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Exemplary Arts: Section A — Subject: Concepts of Emergence and Migration

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SUBJECT: **Concepts of Emergence and Migration**

Edna Glenn

Three Paintings by the Artist Hopid

Figure 7: Emergence
Dawakema (Milland Lomakema)

Figure 8: Migrational Patterns
Lomawywesa (Michael Kabotie)

Figure 9: Spiritual Leadership
Dawakema (Milland Lomakema)

“We believe that we are a part of a great living force which began hundreds of years ago ... Our concept is that we came from the Third World of the Hopi and that now, we are in the Fourth World ... We emerged from underground, somewhere in the Grand Canyon.”

Honvantewa



7. EMERGENCE

Dawakema (Milland Lomakema)

painting, acrylic, 48" × 84"

(Courtesy of Artist Hopid, Second Mesa, Arizona; and Jerry Jacka, photographer, Phoenix, Arizona)

Ideas of EMERGENCE and MIGRATION permeate the consciousness of every Hopi. They structure ceremonial time and provide patterns for daily existence. They are the essence of the Hopi Way, beliefs in the eternal processes of creativity, growth, and life-renewal. They also permeate Hopi art. Perhaps for a thousand years, this has been so.

In this painting, "Emergence," Dawakema presents an ancient event as pictorial reality for a contemporary age. He depicts the emergence of the Hopi people from the Third World into the Fourth World, the present world. He paints a visual narrative in which the Hopi life-stream moves from a turbulent, less-desirable Underworld to a harmonious, more spiritual Upperworld.

The emergence process is revealed through symbolic colors and imagery. Modulated browns and blacks in the lower-half of the painting designate a disturbed Underworld; the sunlit, light area at the top represents an ordered, new life in the Upperworld. In the Third World below, various activities are observed. One speculates that at lower-left a group of tribal leaders, ancient wise-ones, sit and

meditate. They chant prayers and send forth a bird in search of messages or ways of escape from the undesirable life. It is a spiritual quest evidenced by the elaborate “paho” on their left, a prayer stick that guards the ritualistic space. Immediately above the group a light-colored, cylindrical form moves upward vertically. It is a giant, hollow reed through which the Hopi-beings climb to enter the Fourth World. The reed is a four-part form that indicates the three previous worlds inhabited by the Hopi and the emergence of the Fourth-World way of life. A symbolic kiva and ladder are eye-catching motifs as well as significant indicators that the emergence into the Fourth World occurs through the “Si-papu,” a sacred earth-opening.

The time of emergence is visually evident. It is nighttime, moon and stars enhance a dark sky area at upper picture edge. And it is the autumn season when the Women’s Society’s rituals take place during each ceremonial, calendar year. The female leg and related symbolic images at lower-right present this information. Occupying the adjacent rectangular, blue space is an imposing, two-horned, masked figure. Perhaps it is Aloska, the fertility priest, who identifies with winter-solstice time, a time foretelling a new ceremonial year, a new life to come. Bordering his space is a monumental, feathered “paho.”

One black, deity-figure presides over the upper portion of the painting. Emitting from the body is a white life-line, almost like an electric circuit, which interconnects the migrational symbol centered in the kiva. Perhaps this petroglyph-like figure is Massau, Hopi guardian and protector, who controls both the surface of the earth and the Underworld. A symbolic corn ear within his body presents ideas of earth abundance, fertility, and growth to be found in the Hopi Fourth World.

Contouring this total array of sacred images and sun space above is a rainbow arch; and suspended from the arch, in the manner of a jeweler’s pendant, hangs a circular kachina-faced structure, a spiritual icon in itself. One wonders at its beauty, the splendor of gold and turquoise exquisitely fashioned. With radial energy penetrating all existence, this icon-image appears to inhabit both inner and outer space, below and above worlds. Perhaps it is a sun symbol as indicated by the radiance; or a Bear Clan symbol as indicated by blue bear-paw tracks. Bear Clan people provided guidance during the times of emergence and migration; they were the first people to reach the Hopi mesas, the sacred lands; they continue ceremonial leadership today.

Dynamics of color and design classify the work “twentieth century.” Content and symbolism label the work “traditional.” Dawakema’s seven-foot acrylic statement of Hopi emergence is both new and old.



Figure 8. MIGRATIONAL PATTERNS
 Lomawiyesa (Michael Kabotie)
 painting, 51" × 95", acrylic, 1975
 (Courtesy of Maggie Kress Gallery, Taos, New Mexico).

Through a pictographic sign language Lomawiyesa narrates the story of Hopi migrations. And it may be that only the Hopi know the sign language, only they can read this picture.

A Hopi viewer of the painting immediately comprehends the messages: they are signs and symbols telling of events that occurred after the time of Emergence; they indicate that the Hopi people, a chosen people, traveled through immeasurable paths of time and space on earth searching for their sacred homeland. In Hopi traditions this is designated as the ancient migrational period. And it is the subject of Lomawiyesa's work of art.

A Hopi viewer has no difficulty interpreting the painted patterns. He finds identities to clans and societies, tribal ancestors, priests and deities, rituals and ceremonial paraphernalia, astronomical signs, directional codes of travel, and evidence of departed Hopi who occupy spiritual spaces. To the twenty-first century Hopi viewer, there is no mystery about the "Migrational Patterns." They are sacred messages of both particular and universal meaning. They exist pictorially as petroglyph figures on an ancient rock wall or as contemporary ceremonial reminders painted in acrylics on a gessoed panel.

The non-Hopi viewer, unable to read the pictographic language, perceives the painting for its aesthetic value. Indeed, one appreciates its beauty. Lomawiyesa demonstrates expertise in technical

skills, knowledge of compositional design, and sensitivity to artistic form. He utilizes color expressively; the observer knows that the artist responds with great emotion to the content of his painting. Intense colors predominantly red and blue structure the picture plane in vertical rhythms, the observer's moving eye pausing at space intervals just long enough to grasp linear images exquisitely drawn and clustered in three major groups: one at exact center, one at left picture-edge and one at right picture-edge. Stabilizing each of the three groups is an abstract godlike form in votive position whose image is interlaced and overlaid by a network of delicate line patterns. It is a complex painting and the viewer finds fascination in the intricacies of iconography and form.

A modern viewer who is uninformed about the realm of Hopi ceremonialism and symbolism finds the treatment of pictorial elements imaginative and intriguing. There is a spatial quality of fluidity in the total composition. Figures are not transfixed in terms of time or space. In complete silence they seem to project and recede, to appear and disappear. They are of the tenth century, the twenty-first century, and of time in-between. Such a fanciful display brings visions of outer-space adventure, the possibility of a sudden confrontation with a splendid body of unidentifiable creatures floating in luminous galactic regions. One wishes to probe their origins, discover their mission and destination. Is Lomawyesa's pictorial fantasy actually a video screen where whimsical animated characters move in and out of vision through computer controls?

The truth of the painting lies within the artist himself. Lomawyesa is both Hopi and painter. The pictographic imagery belongs to a private world, his individual world which is both aesthetic and spiritual in dimension. They are the sacred symbols of the Snow/Water Clan; thus, they reveal the artist's clan identity. And they interpret the Hopi migrations as a ceremonial event of Snow/Water People. The artist utilizes the subject of "Migrational Patterns" to construct a composite picture of his clan beliefs.

Sacred clouds, rain, snow, water, lightning, and serpent symbols are among the recognizable iconographic elements that state Lomawyesa's tribal identity. Two important configurations at lower picture-edge present visual proof that his ancestral people participated in Emergence and Migration. At the right corner there is an Emergence pattern showing a Hopi prayer-stick emerging from the center and extending toward a sacred water-serpent form. At the left corner there is a rectangular migrational symbol showing four directional clan movements, intersected by a Hopi prayer-stick and bordered at one side by a water-related, jagged sign of lightning. Also included are squash and corn plants, essential ceremonial components for the Snow/Water Clan.

A dominance of the color red in the composition may have symbolic significance. Reds, of the most brilliant hue, enter the lower center picture-edge, move upward and envelop the principal deity-figure of the composition. Visually, the artist confirms a personal belief that his tribal ancestors migrated north from a legendary red city in the south.

The ancient journeys of people toward a spiritual center continue with significance to the Hopi consciousness today. Lomawyesa proves that he is a modern migrant on the Hopi Way. With purpose, he travels the paths of creativity through the arts. With inherent reverence for tribal ceremonialism, he searches for soul strengths so necessary for life in a contemporary age.



Figure 9. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP
Dawakema (Milland Lomakema)
painting, acrylic, 1974 (Courtesy of Artist Hopid, Second Mesa, Arizona)

Dawakema's painting provides a compact slice-of-life view of the Hopi universe. What a dimly-lit, self-contained, compressed space it is. How compact the figures are as they perform their ritual tasks. Activity is vigorous, vitality and movement are so intense that the scene could, within an instant, disappear from view.

Clues to the content of the artwork are found in the title and painted imagery: the Bear Clan provides spiritual leadership during the time of Hopi migrations. Three closely interwoven figures establish the presence and significance of Bear Clan guidance. One is a recognizable bear figure regally wrapped in a ceremonial robe. The deified bear asserts spiritual power over the second major image, a seated humanoid figure whose symbolic identity is primarily revealed by two feet resembling bear paws. Completing the three-part ceremonial unit is a corn plant richly endowed with perfect corn ears, one of them taking on the appearance of a sacred Hopi corn-maiden.

The total scene is taut with creative energy. Here, Bear Clan spiritual power asserts itself and assures the Hopi people that during the long period of migrations they will be continuously guided and blessed with water, food sustenance, and spiritual strengths. Here, Dawakema the painter asserts his own clan identity. He discloses a genuine devotion and personal loyalty to Bear Clan belief-systems. The symbolic Bear Clan group seems to utilize an east-to-west migration path that proceeds from right to left in the lower section of the painting. A decorative band, superbly patterned with flowing-water designs, indicates blessings of water as well as continuous spiritual growths.

The message is so strongly presented. The most minute of compositional elements becomes the most potent of pictorial ceremonial elements at the top right corner: two small concentric circles emit three directional rays of energy. One ray commands attention to the upper left corner where a complex iconographical group reveals an emergence symbol plus kiva steps and cloud altar signs. This is a composite statement indicating the evolvement of Hopi people into a Fourth-World existence from three previous states of being. A second ray passing through the sacred corn plant falls on the two bear deities; a third ray extends vertically downward to the Hopi corn-maiden. Surely, the circle forms indicate the spiritual center of the Hopi universe, a magnetic force energizing Bear Clan deities as they exert strengths to lead a migrating Hopi people. Could the concentric circle-forms also identify with solar power from a circular-shaped sun, the universal life source? In a twenty-first century exploratory view, could the tightly integrated grouping of bear and corn sacred images become a dynamic mechanism with kinetic properties? There is an impelling desire to touch the small energy-circle at top right corner with the tip of one's finger, believing that such a gesture would certainly set all systems on "go." Compressed space, so harmoniously structured with vital elements now becomes activated, and all parts move with patterned precision. Dawakema has invented a Hopi fantasy-machine as well as a painting.

There is further fascination with the unique viewpoint into a section-slice of the Hopi universe. Colors are so subtle; content is so specialized. Could it be the view one has when looking into a Hopi ceremonial bowl where sacred spirits are believed to reside? Does it represent the opening one utilizes, the view one has when descending the ladder into an underground kiva chamber - the place where the most sacred of rituals occurs? Painted textures fill the outer edges of the composition. What do they imply? Is it a fragmented view into an ancient decorated basket, or a glimpse through a torn piece of ceremonial cloth, one that is handwoven and patterned with mystical images?

In any one of these circumstances the moment of looking, wondering, and knowing provides a rare experience for the observer. Essentially, the painter reasserts an identity with the Hopi past, and reaffirms the significance of Bear Clan spiritual leadership in the Hopi present.