

Momaday: Being and Becoming in Selected Works

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Abstract: This article is a brief survey on late Navarre Scott Momaday's literary works since his passing away on January 31st, 2024. It explores the social and existential dimensions of the writer and focuses on his legacy in the literary realm. Building on *The Names* (1976), *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), and his most acclaimed novel *House made of Dawn* (1968), this article analyzes the works of the author to demonstrate how Scott Momaday's literary productions are part of a whole process.

Key words: culture - identity –Indian - interculturality - hybridity

Resumé : Cet article est une brève étude des œuvres littéraires de Navarre Scott Momaday depuis son décès le 31 janvier 2024. Il explore les dimensions sociales et existentielles de l'écrivain et se concentre sur son héritage dans le domaine littéraire. S'appuyant sur *The Names* (1976), *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), et naturellement sur son roman le plus célèbre, *House made of Dawn* (1968), cet article analyse les travaux de l'auteur pour enfin démontrer comment les productions littéraires de Scott Momaday font partie d'un processus global.

Mots Clés : Culture – identité – Indien – Interculturalité – Hybridité

Introduction

Navarre Scott Momaday, author of *House made of Dawn* (1968), is seen as the most prominent Native American novelist at least for three reasons. First, he won the Pulitzer Prize. Second, he is regarded as the person who kickstarted what Lincoln Kenneth calls the Native American Renaissance (1983). Last, it is an outstanding literary expression of American Indian cultures and traditions with great accuracy. The expression Native American renaissance stems from the outpouring of Native American works of fiction including poetry, songs, and stories after the publication of *House Made of Dawn*. It also refers to this generation of new writers from Indian heritage determined to give a new impulse to their culture of origin.

The works of fiction from the flourishing generation of Indian writers can be classified as postmodern since they challenge and subvert the idea of development advocated by modernity. Novels like *Ceremony* (1977), *Winter in the Blood* (1974) highlight “the reigning theories of the cultural postmodernism” as if they were “written as (...) examples of what Fredric Jameson, Jean-Francois Lyotard, or Baudrillard have been saying about socio-cultural condition.” (Bonca, 1996, 26)

In a postmodern context, Scott Momaday indirectly denounces modernity as the quest for development which has resulted in instability, destruction of the environment, conflicts, and dreadful wars. Muharrem ÜNEY argues that “Momaday seems to have undertaken the mission of preventing their disappearance by writing all these indigenous rituals. In other books he wrote, he acts with the awareness of this mission. All his works are full of stories, rituals, and legends about the cultures of the first owners of America.” (ÜNEY, 2020, 208) An analysis of some Momaday’s literary works like *The Names: A Memoir* (1976) and *House Made of Dawn* permit to go beyond ÜNEY’s stance and decipher the author’s hidden social and worldly agenda. He undertakes a pilgrimage in an attempt to find out his identity. He then surveys the complexities of identity and its acquisition in *The Names*. Last, Momaday discusses the future of this contemporary world, still marked by identity questions, and insists on the necessity of living together through interculturality and hybridity in *House Made of Dawn*. By so doing, he successfully establishes a bridge between identity, Indian and white cultures namely.

As a consequence, this study purports to question identity issues in *The Names*, as an expression of human nature (the Being); then, it will dwell on *House Made of Dawn* as a novel that encourages interculturality and hybridity (the Becoming).

1- Momaday's *The Names: The Man and the Being*

Identity is an important characteristic of many communities, American Indians included. Not only does identity determine an individual, but it also influences his subsequent actions and ensure social and psychological stability. In so doing, as a writer, Scott Momaday, tries to sort out his identity issues as it conditions his existence or his Being. In *The Names: A Memoir* (1976), the writer surveys his identity through origins. The first origin is communal life while the second is more personal. Indeed, the origin of the Kiowas people is essential to them as it determines their mentality. That is why, telling and retelling a cultural myth about their coming to life shapes and maintains a collective character and mindset. In *The Names*, revealing the origin of the Kiowa bespeaks of the importance of identity issues. The narrator explains:

They were stricken, surely, nearly blind in the keep of some primordial darkness. And yet it was their time, and they came out into the light, one after another, until the way out was lost to them. Loss was in the order of things, then, from the beginning. Their emergence was a small thing in itself, and unfinished. But it gave them to know that they were and who they were. They could at last say to themselves, “we are, and our name is *Kwuda*” (Momaday, 1976, 1)

Indian cultural myths, that function like some western religious narration about Creation permit to situate individuals in terms of their existence. For the Kiowas people, knowing their origin serves as a catalyst to forge their pride and subsequent behavior. Understanding the origin of the *Kwuda*, is thus the prerequisite to understanding the consequent unfolding of the novel. This name helps them not to forget about their origin and therefore avoid cultural amnesia. Charles Fisher, therefore, argues that “the name is. . . a kind of monogram for the sum total of a person’s memories ... of affective significance.” (Fisher, 1945, 462) the *Kwuda* serves individual and collective functions.

Identity is also sought by means of language and words since they are used to identify animals, objects, and human beings alike. The use of words, peculiarly Naming, helps solve identity matters. Human cultures have *Naming* of their own; a vast majority of religious and pagan communities alike organize *Naming ceremonies* for newborns as they believe that a name is inevitably connected to the newborn’s future actions, and it can even determine or have incidence of his whole life. Talking about the relation between names and identity, Chad Gordon notes that: “... an individual's name ... serves as his [her] more or less unique ‘identity peg,’ it also locates him [her] in his [her] family and serves as a handy indication of his [her] sex.” (Gordon, 1968, p. 125) Hence, the choice of a given name is the manifestation of the parents’ wishes to their baby. Scott Momaday tries to understand both his name and its origin both from

Whites' and Indians' standpoints. He has been identified by the federal government in these terms:

To whom it may concern: This is to certify that the records of this office show that Novarro Scott Mammedaty was born February 27, 1934, at Lawton, Oklahoma, and is of 7/8 degree, as shown on the Kiowa Indian Census roll opposite Number 2035. . . . By Act of June 2, 1925 (42 Stat. 253), all Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States were declared to be citizens of the United States. (Momaday, 1976, 42)

This birth certificate is the white man's way of self-identifying and identifying people. It also identifies Momaday as an American citizen (an administrative recognition) of Kiowa tribe (a cultural affiliation). Hsinya Huang, in analyzing blood quantum in *The Names*, thinks that Momaday's birth certificate is erroneous. He asserts that "whoever has been following the opening genealogical diagram or Momaday's narrative in his memoir will be able to figure that Momaday's blood quantum is at best 9/16 or less than 4/16, instead of 7/8." (Huang, 2006, 181)

Instead of entering an endless debate on blood quantum, Scott Momaday rather gives insights on the origin (s) of his Indian name and its impacts on him. In *The Names: A Memoir*, he asserts:

My name that's Indian my names Tsothah Tsoai-talee Kiowa George gave me that name Kiowa George Poolaw on his gravestone at Rainy Mountain Pohd-lohk those funny names Pohd-lohk Kau-au ointy that's Indian Mammedaty Huan-toa (Momaday, 1976, 181)

Tsoai in Kiowa language literally means "rock tree," while "Tsoai-talee" means "rock tree boy." In his investigating of tribal names, Momaday confronts the US government's identification of his person. Thereafter, he subverts the federal government's positions on *Indianness* to embrace the Kiowa culture. This name will subsequently influence Momaday's social and professional lives turning him into both a storyteller and a teacher in the white people's world. James P. Welch, another important figure of Native American Renaissance addresses the importance of *Naming* in his novel *Winter in the Blood* (1974). There is an obvious relation between the central character's behavior and his name. As a matter of fact, the protagonist is unnamed. Consequently, he lives an aimless life, shuffling between the Indian reservations and white towns, drinking, courting women and raising hell everywhere. Therefore, the absence of a *Name* creates a hollow character. The protagonist's life has no clear direction or orientation. Hsinya Huang, in "Blood/Memory in N. Scott Momaday's *The Names: A Memoir* and Linda Hogan's *The Woman Who Watches over the World: A Native Memoir*" (2006) draws a relation between Momaday's name and his quest for identity. He explains:

The name intimately connects the newborn to a landscape significant in the tribal memory. It invokes the stories of his ancestry associated with that landscape. It is not his blood quantum, inscribed by the white government, which confers his identity. Rather, it is his

blood memory that functions to reach a self-definition. Momaday counts on the story of his being situated in the tribal lineage for his identification. In so doing, he simultaneously identifies his tribe as a people rooted in the American landscape rather than as one that is imprisoned in the Indian Territory or in the official standard of blood quantum. (Huang, 2006, 11)

Identity is therefore not an administrative process. It rather stems from cultural tales about one's origin, the way an individual self-identifies and his name. Muzafer Sherif and Hadley Cantril develop the connection between a child's psychology and his name. They conclude that during childhood, a kid "learns ... its name and around this name. . . gathers many characteristics that define. . . psychological identity" (Sherif & Cantril, 1947, 199).

Identity is perceived through cultural strata. In some communities, that identity is developed by religion as it describes the origin of human beings. Monotheist religions clearly define people as finite beings, conceived by the Power of the God (a divinity with endless powers). In many Native cultures, that function is fulfilled by tribal folk tales, which trace back the origin of each tribe. These tribes therefore act in accordance with the origin of their existence. Naming and folk tales about cultural origins are of great importance today insofar as they impact the individual's and the community's behaviors. Momaday and the Kiowa people overall have become reverent to the landscape and generally to the natural environment due to tribal folktales about their origins.

*You know, everything had to begin, and this is how it was: the Kiowas came one by one into the world through a hollow log. They were many more than now, but not all of them got out. There was a woman whose body was swollen up with child, and she got stuck in the log. After that, no one could get through, and that is why the Kiowas are a small tribe in number. They looked all around and saw the world, . . . it made them glad to see so many things. They called themselves **Kwuda**, "coming out" (Momaday, 1976, prologue, emphasis original)*

This cultural folktale will thereafter condition these people's behavior and relation to nature. Not only they come to consider themselves lucky and develop a feeling of pride, but they also turn to venerate nature and consider it as their mother. Thus, people can define themselves according to their origin, name, and tribal folk tales.

Naming, cultural folktales, self-determination are all important to this contemporary era for diverse reasons. First, the Kiowas folktales about their origins prompted them to accept and respect their remote and immediate natural environment. That reverence helped them voluntarily or not protect biodiversity and climate. Obviously, one of the most terrifying issues of the 21st century concerns climate change. Momaday's *The Names* thus relates identity with social matters. The author connects his tribal experiences to ecological issues; he also mentions the importance of animals in the functioning of this world. Considering the natural environment,

American Indians consider both animate and inanimate things. One of Momaday's childhood experience highlights the general perception of the world. He describes his relation to a horse in these words:

it happened so: I was thirteen years old, and my parents gave me a horse. It was a small nine-years old gelding of that rare, soft color that is called strawberry roan. This my horse and I came to be, in the course of our life together, in good understanding, of one mind, a true story and history of that large landscape in which we made the one entity of whole motion, one and the same center of an intricate, pastoral composition, evanescent, ever changing. And to this my horse I gave the name Pecos. (Momaday, 1976, 155)

Therefore, the natural environment is made of landscape, human beings, animals and invisible entities. That vision of the world is profitable to this contemporary world insofar as it distinctively considers people, animals and things independent from one another. It celebrates its harmony.

In addition to *Naming*, cultural folktales about origins, memory are another barometer of identity. Collective memory participates in shaping individual and collective history. In many Indian cultures, history repeats itself due to their cyclical notion of time. Learning from one history therefore helps individuals to maintain their pride in high standards and better elaborate their future actions. Momaday's *The Names* dwells on the importance of memory through a mother-baby memory being passed on. Born and brought up by his mom, the author in an autobiographical voice recalls how his mother told him stories from his early age. By so doing, Indian cultures have a unique way of cloning individuals, not physically, but mentally and spiritually. The narrator in *The Names* explains: "Some of mother's memories have become my own. This is the real burden of the blood; this is immortality. I remember." (Momaday, 1976, 22) This way of transmitting culture through memory is linked to genetic determinism as "its importance to heritage and identity are passed down through story from generation to generation" (Weaver 8).

Similarly, Momaday undertakes a pilgrimage to better understand what his grandmother told him about the Indian landscape, animals and other cultural elements. Memory is therefore what keeps his grandmother's identity and tribal culture alive. Through his grandmother's memory, the Kiowa culture is transmitted to Momaday. He explains that pilgrimage both in *The Names* and *House Made of Dawn*. He posits:

Although my grandmother lived out her long life in the shadow of Rainy Mountain, the immense landscape of the continental interior lay like *memory in her blood*. She could tell of the Crows, whom she had never seen, and of the Black Hills, where she had never been. I wanted to see in reality what she had seen more perfectly in the mind's eye, and

traveled fifteen hundred miles to begin my pilgrimage. (Momaday, 1976, 7; emphasis mine)

By telling the author her personal and their collective experiences, Momaday's grandmother and mother instill in him the seeds of eternity in such a way that he appropriates those individual and collective stories and make them his. Henceforth, they become Momaday's own stories, and no difference is made about the true owner of the souvenirs. As a consequence, Momaday's mother stories find immortality in her child's memory and so is that immortality kept alive and perpetuated from generation to generation.

Identity can also be constructed through cultural remembrance and souvenirs that are part of people's identities. They determine the Being and the Becoming of the Kiowa people. Scott Momaday included. Instead of joining a complex and endless debate on Indianness, it is rather better to survey on the shaping on one's identity since the concept has grown intricate, sophisticated, hybrid, and provides mixed results. The author in *The Names* learns both from his mother and other family members. Listening to his parents and grandparents' voices have developed in Momaday a sense of pride and appurtenance; therefore, identity can hardly be separated from culture. "I know the voices of my parents, of my grandmother, of others. Their voices, their words, English and Kiowa – and the silence that lies about them - are already the element of my mind's life." (Momaday, 1976, 8) Cultural stories and remembrance help an individual determines who he/she really is. The feeling of belonging to a particular group, acts as a real catalyzer in conditioning one's life.

Identity has become an extremely complex concept with its ramifications. An Indian identity is today hard to define and formalize with specific criteria. That is no longer possible since they experienced colonization, white people's warfare (with their participation of World Wars), white people's concept of development, and waves of modernity. White America has mostly hijacked their natural liberty and parked them into reservation. There are quite a vast variety of Indians today, living in different areas of the US: some alienated, acculturated, addicted to drugs, others still stuck to old Indian ways, hybrids, living in white America. Even the term Native American is sometimes challenged and rejected because considered non-authentic. Being called an Indian American is often seen as a sign of mixture with white people. Seren YILDIZ surveys on Indian Americans' identity issues and comes to the conclusion that

the changes which have affected Native Americans since the end of the Indian wars have prompted diverse responses. There are those who stay on the reservations quite happily. They maintain their Native American identity, and sometimes enjoy new business opportunities.

There are others who suffer from poverty and drug and alcohol abuse. Likewise, those who have moved to the city, have responded in various ways. Some are happy. They are succeeding socially and economically. Some are those rejecting all remaining Native American identity. Others maintain a balance by visiting reservations. However, there are those who are alienated because of typical inner-city problems, namely, racism, gang culture, drugs, and unemployment, poor housing and inadequate health cover. Their problems are not unique to their community. Some have affirmed their Native American identity and developed institutions in response. (Yildiz, 2019, 12-3)

Identity is thus related to a great number of factors namely cultures. Indianness has become difficult to define due to colonization and the sirens of economic development. Though that problem is not typical to Indians alone, identity is both a collective and individual choice. A community can decide to accept or identify someone as one of theirs; likewise, that decision can be null if the same individual refuses to identify as part of that community. It goes the same for a choice of an individual and a refusal from the community to accept him.

In publishing *The Names*, Scott Momaday shows that identity is felt in the blood and at cultural level; it is also construed. *The Names* is written with a great deal of information from local authorities like his birth certificate. The author dwells on that information he doesn't take for granted, to investigate his Indianness. Seren YILDIZ compares Momaday's identity to the construction of a house. In his Master thesis "Search for Native American Self in N. Scott Momaday's *The Way To Rainy Mountain, The Names, And The Ancient Child*" (2019), he believes that Momaday uses words to recreate his identity as a mason uses bricks to build a house. He posits: "He [Momaday] is well aware that writing is the most permanent and effective way to achieve this, by documenting and recreating it. Each word he uses is a brick of the building that he seeks to construct." (YILDIZ, 2019, 16) In modern times, with the porosity of frontiers, identity is a serious issue to a great number of individuals like people with double citizenship. Momaday's example can thus help them undertake their own pilgrimage to self-identify.

The search for identity is of paramount importance for Indian Americans. Many people are also concerned with in this contemporary era. *The Names* (1976) is a novel which serves as a guide as it demonstrates that identity is multifold and it is the combination of culture, blood, memory, naming, individual and collective choice. Likewise, Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) gives insights on the impacts of identity on an individual's life.

2- *House Made of Dawn: The Man and the Becoming*

Navarre Scott Momaday's oeuvre is part of a whole process, that the desire to find or create bridges between every constituent of the universe. Though most of his literary productions are

based on Native American cultures, identity issues and cultural survival namely, one is tempted to believe that once identity is acquired, an individual has to follow his path without breaking natural laws; one of these laws is that nothing stands alone, and things are interconnected in one way or another.

In *House Made of Dawn*, this interconnection is shown various ways. First, it is perceived in Momaday's unique description of the physical environment. By describing the environment as a united entity, he prefigures or entails that human beings should be united. As a matter of fact, most Indian cultures trace back their origins to nature. Thus, human beings should find a role model in nature by imitating and respecting it.

The light there is of a certain kind. In the mornings and evenings it is soft and pervasive, and the earth seems to absorb it, to become enlarged with light. About the noons there are edges and angles, - and a brightness that is hard and thin like a glaze. There is something strange and powerful in it. When you look out across the land you believe at first that it is all one thing; there appear to be an awful sameness to it. But after a while you see that it is not one thing at all, but many things, all of which are subject to change in a moment. At times the air is thick and languid, and you imagine that the world has grown very old and tired. (Momaday, 1976, 4-5)

Depicting a united world in its differences, a kind of melting pot, open to changes and incorporating other realities. Unity is by no means uniformity, but congruence despite differences or harmony in diversity. Native cultures do not even encourage uniformity; they rather insist that change and development are achieved through diversity as natural elements and human beings learn from one another.

Momaday metaphorizes the world by describing the landscape in *House Made of Dawn*. The house serves various functions to people. In addition to being a shelter, it is first of all the product of people's imagination. They build their houses in their desired shape and size. A house is also made of different materials such as clay or cement, bricks, water, and woods. Momaday considers his Indian reservation like a house. He describes it in these terms:

There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain, and the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different-colored clays and sands. Red and blue and spotted horses grazed in the plain, and there was a dark wilderness in the mountains beyond. The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around. (Momaday, 1968, Prologue, emphasis original)

A house is a place wherein he finds comfort and protection. The parallel between the house described by Momaday and the contemporary world is obvious. This world is made of different races, cultures, and other sensitivities. Emphasizing the unity of the landscape despite the differences in the shapes, sizes, and nature of its elements, is insisting on the unity of the contemporary world despite its differences.

The idea of melting pot finds echo in Momaday's writing quality and styles. He emulates the physical environment by blurring the barriers in literary genres. The American mainstream has set clear difference between literary genres as poetry, short stories, and prose writing are different from one another and have characteristics of their own. An author decides which form is suitable for his production. Some Native American writers will not abide by that rule as they deconstruct that rigid perception of things. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, *The Names*, Leslie Silko's *Ceremony*, make poetry, short stories and prose writing interact in such a manner to create an artistic osmosis. The melting of literary genres like poetry, prose and short stories, and artistry songs is a clear expression of decompartmentalization not only on literary bases, but also on cultural and social levels.

As a Native American writer, Scott Momaday tries to follow or create his own path. He decides to advocate from Native American culture without rejecting his white heritage. This decision is materialized by his choice of using a white people's method of expression: writing. He expresses Native cultures using white people's tools; in so doing, he blends them without altering them. That connection is a pure form of unity sought by the author. Louise Erdrich, in *Where I Ought to Be: A Writer's Sense of Place* (1985), insists on the bridge Native American writers should establish between past and present. That challenge represents one of the key differences between them (Native American writers) and the other novelists. She explains:

Contemporary Native American writers have therefore a task quite different from that of [non-Indian] writers.... In the light of enormous loss, they must tell the stories of contemporary survivors while protecting and celebrating the cores of cultures left in the wake of the catastrophe. (Erdrich, 1985, 23)

Human beings' *Becoming* finds expression in interculturality. This supposes that there is cultural exchange. Colonization has unwillingly created cultural cohabitation between Indians and Whites. Many Indians have been christened voluntarily or involuntarily. Indian tribes are accustomed to learning from one another despite high tensions that may exist between them. In *The Names*, Momaday explains how his mother learnt from his father's culture after their marriage. Momaday describes the character of the Kiowa people in this way:

My father's people are arrogant and set in their ways. I like this in them, for it gives them a certain strength of character, a color and definition of its own. But it means that they are hard to suffer, too. This distemper of theirs was a very serious matter to my mother about the time of her marriage. She came warily among the Kiowas. (Momaday, 1976, 8)

There are both advantages and disadvantages in things. Though considered to be 7/8 Indian, Momaday is no less than a hybrid who learns both from his father and his mother's cultural heritages.

White people and Indians learnt from one another as it can be seen in *The Names* and *House Made of Dawn*. In fact, religion is an integral and essential part of culture. After the damages of colonization, a pacific cohabitation has brought these former belligerent communities to learn from each other. On the one hand, white people have culturally impacted Native Americans

Momaday gives insights of Christianity on Indian people. In *The Names*, a majority of Indians have changed their original names after being christened. He explains the impact of Christianity on his father. He says: “My father, whose Indian name was Huan-toa, was christened Alfred Morris; thus did my grandparents do honor to the Alfred Morris who was a white man and merchant of Mountain View, Oklahoma, in 1913 and a “good man” and friend to the family.” (Momaday, 1976, 34) Names have therefore an impact on people’s life. In this case, not only does the individual acts in relation to the name he bears, but his siblings also endeavor not to disrespect the same name. James Ruppert therefore concludes that most Indian American writers are engaged in the same process. Whether these writers did it on purpose or not, their literary productions are intercultural. He explains:

Varying degrees, all verbal performances studied as Native American literature, oral, textualized, or written, are mixed, hybrid; none are pure or strictly speaking autonomous. Native American written literature in particular is an intercultural practice. (Qtd in *American Indians*, 32)

Indians do not have a written form of literature. Though it is richly diverse for it namely encompasses short-stories, myths, legends, poetry, and songs, it remains oral. Thus, printing these forms of literature is incorporating some aspects of the mainstream in their world, which is greatly advantageous to both communities.

On the other hand, white people have started learning about Indian American cultures different ways. In *House Made of Dawn*, white people’s learning about Indian Americans finds echo in Angela (a white character) and Abel (the protagonist) interactions. Angela joins the Indian reservation in search for a cure. That quest for health bespeaks of some white people’s awareness about Indian medicine’s efficiency. Angela’s acceptance to join the Indian reservation also denotes the absence of stereotypes about Indians. Moreover, Angela learns about Indians circular notion of time. She understands that time cannot be possessed as white folk mistakenly believe they do. She will learn patience in her interactions with Abel. Last, Angela de St Johns, through Abel’s silence, learns how precious words are. Silence in Indian culture is not a sign of disrespect as it is perceived in white cultures. It is rather a sign of respect to the visitor since silence gives this latter to feel at ease and express his mind when he/she

judges it necessary. Angela and Abel's encounter gives insights on the relativity of things because the notion of time and silence have quite different meanings in both cultures.

The *Becoming* of human beings is likely driven towards hybridity. *House Made of Dawn* develops the theory of hybridity different ways. On socio-cultural level, hybridity finds expression in religion. In *House Made of Dawn*, "The Feast of Santiago", is celebrated on the 25th of July. Santiago, the patron saint of the Spanish army" (Cahill, 1999, 6), is a sign of cultural hybridity since that feast finds its origin in the Spanish culture. However Native Americans regularly celebrate it as a sign of their collaboration with Spaniards.

Social integration can be successful or not. Cultural hybridity is felt is Abel's attempt to integrate mainstream; though he does not actually succeed, his friend Benally does. He successfully integrates white people's culture while keeping track with his own Native culture. Benally and Abel's plan to go back to the reservation and reunite with their culture represents a cultural elevator of culturally hybridized individuals. Napoleon Kills-in-the-Timber, a traditional medicine man, believes that cohabitation is possible between Indians and white people. He hails friendship and calls for responsibility when things go wrong. During a cultural ceremony, he makes things clear. He prays:

We been bad long time 'go, just raise hell an' kill each others all the time. An' that' why you 'bandon us, turn your back on us. Now we pray to you for help. Help us! We been suffer like hell some time now. Long, long time ago we throw it in the towel. Gee whiz, we want be frens with white mans. Now I talk to you, Great Spirit. Come back to us! (Momaday, 1968, 100)

Napoleon Kills-in-the-Timber's ceremonial performance is a plea for cultural confluence, friendship, forgiveness, and responsibility. He ends his prayer by invoking Jesus, the leading figure of Christianity, thus incorporating Whites' religion. He says: "I jes' want to pray out loud for prosper'ty an' worl' peace an' brotherly love. In Jesus' name. Amen." (Momaday, 1968, 100) Napoleon is just an example of religious tolerance. Such a mentality is necessary today to roll back religious intolerance and conflicts that plague modern times.

Conclusion

Navarre Scott Momaday is likely the most important Native American writer. His whole collection of literary productions ranging from semi-autobiographies to short-stories, novels and poetry are interrelated since they are part of a same project: theorize on the Being and Becoming of the world.

Above all, Momaday's writings insist on identity issues since they impact positively or not human beings' actions. Momaday also shows the complexity of identity; it is both an individual and collective quest and it can be acquired or given through naming, cultural practices or folktales, collective memory, and bloodline.

Furthermore, identity quest is exacerbated by the porosity of the frontiers insofar as people of different races and cultural affiliations come across. Though those encounters most of the time create tensions, conflicts and sometimes wars, Momaday is optimistic for, these people will eventually come to common grounds.

Last, the future of the world resides in some forms of interculturality and hybridity. These steps are quite inevitable as long as people of different origins encounter. In order to emphasize the need for interculturality and hybridity, Scott Momaday mixes both Indian and white cultural elements like the expression of Indian songs, poems and stories into white people forms of literature.

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