Becoming Bear: Transposing the Animal Other in N. Scott Momaday and Joy Harjo

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Abstract
This paper studies the intertextual, multivalent significance of the traditional motif of human-to-bear transformation as it is reinscribed in The Ancient Child and In the Bear’s House by N. Scott Momaday and in the poems “The Place the Musician Became a Bear,” “White Bear,” and “Transformations,” anthologized in Joy Harjo’s How We Became Human. The bear in the motif of transformation created by these contemporary writers reinforces the animal’s role as mediator between man and other animals and interrogates the subjection of animals in evolutionary thought. Transposing the bear from the position of being an “other” to human beings, Momaday and Harjo re-align the bear with Native American identity in a palimpsest figure that stands in a place of resistance to assimilation and beyond reservation captivity. They follow the bear of myth to a position of astral superiority in a cosmological order transcending earthbound histories and endangered cultural spaces.

Keywords
Joy Harjo, N. Scott Momaday, Ursa Major, bear transformation, resistance
Native American myth, decolonization

1 This paper is a revision of a conference paper presented at the 12th R.O.C. English and American Literature Association Conference held at National Chiao-tung University, Taiwan, on 4 December, 2004. It derives from a National Science Council research project on “Native North American Prophecy and Its Reinscription in Joy Harjo’s Map to the Next World,” which was part of the joint project, “Metamorphosis of the Tribal: Poetics and Culture in Contemporary Native North American Literature,” directed by Professor Rose Hsiu-li Juan. I appreciate the helpful editorial suggestions for this paper from the editors and the reviewers of the paper.
Contemporary Native American writers have found themselves to have an intense and meaningful affinity with the endangered bear. The images from traditional orally-transmitted tribal legends and myths of the bear are artfully and imaginatively reinscribed into a surprising number of contemporary literary works. Leslie Marmon Silko in her *Storyteller*, published in 1980, re-tells two bear stories: one is a personal thirteen year-old hunting experience of an encounter with a bear (77-78) and the other a Laguna Pueblo legend (204-09). Gerald Vizenor recalls the traditional bear in the leading figure of his dystopian fantasy *Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart* in 1978 and in the later edition republished as *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* in 1990. More recently, in 1996, Diane Glancy in *Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears* alludes to the bear in order to broach the issue of forced migration by government decree. But it is N. Scott Momaday and Joy Harjo who most directly and powerfully reinscribe the mythic image of the bear in transformation, making it not only reflect upon their own personal artistic growth, experience, and transcendence, but also provide an imposing image of change for native peoples. Focusing on the transformation motif of human to bear in the traditional myth, Momaday and Harjo articulate cultural and personal resistance by transposing the bear as animal-other into a Native American alter-self which confronts predatory colonization and assimilation through transcendence into a cosmic order, not bound by human history or law.

This paper focuses upon the representation of the mythic bear in *The Ancient Child* and *In the Bear’s House* by N. Scott Momaday and further examines Joy Harjo’s poetic jazz-like responses to Momaday’s reinscription in several poems, including “White Bear,” 2 “The Place the Musician Became a Bear,” 3 and “Transformations” 4 from the definitive anthology of her work *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems:1975-2001*. 5 Here I read the intertextual correspondences between Momaday and Harjo as a literary dialogue that not only transposes the traditional bear image but also converses with it and draws out various significances of this transformation for Native American peoples. In the imagination of Harjo and Momaday, the mythic bear-man is a living palimpsest

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2 This poem originally appeared in the collection *She Had Some Horses* (1983) 27. When it is later anthologized in *How We Became Human* (2002), Harjo adds a note to explain that the poem is “inspired by” a prophecy told by Phillip Deer, “an esteemed Mvskoke tribal member” (211).
5 Henceforward in this paper, the page numbers cited for Joy Harjo’s poems are those of the anthology *How We Became Human*.
hybrid artistically facing off against assimilation into the mainstream society and reservation “captivity.” And, in its sublime completed transcendence to the stars as Ursa Major, the bear-man enters the cosmic order of the universe.

Imagine a painting, if you will, in which a human figure is transforming into a bear or a bear is turning into a human being; or imagine a “disturbing” painting of “a window . . . from which emerged a figure, a grotesque man with red hair and red dress, approaching” (Momaday, *The Ancient Child* 107). Now envision the Ursa Major, the “Great Bear” of the Big Dipper, as the figure of a jazz saxophonist in Brooklyn, New York, playing a “tune again, the one about the wobble of the earth spinning so damned hard / it hurts” (23-24). And finally think of a Great White Bear descending from the North “motioning her paws / like a long arctic night, that kind / of circle and the whole world balanced in / between carved of ebony and ice / oh so hard” (24-28). These are figures that appear in Harjo’s poems from *How We Became Human*, namely “The Place the Musician Became a Bear” (114-15) and “White Bear” (38-39). Momaday and Harjo both began their artistic careers as painters before becoming writers and, in the case of Harjo, also a jazz saxophonist. Their iconographic palimpsest-like writings have the characteristics of painting and make readers conscious of the presence of a powerful being, one that has dwelt in our deep minds from primordial times—the bear.

In the oral literature of indigenous cultures, human imagination projects human characteristics upon animals. These appropriations of animals, however, do not ordinarily display “evil,” “base,” or “aggressive” aspects of animals in order to criticize human behavior as in Aesop’s allegorical fables or in the victimizing

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6 John Scarry remarks that “some of the actual techniques a painter takes to a canvas have influenced Harjo’s approach to the making of a poem. She has been quoted as saying that “images overlap until they become one piece” (286).

7 Catherine Rainwater, who analyzes Momaday’s iconological metafictional aesthetic, describes two paintings by Momaday—*Self Portrait with Leaves*, a bear superimposed upon the figure of a man, and *Set-angya*, in which the artist’s face is superimposed over a representation of the famous Chief Sitting Bear. The paintings, Rainwater comments, “call attention to their status as representations and, simultaneously, . . . comment upon the role of representation in the process of self-realization” (387-88).

8 In her ecological critique of Western philosophy *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*, Mary Midgely, a British ethologist, is concerned that the fable genre of literature, a philosophical allegory, often characterizes animal figures as “base” or as projecting such human weaknesses as greediness and violence. Annabel Patterson in *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* provides further insights into the historical uses and semiotic manipulations of the Aesopian tradition.
transformations\(^9\) of Ovid’s myths. The trickster in Native American mythic tradition, as defined by Paul Radin’s thorough study, for instance, is often an animal (Coyote, Hare) or a bird (Raven) figure disrupting order, but the trickster is also highly honored as creator of nature and has the power to transform himself.\(^{10}\) Stories of emergence, according to Leslie Marmon Silko, function to distinguish man from animal. Silko says that emergence is a time of differentiation, when the people’s “... journey was an interior process of the imagination, a growing awareness that being human is somehow different from all other life—animal, plant, and inanimate.” Silko further points out what she sees as a difference from Western thought: “Yet we [human beings] are all from the same source: the awareness never deteriorated into Cartesian duality, cutting off the human from the natural world” (“Landscape, History” 83-89). Silko’s Storyteller relates a version of a widely-distributed traditional story of a human child who was lost to the bears. Human beings tried to call back the child; if he came back, he was changed so that he was not like other children. In many versions of this legend, the relatives’ pleas for his return are in vain.

As with this legend, other types of stories, especially the trickster narratives, require a concept of mediation between animals and mankind. The traditional motif of transformation in such stories both shows and bridges the difference between other creatures and man. The bear,\(^{11}\) walking on two legs like the human and therefore different from the four-legged creatures, is just such a mediator. Ronald Goodman records Lakota myths of creation that place the bear in this sort of mediating role in a Great Race or competition between man and the animals and birds (44-45).

\(^9\) As for poetic genres, the exercise of power also drives the narratives in the Metamorphoses of Ovid. These stories make the transformation from vulnerable human being to animal or plant into a punishment wrought at the anthropomorphic whim of gods. Such myths also underscore the difference between human and non-human rather than represent continuity.

\(^{10}\) Natalia R. Moehle, in her study of the transtemporal identity of mythic beings, accepts Claude Lévi-Strauss’ contention that there are mythic taxonomies and astutely sorts transformations into active and passive, as well as identity-preserving and identity-destroying (64-68). In her categorization scheme, the bear transformation of Kiowa myth would be an example of deep transformation in which the former identity of the bear is lost.

\(^{11}\) Ted Andrews in his popular Animal Speak advocates that everyone learn about his/her own totem animals and come closer to them through various shamanistic, shapeshifting “exercises” (234-38). He says that “[t]he bear has lunar symbology, giving it ties to the subconscious and even unconscious mind. ... It is also a symbol for alchemy, the nigredo of prime matter. It relates to all initial stages and primal instincts... Bear medicine can teach you to go deep within so that you can make your choices and decisions from a position of power” (250-51).
Another meaning besides mediation of the man-animal division emerges when the bear enters literature: as a reaction to contemporary debates about evolution, the transformation motif of man to bear or bear to man allows writers a vehicle by which to convey the “continuity” between man and other species and to oppose the colonization of man’s animal nature. These authors add their voices to the call for the preservation of the wilderness. And, in so doing, they make an appeal to the cosmological and transcendent meanings of the bear in traditional Native American societies, as they challenge the concept that man is superior to, or has dominion over, “other” animals.

Working within the social context of the 1960s and 1970s, where his works were a strong foundation for the establishment of ethnic literature studies, but also a student of new criticism, Momaday often juxtaposes the nativist and the modern in his expressions of Native American identity. The concept of identity put forward by Momaday is neither essentialist nor post-modernist constructionism. By making himself represent the mythic bear-child of his people, the Kiowa, he reinscribes the self into a new wilderness landscape. In In the Bear’s House, he relates his personal pilgrimage to the site of transformation—Tsoai, Rock Tree, or Devil’s Tower in Wyoming (9-11). Three societies are transposed in this reinscription as pilgrimage experience: the formerly alien other, the bear, becomes an alter-self of the native artist while the dominant colonizing society, which has made the place of the towering rock a national monument, even though also human, becomes the alien threat to the survival and values of native cultures.

With respect to the complexity of Momaday’s achievement in his successful reinscription of, and identification with, the traditional mythic narrative, I agree with Mohanty’s post-positivist realist approach to identity: “Both the essentialism of identity politics and the skepticism of the postmodern position seriously underread the real epistemic and political complexities of our social and cultural identities” (57-58).

Harjo, who extends Momaday’s trope and further poeticizes the bear myth, is even more vocal than Momaday about identity politics. In an interview with Laura Coltelli, Harjo says that being an American Indian woman

... means you are a survivor. Indian people make up only about one-half of one percent of the total population of the United States! It means you carry with you a certain unique perception. ... I believe there is a common dream, a common thread between us, mostly

12 The ecological argument in Harjo’s poems has been elucidated by Patrick D. Murphy 83-85.
unspoken. . . . I realize that being born an American Indian woman in this time and place is with a certain reason, a certain purpose. There are seeds of dreams I hold, and responsibility, that go with being born someone, especially a woman of my tribe, who is also part of this invading other culture, and the larger globe. (65)

Put in this context of ethnic solidarity and responsibility for identity, the bear image is highly appropriate to the survivalist theme of Native American writers. However, the image of a transformation can represent more than mere survival. It is for Harjo a re-emergence into a new world, recalling the Navajo myths that place the contemporary within the Fourth World. Underlying the image, then, is a revisionary concept. Likewise, in Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, the indigenous Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith outlines a new agenda for research on indigenous cultures. Charting a new paradigm, she makes Transformation, Mobilization, Healing, and Decolonization key “directions” representing processes within the “tides” of Survival, Recovery, Development and Self-determination. As one of the four crucial directions, “transformation” indicates psychological, social, political, economic and collective change” (116-117).

Harjo is a jazz musician and well-versed in the practice of intertextuality both in musical responses and poetic ones. When she echoes Momaday’s bear transformation in her elegy for Jim Pepper, the artist referred to is a jazz musician. In her poem, the conflation of the bear-man opposition in an ecstatic moment puts the audience in touch with cosmic forces. Music is a vehicle for transformation into bear and for transcendence. Other animals “people” Harjo’s poetry: mainly horses, as in her early collection of poetry She Had Some Horses. Palimpsests of women and deer, crows or blackbirds also occur. Her “The Myth of Blackbirds” in How We Became Human (106-07) even carries on a jazz conversation with Wallace Stevens’ “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.”

Harjo, then, is not as exclusive as Momaday and ranges more widely in her representations of animal transformations, demonstrating a post-modern freedom to improvise and even parody. In poetic form, the transformations are quick palimpsest images of man-animal hybridity. Harjo, however, still faithfully follows Momaday to bestow a special significance upon the bear as a mediating bridge to immortality in cosmological signification. That is, the bear form in her poems

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13 See Harjo’s poem, “Map to the Next World,” in How We Became Human (129-32). Also see my interpretation of this poem in Chung-Wai Literary Monthly.
transcends human meaning and order—becoming part of a cosmic meaning/order: Momaday’s mythical Tsoai and Harjo’s own sky-bear holding the earth.

“Becoming bear” for both artist-writers is an aesthetically channeled choice resisting assimilation into a mainstream American culture that undervalues respected creatures of nature like the bear. In the following discussion of their works, I describe how this transpositioning occurs on several levels, in both Momaday’s multiple reinscriptions of the astral bear myth and Harjo’s extensions in poetry. I discuss as well the transcendental escape from the double-bind of living and dying by two laws, tribal and national (U.S.), and two human fathers, the defeated birth-father and the paternalistic foster father. In both writers, through the transformation of man to bear, a cosmological time is made to overcome the debilitating historical and evolutionary chronology.

From Artist to Bear-Man

Momaday’s novel *The Ancient Child* could be read as a “portrait of the artist” as a 40-year old man who rejects his cultural assimilation into the dominant society. In it the author gradually sketches, and himself enters into, a depiction of life as bear. The successful artist Set, living in fashionable San Francisco, would seem to “have it all”: a surrogate foster white father with considerable financial means, a career-minded, supportive girlfriend, and exhibits of his art in New York and Paris. In the course of the story, what cuts into this “American Dream”-like idyllic situation, however, is something which at first seems primitive and fear-inspiring: Set returns to Indian country for the funeral of Grandmother Kope’mah, but the funeral notice he receives has been wrongly worded so that he is made to believe that it is his Indian birth father who has died. He knows that this father, Cate, has already been dead for several years, but returns anyway to rediscover this place; he never returns to the white “civilization” into which he had largely assimilated himself. Is this a nervous breakdown, the result of his psychologically being unable to cope with the idea of two fathers? Is it an artist’s burnout? Or is he being pulled back by the power of the “medicine bundle” that he gets from a Navajo medicine woman who has been told to pass it on to him by the even more powerful

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14 By “reinscription” I mean the process by which an author takes a more or less accurate inscription of a traditional oral mythic motif or text, as found in transcribed collected versions, and gives this motif or tale a new meaning or meanings within the context which the writer has defined for him or herself.
“grandmother”? The answers to such questions of interpretation depend upon one’s worldview, itself a function of one’s society and culture.

Interspersed in the text is the myth of the bear told among Native American tribes, in particular the Kiowa. In this myth a boy is chasing his sisters and, as he nears the sacred monolith of Tsoai, he is turned into a bear. His sisters become the Seven Sisters (the Pleiades) and, as the boy rises, he becomes the Ursa Major. In numerous tribal legends, children are said to wander off from the tribal village and disappear or, as in a version recorded by Momaday in the novel, suddenly appear in a different village. All are attracted by the comely appearance of the strange child who appears in a village in Momaday’s story. The stranger plays and eats among the people only to disappear, and no one knows where he has gone. If the people follow, they may find bear tracks where the child’s tracks leave off. During the course of this novel, Set’s story parallels the embedded tribal story as Set himself becomes a bear. But through the more powerful force of the novel genre, readers are able to enter the subjectivity of the bear itself and to sense the world he/it experiences as a bear. The following ecologically-informed passage by Momaday shows how the senses are altered in the course of the transformation. As the bear came to the rock tree (Tsoai), it was moving:

It was changing in the motion of the moon . . . and the stars of the Big Dipper gradually appeared over it. And when he brought his focus back upon the monolith, a strange pitch-black shadow lay upon it, near the base. It was the image of a great bear, rearing against Tsoai. It was the vision he had sought. In the clearing, he belonged. Everything there was familiar to him. Set, set! They shouted, “The bear, the bear!” and ran. And he ran after them. “Yes. I am set,” Loki called out….Suddenly he slowed and began to stagger and reel. Something was wrong, terribly wrong. His limbs had become very heavy, and his head. He was dizzy. His vision blurred. The objects on the ground at his feet were clear and sharply defined in his sight, but in the distance were only vaguer shapes in a light like fog. (312-13)

Here the reader is aware that Momaday is painting a picture of the transformation of Set, who has now become younger, a mere child, as he transforms. Entering the scene, the sounds and smells that a bear might perceive are spelled out:
At the same time there was a terrible dissonance in his ears, a whole jumble of sound that came like a blow to his head. He was stunned, but in a moment the confusion of sounds subsided, and he heard things he had never heard before, separately, distinctly, with nearly absolute definition. He heard water running over stones, impressing the rooted earth of a bank beyond stands of undergrowth strummed by the low purling air, splashing upon a drift of pine needles far downstream. . . . It was as if he could detect each and every vibration of sound in the whole range of his hearing. . . . He could smell a thousand things at once and perceive them individually. He could smell the barks of trees and the rot of roots and the fragrances of grass and wildflowers. . . . He looked after his sisters. . . . [H]e had no longer a human voice. He saw the change come upon their faces. He could no longer recognize them; they were masks. They turned and ran again. And there came upon him a loneliness like death. He moved on, a shadow receding into shadows. (313-14)

This scene of transformation into a bear does not portray merely the painter Set; this individual is entering the wilderness in a vision-led reenactment of the ancient myth of the Kiowa, the story of the sacred rock-tree of Tsoai (Devil’s Tower). This is a more subjective version of the same myth retold early on in the novel. Ronald Goodman has collected a text that shows how the Lakota also tell this myth, and hence we know that for every being on earth there is a companion being in the skies, and that our lives here on earth are paralleled by the movements of the stars (4, 14-20). Such a relation of the earth to the sky is also found in a book for children entitled The Earth under Sky Bear’s Feet in which Joseph Bruchac and Thomas Locker present traditional songs and stories of the Sky Bear and other stars collected from a number of tribes. The transformation into bear, then, is not thought of as a death, but is a trans-positioning in/of the universe.

The bear in a Clackamas story, analyzed for its linguistic features by Dell Hymes (376-77), can show how tribal cultures articulated the opposition of the bear to the culture of the tribe. In this legend, a grizzly bear-woman transforms into a beautiful human woman and comes into a camp. She becomes one of the Chief’s wives, and then massacres the whole village, except for the chief himself and his older brother, a rather awe-inspiring parallel to the frontier massacres. Here the bear endangers human life as she takes on human form.
The prominence of the legend of the lost child also shows that the bear can be antagonistic toward human society. A Cherokee story related by James Mooney tells of the bear-man, a man who went to live with the bears. When he returned to his people, he had to fast for seven days and seven nights “until the bear nature had left him.” After four days, his wife forced him to go home with her. “[I]n a short time he died, because he still had a bear’s nature” (329). Other stories draw our attention to the form of the bear and its ability to run faster than human beings. Joseph Bruchac, in a collection subtitled *Native American Tales of Terror*, narrates how a bear-man comes into the village, is challenged by the chief’s son, and is finally defeated in a race in which the bear-man progressively becomes more bear-like (75-85). Transformation, however, precludes the evolutionary model according to which human beings are “higher” (more developed) than the bear. It is not through his own power that the man can defeat the bear, but through the information he receives from his grandmother that teaches him to aim for the foot of the bear in order to kill it, since the animal’s heart is in its foot (84). In other stories from Mooney’s collection, bears are immortal while man is mortal. A whole family can go to live with the bears and become immortal with them. Human beings can then hunt and be fed by these immortal bears (325-26).

When the white man enters onto the scene, we will wonder who becomes the more formidable and genocidal enemy of the native cultures—the bear or the white man? In Momaday’s novel the reinscription of the tradition in the plot of the novel reverses the legend: the painter (as a man the reader has come to know) becomes a bear; that is, becoming a child who then becomes the mythic bear is a clear sign of resistance to a society that would make a “white” man out of a Kiowa native through forced assimilation. The transformation-to-bear in Momaday’s novel is then a transposition of the roles played by the bear in different societies. If the bear is an enemy of the white male hunter, who disrespects nature through his irresponsible killing of it, there is a renewed recognition of bear-identity in native writing. This even more positive image of the bear than the one we get in most traditional stories parallels another image created by the artist Set, as he talks about the boredom of God. Set thinks that what consoles this lonely God is the creation of the things of nature. The creation of the bear, also lonely, is something God is especially proud of: “He used both hands when he made the bear. Imagine a bear proceeding from the hands of God” (39). Momaday is explicit: man does not have a “higher place” on any sort of evolutionary ladder.

The admiration that Set feels here for the bear of nature is echoed in *In the Bear’s House*. In his 1998 introduction, Momaday states that the bear “is a template
of the wilderness” (9), and relates his own personal Quest-for-Bear at the Tsoai mountain: “. . . when the constellation Ursa Major emerged on the south side of its summit, as if the two things were in the same range of time and space. . . . I too was looking beyond time, into the timeless universe. I came away more nearly complete in my life than I had ever been” (10). This book, with its numerous illustrations drawn by Momaday himself, presents an imaginary dialogue between Urset and Yahweh. This is a dialogue in which man does not appear, and in which the bear’s perspective on existence is explored at length and with considerable humor. Yahweh says that “it is possible to drown in the nature of things” (23). The bear has a position in the universe just as man does; man can assimilate the alien bear (in)to himself, in his construction of an identity that now can stand in relation to other cultures, including that of bears, but to do so is to de-assimilate (himself) from the culture of the colonizer. This includes the language of man, which is defined by Urset as “child’s play,” and the theory of evolution which Yahweh states will come to an end: “Nothing will come of it, as it has come from nothing” (40).

Harjo’s elegy to the jazz saxophonist Jim Pepper, “The Place Where the Musician Became a Bear” (114-15), conflates the becoming-bear transformation and artistic identity, just as do Momaday’s *The Ancient Child* and *In the Bear’s House*. Like Momaday’s scene of transformation, the scene Harjo depicts is “at the end of the world” (1) where the senses are born or reborn, and we feel the “lush stillness” (2). We are in “a soft awakening.” And “Our souls imitate lights in the Milky Way” (5-6). Referring to this poem in the note, Harjo comments that after Pepper died, she “knew” his place was now in the Milky Way (224). In the poem, the musician has “the laugh of a bear who thought he was human” (22) and dances as he plays his music—itself the counterpoint to the sounds of the Brooklyn subway—“about the wobble of the earth / spinning so damned hard / it hurts” (23-24).

The poem is the poet-witness’ testimony to this miraculous transformation but, as Jenny Goodman has pointed out, in Harjo’s poems, “the rules of evidence” do not match those of the personal lyric of our dominant culture. Goodman comments that Harjo’s “Crossing Water” is both poetic and political because it validates non-Western ways of knowing. It “insists that poetic evidence, spiritual evidence, is valid” (44-45). Through the transformation of Pepper, a transposition is attained: the bear is no longer alien to humankind; mankind now becomes the alien other. The masquerade of being human can at last be dropped so that the larger astral or stellar existence can be enjoyed. Harjo, the poet musician, plays the role of witness to this transformation, calling attention to that fallible human-ness she and her
friends still remain subject to, before and after the passing of Pepper. The bear existence is the privileged one because when we are human we are only part of the “human comedy” (7).

**Indian Out-of-Law vs. Outlaw**

We tend to think of human beings as being law-makers and law-givers. The ambivalence of the Native American’s historical relationship to the law is underscored in Momaday’s *The Ancient Child*. Here “lawlessness” refers to the historical view that the Indian was a lawless renegade; even in Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Chapter XXXIX) the so-called “Indian territory” of Oklahoma is a safe place for all those “runaways” who are escaping the law.

Jason Stevens has studied Momaday’s fascination with the images of the frontier and especially the heroic outlaw Billy the Kid. Stevens views the transformation ending of *The Ancient Child* as a negative one, paralleling the transformation that occurred with the death of Billy the Kid. Stevens says, “The bitter displacement of identity at the core of the outlaw’s story is perhaps as telling of Momaday’s labor for ethnic definition as the myth of transformation that the Kiowa bear fails to fulfill” (626). Yet being unable to resolve the identity issue does not mean, I would insist, that this transformation is negative. An analysis of the problem of law on the frontier from another perspective can allow readers to appreciate the bear transformation as something much more than the death of a heroic figure that only mimics the white-man-going-native.

The conditions Momaday arranges for the law in *The Ancient Child* lead to an opposition between and among different cultures’ laws. Grey, the medicine-woman/mayor of Bote, opposes the white man’s law more directly than does Set. She dreams of the old West and daydreams that she is the lover and accomplice of the “outlaw” Billy the Kid, a notorious killer. She, too, is mysterious to Set as a symbol of that native heritage which through legal adoption he had to leave. There is a strange symbiotic relationship between Billy the Kid and this Navajo woman who wears a white dress. If she were white, she would be the other of a Navaho-Kiowa self. Her dress is a disguise of her real identity. Like Set she gradually distances herself from the dream of being a part of the white world. Moreover, in learning about the native medicine from Kope’mah she learns other laws. Until she opts totally for the Navaho reservation of her mother, she is in a double-bind situation with regard to the law.
The theme of the Sun Dance is also one which may be seen as a problem of “the law,” more specifically the conflict between Kiowa culture and U.S. law. Raymond DeMaillie, in his notes to The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk’s Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt, states that the Lakota Sun Dance as well as other similar rituals was outlawed by government decree (260). In Momaday’s works, the history of the Sun Dance plays an important role in defining the Kiowa people. In In the Bear’s House the author states that for the Kiowa, the “principal religious expression was the Sun Dance” (9). In The Ancient Child the grandmother Kope’mah, who leads Set to his bear identity, has received her power from the 1887 Sun Dance. This ceremonial dance was held near the mouth of Oak Creek, a tributary of the Washita River above Rainy Mountain; it was here that Kope’mah came into the presence of the sacred Sun Dance doll Tai-me: “From that time on she was greatly respected among the Kiowa—and feared, too, so that there was in her the profound loneliness of medicine people” (20-21).

The Sun Dance having been outlawed, it was at the Sun Dance in 1873 that the Kiowa were taken into captivity by the white men (Momaday, The Names 41-42). In House Made of Dawn this historical incident is reinscribed as part of Abel’s road to recognition. The urban Priest of the Sun tells the story of the captivity, one which through the self-reflexive metafictional devices of Momaday, the “author,” becomes a sort of postmodern parody: the native storyteller becomes a priestly “orator” who delivers a sermon, itself made up of whole sections from The Way to Rainy Mountain, and the medicine man becomes a “doctor.” These self-parodying devices too, like Grey’s white dress, disguise native outlaw identity.

For those who choose to keep Native American tribal identity, there are two overlapping systems of law—the tribal law based upon and synthesizing cultural traditions, which arranges the times for modern-day rituals, and the U.S. law which makes citizens of all Native Americans. The bear, both as animal and as mythic cosmic being, adheres to a natural order beyond man-made law. Set is not Nietzsche’s lion beyond law and duty, a “beast within,” but another living being the artist has chosen to become. As the ethologist Mary Midgely explains, “to talk of a beast is to talk of a thing with its own laws” (37), by which she means patterns of behavior that are rational means for achieving the thing’s (the beast’s) own optimal existence. Momaday thinks of the bear as a superior being for its power and beauty, yet it too obeys the natural laws of the universe. Becoming bear, Set is no longer enmeshed in the native human situation of being bound by two sometimes conflicting (U.S. vs. reservation-tribal) human laws. For Chen Kuo-shih the ending of House Made of Dawn shows that Abel finally is “running with the universe”
after many travails; likewise, the man as bear begins living in synchrony with a universal natural order.\(^{15}\)

**The Doubling of Fatherhood in *The Ancient Child***

Not only the law but also fatherhood is doubled in Native American experience. In the novel Set has two fathers: one white and one native Kiowa. When his own father Cate died, he was first placed in a boarding school. Then he was adopted by Bent and taken to San Francisco. The awakening to his native identity comes in mid-life, in his forties. The bear identity being non-human would seem to allow the artist to transcend this ambiguity or doubleness of his paternity. But opposition to the beneficent *paternalism* of the white society is also implicit in the choice to become bear by tribal affiliation. By becoming bear, the character joins a totemic order of countless generations of bear dancers who gave up birth-descent for a distinctive tribal identity or affiliation.

To retrace the steps of this transformation from the perspective of paternity, I will discuss in greater detail Set’s relation to his two fathers. The notice Set receives at Grandmother Kope’mah’s death implies that his birth-father is still alive. This false information can be viewed as the medicine-woman and her protégé Grey’s refusal to see death as the end of a person’s existence; it is one’s collective (tribal) memory that keeps the father alive past his day. This ambiguity is also what awakens the artist son to his true line of descent, his true heritage. After his first visit to the Grandmother’s grave (significantly not his own birth-grandmother but a tribal one) and Grey’s, Set is able to ignore the medicine bundle, which contains the remains of a bear that has been given to him. The death of his white foster father, however, precipitates a downward spiral into what is called by his city friends a *nervous breakdown*. He is out on the street and a policeman tells him to “go home.” But in his studio the bear power awakens in him. He paints with bear power, and he views himself as telling a story: “Yes, he believed, there is only one story, after all, and it is about a man who ventures out to the edge of the world, and it is about his holy quest, and it is about his faithful or

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\(^{15}\) Chen Kuo-shih in his MA thesis on Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* analyzes throughout the significance of the rite of running in the novel. Running long distances for initiation or at special times of the year has been a rite particularly practiced by the Pueblo and other Southwestern tribes. The rituals and songs on running have been studied by the historian Peter Nabokov in *Indian Running: Native American History & Tradition*. 
unfaithful wife, and it is about the hunting of a great beast.” He repeats that “he must be true to the story” (216).

Here, Momaday is challenging the concept of human identity and that of white identity in the same breath. Midgely asks whether we have a monopoly on what we value. Much of what we value—such as kindness and affection—“is drawn from a common source, and overlaps with dolphinity, beaverishness, and wolfhood” (160). The man-bear Set dances. Set’s girlfriend tells the psychiatrist, “the bear is preoccupied with the conviction that he is a man. . . . He stands upright on two legs. He dances.” The psychiatrist had merely thought he was self-centered. The woman begins to understand that this term does not mean he was spoiled, but rather it was something that “anchored you; it locked you in” (236).

The choice Momaday makes for Set is to make him move, transpose him, into another cultural arrangement (or perhaps “constellation”). He must turn his back on both Native American reservation life with his young new wife and his artist’s life in San Francisco with his friends. Set is in effect appealing to the ancient Kiowa myth to save him from these relationships. The adult has become a child again—a child who turns into a bear, notwithstanding the fears of the watching grandmother. Thus I read this ending as a third choice that lies beyond the either/or option of nativist reservation life or assimilation (in)to the dominant values of American society. It is both an alienating and a transcending move, appropriate for the artist, with implications of resistance against enforced assimilation. The soul of Set, this ancient child, like that of Silko’s child, cannot be called back. It enters the timelessness of cyclic regeneration. Or if Midgely is right, we must ask whether men are really the more intelligent beings (157-58). Set takes on the wisdom of the bear in all its loneliness, just as the orphaned boarding school child was lonely in the first place.

Transformation: The Least Resistance

The central problem or mystery of Momaday’s text remains the reading of the transformation at the end. In the closing chapters, when Set actually hears and sees nature differently, he has become a bear. In Lakota Sioux philosophy as interpreted by Ronald Goodman, this would mean that the man has taken on the qualities of a sinun, the intelligence or ability of this creature. It is a state of possession enacted in the traditional bear dances. As an artist, Set has learned about “resistance.” When he is first on his way back to Oklahoma, the narrator says:
In school Set was taught that art was resistance. In one way or another all his teachers said so. But Cate Setman knew better, Cate must have spoken the truth to Set, and Set must have known too, even when he was not looking, listening intently, and he would somehow keep the knowledge. Look, he said to himself, the wild, crooked courses, reaching in every direction. Water follows the line of least resistance, and it is itself irresistible. It has shaped some of the most impressive forms on the face of the earth. (57-58)

Set doubts his teacher, who claims that “all art is resistance” (57). Catherine Rainwater believes that in this passage Momaday opposes his teacher Ivor Winters, for whom writing resists chaos (380). In the chapter of the novel entitled “the reflection in the glass is the transparent mask of a man,” Set’s manhood becomes a mask with the bear hidden beneath. The mirror image of self is a mask of a man. Set removes the human mask to become the bear. This is the entrance into the true wilderness, something that the artist feels impossible until he can take off the mask he has acquired in white social circles. Matthias Schubnell interprets Set’s art as being Expressionist, noting that a work of the German Expressionist Emil Nolde, Sternenwandler or Wanderer Among the Stars, is mentioned by Set’s girlfriend early on in the novel. Like an expressionist, Set wants to remove the mask, a path of less resistance than that of wearing it.

As Set’s story evolves, he gradually gives his instinctive nature priority over his rational intellect and artistic sensibilities. This makes us suspect at first that, like Grey the mayor of Bote, who is at first willful in her relations and then goes home to her mother’s Navajo culture to find peace, Set is gradually leaving the self-made man he has become and returning to a more primitive state. But in Momaday’s man-who-has-become-bear a vision of the possible continuity between man and other species is postulated. What the author seems to be correcting here is Set’s weakness—his passive nature in his relations with others. Craig Frischkorn has shown how superficial the psychologist’s treatment of the bear stories is: “Given the sacred emphasis placed on telling bear stories in the culture of the Kiowa, Set’s patience begins to run out. The doctor is essentially trying to treat him by patronizing him with soulless and sacrilegious versions of these bear tales” (25).

Momaday is decolonizing Set by making him increasingly learn violence. Set’s first act of violence is committed against this psychologist, a violence that also has the effect of warning readers against Jungian interpretations of this text about a middle-aged man. The second act of violence is committed against the “man-on-
horseback, who challenges him at the Navajo reservation. The “centaur” strikes him with a bear’s paw, a likely symbol of the animal’s power. It is then that the Set who has been emasculated by the larger society becomes enraged, but his rage is safe within the confines of the reservation, which is now enacting a ceremony planned by Grey and her first lover. The formerly impotent Set then marries and has a child of his own. This helps him reintegrate his personality on the reservation and find love.

For Harjo as well, transformation embodies the least resistance to hatred, a coming to terms with those who would destroy her, a transition and transcendence. In the prose-poem “Transformations,” from *In Mad Love and War*, Harjo claims her poem itself to be a “bear”:

This poem could be a bear treading the far northern tundra, smelling the air for sweet alive meat. Or a piece of seaweed stumbling in the sea. Or a black-bird, laughing. What I mean is that hatred can be turned into something else, if you have the right words, the right meanings, buried in that tender place in your heart where the most precious animals live. Down the street an ambulance has come to rescue an old man who is slowly losing his life. Not many can see that he is already becoming the backyard tree he has tended for years, before he moves on. He is not sad, but compassionate for the fears moving around him. (59)

To return to the jazz expression of Harjo and place it in the context of Momaday’s theme of least resistance, jazz is a form of music long associated with cultural resistance in African-American culture. It also allows Harjo to go further than Momaday by combining her own native identity with the identity of other minorities. Harjo’s musician Jim Pepper in the poem “The Place the Musician Became a Bear” (114-115) is “a bear” who only “thought he was a human” (22). Through the transformation-to-bear of the Creek jazz saxophonist, Harjo as witness and fellow Creek saxophonist brings the tribe and a whole generation of saxophonists of other ethnicities together into a community: this group includes John Coltrane and Charlie (Bird) Parker. They are framed by performance genre of jazz music, symbolic of an ethnic resistance that is once again “the path of least resistance,” now in musical form. Of course, the least resistance is also the most powerful one.
The group adheres to a 1980s worldview whereby “performing ethnicity” is a part of Harjo’s life and that of her musician friends. Being human is to be “single” and complicated, forgetting “to be ashamed of making the wrong step” (“The Place the Musician Became a Bear,” (8-12). It is the music of the saxophone that is to accompany her poetry. In the introduction to How We Became Human, Harjo reflects upon the years represented in her earlier volume In Mad Love and War. She writes about the importance of jazz music to her during that period of life:

The language of jazz kept me up at night or woke me up early in the morning as I wrote in the manner of the horn riffs that carried me over the battlefield. I needed a saxophone so that poems would have accompaniment for the songs of love and war. The horn could laugh, could cry in a direct, physical manner. Poetry and music belonged together. (xxiv-xxv)

The community of artists in Brooklyn replicates the community of the tribe, and the Jim Pepper elegy moves through images of tribal awakening. Here the poet-musician Harjo merges with her group of friends of various ethnic origins in a lyrical movement of “least resistance” that is self-transforming in its bear-power.

**Loneliness of the Bear**

Just as in the reinscribed legend about Tsoai where the boy becomes bear, Set’s sisters in The Ancient Child cannot hear him call out to them in his bear’s voice, and a great loneliness descends upon him. Becoming-bear brings with it a great feeling of solitude. In a short 1995 poem written in Tucson, Momaday repositions himself in relationship to the bear, assuming the awe Blake showed toward “The Lamb” and “The Tiger.” The poem is quoted here in full:

How is it he keeps the night, God?
*Alone, in universal space.*
Is his the loneliness of time?
*And being. Night defines his place.*

How is it he rides the void, God?
*Alone, among the threads of light.*
Is his the loneliness of death?
And being. He enters the night.

How is it you performed him, God?

Alone, across a firmament.

Is his the loneliness of grief?

And being, and a sacrament. (In the Bear’s House 63)

Separation from the group is also an aspect of the Jim Pepper experience in Harjo’s “The Place the Musician Became a Bear.” “We” are separated from the saxophonist-bear by his death. The traveler in Harjo’s poem “White Bear” (38-39) is afflicted with loneliness, too. Reluctant to communicate with anyone on an airplane, she reflects that she is always “Leaving and staying / where the night sky catches / her whole life” (4-6). In her mind-dreaming, she associates her absent daughter’s dark eyes with the darkness of the night, the daughter being cradled by the moon and not by the mother herself. In the background is a prophecy of impending disaster. Like a number of other poems of Harjo, this one reinscribes Native American prophecy, here about the coming of the White Bear from the North. Harjo notes that one tribal interpretation of this is the future invasion of the United States by China or Russia; another is the eruption of the Mount St. Helens volcano (How We Became Human 211). In the Dictionary of Native American Mythology, the Great White Bear is described as the most evil being residing in the deepest underground (106). However the prophecy may be explained, change is immanent.

In Harjo’s reinscription of the popular prophecy-legend the bear moon (or the bear’s moon) is a rocking cradle, and the daughter (the native child, as in Momaday) of the traveler is in the cradle that is now dangerously “tipping back” (32). Harjo ends with the striking statement that on the other side of all darkness is “all light” (35), and the images come around again into the mythic apotheosis of human into star. This is the lonely wilderness into which the human being, the personal subject-speaker of the poem, is lost. In the poem there is no reassuring return to a destination on earth from this flight into the night sky.

The Matter of Death as Transformation

As the masks are removed we have the death of the individual “white” Set into the tribe, of the human native Set into the mythic bear shadowed on the rock, of the artist-writer Momaday into his painting of Set, of the musician Pepper into his
music, and of the poet Harjo contemplating her separation from a daughter in dangerous times. Here a positive side of death as a joining with one’s ancestors and as a transcendent permanence is evoked by reference to the myth of the astral bear. Consulting the traditional myths, one notes that the bear in Muscogee and Cherokee stories is an immortal being who can give his flesh to other animals and to mankind to eat at the feast, and still be revived and brought back to life. When Harjo and Momaday reinscribe the immortality of the bear, they are expressing the immortality of their artist-humans who become bears. One might argue that Momaday uses the word “evil” to refer to his protagonist’s being drawn back to Indian Country by the bear medicine-bundle. The healing properties of the bear as image, however, rather than its death-bringing properties, mirror the paradoxical healing powers of the medicine bundle itself.

Neither Momaday nor Harjo could be considered an essentialist in the sense of actually making a journey home to one’s native tribal culture through bear-transformation. Nor are they strictly ethnocentric in their visions. Both are reinscribing the traditional bear image to make it represent the transcendence of the artistic human being who, once in the person of the bear, sublimely rises above others in the community and possesses a healing bear-power. This power can resist the death of their people, which occurs when there is assimilation into white society, or the “forgetfulness,” as Harjo calls it, “forgetfulness” of the native values and culture. Harjo articulates this most forcefully in the poem “A Map to the next World,” written for her third granddaughter (129-132).

This transformation-to-bear also entails the coming into being of a synecdochic self out of a metonymic one, to use Arnold Krupat’s distinction between two different kinds of autobiography. Krupat makes this rather artificial distinction between the autobiographical native writings that present a synecdochic

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16 The medicine bundle, considered an evil force, contains the remains of a bear cub along with other paraphernalia. Is it a traditional “evil” force, or one that the main character feels is evil while he is still in his “white” assimilated stage? I would suggest the latter—that it is in his older, assimilated “white” self that he can think of the bundle as an “evil.” This is what it would have been called by early white missionaries when they first encountered such “superstitious fetishes.” This is one of the ways, then, in which the “bear” could perform its function as a symbol of resistance.

17 Krupat distinguishes the types of autobiographical writings in the following way: “. . . where personal accounts are strongly marked by the individual’s sense of herself predominantly as different and separate from other distinct individuals, one might speak of a metonymic sense of self. Where any narration of personal history is more nearly marked by the individual’s sense of himself in relation to collective social units or groupings, one might speak of a synecdochic sense of self, both metonymy and synecdoche constructing identity syntagmatically, along the horizontal axis of contiguity and combination” (212).
self speaking for the tribe and the metonymic self of Western autobiography, for instance of Thoreau in *Walden*, where the writer is primarily expressing his/her own self as it completes subjectivity and individualistic development (201-31). Although Krupat suggests that “[t]he autobiographies by the much-acclaimed N. Scott Momaday, a Kiowa, seem to me as metonymic in their orientation as Rousseau’s” (230-31), I think this is a misreading of the images Momaday uses. In *The Names: A Memoir*, Momaday states clearly that he is the tribal bear, and immediately following the reading of his birth certificate—“By Act of June 2, 1924 (43 Stat. 253), all Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States were declared to be citizens of the United States”—he says that the first notable event in his life was when he went to Tsoai, the “rock tree.” This launches a story told by Pohd-lohk and Momaday’s recognition that he is Tsoai-talee, the Rock-Tree Boy who becomes bear. “I am. It is when I am most conscious of being that wonder comes upon my blood, and I want to live forever, and it is no matter that I must die” (*The Names* 56-57). In this three-way juxtaposition of U.S. national citizenship, Kiowa tribal descent through the names, and the bear living by the cosmic laws of nature, there is a closer (if still ambiguous) affinity between the last two “places” and thus a place for the identity of “I.”

For Harjo, entrance into the transforming-self is quick—the wilderness is inside the heart. Mary Leen sees Harjo as having a multiple-subject position in her poems. In “Don’t Bother the Earth Spirit,” for example, there is a negotiation between and among speaker, listener and earth as “storyteller.” In the strikingly abrupt ending to this tale of life, the listener is trapped into changing nature. “See that stone finger over there? That is the only one who ever escaped” (*How We Became Human*, 61). Through the rapid shifting of grammatical person in the poem, this transformation suggests an Ovid-like etiological ending of all death-life in nature.

The distinction between metonymic and synecdochic self is furthermore helpful, I think, because it shows how contemporary native writers address identity politics through ritualized experience. The jazz saxophone for Harjo is a healing voice and such players as Charlie Bird Parker, John Coltrane, and the Native American Jim Pepper, who was developing “a music that married the traditional elements of jazz with Muscogee and Plains tribal musics” (see Harjo’s note, 224), are not just outstanding individuals but distinctively artistic healers, shamanistic in their mysticism; the jazz cult that they speak for includes a multicultural group, not entirely ethnically distinctive. The transformation in the Harjo elegy for Jim Pepper (114-15) is a sublime movement from the pain of separation to ecstasy in a
remembrance, which joins all existence. Harjo intentionally transcends the limits of human consciousness of self in the poem when she juxtaposes the line “We never mistook ourselves for anything but human” (17) with the description of Pepper as having “the laugh of a bear who thought he was human” (22). Transformation to bear is here a link between the self and other in a move of ecstatic oneness with all of creation, as it is in her “The Myth of Blackbirds,” where “The stars told me how to find us in this disorder of systems” (106). Likewise when Set becomes bear, as the transformation is completed, the bear is no longer just a tribal totem bear but one who goes alone into the wilderness, leaving both the tribal and the non-tribal behind him—he/she/it is a completion, a death of the former self and rebirth into a being of the wilderness. At the same time it is a synecdochic embodiment of the survival of the tribe. In the chapter which follows his transformation we see that Set has descendants; one of them is a great, great, grandson who continues to make shields for the people, a synecdochic form of art representing the tribe’s defense against the genocidal threat, just as the novel is a shield against cultural death.

Conclusion

There are several ways then in which transformation and transposition in Harjo and Momaday’s works “resist” Western philosophy and history. The bear representation cuts in several directions: it confirms aspects of the native worldview, such as the astral bear myth and the bear’s immortality, and it deconstructs such concepts of the native as illustrating for colonial intruders the “childhood of mankind,” in which mankind is placed above other animals on the evolutionary ladder and “rational-scientific man” is placed highest of all. Momaday counters by making the child into an ancient bear having great knowledge or wisdom; in Harjo’s “White Bear” the bear rocks the moon cradle in the stars, a cosmic substitution for the scene of mother-daughter separation.

Moreover, Momaday’s child becomes a bear as he removes the mask and becomes his tribal self: this is the path of “least resistance” which is also that of most resistance for him, subverting the philosophical view that man is more rational than the “lower” animals or that animals are baser than humans. The disguise of living by the white man’s law can be removed. By transposing the bear into different literary “places,” Momaday has Set assimilate (in)to reservation culture and then (in)to bear-ness rather than white culture. The choice between reservation and assimilation is resolved by the resistance in transcendence, not a return to the “captive” reservation but to the wilderness and the stars.
Harjo’s poems respond to Momaday’s use of the bear transformation motif like jazz conversations do between instruments. With a clarity of purpose and clear sense of responsibility, she locates the self in resistance communities and in the stars. As Sandra Gilbert observes, “Harjo disrupts our modern categories of the ‘real’ and the ‘surreal’. It is her “determination to ground the apparently fantastic in the supposedly quotidian” that “validates the legitimacy of both” (291-92). Artistically transposing the enemy bear-as-other into a mediating bear-man dancing with least resistance to the wobbling of the earth, Harjo articulates her naturally powerful oppositions within a transposed belief system, no longer that of the traditional bear ceremonies and myths, but a more complex one that addresses the concern of contemporary Native resistance communities for decolonization.

Whereas in traditional native literatures the bear is an ambiguous alien other, sometimes humanlike but also sometimes predatory against a tribe, an even more threatening other is the colonizing “species” that is prone to genocidal acts and biologically “determined” to terminate native cultures. In order to confront such an onslaught, both Momaday and Harjo present the becoming-bear of the native artist-man as a defense and as an emblem of tribal survival, transformation and self-determination; this bear is a singular and solitary being who has sacrificed human selfhood for the tribe. The artist, in re-constructing the native self, becomes a reinscribed, hybrid being who, through the will to change by artistic practices of “least resistance,” can enter the landscapes in a transcendent mythic state—like the young bear dancers of tradition who danced so well and so long that they entered the sky-world.

Intertextually echoing the importance of native descent names in Momaday’s works and identifying not with the bear of Kiowa myth but with the sisters who were being chased by their brother when he began to become a bear, Harjo calls upon the sisters in her poem “Naming”(181): “I tell my sisters, / this name that gives our legs the music / to shake the shells— / a name that is unspeakable / by those who disrespect us / —a name with power to thread us through / the dark to dawn / and leads us faithfully to the stars” (18-25). The entrance into the wilderness and into the night sky of the bear, and his sisters, clearly shows that the captive reservation, like captive artistic representation itself, is hardly the chosen place for the tribe’s artistic souls.
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About the Author
Patricia Louise Haseltine graduated from Indiana University with a Ph.D. degree in folklore studies. In her post-doctoral work in the English Department at the University of Arizona, she began to do research in contemporary Native American literature. Concentrating on the relationships between oral and written literatures, as well as the semiotics and aesthetics of performance genres, she has recently published works on Native American literature, children’s literature, and folklore. Her research for the National Science Council of Taiwan has most recently focused on the poetry of Joy Harjo. She is co-author with Lee Chia-tung (李家同) of a basic English text and has compiled various reference articles and books, including East and Southeast Asian Material Culture in North America: Collections, Historical Sites and Festivals (1989). She began teaching English language and literature in Taiwan at Tamkang University in 1976 and is currently teaching in the English Department at Providence University in Taichung.

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