal roots. It paints a vivid

picture of a man dealing with the difficult aftermath of war. The fact that nature is not described much in the third part of the story symbolizes how Abel has become distant from his culture and where he comes from. It is like a way of saying that Abel has a big journey ahead to find his place and who he truly is in the vast American landscape.

Abel, the central character, embodies the struggle of a man who has been severed from his roots, a journey that started when he departed his homeland to embark on an overseas mission as a soldier during World War II. While he eventually returned to his homeland, he found himself trapped in a web of circumstances, ultimately being convicted of the murder of the Albino, an act that led to his imprisonment for a grueling eight-year period.

Emerging from incarceration, he harbored the hope that he could rediscover the values and purpose that had eluded him in the past, fueling his decision to seek a new life in Los Angeles. Yet, it becomes increasingly evident that his quest to restore his identity remains elusive as “[f]or a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity.” (Fanon, 2004, p. 9). Eventually, Abel realizes that the only practical path toward identity restoration is a profound reconnection with his place of origin—the ancestral homeland of the Native Americans.

While much of the narrative's focus is on the protagonist, it is crucial to recognize that he is not the sole character grappling with the profound sense of displacement from his original homeland. In fact, both Tosamah and Ben Benally share in the sufferings of separation from their respective ancestral lands as they endure their stay in Los Angeles. As it is observed by Lucic, a significant portion of the novel is dedicated to exploring the experiences of these three Indian characters, all of whom contend with a common predicament—their inability to access the lands they come from, places where they once found safety, and harmony in it (2015, p.94).

Lucic further delves into this thematic aspect by asserting that, for these characters, their sense of place transcends only geography; it encompasses the very essence of “individualism and cultural identity” (ibid). In other words, the land symbolizes not only a physical space but a fundamental aspect of who they are and the cultural heritage that defines them. Consequently, the loss of identity experienced by these characters is completely intertwined with their detachment from the land of their origins. This connection between identity and homeland is paramount in understanding the central dilemma faced by Abel.

In this light, Abel's struggle with identity loss has a direct link with his separation from his homeland. It is not surprising that he finds it exceedingly challenging, if not impossible, to restore his fractured sense of self while dwelling far from the very place that once gave his identity. The novel's exploration of this theme serves as an influential reminder of the profound connection between one's sense of self and the land that nurtures it, a connection that transcends mere physical geography and extends into the realms of cultural identity and personal history.

III. Cultural Diversity and Hybridity

Hybridity is a postcolonial term that refers to a condition in which a person owns a mixture of two cultures, the colonizer and the colonized ones, and creates a sense of understanding and realization towards these cultures consecutively (Galens, 2002, p. 232). Although it cannot be claimed that Abel's identity is completely uncontaminated and is profoundly original, yet one can assume that this character lacks a sense of hybridity. He cannot relate to the colonizers' culture and compromise with it. In other words, he is unable to find a common ground between his origins and the whites' culture. He seems to be helpless and his condition deteriorates day after day in Los Angeles. Thus, readers can see his friend, Ben Benally, rejoicing because Abel is heading towards home as he realized that his condition will be better there. Ben Benally's reaction regarding Abel's reversal journey can be noted in the lines below:

He was going home, and he was going to be all right again. And someday I was going home, too, and we were going to meet someplace out there on the reservation and get drunk together. It was going to be the last time, and it was something we had to do. [...] We were going to get drunk for the last time, and we were going to sing the old songs. We were going to sing about the way it used to be, how there was nothing all around but the hills and the sunrise and the clouds. We were going to be drunk and, you know, peaceful—beautiful. We had to do it a certain way, just right, because it was going to be the last time. (Momaday, 1989, p. 145- 146)

These lines show a clear and illuminating perspective on the significance of Abel's decision to return to the reservation. In Ben Benally's heartfelt words, he forcefully expresses that both Abel and he himself are heading back to their homeland, and in doing so, they are destined to find solace and resolution. Ben's speech stresses his profound understanding of Abel's predicament during their time in the city. Through their shared experiences, Ben has gained a deep insight into Abel's struggles and challenges.

In his current belief, Ben firmly asserts that returning home is the path to healing and completeness for Abel. He recognizes that within the familiar embrace of their community and ancestral lands, Abel will rediscover not only his sense of self but also his place among the people to whom he is intricately connected. This return promises a life free from the complications and complexities of the city, where Abel can truly belong and find contentment.

Ben's solid opinion is rooted in the belief that Abel's difficulties in the city can be effectively addressed and resolved within the comforting confines of the reservation. In essence, Ben's words carries the notion that returning to one's roots and the embrace of their cultural heritage holds the key to overcoming the challenges of identity and belonging, providing Abel with the opportunity for a fresh start and a sense of genuine return.

Furthermore, these lines shed light on the fact that Ben Benally faces similar challenges to Abel. Like Abel, Ben longs to return to the reservation because he struggles to adapt to city life. Ben's descriptions of the reservation's scenery and natural beauty reinforce the argument about their deep connection to the culture and the natural surroundings of Walatowa. This connection is so profound that it makes it difficult for them to lead a normal life away from their homeland.

Additionally, the contrast between being drunk in Los Angeles and being in Walatowa is obvious. While most critics who study the lives and culture of Native Americans acknowledge that alcoholism and drug use are significant issues for Native Americans, as stated by Pritzker (1998), “[a]lcoholism and drug use are a large problem on the reservation” (p. 30). Ben's portrayal of alcohol consumption in the Indian country has a notably positive connotation. In other words, drinking in Los Angeles appears to be a way to cope with their suffering and deteriorating condition. On the other hand, consuming alcohol on the reservation is viewed as a joyful act, a celebration of their return to a place where they can truly feel a sense of belonging and happiness.

The significance of these lines lies in Momaday's clear intention to convey a powerful message. He aims to communicate to his fellow Native Americans that the path to healing their mental and physiological well-being lies in reconnecting with their original culture, traditions, and identity. This resounding message shows that by embracing their roots and the cherished elements of their heritage, they can find the remedy they so desperately seek—a way to regain harmony and wholeness in their lives.

Abel's lack of hybridity and his unwillingness of accepting the modern American lifestyle and culture, and his refusal of change in order to adapt to the

new reality is highlighted very clearly in the following lines that prove Abel's reluctance to change. Momaday (1989) writes:

He was unlucky. You could see that right away. You could see that he wasn't going to get along around here. Milly thought he was going to be all right, I guess, but she didn't understand how it was with him. He was a longhair, like Tosamah said. You know, you have to change. That's the only way you can live in a place like this. You have to forget about the way it was, how you grew up and all. Sometimes it's hard, but you have to do it. Well, he didn't want to change, I guess, or he didn't know how. He came here from prison, too, and that was bad. (p. 148)

Discussing these lines, the study believes that there are certain statements in the novel which assert the impossibility of Abel's assimilation by the city life. The above lines show Ben Benally's understanding of Abel's problem and indicate that the lost identity cannot be restored there. The expressions 'change' and forgetting about the past alluded to the fact that one has to detach him/herself from the original cultural and ethnic roots completely in order to start a new life. In other words, Abel has to deracinate and accept a total abandonment of his former and original affiliation. Deracination is a word that suggests the rejection of one's racial identity and it literally means "to pluck or tear up by the roots; to eradicate or exterminate" (Ashcroft et al, 2007, p. 60). Nevertheless, the events of the novel regarding Abel's reaction toward his surrounding indicate his denial of uprooting his native race and culture.

On the contrary, the act of returning to one's homeland after an extended period of migration presents a complex and formidable challenge. Ben Benally, in his deep judgement, recognizes that the remedy for their collective sickness lies in the act of returning to their roots. However, he is highly aware that the chances of securing suitable employment are exceedingly rare, and the pursuit of a better, or even a decent life in their place of origin is by no means easy. Benally's smartness allows him to identify the root causes of their predicament, diagnose the underlying issue, and pinpoint the remedy—return to their native land. Nevertheless, this decision is not without its obstacles, and those who follow the demand of their hearts and embark on this journey must confront a number of challenges, with unemployment waiting for them as the foremost concern. This contention is verified by a closer examination of the subsequent lines in which Ben Benally explains the reasons that compel them to remain in Los Angeles, rather than undertaking the arduous return to Walatowa:

You think about getting out and going home. You want to think that you belong someplace, I guess. You go up there on the hill and you hear the singing and the talk and you think about going home. But the next day you know it's no use; you know that if you went home there would be nothing there, just the empty land and a lot of old people, going no-place and dying off.
(Momaday, 1989, p. 159)

Additionally, these lines can be regarded as indicators of the colonizers' attempt to leave the colonized people in dilemma and doubt in making decisions. Left in a position where one is unable to know what is good or bad for him, an individual fails in recognizing his role in society. In return, he loses connection with his identity. Fanon discusses that issue and argues that the colonizers constantly attempt to negate the existence of the colonized and detach them from any human characteristics in order to cause a self-alienation and make them ask: "Who am I in reality?" (2004, p. 182).

On the other hand, Abel's failure in adapting to the city life and his refusal of change show him as a true Native American character who, despite all the hardship and suffering he has gone through, finds peace and tranquility in the traditional and simple life of the reservation. Lucic states that Momaday was much acquainted with the facts and knowledge about his race and knew that the Indians are aware of their indigenous identity, yet forces from outside worked together against them and want the Indians to think and be the way those outsiders want them to be (2015, p.92). Thus, Abel's inability to alter and adapt can be seen as a sense of resistance against the efforts of abolishing the Native American culture and tradition.

Another subject that is focused on in the novel is emphasizing the contrast between the life in the city and on the reservation. This is also can be seen in the part of the novel which focuses on Los Angeles. One can perceive Ben Benally's description of the two places in the following lines:

It's going to rain all night, I guess. It's cold and rainy up there on the hill, and nobody's there. It's dark and quiet and muddy up there. It will be muddy for a long time. He wanted me to tell him how it was going to be, you know. It's funny how it can be so clear like that one night and rain the next, and go on raining like it wasn't ever going to stop.

And then the train will head south and east and down on the land, and the sun will come up out there and you can see a long way out across the land. [...] You felt good out there, like everything was

*all right and still and cool inside of you, and that black horse
loping along like the wind.*
(Momaday, 1989, p. 168-169)

Here, Ben Benally compares between the nature, climate, and mood of the city and the reservation. Words used in Benally's speech to describe Los Angeles are 'rain', 'night', 'nobody', 'dark', 'quiet, and 'muddy'. The city's climate is somehow disapproved as it rains so often. On the contrary, Ben Benally's memory of the Indian prairie is presented mostly through expressions like 'sun', 'good', 'all right', and 'cool'. These expressions emphasize a sharp contrast between Los Angeles and the Indian lands. They indicate the simple, yet good life which a Native American can live in the wilderness of the Indian land. Moreover, they shed light on the difficulty and hardship felt by those who attempt to go far and live in another place, a big city such as Los Angeles in Abel's case.

In addition to the above-mentioned points regarding the protagonist's failure in restoring his national identity in the city, the third part of the novel, which is also the last part in Los Angeles, ends with "[a]nd he was going home" (Momaday, 1989, p. 190), to indicate the importance of going home. Momaday's emphasis on the act of going home and leaving a city like Los Angeles towards Walatowa in New Mexico can foreground the idea that whenever someone wants to get cured of a psychological complex, losing identity in Abel's case, s/he might overcome those problems through returning to the place which s/he basically belongs. In fact, returning to the original and native land can expose and reintroduce an individual to the culture and the traditions of that place which in return help in the process of reclaiming identity.

Finally, readers can notice that the end of the novel is very significant. The end resembles the prologue in which Abel has returned to Walatowa. It is important because in this part Momaday suggests the cure for the disease that he had tackled throughout the novel, which is identity loss. In this final part, readers can see a resemblance between Abel's current situation and his childhood. Childhood means attachment and belonging to Abel. In return, attachment to land means identity. Momaday (1989) states:

And he got up and ran on. He was alone and running on. All of his being was concentrated in the sheer motion of running on, and he was past caring about the pain. Pure exhaustion laid hold of his mind, and he could see at last without having to think. He could see the canyon and the mountains and the sky. He could see the rain and the river and the fields beyond. He could see the dark hills at dawn. He was running, and under his breath he began to sing.

There was no sound, and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song. And he went running on the rise of the song. *House made of pollen, house made of dawn. Qtsedaba*

(p.

212)

After Abel's return to Walatowa in the last part of the novel, readers can assume that he finally regains his identity by getting in touch with his past again. This idea can be asserted by focusing on the last two chapters in the last part of the story. The first chapter of the last part focuses on Francisco's remembrance of the past memory regarding Abel's childhood. In addition, the second chapter focuses on Abel's present day and the motif of running in the Indian wilderness. Thus, one assumes that Abel has regained connection with his past, specifically with his childhood, as he is running in the fields just as when he was a little child. The connection between being attached to the original land and self-realization is restored. "All over North America, Native American groups continue to press for self-sufficiency and self-determination, including control over natural resources, fulfillment of treaty rights, just compensation for—or the return of—land" (Pritzker, 1998, p. xv). Accordingly, the protagonist's self-respect and determination accompany his reappearance in Walatowa. Once again, he happens to have a sense of the old days when he had feelings of belonging and connection with his surroundings.

IV. Conclusion

In *House Made of Dawn*, the protagonist's journey emphasizes the profound significance of culture in restoring his identity. The focus on rituals and traditions in the novel highlights their role in preserving cultural ties and, in turn, reclaiming national and racial identity. However, it is important to recognize that this process is not one of rigid adherence but rather an acceptance of cultural diversity and hybridity. Abel's path to rediscovering his national identity involves embracing not only his own heritage but also the cultural influences and mutual experiences that have shaped him. As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that Abel can fully reclaim his national identity by returning to his homeland and distancing himself from the urban complexities. This study asserts that N. Scott Momaday suggests a solution for individuals seeking to reclaim their lost national identity: reconnect with their past, memories, land, and the people to whom they belong. In doing so, they embrace the richness of cultural diversity as integral components of their identity.

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