FROM *HÓYÉÉ* TO *HAJINEI*: ON SOME IMPLICATIONS OF FEELINGFUL ICONICITY AND ORTHOGRAPHY IN NAVAJO POETRY¹

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Abstract

This paper examines the use of co-switching in Navajo written poetry. I look specifically at the use of code-switching from English dominant poems to Navajo. I outline three general semantic domains that are most commonly code-switched from English to Navajo: 1) emotions; 2) mythic characters; and 3) traditional place-names. I suggest that this has to do with a general linguistic ideology that understands these domains as incommensurate with English. I argue that such code-switches are “emblematic identity displays.” I conclude by discussing the relationship between “folk” orthographies and “standard” orthographies. I argue that an over-reliance on “the standard” and a diminishing of “folk” orthographies limits the potential for creativity and subtly undermines notions of incommensurability when Navajo poets are limited to “the standard”, a standard that many Navajos do not know.

Keywords: Navajo; Poetry; Orthography; Code-switching; Place names.

Introduction: Preliminaries on linguaculture and feelingful iconicity

This paper concerns feelingful iconicity in Navajo written poetry as it is manifested in code-switching and citation. This is a topic of some interest, precisely because there is a general language shift from Navajo to English occurring and it is important to understand the places where Navajo persists (see House 2002; Lee and McLaughlin

¹ I want to thank Charles Briggs for challenging me to think a bit more about this poem. I also agree with his assessment of the Navajo version of the poem having a “pedagogical” feel to it.

² I want to thank all the Navajo poets that allowed me to interview them and record their performances. I also want to thank the myriad of other Navajos who helpfully discussed “things Navajo” with me, including Navajo poetry. An earlier version of this paper was presented 3 November 2006 in Albuquerque, NM at the Diné Studies Conference. I want to thank a number of Navajos who came up to me after the talk and made specific comments about the talk or about their poetry and how it connected with the topic. The research for this paper was made possible by Wenner-Gren and the University of Texas at Austin. I want to thank the Navajo Nation for granting me a permit to do research on the emergence of poetry on the Navajo Nation. The ideas in this paper have benefited from a number of conversations with David Samuels, Aimee Hosemann, and Leighton Peterson. I also want to thank Charles Briggs and two anonymous reviewers for a number of useful suggestions. I especially want to thank the reviewer who suggested I read the article by Eva Mendieta-Lombrado and Zaida A. Cintron. Views expressed in this paper are my responsibility. Mistakes that remain are also my responsibility.

2001; Spolsky 2002; Webster 2006b). It is also important to understand what of Navajo is persisting and where. This paper attempts to outline those places in which Navajo perdures in poetry. Expanding on Philip Deloria's (2004) call for studying Native Americans in "unexpected places", I would call for understanding Native American languages in "unexpected places." In this respect, I look at the sites of code-switching and citation in Navajo written poetry. I conclude by suggesting that the written form of the language may be unexpected, but not the potential for feelingful iconicity (Samuels 2004). I follow Sherzer (2002: 93-95, 97-103) and use the term code-switching in a rather broad sense, namely that any instance of a switch from one lexical-grammatical code to another (be it syntactic clause or lexical item) is an example of code-switching (though we might term such forms citation tokens). Finally, I suggest that an over-reliance on "the standard" and a diminishing of "folk" orthographies limits the potential for creativity and subtly undermines notions of incommensurability when Navajo poets are limited to "the standard," a standard that many Navajos do not know.

Let me state here that when I use code-switching, I do not mean that the lexical or clausal item activates Navajo grammar, rather I am suggesting that such uses have the pragmatic effect of activating the felt connections to language and the clusters of such language as emotionally affective displays (Sherzer 2002: 98; Mendieta-Lombrado and Cintron 1995). In this sense, I see code switching as "juxtapositions of items that intertextually surprise (Sherzer 2002: 10)." As Mendieta-Lombrado and Citron (1995: 565) argue concerning the use of code switching in poetry:

By *code switching* (CS) we understand any combination of English and Spanish words or phrases or, in our case, a poem. This broad definition encompasses segments that are usually considered *borrowing* in the linguistic analysis of everyday speech. However, the particular situation of written poetry, with its characteristic literary intentionality, along with the non-applicability of some criteria used to distinguish between borrowing and CS, make this definition preferable.

When Navajo proper nouns are used we can refer to this as Navajo citation (tokens), which can - potentially - evoke the clustering of symbolic, indexical, and iconic signs that adhere and accrue through and by language in use (Silverstein 2005). Such citation forms are related to notions of recontextualization and entextualization (see Briggs and Bauman 1992). It is precisely because poetry uses "emblematic identity displays" (Silverstein 2003) that "CS transcends its oral boundaries and is authenticated as representing the everyday linguistic choice of a group of people (Mendieta-Lombrado and Citron 1995: 565)."

As Toelken (1987) and Webster (2004) have argued the use of citation is an intertextual linkage (Bauman 2004) that evokes other Navajo genres. Thus the use of Navajo citations and code-switching puts these poems in dialogue with a wider horizon of Navajo linguaculture (see Bakhtin 1986; Webster 2004, 2006b; and Friedrich 2006). Likewise, there is a general Navajo ethos that I am familiar with that is variously phrased in English as "it's up to him/her" or "he's/she's his/her own boss" (for comparative purposes see Rushforth and Chisholm 1991).

What I am interested in, then, is in Navajo linguaculture (Friedrich 2006). By linguaculture I mean the breaking down in practice of the putative distinctions between "language" and "culture." One crucial site to investigate Navajo linguaculture is through

the artful use of poetics. Robert Moore (1988) has argued that certain nominal forms become templates and exemplars of indigenous identity. That is, while syntactic knowledge may be lost, the knowledge of certain emblematic lexical items may become the tokens of a language. Language then becomes reduced to “words.” This is, I believe, partly what Michael Silverstein (2003) means by “emblematic identity displays.” Language becomes objects - words - that can be put on display to index a certain identity. And in writing, such objects become icons of standard versus folk orthographies. They enter into Navajo linguaculture through their circulation in discourse (Sherzer 1987). This paper looks at code-switching and citation as ways of understanding Navajo linguaculture.

By feelingful iconicity, I follow Samuels (2004), Feld (1988) and Friedrich (1987: 16-53), and understand feelingful iconicity as the felt attachments that accrue to expressive forms. As Samuels (2004: 11) argues for multiple genres of Apache music, feelingful iconicity is the “emotional attachment to aesthetic forms.” Such emotional attachments create a sense of “continuity.” For example, when Navajos use the Navajo forms for their clans and place names, there is a feelingful attachment to those forms and as sense of continuity to their ancestors through those forms. That is one reason that Navajos say that clan names and place names are incommensurate. Feld (1988: 132; emphasis in original) describes the Kaluli aesthetic for ‘lift-up-over sounding’ as “an icon of what Sapir, Whorf, and others spoke of as an *intuitive* nature of a felt worldview, what Paul Friedrich (1986) has described as the emotionally satisfying dimensions of poetic indeterminacy.” Feelingful iconicity is the *sin qua non* of the poetic function of language; the satisfaction of form over referential content (Jakobson 1960; Bauman 2004: 9). As Samuels (2004: 11) states, this is “the continuity of the *feeling* evoked by expressive forms.” Feelingful iconicity is part of the poetic function of language, where there is a felt naturalness to the expressive dimension - a felt naturalness that has accrued over time and thus creates a sense of continuity.

Let me state here that by “standards” I mean those written forms that are considered to align with the Young and Morgan (1987) orthography (see also the papers in Frawley, Hill and Munro 2002). As I point out below, not every Navajo is familiar or conversant in the Young and Morgan (1987) form. A “standard,” that form associated with certain orthography practices that are relatively codified, should not be a constraint to the expression of feelingful relations to the transcendence of language in use (see Samuels 2004). Also, I take Moore and Silverstein as initial avenues into understanding the feelingful displays of certain linguistic forms. Also, note that Navajo poetry is artful language use, and as such it displays a high degree of metalinguistic awareness. Poets do reflect upon the uses of code-switching and Navajo citation within their poetry. In Navajo poetry, then, language is connected to speaker awareness and metapragmatic theories of language use (see Murray 1989).

Metalinguistic commentary in Navajo poetry:

I want to first start by noting those places where metalinguistic commentary accompanies a shift in code. Here I am concerned with the idea, not unheard of among Navajos, that there is incommensurability between Navajo and English, namely, that certain ideas, emotions, and objects cannot be translated into English adequately. This

is a position that Navajo poets have written about. Below I provide two examples of Navajo poets engaging in metalinguistic commentary and code switching:

- (1) “What is it? She asks. “What’s wrong?”
 There are no English words to describe this feeling.
 “T’áá ‘iighisíí biniina shil hóyéé,” I say.
 (Tapahonso 1993: 14)

- (2) Hataalii sings over the patient
 Someone whispers, in English

 “Diné bizaad bee yádaalti”
 This is an EnemyWay.
 (Chee 2001: 25)

In the first example, we see an explicit statement that certain emotions cannot be articulated in English. *Hóyéé*, this emotion that entails surrounding, according to Luci Tapahonso cannot be translated into English. The second example, by Norla Chee, suggests a linguistic ideology concerning what Paul Kroskrity (1992) has called “strict compartmentalization.” This linguistic ideology concerns the idea that there are certain circumscribed domains where Navajo is not only preferable but also more efficacious. One speaks Navajo at an Enemyway ceremony. As Gary Witherspoon (1977), among others, has pointed out, there is a general Navajo linguistic ideology that language makes things happen. Rex Lee Jim, a Navajo poet, for example has described to me his belief that his poems that evoke thought, will, in so doing, create proper thought (which is the inward quality of speech). Language is not epiphenomenal, it is something. In fact, speaker and language can be indexed simultaneously. In one poem, Jim (1998: 26) writes:

(3) Saad	sh	nishlí
language	1st person	ni- perfective.1 st person subject.to be
	independent pronoun	(animate)
- I am language.

Curing ways are evocative because they are in Navajo, and the chants, ideally, are verbatim quotes of earlier chants. As Clyde Kluckhohn (1960: 81) noted, “The words of a chant myth must be just right because they prescribe a course of behavior that must be followed with minute exactness.” As Field and Blackhorse (2002) argue, the use of certain metonymic parallel constructions in chantways creates the ethnopragmatic context for the efficaciousness of the chantway. Field and Blackhorse (2002: 227) go on to point out that:

Metonymy does not solely serve a performative function, but serves an important aesthetic function as well, especially in that the deities must approve of the *hataali*’s composition in order to respond; simply listing or naming constituent units in a particular order is not compulsive in itself.

Gill (1977) argues that through semantic calibration Navajo chants are understood as “persons” and as such can effect change. Toelken (1987; see also Webster 2004) argues

that intertextual references of Coyote stories aid in the efficaciousness of Navajo curing ways. These intertextual forms, then, are efficacious - in part - due to their aesthetic and feelingful qualities.

Code-switching and Navajo citations then take on a greater import given the linguistic ideology that values language not just about the world but as a creative force in that world. As Bakhtin (1986) noted, all utterances are quotations of ancestors. We do not say something new. Rather we insert ourselves into the implicated and entangled history of our language. That, I would argue, is precisely what Navajo poets are engaging in when they code-switch or use Navajo citations. They are implicating their poetry through the use of Navajo in the feelingful iconicity that is both entangled histories and emergent felt connections. The use of Navajo is thus both evocative and efficacious. Placenames, for example, can be understood as the words of the ancestors. But what do Navajo poets feel can best be expressed in Navajo? That is, what do Navajos code-switch or cite into Navajo?

During my fieldwork, I often asked Navajo poets why they wrote in English or Navajo (see Webster 2004). Sometimes the answer was practical: They simply did not know how to write in Navajo. This is quite common. Many Navajos speak Navajo but do not know how to write Navajo. Literacy is emerging (see McLaughlin 1992; Webster 2006a). On the other hand, those poets who could or would (the two are not the same) write in Navajo often stated that they wrote in Navajo because it was in some feelingful way “better” or “more accurate.” Kluckhohn (1960: 81) made this point years ago, “the Navaho are interested in words insofar as they categorize events with some precision.” The precision, however, is not of reference but of iconicity.

Feelingful iconicity in Navajo poetry:

Now to the poems. One of the most common examples of Navajo citation in English dominant poems concerned placenames. As Keith Basso (1996) has discussed for Western Apaches (a related Southern Athabaskan language), placenames are fundamental in creating a moral landscape, in fact, to use a placename is to quote the ancestors. Julie Cruikshank (1990), working with Northern Athabaskan languages, has shown how Tagish and Tutchone people speaking in English will use their native language when discussing placenames. Though, the Tagish and Tutchone women Cruikshank worked with, wanted her to record their narratives in English, the placenames were given in Tagish and Tutchone. Those are their placenames. Stephen Jett (2001) has remarked about the import of Navajo placenames as well. To know the name of a place is more than simple geography, it is to know the events and ancestors who gave the place cultural meaning.

It is not surprising, then, to find many Navajo poems using Navajo placenames when discussing place. In what follows, I provide two examples of placenaming in Navajo poetry. The crucial element here is that these were poems written in Navajo and then translated into English, yet the placenames remain in Navajo. The Navajo placenames, and their use in Navajo (some Navajo poets provide English glosses), are evocative and feelingfully connected to Navajo ethnogeography.

(4)	Sis naajiní
Tsoodził | Blanca Peak
Mount Taylor |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------------------|

Dook'o'ooshíid	San Francisco Peak
Dibé Nitsaa	Hesperus Peak
Dził Ná'oodilíi	Huerfano Mountain
Ch'óol'í'í	Gobernador Knob

(Blueeyes 1995: 9)

- (5) Níléí éí Ch'óol'í'í jó 'éí bikáá'gi awéé lí, ákodei haayá, ákodei tì'
 It was on top of Ch'óol'í'í he found the baby, up there, let's go.
 (Neundorf 1999: 2)

Both of these poems reference *Ch'óol'í'í*, which is one of the sacred mountains for many Navajo. Indeed, Blueeyes lists the sacred mountains of the Navajo, from the formulaic and traditional east to south to west to north direction. In the Blueeyes poem *Sacred Mountains* both the Navajo and English placenames are given. They are not translations, rather they are different names in different languages for some putatively “same place.” For example, *Dibé Nitsaa* glosses in English as “Big Sheep” and not Hesperus Peak. Whatever feelingful associations there are with Hesperus Peak they are not the same as *Dibé Nitsaa*. Likewise, Neundorf makes no effort to translate *Ch'óol'í'í*, into English, nor does she provide the English placename. You either know where *Ch'óol'í'í*, is or you do not. I should add that in Alan Wilson's (1995) excellent discussion of Navajo placenames he leaves this placename untranslated. As Navajos told me, placenames are incommensurate.

Another use of placenames in Navajo poetry concerns the opposition between *Hwééldi* and *Dinétaah*. A little background may help at this point. *Hwééldi* is the Navajo term for Bosque Redondo or Fort Sumner. This was the place that the Navajos lived for four years (1864-1868) after the horrific Long Walk which claimed the lives of many Navajos. It was a time of “great hardship” to quote Laura Tohe. It is perhaps the single most salient moment in the collective memory of Navajos. It is a time of suffering and also a time of pride. The Navajos eventually did negotiate their return to *Dinétaah*, the traditional Navajo homeland. And that is the contrast: *Hwééldi* is about removal and *Dinétaah* is about home. Many poets have written about the Long Walk and the internment at *Hwééldi* and they have written about the return to *Dinétaah*. What is important is that *Hwééldi* and *Dinétaah* are the terms that they use. They are put into binary opposition in a number of poems. This binary opposition is based on the implicated socio-historical sensibilities that can and are activated by the use of the Navajo placenames. *Hwééldi* is not and cannot be *Dinétaah* and the two forms gain feelingful currency as oppositional forms. Below I provide two examples. One from Laura Tohe, *Within Dinétaah the People's Spirit is Strong*, and one from Luci Tapahonso, *In 1864*.

- (6) We called this place Hwééldi
 this place of starvation,
 this place of near death
 this place of extreme hardship
 (Tohe 2002: 103)

And later in the poem:

- (7) We returned to our land after four years.
Our spirits ragged and weary.
And vowed that we never be seperated from Dinétah;
the earth is our strength
We have grown strong.
(Tohe 2002: 103)

And this example from Tapahonso's poem *In 1864*:

- (8) We didn't know how far it was or even where we were going.
All that was certain was that we were leaving Dinétah, our home.
(Tapahonso 1993: 9)

And contrasted with:

- (9) There were many who died on the way to Hwéeldi. All the way we told
each other, "we will be strong as long as we are together." I think that
was what kept us alive.
(Tapahonso 1993: 10)

Another example of Navajo citation in use occurs with the lexical item *mq'ii* which glosses as "Coyote." Coyote is an especially salient and important mythic figure in Navajo verbal art. Not only are there a number of stories about the trickster Coyote, there are also songs and a curing way that have Coyote as the central figure (see Haile 1984; Luckert 1979; and McAllester 1980). Indeed, the very form of Coyote's name with the word initial /m/ marks the form as salient. In Navajo there are relatively few words that begin with the phoneme /m/ (see also Landar 1961). Below I present three examples of the use of *mq'ii* in English dominant poetry. The first example, from 1971, is one of the first examples of English to Navajo citation that I have found.

- (10) He'd make us laugh with the stories of the hated
Ma'i.
(David 1971: 9)
- (11) That which we can only guess to be
Like voiceless vacant villages of old
Coyote, Ma'ii, was always there to see
What the rest of us are only told.
(Begay 1995: 40)
- (12) Beyond the fire *ma'ii* sheds his coyote skin
and appears as the moral of our story.
(Chee 2001: 36)

Note that *mq'ii* can either stand alone or there can be an attempt at translation. One should also note that *mq'ii* is spelled two different ways; none of the above examples spells *mq'ii* the same way as the standard *mq'ii*. I will return to this point below. Note, however, that while Coyote is a common trickster figure among Native Americans in

the west, by using *mq'ii* the poets demarcate him as not just any Coyote but as the Navajo Coyote. This is an emblematic identity display. Even Navajos who do not speak Navajo can and do recognize the lexical item *mq'ii*. The form localizes the poems. It is evocative of local knowledge.

Coyote can also be used metaphorically. While the above examples reference Coyote the trickster, the following example of code-switching references the trickster as Coyote. Now I will give an example where the use of code-switching draws the listener into the humor of the poem. The example is from a performance by Laura Tohe at the Native American Music Festival in Tsaile, AZ at Diné College in June of 2001. The poem is titled "Sometimes those Pueblo Men can sure be Coyotes." The poem describes the narrator - a teenage girl- and her friend - also a teenage girl - being driven home by a handsome Pueblo man. The girls make a number of comments concerning the man in Navajo, assuming the man does not know Navajo.

- (13) we had just pulled onto Central
 when one of us said
Éí hastiin ayóo baa dzólní' this man is very handsome
Éí laa' I agree
 (Tohe 1999: 16)

The interesting thing - but not terribly surprising - is that the audience - made up mostly of Navajo - began laughing prior to the translations. The use of English was clearly secondary for many Navajo and their enjoyment came - in part - from the use of Navajo. The largest laugh comes when Tohe concludes the poem with the Pueblo man responding in Navajo:

- (14) *A'héhee' at'ééke* he said thank you, girls
 (Tohe 1999: 17)

In this example, the Navajo is used to create a connection, unintended, but a connection nonetheless between the young girls and the Pueblo man. The laughter, I would argue, came from the audience anticipation of the revelation that the Pueblo man spoke Navajo. The laughter was also connected to the way audience members (especially women) imagined themselves as the young girls. In a similar way, poems that are based on Navajo sound symbolism evoke mental images that allow Navajo reader/listeners to feelingfully imagine (Webster 2006b).

Writing in Navajo poetry:

While the previous example is from an oral performance, the code-switching also occurs in the written version by Tohe (as indicated above). In the oral performances of this poem that I have seen, the code-switching is more extensive as the humor of the moment is extended. Indeed, it is the code-switching that is the linchpin to the poem; it is what gives it its humor. But writing in Navajo is a relatively new phenomenon. Robert Young and William Morgan (1987) have done a great service to the Navajo (Morgan was Navajo) by creating an orthography and dictionaries of Navajo. Their orthography - the writing system employed by Young and Morgan as against the system

used by Gladys Reichard - has become the standard (see Young 1993). Writing as an ideologically loaded and historically situated set of metadiscursive practices does things (on literacy see Collins and Blot 2003; Bauman and Briggs 2003; Webster 2006a; McLaughlin 1992). One thing that writing may do is help ratify notions of a “standard.” This is especially true when a standard written form is taught as a validating mechanism in the reification of language as object and hence comparable with other putatively “real” languages. This is both empowering and limiting. It is empowering because of a Western linguistic ideology that sees language standards as the mark of “real” languages (Bauman and Briggs 2003). This is the common conflation of language with writing. It is limiting because it devalues the “folk” orthographies of many non-standard writers.

By “folk orthographies” I mean the written forms created by Navajo writers that are not part of the “standard” (i.e., the form of writing taught at schools on the Navajo Nation). It should not be surprising, for example, to find that Alyse Neundorf was not just a poet, but also a linguist who wrote articles on Navajo and even wrote a children’s Navajo dictionary (1983). But all Navajos do not have such training. Neundorf knew the standard and wrote in it. But what of the three Coyotes I presented above? One persistent criticism of poets who wrote in Navajo was that they did not spell Navajo “correctly.” And some Navajo poets who wrote in Navajo were apologetic to me concerning their spelling of Navajo words. It should be added, that given the complex morphophonemic rules employed in Navajo, any spelling system will be fraught with ambiguity.

When Vee Browne (2000) writes a limerick in Navajo about the Navajo language, using her “folk orthography,” we should first pause and respect the feelingful iconic connection that Browne is articulating about her language, through her use of a “folk orthography.” An orthography that is wholly interpretable. Such folk orthographies are locally controlled expressions of language loyalty. I should note that in the limerick to follow, Browne does not follow the normal poetic conventions for syllable counts in English language limericks. Rather, she asserts through the title to this poem as a “Navajo limerick” (Browne 2000: 30). There is some off-rhyme in this poem with *wolye* ‘it is called’/ *ya’at’eeh* ‘good’ and *diists’a’da* ‘not heard’/ *bohoosh’aah* ‘I am learning it’. Here is the Navajo limerick by Browne:

(15) Dine Bizaad

Saad wolye’
Nizaad doo diists’a’da
Hazaad hozhoni
Bizaad shil ya’at’eeh
Shizaad bohoosh’aah

(Browne 2000: 30)

In Browne’s book, *Ravens Dancing* (2000), in which this poem is found, there are poems in both English and Navajo and mixtures of the two. The vast majority of poems are in English. The primary forms found in Navajo are place names. There are two limericks in Navajo. A forward by Herman Cody in Navajo on *Nihizaad* ‘our language’ is translated into English by Browne (Browne 2000: xvii-xviii). That forward is a commentary on the importance of the Navajo language. The Navajo limericks are not translated. I believe that to be an assertion of incommensurability between Navajo and

English. Within Browne's book these limericks are examples of the dialogue of languages, made manifest in the use of Navajo. The Navajo limerick is intertextually linked to a Western poetic tradition, but the understanding of the poem is to be done through Navajo. It is both a "nod" to Western traditions and an assertion of Navajo language sensibilities. Its readership is intentionally limited by a general lack of Navajo literacy (in any orthography). The poem acts as an exemplar of Navajo poetry in Navajo, refusing translation but evoking Western literary traditions. In this way, the poem is in dialogue with Western genre conventions (Bakhtin 1986). Browne is thus indexing her familiarity with Western poetic traditions, but at the same time challenging readers to engage the Navajo version in Navajo.¹

Here is a glossing (not a translation) of the poem I did in December of 2005:

(16) The People's Language

Language it is called
 Your language is not heard
 One's language is beautiful
 Her language I like it (with me, it is good)
 My language I am learning it

For me, one important point here is not how *shít* 'with me, my' was written or the way that *yá'át'ééh* 'good (traditional Navajo greeting)' was written. Rather, I am more interested in the attempt to write a limerick in Navajo and the ownership of an orthography that Browne takes when she writes in Navajo, in her Navajo. The glossing was relatively simple, while I have attempted to learn the Young and Morgan standard, I can also recognize idiosyncratic spellings as well. Browne shows local control of a vernacular language (the book was self-published). We should celebrate such accomplishments. Indeed, such folk orthographies gain pragmatic force from their individual and local nature.

Code-switching or citing Navajo in speech is in some ways less problematic than code-switching or citing Navajo in writing, and specifically in poetry. For example, I know many Navajos who speak Navajo and code-switch between English and Navajo regularly and frequently. But, they do not know how to write the standard Navajo. Laura Tohe (2005), for example, fluent in oral Navajo has taken classes to learn to write Navajo and now she writes poetry in both English and Navajo. Many of those poems concern place, and specifically *Tséyi'* or its Spanishified form Canyon de Chelly (Tohe 2005).

Using Navajo is dangerous when writing. A number of Navajos I spoke with criticized poets who code-switched into Navajo for not spelling the Navajo words "correctly." This is a statement of "cultural knowledge," "language knowledge," or "expertness." It is also intertwined with ideas about education and the right to critique. In many ways it is about claiming a standard. Such talk aids in the regimenting of Navajo literacy practices.

I want to give a final example, not because it is particularly egregious, but because the citation is indicative of another theme that Navajo poets use when evoking Navajo proper nouns. Not only do Navajos use citations concerning place and mythic figures, they also use citation when evoking mythic places (compare with Cruikshank et

al. 1990 on Tutchone and Tagish). Here is the example from Rutherford (Ford) Ashley's *Heart Vision 2000* (Ashley 2000: 14):

- (17) As from the rood of "*Hajinei*" his people had emerged
and that emergence,
that "*Hajinei*,"
can take many forms,

A little background may help here. *Hajíínáí* is the place of emergence; it is the hole the Navajos emerged from into this "glittering world." Ashley, I believe, is arguing that one's own emergence can take many forms. When I first read this poem, I knew two things immediately about the form *Hajinei*. First, I knew that it was the place of emergence. Second, I knew that it did not conform to "the standard" orthography. But, I think, the first realization was far more important than the second.

Navajo poets, when they use Navajo in English language dominant poetry, are more concerned with the feelingful iconicity than with getting the "linguistic details right" (Collins and Blot 2003: 159). When I spoke with Ashley in Window Rock, AZ, for example, he was quite open about the fact that he did not write Navajo in "the standard." Rather, he was more concerned about the connection to Navajo mythic origins, than to a "correct" spelling. The use of Navajo as an emblematic display of incommensurability supersedes the orthographic form, what is important is the indexing of incommensurability through a written form that is recognizable as Navajo (regardless of the linguistic details) and the feelingful iconicity evoked by that usage. Thus while the choice of placenames (citations of Navajo) and code-switching (including metalinguistic commentary on that code-switching) may seem to be distinct linguistic practices, they are not distinct in their ability to feelingfully transcend the English language dominant poetry and draw forth the implicational clusters of associations that reverberate and are indexed in the use of Navajo (in whatever form).

Conclusion: Many forms.

Joel Sherzer (2002: 100) argues that "poetry based on style shifting and code switching constitutes a political act of consciousness and identity, as well as ethnic, social, and cultural resistance to hegemonic poetic models and, more generally, the homogenized, monolingual, English-speaking America they represent." This is true of the Navajo poetry above. It is also an expression of the creative linguistic individual as poet (Sapir 1921; Johnstone 1996). Furthermore, as Mendieta-Lombrado and Cintron (1995: 570) note concerning Chicano poetry and the use of Spanish forms in English language dominant poems, it "develops a very dynamic genre that induces the reader into an active interaction with a culturally intimate world of signification." Thus the politics are - in some ways - a by-product of the feelingful and aesthetic uses of Navajo forms in English language dominant poetry.

Related to this is Deloria's (2004) notion of investigating "Indians in unexpected places," both for what they reveal about Native Americans, but also for what they reveal about the ways that Native Americans are imagined. That is, to ask ourselves what makes this "unexpected?" In this case, I have been concerned with the Navajo language in "unexpected places" (language in unexpected places). I have been interested in how

the Navajo language localizes these poems within frameworks of meaning and feeling based upon Navajo implicational knowledge. When Deloria (2004) called for examining Indians in “unexpected” places, he was also arguing that we examine why it was that Indians who were actors, directors, or opera singers at the turn of the last century were “unexpected?” Clearly, they were not in any sense *a priori* “unexpected” at the time. In showing where Native Americans were and what they were doing, activities that directly counter the received wisdom of what Native Americans were doing in the early 20th century, Deloria seems to be arguing that to see Native Americans directing early silent films - for example - is only unexpected if we approach the obscuring stereotypes as “real.” The same is true of language in unexpected places. There is nothing, I would argue, unexpected in finding the Navajo language in written poetry, if we first appreciate the feelingful iconicity, the felt connections towards language.

There may come a day when the standard so overwhelms folk orthographies in Navajo, that poets like Ford Ashley or Richard David may feel constrained from code-switching in their poetry, because they write in some putative way “incorrectly.” That will be a shame. Code-switching and citation in Navajo poetry is about incommensurability, the incommensurability of place names, emotions, and the mythic. Code-switching and citation are also about identity, about emblematic identity displays - code-switching is about indexing Navajoness, no matter what orthography is used. To lose that option is to be constrained by “standards.” It is to lose potential and creativity. It is also to go against a basic tenet of Navajo life that I am familiar with: “It’s up to you.” People are expected to make their own decisions (see Rushforth and Chisholm 1991). As Ford Ashley says, “‘*Hajinei*,’ can take many forms.”

Epilogue

I presented an earlier version of this paper at the 2006 Diné Studies Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. After I had presented this paper, a Navajo man approached me. He and I talked about the feelingful quality of Navajo “words” and then he told me that as I was giving my talk I had - through the use of Navajo “words” - inspired him to write a poem in Navajo to his “girlfriend.” He read me the poem in Navajo and then provided a translation of the poem for me. The use of Navajo in poetry is feelingfully evocative. It can transcend the situated moment and evoke other aesthetic expressions. The use of Navajo thus tumbles through the implicational evocations of language as more than mere reference (meaningful), but as iconic (feelingful). A feelingful iconicity that is emergent within novel contexts. This is true, even when the Navajo being spoken is done haltingly in the context of an academic talk by a non-Navajo linguistic anthropologist.

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