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Contemporary Native American Autobiography: N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

HERTHA D. WONG

Native American autobiography did not begin in the nineteenth century when white ethnographers began to collect Indian life histories. Although aboriginal notions of self, life, and writing (auto-bio-grapheme) differed from those of Europeans, pre-contact natives did share their personal narratives. Instead of writing about their lives, though, individuals, often in collaboration with the tribe, shared their stories in oral, artistic, and dramatic modes.¹ This intra-cultural collaborative narration became what Arnold Krupat calls "bicultural composite composition."² Contemporary Native American autobiographers have attempted to re-create these collaborative processes and to modify aboriginal traditions of personal narrative, often consciously combining their Indian traditions with their white educations. One of the most accomplished examples of this is N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.

Momaday's belief in the transforming capabilities of the imagination, in the synthesizing potential of memory, in the identity-inducing possibilities of the land, and in the power, beauty, and grace of the word, all find their way into *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. He says:

In one sense, then, the way to Rainy Mountain is pre-eminently the history of an idea, man's idea of himself, and it has old and essential being in language.

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The journey herein recalled continues to be made anew each time the miracle comes to mind, for that is peculiarly the right and responsibility of the imagination.³

This journey is "made with the whole memory, that experience of the mind which is legendary as well as historical, personal as well as cultural"(4). Momaday links the legendary, historical, and personal literally in his journey and literarily in his imagination. After retracing the historical Kiowa migration, Momaday returned to Oklahoma. There, like a Kiowa Neihardt, he "interviewed a number of Kiowa elders and obtained from them a remarkable body of history and learning, fact and fiction—all of it in the oral tradition. . . ."4 Since Momaday does not speak Kiowa, these oral accounts were translated and added to by Momaday's father, Al Momaday.⁵ This collaborative work was then published privately as *The Journey of Tai-me* (1967) which became the basis for *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.

The Way to Rainy Mountain's unique structure and purpose have been widely noted.⁶ It is composed of three basic divisions which are preceded by a prologue and an introduction, concluded by an epilogue, and framed by two poems. The two poems, which begin and end the work, repeat, in miniature, the longer narrative of the Momaday-Kiowa journey. Al Momaday provides the eleven illustrations found throughout, and the running title along the bottom of the three main chapters beckons the reader-traveler like a typographical trail into the journey.⁷

The autobiography's tripartite structure reflects three narrative voices: the mythical, the historical, and the personal, each accented by a different type face.⁸ The twenty-four three-part narrative units are divided into three larger chapters: "The Setting Out" (sections 1-11), "The Going On" (sections 12-18), and "The Closing In" (sections 19-24). These three main divisions reflect the historical movement of the Kiowa migration from "the mountains of what is now western Montana," traveling south and east to what is now southwestern Oklahoma (Man, 169), as well as Momaday's personal journey in their distant trail. Although the overall narrative movement of these three main sections is chronological, Momaday blends the mythic, historical, and personal by an elaborate process of association. The intermixing of these distinct historical periods results in a kind

of timelessness or, at the very least, in an intimate and irrevocable connection among the three.

Momaday's experimentation with the structure of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* reflects his familiarity with Western literary conventions and his knowledge of Kiowa oral traditions.⁹ Like the transitional Indian autobiographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (such as Charles Alexander Eastman and Black Elk), Momaday modifies pre-contact oral, artistic, and dramatic modes of personal narrative. Unlike those of earlier Native American autobiographers, Momaday's changes are highly self-conscious, not residual forms that innocuously find their way into written expression. Likewise, they are due to his creative imagination, rather than to a political or ethnological expediency. He wishes to show the evolution from an oral tradition to a written tradition, to show the oral tradition "within the framework of a literary continuance . . ." (Man, 170). In fact, according to Momaday, who applies an evolutionary model to traditional Kiowa notions of the cyclical nature of life and narrative, the Kiowa tales in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* "constitute a kind of literary chronicle" (Man, 170). He dramatizes this evolution in the text when, in the third chapter, he replaces ancient Kiowa myths with family stories now elevated to legendary status: "that is, Momaday is creating myth out of his memories of his ancestors rather than passing on already established and socially sanctioned tales."¹⁰ Similarly, the historical accounts become family memories, and the personal reminiscences become "prose poems containing symbols which link them thematically to the other two, suggesting that all three journeys are products of the imagination" (Nicholas, 154). Refashioning the oral, artistic, and dramatic modes of pre-contact personal narrative is one way he attempts to reveal the continuity of Native American tradition, from orality to literacy.

II

The oral aspects of personal narrative are focused within, but not limited to, the mythic sections, which, of course, were all originally oral. Momaday emphasizes orality by including dialogues, multiple voices, songs, oral devices such as repetition of words, phrases, and images, and oral formulae, as well as a few

variations on Plains Indian coup tales. Throughout the work Momaday includes a type of one-sided dialogue which allows for many voices to be heard. An enemy appears to a family, demanding, "If you will feed us all, we will not harm you" (44). Although this is a one-way conversation (we hear only the enemy), a response from the listener is implied. Other speakers provide little besides lively choral backgrounds—like the dog (20), the sun (22), the giant's wife (32), Tai-me (36), an invisible voice (54), and the blind hunter (58). Thus Momaday, in a minimalist style, gives the feeling of conversation but allows only one person to speak.

More important than one-dimensional dialogues are the few voices that speak for themselves. Only two people—Aho and Ko-sahn—are allowed to speak for themselves at length. They, of course, are major figures in the entire work. Momaday's Kiowa grandmother, Aho, provides the occasion for the work and its best unifying image. It is her death that compels Momaday to begin his personal-tribal quest, to return to his people, and to write his book. In the introduction, Aho tells the legend of the creation of Devil's Tower (a rock formation in northeastern Wyoming) and of the seven sisters who "were borne into the sky, and . . . became the stars of the Big Dipper" (8). "From that moment," says Momaday, "and so long as the legend lives, the Kiowas have kinsmen in the night sky" (8). This story links earth to sky and humans to both. Also, we discover elsewhere, the story and the place are significant as the source of one of Momaday's names—Tsoai-talee (Kiowa for "Rock Boy," a name given to him at Devil's Tower).¹¹

Balancing Aho's story in the introduction, Ko-sahn's recollections are found in the epilogue. Momaday refers to this "hundred-year-old woman" as the embodiment of the "living memory and verbal tradition which transcends it" (86). For her, at least as she is re-created on the page by Momaday, there is no distinction between individual and racial memory, between mythical and historical realms (Man, 166). Just as Aho is the deceased image of the Kiowa past, Ko-sahn is the living symbol of Kiowa antiquity. Through her memory, re-envisioned by Momaday, the mythic and historical unite in the present.

Five brief songs, a second oral component, are included in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. These five songs parallel Momaday's

ideas about the process of literary evolution. The first is sung by a mythic character, Spider Woman, while the song of the wife of Many Bears is clearly grounded in historical experience. Ko-sahn's songs unite the mythic and historical in the present. Of course, empowered by myth and history, Momaday is the creative intelligence behind each of these singers. With his belief in the "tribal mind" (Man, 170), which he tries to resurrect in himself and in his work, we might think of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as the multi-voiced song of his Euroamerican-Kiowa identity, of his individual-tribal self.

In addition to multiple voices and songs, Momaday uses the formulae and style of oral composition. His language is simple and he frequently begins his stories with traditional openings such as "They were going along . . ." (18); "A long time ago . . ." (38); "Once there was a man and his wife . . ." (46); "This is how it was: Long ago . . ." (48); and "Once upon a time . . ." (60). At times, he inserts the phrase, "you know," to slow the pace of the sentence, accentuating the orality of the story and giving it a personal tone.

One aspect of oral style he masters is the repetition of words, phrases, images, themes, characters, and structural units. For instance, the poem, "Headwaters," introduces the Kiowa creation myth in which the Kiowa emerge through a "log, hollow and weather-stained." This is echoed in the prologue in which he writes: "You know, everything had to begin . . . For the Kiowas the beginning was . . ." (3). This phrase is repeated almost exactly in the first and last sentences of the mythic passage of Section 1. In the historical part of Section 1, the ethnological explanation, derived from James Mooney's reports, repeats the previously mentioned notion that "Kwuda" means "'coming out.'" This idea of emerging is again repeated when, in the personal recollection, Momaday writes: "I remember *coming out* upon the northern Great Plains . . ." (17, emphasis mine). Similarly, the end of the prologue is repeated exactly in Ko-sahn's final words in the epilogue. Such resonant repetition is used with images of halves (e.g., the Kiowa haircuts which are long on one side and short on the other, the tribal split, the twins, and the mirror image), animals (varying images of antelope, buffalo, dogs, horses, and spiders are echoed throughout), and people (for instance, Mammedaty, Ka-au-oainty, Ko-sahn, and Aho).

A final oral aspect that Momaday uses sparingly is a modification of Plains Indian coup tales—accounts of brave deeds generally performed while hunting or fighting. Basically Momaday retains only the barest echoes of the “bragging biographies” of the Kiowa whose contact with horses, according to Momaday, gave them “a taste for danger and an inclination to belligerence.”¹² According to legend, on one hunting trip the tribe splits in two due to a quarrel over an antelope udder. The historical passage does not glorify a particular hunting exploit, but rather explains the technique for a great circle hunt. In the personal reflections, Momaday is a poet, an artist, a man of sensibility as he describes not the triumph of catching a fine deer, but the joy of attaining a lovely image—the white rump of a frightened pronghorn bounding across the plains “like a succession of sunbursts against the purple hills” (19).

What we have here are not the nineteenth-century Plains Indian narratives of personal accomplishment, but a modernized narrative, based on pre-contact oral traditions of all sorts, which Momaday modified to educate and to inspire contemporary readers. It is, in effect, a series of Momaday’s tribal coup tales, but in place of arrows, Momaday uses words. The story of the arrowmaker makes this clear. The arrowmaker, sensing a person outside his tipi, tells his wife to continue their conversation as if everything were normal so as not to reveal to their potential enemy their awareness of him. As he should, the arrowmaker tests his newly made arrow, drawing it in the bow and aiming “first in this direction and then in that” (46). The story continues:

And all the while he was talking, as if to his wife. But this is how he spoke: ‘I know that you are there on the outside, for I can feel your eyes upon me. If you are a Kiowa, you will understand what I am saying, and you will speak your name.’ But there was no answer, and the man went on in the same way, pointing the arrow all around. At last his aim fell upon the place where his enemy stood, and he let go of the string. The arrow went straight to the enemy’s heart. (46)

This story is about language, “the repository of [the arrowmaker’s] whole knowledge and experience, and it represents the only chance he has for survival” (Man, 172). For the arrowmaker-storyteller, language is not merely decorative; it is a tool for self-creation, a weapon for survival. Momaday has shifted the

thematic focus from the arrows of the nineteenth-century Kiowa to the language of the twentieth-century author. In the process he fuses the two in the image of the arrowmaker. Both the tooth-marked arrow and the well-crafted word go "straight to the enemy's heart." But arrows did not save the buffalo, nor the horses, nor Tai-me, nor even the Kiowas themselves. When in 1879 they surrendered to the U.S. Cavalry, the hunting-warring ways of their life on the plains were over. Now, more than one hundred years later, Momaday uses language as a means to salvage his personal and tribal story.

Momaday's modification of oral personal narrative is accompanied by his transformation of early artistic narrative forms as well. He does not include pictographs, but like Kiowa tipi painters of old, he employs others (in this case, his father) to help realize his vision in artistic form.¹³ The eleven black-and-white illustrations are not meant to tell the story alone. Rather, they complement the written narrative. According to one critic, the first six illustrations provide "images of mythic time" and the "latter five . . . could be designated 'historical.'"¹⁴ Thus the pictures reflect the narrative flow.

The first and last pictures both deal with the relationship of the earth and the sky, and the human desire to ascend from one to the other. In the first drawing (fig. 1) the seven sisters, who are now the seven stars of the Big Dipper, hover just above the top of Devil's Tower. In the last (fig. 2), seven stars (mirroring the seven sister-stars) fall from a dark cloud at the top right of the page onto a row of five tipis lining the bottom of the page. Just as earlier pictographic coup accounts denoted animal tracks or military movement by a series of marks, the falling stars are linked to the cloud by curved descending lines, indicating their motion and direction. Like the two poems which begin and end *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, these two pictures tell the entire story of the Kiowa. The first drawing depicts the mythic world of the Kiowa—the pre-contact world that reflected their intimate link to the land, their need to articulate their "wonder and delight" (4) in legends, and their personal relationship to the cosmos. The final picture illustrates the great meteor shower of 1833, "among the earliest entries in the Kiowa calendars," and, according to Momaday, the end of the mythic era and the beginning of "the historical period in the tribal mind" (85). This fundamental transformation of the Kiowa world is summarized in these two contemporary, highly stylized illustrations.

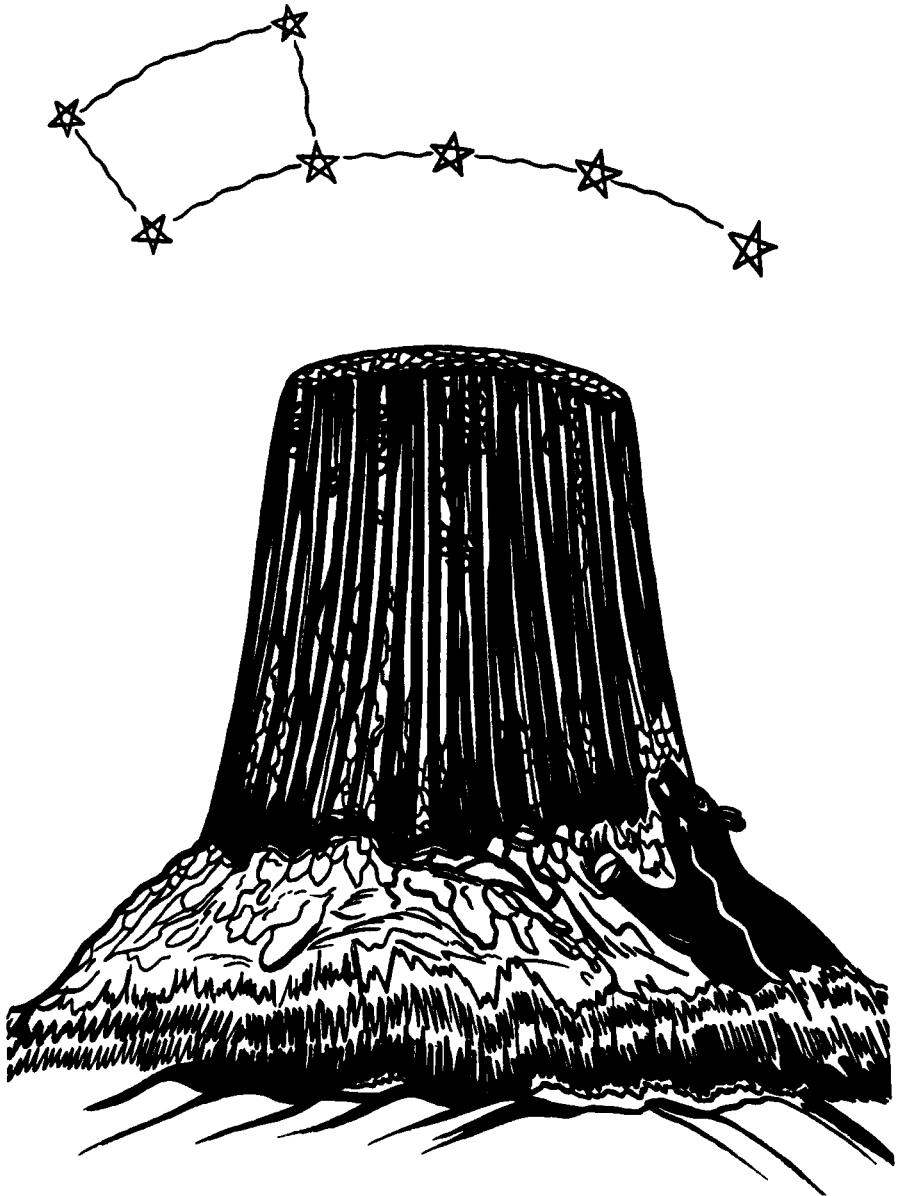


FIGURE 1. Seven Sisters Transformed Into Big Dipper at Devil's Tower.

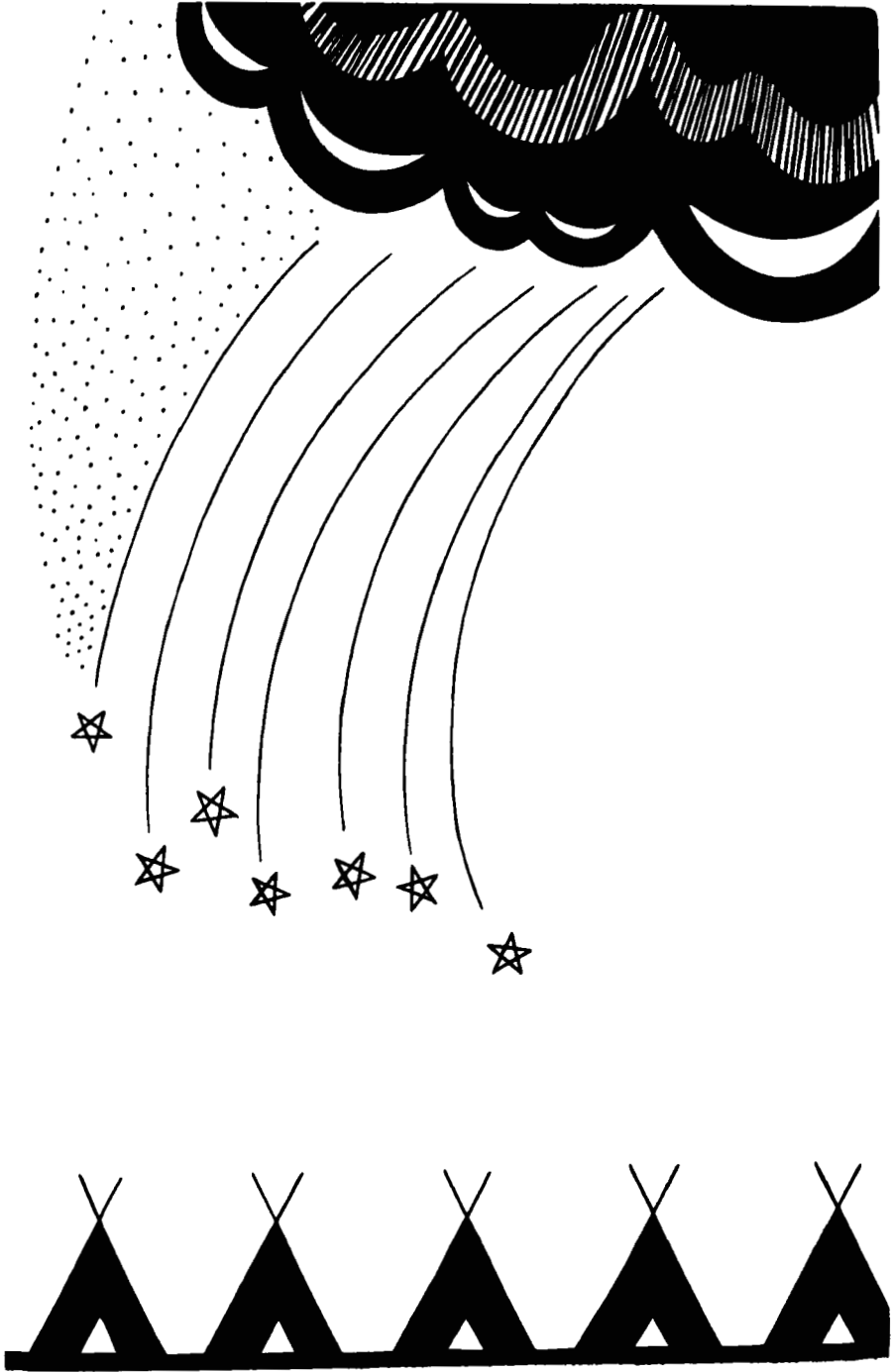


FIGURE 2. Falling Stars of 1833.

The picture of the Kiowa hunter (fig. 3), a second example of an artistic narrative mode, is the closest thing in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* to the early style of pictographic painting. It depicts strategic position and at least some detail of the hunter's and horse's ornamentation. But, like earlier transitional pictographic painters,¹⁵ Al Momaday has modified the nineteenth-century conventions of tipi and hide painting. He depicts a buffalo being chased by an Indian on a horse. That the chase is at high speed is indicated by the buffalo's flying beard and hair, the horse's streaming mane, and the hunter's flowing hair and feathers. They race from right to left across the page, seeming to emerge from behind a heap of scallops, perhaps representing the mountains from which they came. The hunter has his spear held high in his right hand, ready to thrust it into the buffalo, while his left hand holds his horse's reins lightly. This surreal depiction of physical landscape, the entirely side view, and the realistic rendering of the buffalo, the horse, and the hunter are all modifications of nineteenth-century conventions of hide and tipi painting. Momaday ends this chapter with a contemporary pictograph of the Kiowa who was "transformed into a daring buffalo hunter" (62). This is not Momaday's personal hunting exploit, nor an individual Kiowa hunter's animated chase; it is a depiction of a representative Kiowa hunter—a somewhat stereotypical emblem of the heroic Kiowa plains culture.

The dramatic aspects of Momaday's modifications of pre-contact forms of personal narratives are not so abundant nor so obvious as his experimentation with oral and artistic modes. Just as some earlier editors of autobiographies described the tones of voice, gestures, and other performance aspects of their real-life subjects,¹⁶ Momaday presents a few such details for the recollected and imagined characters of his personal-cultural narrative. He describes Aho's "screwed-up face" and the click of her tongue as she speaks. Another brief dramatic touch, reminiscent of Black Elk's more elaborate incorporation of ritual drama into his autobiography, is Ko-sahn's reenactment of preparations for the Sun Dance ceremony. Generally, though, Momaday himself is the storyteller-dramatist, and through his structural cues, he signals to the reader his changing style and tone. But finally, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* itself dramatizes the mythic, historical, and personal journey of the Kiowa and their consequent transition from an oral to a written tradition. Through the power of the



FIGURE 3. A Kiowa Buffalo Hunter.

word, Momaday has reclaimed Kiowa myth, recalled Kiowa history, remembered personal experience, and, in the process, re-envisioned himself in terms of each of these.

As well as resurrecting, in modified forms, oral, pictographic, and dramatic personal narratives, Momaday continues the pre-contact tradition of collaborative self-expression. He collaborates with Kiowa tribal elders, with his father, and with whites (those, like James Mooney, who collected the ethnographic data upon which he relied and those, like Yvor Winters, who influenced his literary taste). Like earlier Indian autobiographers such as Charles Alexander Eastman, he writes as a product of both the white world and a native culture. In the process, he modifies the oral, artistic, and dramatic modes of Plains Indian personal narrative, emphasizing the oral.

III

Finally, we have to ask what is autobiographical about *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. It could be simply an exquisitely written history of the Kiowa tribe, rather than an artfully shaped personal history of a Kiowa individual. Momaday's point, however, is that these are one and the same. He attempts to reclaim the communal sense of self, the land-based sense of identity, and the cosmic-related sense of being of his pre-contact ancestors. The only way that is possible for him, as a twentieth-century, Stanford-educated literary sensibility, is through an impassioned act of the imagination realized in language. He wants, like Ko-sahn, to see no distinction between the mythic and the historic, between the individual and the racial experience. But more than that is his decidedly twentieth-century Western obsession to remake himself anew through the power of the word.

Like Charles Eastman and Black Elk, Native American autobiographers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Momaday incorporates traditional oral, artistic, and dramatic modes of personal narrative into his work. Like them, he modifies these forms for a new audience and a new purpose. In *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday writes for a complex and varied audience—both Native American and Euro-American. Through his imagination, given substance in language, Momaday attempts to restore, reclaim, and revivify—at least on the page—

his personal and tribal heritage. In the process, he expands the Western notion of autobiography to include non-written personal narrative (e.g., recorded oral tales and illustrations) and non-Western ideas of self (e.g., a personal-tribal sensibility). In short, Momaday attempts to incorporate a Native American voice into the Euro-American literary tradition, an old voice newly appropriated, that can begin to address the ethnic plurality of the twentieth century.

Momaday's attempt to universalize Kiowa experience for a diverse audience may be problematic. It certainly is for critics like Jack Forbes, who insists that "*Native American literature must consist in works produced by persons of Native identity and/or culture for primary dissemination to other persons of Native identity and/or culture*" (emphasis is Forbes's).¹⁷ According to this definition, Momaday would not be a Native American author at all. Using such a strict definition of Native American literature excludes not only Momaday, but such well known author-autobiographers as Black Elk and Leslie Marmon Silko as well as others whose works have been published and read by non-Indians. More importantly, it denies the possibility of addressing a multi-ethnic audience, while retaining an ethnic identity. Momaday, however, acknowledging no such ethnic or literary limits, makes the exaggerated claim that "an Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself" (Man, 162). Clearly imagination holds a privileged place in Momaday's personal and literary metaphysics.¹⁸

Momaday reflects the influences of a long tradition of Native American autobiographers. He reclaims pre-contact Native American notions of a communal self which is linked to the tribe, the land, and the cosmos. At the same time, he combines this notion with Western ideas of individuality, revealing the potential conflict between the two. In addition, Momaday continues the collaborative nature of Native American personal narrative.¹⁹ Just as early Plains Indian tribal members joined together to hear a warrior's brave deeds, to paint an individual's pictographic coup tale, or to enact someone's vision, Momaday collaborates with Kiowa elders, his father, and white scholars to tell, draw, and enact his personal story. Finally, he brings together the orality and artistry of pre-contact personal narrative and the multi-culturalism of late nineteenth/early twentieth-century transitional autobiography, and modifies them according to his contemporary literary consciousness. Momaday resurrects, in modified form,

the conventions of nineteenth-century Plains Indian hide and tipi painting in his father's drawings; he incorporates Kiowa myths, songs, and ceremonies into his personal account; and he adopts the collaborative process, attempting to provide both Native American and Euro-American perspectives.

Certainly much has changed since Columbus stumbled onto this hemisphere nearly five centuries ago. But some things, like stories—of one's land, one's community, one's family, and one's self—endure. Traditional pre-contact oral, artistic, and dramatic modes of personal narratives such as coup tales, pictographic robes and tipis, and storytelling performances, modified over the centuries, continue today in spoken, crafted, performed, and written forms. Such multiple modes of pre-contact self-expression form the basis of a dynamic and enduring Native American tradition of personal narrative. Native American autobiography does not begin when nineteenth-century ethnographers, historians, and literary enthusiasts seek Indian life histories. Rather, the tradition begins with pre-literate forms of personal narrative. It is extended, in modified form, in the "bi-cultural collaborative compositions" of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,²⁰ and it culminates in contemporary written autobiographies, which incorporate and transform earlier traditions of personal narrative. This movement, from tribal speakers to transitional life historians to contemporary autobiographers, reflects the transformation from an oral to a written culture. While "it took Western man some two thousand years to move from pre-literacy to a real awareness that a self might . . . be unique," observes H. David Brumble, Native American autobiography records "much the same transformation being wrought among the Indians in less than 150 years."²¹ At the same time, contemporary Native American autobiographies reveal how collaboration has changed from intra-cultural to bi-cultural to multi-cultural cooperation. But it is not a simple matter of one tradition replacing another. Rather, contemporary Indian autobiographers, like Momaday, seek to incorporate Native American pre-literate narrative modes into Euro-American written autobiography, thus marrying two traditions of personal narrative.²² As Brumble has noted, Momaday, in particular, "has taken an important step toward transforming this miscellaneous set of anthropological, historical, and literary documents [as-told-to Indian autobiographies] into a living literary tradition" (5).

Even more importantly, Momaday has revived *pre-literate* native traditions of personal narrative, re-shaping them into a creative configuration of a Kiowa identity. Finally, then, the development of Native American autobiography parallels the historical transitions of Native American cultures from the tribal tales of ritual to the life stories of history to the imaginative autobiographies of art.

NOTES

1. These categories are provided by Lynne Woods O'Brien, *Plains Indian Autobiographies* (Idaho: Boise College, 1973), 5.

2. Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 31. For further elaboration of the idea of bi-cultural authorship and its importance for late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Native American autobiographies, see H. David Brumble III, Introduction, *An Annotated Bibliography of American Indian and Eskimo Autobiographies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981); Kathleen Mullen Sands, "American Indian Autobiography," in *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs*, ed. Paula Gunn Allen (New York: The Modern Language Association, 1983); Gretchen Bataille and Kathleen Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

3. N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969), 4; hereafter cited in the text.

4. N. Scott Momaday, "The Man Made of Words," in Geary Hobson's *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 170; hereafter cited in the text as Man.

5. Momaday makes the controversial claim that "his writing preserves the spirit of Kiowa language, if not the language itself." See Matthias Schubnell, *N. Scott Momaday: The Cultural and Literary Background* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 144-145.

6. Many critics have commented on its unique structure and purpose. Claiming that it defies generic classification, Berner calls it "an abbreviated history of the Kiowa people, a re-working of Kiowa folklore, a mixture of legend, historical fact, and autobiography," "a kind of prose poem," "an exercise in self-definition," while Zachrau refers to it as "Momaday's second novel." McAllister sees it as "a piece of music," Dickinson-Brown as a work with an "almost Jamesian symmetry." Other critics claim that it is about "the recognition of what it means to feel himself a Kiowa in the modern American culture that displaced his ancestors" (Fields); "the essential continuity of myth and poetry" (Nicholas); "Momaday's own exploration of his racial heritage" (Schubnell); or "the question of personal and cultural creation through imagination and language" (Strelke). See Robert L. Berner, "N. Scott Momaday: Beyond Rainy Mountain," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3:1

(1979): 57–67; Roger Dickinson-Brown, "The Art and Importance of N. Scott Momaday," *The Southern Review* (January 1978): 30–45; Kenneth Fields, "More Than Language Means: A Review of N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*," *The Southern Review* (Winter 1970): 196–204; Mick McAllister, "The Topography of Remembrance in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*," *Denver Quarterly* 12:4 (1978): 19–31; Charles A. Nicholas, "The Way to Rainy Mountain: N. Scott Momaday's Hard Journey Back," *South Dakota Review* 13:4 (1975): 149–158; Matthias Schubnell, *N. Scott Momaday: The Cultural and Literary Background* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985); Barbara Strelke, "N. Scott Momaday: Racial Memory and Individual Imagination" in *Literature of the American Indians: Views and Interpretations*, ed. Abraham Chapman (New York: New American Library, 1975), 348–357; and Thekla Zachrau, "N. Scott Momaday: Towards an Indian Identity," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 3:1 (1979): 39–56. See also Kenneth Lincoln, *Native American Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Jarold Ramsey, *Reading the Fire: Essays in the Traditional Indian Literatures of the Far West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Alan R. Velie, *Four American Indian Literary Masters: N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Gerald Vizenor* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982); and Andrew Wiget, *Native American Literature* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985).

7. Credit goes to my students at The University of Iowa and at Carleton College for insisting on the significance of the running title.

8. Critics label these three narrative modes differently. Momaday refers to them as the mythical, historical, and immediate (Man, 170); Schubnell calls them the traditional, historical, and personal or contemporary (199). In *Native American Literature* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), Andrew Wiget labels them the mythic, historical-cultural, and personal (122). Kenneth Lincoln, in *Native American Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), adds a fourth perspective by including the pictures. He refers to these categories as the tribal, pictorial, historical, and personal (103).

9. Momaday used the same library (and human) resources an anthropologist uses in studying a culture. In this case, he is a member of the group he studies. According to Schubnell, in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, Momaday used the following written sources: James Mooney, *Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians*, Bureau of American Ethnology, 17th Annual Report (Washington, D.C., 1898); Mildred P. Mayhall, *The Kiowas* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962); and Elsie Clews Parsons, *Kiowa Tales* (1929; report New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969).

10. Charles A. Nicholas, "The Way to Rainy Mountain," *Southern Review* (Winter 1970): 154; hereafter cited in the text as Nicholas.

11. See N. Scott Momaday, *The Names: A Memoir* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), 55–57, 170.

12. Helen H. Blish uses the term "bragging biographies" to describe the robes upon which Plain Indian warriors depicted their personal battle accomplishments. See Helen H. Blish, *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 145. The remainder of the quotation is from N. Scott Momaday, "The Morality of Indian Hating," *Ramparts* 3:1 (1964): 36.

13. For an example of Kiowa painted tipis, see John C. Ewers, *Murals in the*

Round: *Painted Tipis of the Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache Indians* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978).

14. Mick McAllister, "The Topography of Remembrance in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*," *Denver Quarterly* 12:4 (1978): 25.

15. For instance, see Dorothy Dunn, ed., *1877: Plains Indian Sketch Books of Zo-Tom and Howling Wolf* (Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland Press, 1969).

16. For a discussion of the most current theory and practice of applying performance theory to oral traditions, see Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Rowley, Mass.: Newberry House, 1977); Dell Hymes, *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); and Dennis Tedlock, "The Translation of Style in Oral Literature" in *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983). It is important to keep in mind that Momaday is not translating or transcribing individual oral performances; he is re-creating them from books and memory.

17. Jack Forbes, "Colonialism and Native American Literature: Analysis," *The Wicazo Sa Review* 3:2 (Fall 1987): 19.

18. The political implications of Momaday's philosophy are far from imaginary. For a discussion of Native American literature as a "colonized literature," see Forbes (cited above) and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Literature in Servitude," *Indian Historian*, 10 (Winter 1977): 3-6.

19. See Krupat, Brumble, and Sands, fully cited in note 1.

20. See Krupat, Brumble, and Bataille and Sands.

21. Brumble, 3; hereafter cited in the text as Brumble.

22. It is important to note, however, that there are ongoing native oral traditions distinct from Western literary models.