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is to be commended for reprinting this selection of Horatio E. Hale's work.

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Ancestral Voice: Conversations with N. Scott Momaday. By Charles L. Woodard. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989. 179 pages. \$19.95 Cloth.

Despite its subtitle, this book might be called yet another (extended) interview with yet another contemporary writer, and these days such interviews are everywhere: writers chattering away as never before, eager to explain themselves as if seriously worried about losing their voices amidst the deafening din of the killer theorists. Or maybe not. Maybe real writers like Momaday know a secret: Real readers love to listen to writers they know, simply because writers talking about themselves are irresistible and fascinating and, even now, continue to have an authority other literary commentators only wish for.

In fact, *Ancestral Voice* is far more than an extended interview; it is an altogether new form, a work of art in its own right, a multi-voiced, mixed-media grand thing. Momaday talking is at the volume's heart (transcribed conversations divided into six chapters, a "sequence that roughly parallels the progression of Momaday's life" [p. xi]), but it also includes twenty-three reproductions of Momaday's paintings, two photographs of the man himself, several excerpts from his poetry and prose, and, at the beginning of each chapter, explication and commentary on Momaday's work by the editor, Charles L. Woodard.

Woodard is an expert on Momaday as well as the subtle shaper of this artful volume (the paintings, for example, by their selection and placement, address and illuminate the narrative as well as confront it with a variety of Momaday-made faces, which also speak). Woodard also is one of two characters in a relaxed, lengthy, almost novelistic dialogue or, to repeat his own term, "conversation." Momaday's voice is what we pay for, but Woodard's is always there, too—confident and familiar, the voice of an old friend and student, smart and direct, never obtrusive or pushy but never lazy either and always allowing for tangents and digressions, those out-of-the-way twists and turns that gradually

allow readers at least the illusion that they are getting to know N. Scott Momaday on familiar terms:

MOMADAY: . . . Among the people with whom I like to converse, probably seven out of ten are women. Once in a while I can fall easily into conversation with a man. I'm now talking about my adulthood. When I was a teenager and palling around with buddies, it was very easy to talk to them. But past that state, I have found it more difficult to talk to men than to women. This is going to be a psychological exposé of some kind.

CLW: [Laughing.] Not at all. I think there's something to what you say in my experience, and I can't fully explain it either. Maybe it has something to do with the greater hesitancy of men to exist in language, to use your term. Women tend to be more comfortable in the medium of words. At least, that's true of most of the men and women I've known.

MOMADAY: I wouldn't be surprised if that's the case.

CLW: We're shaping some great sociological statement about America here.

MOMADAY: We're breaking ground. [Laughing.]

CLW: Is conversation an art form?

MOMADAY: Oh yes. Certainly. And I have delighted in overhearing conversations that were artistic. I like to listen to people talk. I enjoyed the Dick Cavett show, because Cavett is so articulate and apparently at ease, and his guests on that show were by and large people who were very interesting to listen to, and Cavett had the knack of bringing them out. So when I watched that, I had the sense that it was an art form. Cavett was making it artistic.

CLW: Was he creating himself as well as creating language?

MOMADAY: Absolutely.

CLW: And there were different Cavetts? There were different selves in different circumstances (p. 98)?

Part of the charm of these conversations is that neither voice is trying to make literary history or monumental pronouncements. Unlike, say, the *Paris Review* interviews, always so studied, self-important, and concise, here the luxury of book-length space allows a leisurely unfolding and much room for lifelike wanderings.

Partly because of its length, its repetitions, its odd change-of-pace form, *Ancestral Voice* forces the reader to pay attention and listen, really listen, to Momaday's soft and gentle voice, at times effortlessly wise, at times engagingly ordinary. One grows to like this man, and if occasionally one wants to warn him about potential shark attacks (of deconstruction he says, "I must confess that I haven't the foggiest notion of what that is, and it's not something I intend to investigate" [p. 137]), one is more often struck by his quiet sophistication and his possession of certain mighty powers undreamed of by the systematizers or the post-Freudians:

It is a kind of transformation. It occurs when I think of such things as the story of Devil's Tower. I think of the word *reincarnation*, and I think sometimes that my voice is the reincarnation of a voice from my ancestral past. Not only when I write but when I lecture, even when I speak on a one-to-one basis, I sometimes have that feeling, and think, Yes, this voice of mine is proceeding from a great distance in the past (p. 112).

Or consider his bear power:

It is so real to me that understanding is almost beside the point. I am a bear. I do have this capacity to become a bear. The bear sometimes takes me over and I am transformed. I never know precisely when it is going to happen. Sometimes it becomes a struggle (p. 15).

The several pages spent seriously discussing this phenomenon are replete with such dignity and sense of mystery that one may easily come to regard it as more credible than most explanations of artistic motivation:

Probably in every generation there is a reincarnation of the bear—the boy bear. And I feel that I am such a reincarnation, and I am very curious about it. The way I deal with it, finally, is to write about it—to imagine it and to write a story about it. All things can be accepted, if not understood, if you put them into a story (p. 15).

There is much more in *Ancestral Voice*, including talk about Momaday's long interest in Billy the Kid, his views of the Navajo, his Kiowa heritage, the relation of his writing to his painting, language, literature, the Soviet Union, former teachers, and his familiar reluctance to be an American Indian spokesperson ("I

have to some extent lost touch with the contemporary Indian world'' [p. 44]). Emerging from this unique book more than anything else, however, is a lasting and unpretentious self-portrait and self-revelation lovingly elicited by Charles L. Woodard from a remarkable man.

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American Indian Autobiography. By H. David Brumble III. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988. 278 pages. \$35.00 Cloth.

In 1981 H. David Brumble III published *An Annotated Bibliography of American Indian and Eskimo Autobiographies*, by far the most comprehensive bibliography of these autobiographies to date. Brumble provides nearly six hundred entries, which include both popular Indian autobiographical accounts and autobiographical material from relatively unknown ethnographic and linguistic sources. For each entry he gives the Indian's date of birth and tribe, publication information, and a brief but informative summary of the text's content and the nature of the text's production (i.e., whether, and to what extent the Indian autobiographer worked with an editor). It is no wonder then that Brumble, having read virtually every Indian autobiography, might produce a history of the genre in his *American Indian Autobiography*.

Immediately Arnold Krupat's *For Those Who Come After* comes to mind, since Krupat also studied the historical circumstances of Indian autobiographical works. But Krupat focused on certain autobiographies "that allowed [Krupat] most readily to show (1) their relation to their historical period, (2) their relation to the discursive categories of history, science, and art (literature), and (3) their relation to the four modes of emplotment—romance, tragedy, comedy, irony—by which Western authors (or editors) must structure narrative" (Krupat, p. xii). He did not set out to chronicle the history of the genre.

Brumble aims to chronicle the history and develop the notion first suggested in his *Annotated Bibliography* that the history of American Indian autobiography resembles the history of Western autobiography. What historians of Western autobiography (Weintraub, 1975, 1978; Misch, 1951) see as having happened over