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Delineating the Double Consciousness and Hybridization in N. Scott Momaday's *House*

Made of Dawn

Exploring the Abel's Fragmented Individual Consciousness as the by-product of
Hybridization

Abstract

The increasing beckons of globalized culture, post-colonial state of affairs have enthused an amorphous characters in the world. Much of the literary works have explored upon the diversity of cultures, miscellany and disintegrated psychology of individuals in the times. Socio-cultural, political and psychological unrest during the World Wars First and the Second has triggered a quest for identity, integrity of life and a sense of dislocation amidst of psychological disintegrity. Art and literature have sought to refract and reinscribe this uncertainty and fragmented personal and collective consciousness to its best possible extent. The postmodern literature, more exclusively, reflected the very crisis of individual

consciousness, and mirrored moral-cum-spiritual chaos of the age. Almost, all the novelists have noted this problem of integrating memories and relative aspects of consciousness to unify their whole.

As stated before, the generations have experienced a kind of formless life conditions, hybridized lifestyle in almost all the dimensions of life such as social, religious, political, educational and moral as well. At most, they have postulated a life scenario what Mikhail Bakhtin would call as *Hybridization* of life. N. Scott. Momaday, an American novelist, has captured this very essential collapse of individual and collective social consciousness, in Abel's amorphous character in his *House Made of Dawn*.

The present research paper aims to interpret these conditions of life under the light of similar theoretical disposition by accessing multiple layers of possible interpretations. It endeavors to explore the fractured individual and collective consciousness in which Abel struggles to fit, collaborate and lead his main course of life. The same would also interpret duality of perspectives *Heteroglossia* as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin that drive the entire course of novel. The same would postulate an individual's struggle for escape from memories and unify his soul as a whole.

Keywords: World War II, Double Consciousness, Hybridization, Identity,

There was only the dark infinity in which nothing was. And something happened. At the distance of a star something happened, and everything began. The Word did not come into being, but it was. It did not break upon the silence, but it was older than the silence and the silence was made of it. (Momaday, *House* p. 43)

N. Scott. Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* best rejoices the uncertainty, disillusionment and uneasiness of characters from post colonial American scenario by placing the protagonist Abel into conflicting situations against the backdrop of the Second World War. Abel best represents his inability to choose one either from his roots and the fruits. The protagonist Abel has been portrayed as an amorphous hero who has just returned from armed service of the Second World War. Abel falls as the victim of postcolonial circumstances whose most recent past is sparse and just delineates him as fearless and reckless character. His fearlessness and recklessness stands as symbolic to his disillusionment of American and Indian faced disparity of modern life. Abel's journey depicts the most important tales inspired from Francisco, an old man, who is almost dead and Abel's youth that marks the emergence of Native American Renaissance. Abel defines his struggle to fit into the foreign world as '*Race of the Dead*' taking place once in a life.

Abel, the protagonist in the novel shares all inclusive experiences of cultural diversity due to hybridized culture where he finds it difficult to join, merge due to hybridization and eventually ends with fragmented individual psychology. The social, economical, political and infrastructural developments during the Second World War have introduced society compressed in time and space by the rise of new technology. This newly invented formless society offered suffocative experiences to the generations living in the complex and inconvenient times. Amazingly, Abel is an individual leading in hybrid society that reflects a mixture of heterogeneous feelings, gestures and expressions through his main course of life. The complex theories have widely reflected a social conscience to maximum degrees and extent in the novel. Similarly, Abel in *The House Made of Dawn* exhibits a process of hybridization of cultures that leads merely to disillusionment and denial from the societal set up.

As the novel opens, Abel gets mesmerized by the memories of his beloved father, whose death filled his entire life with disillusionment, severance and estrangement. Abel's appears into the novel, running as '*hardest*' and '*breathless*,' stands for someone who has been away from his native land for a long time and is returning to meet, embrace his motherland. His breathless running is equated to his '*readily act of escape*' from the '*fruits*' he is being offered in respect of his '*choice*' in life. Rather, it deploys his '*denial to hybridization*' process as he no more wish to be in the foreign land. His hardest running symbolically exhibits an act of reunion, quest for identity with the native land. Abel appears as naked to the waist, his arms and shoulders are stained with burnt wood ashes, as if he is returning from the bloody war.

The conception of hybridization has been a multidimensional term that essentially refers to the mixture and diversities of races, identities, colors, cultures, psychologies, and perspectives. The theory carefully examines the plurality of aforesaid elements applied in the construction of the textual worlds. Chiefly, the word 'hybrid' was in use in English since the early 17th century and gained a wide popularity in the 19th century. The post-colonial aftermaths have closely reflected the '*hybrid consciousness*' that was clearly visible in the fragmented psychology of the contemporary age. Simply speaking, the hybridity, deploys a postcolonial discourse to mean cross-cultural exchange of ideas and other all possible elements in society. At most the theory reveals the assimilation, dissimilation and mutual existence of diverse cultures, races, ethnicities etc. The similar course of hybridization does not allow Abel to be happy in the entire course of his life.

Surprisingly, the contrast between Francisco's prayerful meditations on the native land and Abel's drunken appearance in *The Long Hair* exhibits the paradoxical consciousness of the contemporary age. Abel falls down from the bus steps in drunken situation as if he falls down socially, morally, and degrades by all pervasive means in his life. His character

represents the entire disappointment, disillusionment, humiliation and insulting phenomenon from all sides of life. His return with broken consciousness, hybrid psyche that too with obsessive memories of the Second World War especially of massive machine killings of masses evidently explores his sense of alienation, withdrawal from life itself. No more he wish to adjust, collaborate within the foreign land and culture. The clash between his adopted Kiowa, Jamez tradition and the original Indian tradition. The novel leads with several episodes such as *The Long Hair*, *The Priest of the Sun*, *The Night Chanter* and *The Dawn Runner*. Abel, as contrary to his brother Vidal represents the sense of the community tradition, mythical values, but the horrific war and the other relative incidents break Abel's bond with the spiritual and physical unity as well as the bonds between the land and the native people and finally with the entire world. His conflicting situation does not allow him to integrate his interior with the exterior self. His inability to lead within suffocative environment of foreign land and culture is seen as the by-product of hybridized culture and life style.

Once, Abel wakes up on a hill in the afternoon not knowing where he was a quite alone on the grass field where he listens the only sound of an approaching of killing machines and surrounded by dead bodies alone. This dreadful incident fills a kind of psychic disorder, state of disillusionment in him. He quotes

'He didn't know where he was, and he was alone. No, there were men about, the bodies of men; he could barely see them strewn among the pits, their limbs sprawling away into the litter of leaves... (*House*, p. 51)

Moreover, Abel's life journey stands symbolic for the man and land relationship, the physical world of nature coupled with psychological trauma simultaneously. In fact, Abel emblematically stands committed to expose mere destruction of humanity. Everything

happens in life, as Abel witnesses, results from modern technology machines and individuals fail to absorb the modern ways of life. Everything stands for the white men and is considered as an evil for others. The succeeding segment, *The Priest of the Sun* describes Abel's entrance, exploitation and throttling experiences in modern American scenario as if a fish is thrown on the beach in the moonlight only to be dead and vanished. The segment uncovers Abel's killing of Albino, bringing him a life of imprisonment in Los Angeles where he spirals down from a dynamic associate of society to a vulnerable drunkard. The story also transforms an ideal hero of the war to a vulnerable, wretched drunkard. This fall of humanity is symbolic of the fall of human conscience and fragmented consciousness as well. Abel, as Ivana Nakic Lucic says, finds it difficult to distinguish between, "*Indian moral and spiritual vision different from European or American*". (Ivana, *Influence*, p. 93) Eventually, he is heavily beaten up and is left in close to death condition on the beach. Abel finds himself in a state of disillusionment due to loss of his original identity and culture. Significantly, the segment reveals the clash of cultures, traditions, races, ethnicities and perspectives amidst of which Abel stands committed to merely Milly who is the only source of comfort, care, solace and affection in life.

Magnificently, Abel is being place within the circles of hybridization where he is unable to choose one fruit that life can offer to him. His inability to cope up with one culture takes him towards his destruction of individual conscience. The advent of colonialism raised a racist assumptions, clashes of ethnicities amongst varied cultures, races, nationalities and identities. Mikhail Bakhtin, observed its influence upon socio-linguistic, political and cultural dimensions of life. Productively, Abel relocates hybridization of consciousness and sub-consciousness but fails to regain his integrity. Almost all the characters reveals their struggle to fit with ethnicity, identity in the foreign land. The theory undermines the light of plurality and diversity and simultaneously tries to reach the core of each aspect. The theoretical

confluence of Hybridization denotes diversified elements, conditions of life in which Abel finds no solace and develops a fragmented psychology and consciousness which leads the main course of *House Made of Dawn*.

'An insipid voice, message or an incongruent emergence from the 'other' world may disrupt our whole thinking system. If we are not able to deal with the fragmentation of our self and assess the deconstruction of our identity, a corny incident could easily capsize our being. A misinterpretation of facts and expectations may perturb our awareness and unsettle our perception. When 'I' and 'me' don't get along very well, the road to oneness may be very often bumpy. (Pevernagie, Erik. web)

As stated above, the central thematic concern in *The House Made of Dawn* seems to be the search for identity. Abel who is caught between two opposite poles and is unable to come to terms with either. His obsession with his own tribe, culture before he faces modern American culture seems to be prominent in the due course of novel. Rather, his psychological clamor exhibits the crisis of a culture and refuses to compromise amidst changing conditions of life. Abel finds it difficult to accept, absorb and to fit into customs of his root culture as well. His very existence swings from modern American culture to Indian culture. His hopeful return to the tribe also brings nothingness in life as the tribe refuses to accept his newer diluted values. Hence, the novel brings forth merely the clash of languages, religion, customs largely intact with the journey of Abel's life. The traumatic conditions of life, people trapped into dramatic period of disintegration of life that does not allow them to integrate their memories, identity, roots and aspects of their consciousness into a continuous whole.

N. Scott. Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* can be seen as a wonderful synthesis of current state of fragmented consciousness that underlines contemporary traumatic

conditioning enlivened with wisdom, insight and deep compassion for the victims or industrialization, exploitation in life. Abel, signifies the loss of neurological integrity, mental conjecture through his journey from one identity to another which is non productive, but easily painful, full of trial and errors which eventually ends with nowhere accommodation. Similarly, generations in the contemporary period have destined same experiences and have failed to sum up courage to re-orient the main course of their life. Resultantly, they have repressed memories, and breakdown with psychological crisis that makes it impossible to continue in life. Having lost into diversified cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and identities, Abel undermines and tries to re-learn '*everything*' about identity, roots and original culture. Eventually this modality brings only psychological fragmentation, double consciousness, hybridization and no comfort in his life. Hence, he leaves the life as V. S. Naipaul asserts

Life doesn't have a neat beginning and a tidy end. Life is always going on.
You should begin in the middle and end in the middle and it should be there.
(Naipaul, *Half*, 83).

Conclusively, when we meet Abel in Los Angeles, Ben observes a similar disconnection in between Abel and rest of the society. He is seen as a conservative, reserve and in a disillusioned quietness after several years of imprisonment. Rather Abel has formed a discontent towards society, left his job and has grown as a heavy drunkard until it consumes his entire life. It is in this state, exactly in a suitable fashion to the youth at Walatowa, Abel walks out drunkenly at *the Priest of the Sun*. And yet declines in Los Angeles does not hurt anyone than to himself and gets beaten up by everyone. When he returns to Walatowa, he fulfills the obligation to his dying grandfather. His return journey to Walatowa transforms him completely, he facilitates the passage of the last member of his family into the afterlife. He starts acting as the chief father figure of his family - but in reality, the only one remaining

in the family. His imitative act of his grandfather is indicative of the transfer of familial roles from one generation to another. Abel used to listen stories from his grandfather about the importance of staying connected to his people and traditions. It is the time when Abel replaces his grandfather, after burial, he smears his own body with ashes. Abel starts acting, participating in rituals like *Race of the Dead*. As the dawn breaks, Abel begins to run and sing for himself. This is symbolically shown as an act of reunion to his nativity - his root place in the world. The novel depicts several layers of unification of distinguished phenomenon of languages, dialogues, tones and plurality of perspectives as propagated by Mikhail Bakhtin in his theoretical disposition of Heteroglossia. Hence, it offers an ample ground for the play of Hybridization, Double Consciousness and Heteroglossia with its chief concern to central theme in the novel.

Conclusion:

House Made of Dawn denotes upon the dramatic changes amidst of globalization, where Abel is placed in a quest for identity against the backdrop of the World War II. Anxiety, dislocation and fragmentation of consciousness leads his entire life. His very quest for psychological integration, identity is seen as the by-product of his all pervasive hybridization of psychology and very existence as well that eventually ends with loss of true identity only. The novel reveals about the American world, ways giving credibility and confession of an American-Indian consciousness, but not an exclusively one sided view. The authorial voice is pluralistic while encoding Indian moral and spiritual vision as distinguished from European in general and American in particular. Abel's fragmented consciousness is clearly seen as the by-product of his deep rooted identity with a sense of natural surrounding and tradition from which a wider community obtains energy of life. Simultaneously, he confesses, the journey of man separated from natural land causes psychological and spiritual

diseases, develops a sense of alienation and uncertainty. He failure to negotiate and inability to associate within the foreign land, detains himself from social, economic and natural progress. Eventually, happens to return to the native land where fails to regain his real identity as well.

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