

BREATHING OUT THE WORDS OF A DIFFERENT WORLD: AMERICAN INDIAN AUTHORS WRITING IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

The essay discusses the connection between language and culture in American Indian literatures. Having found affinities between the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis about language as a tool that shapes reality and the Indian belief in the magic of words, the author argues in favor of protecting the national (tribal) language and American cultural diversity because, with the loss of its language, a minority ethnic culture loses its grounding.

KEYWORDS

American literature; American Indian authors; language and culture; ethnicity

From the psychological point of view, there are as many different worlds upon the earth as there are languages. Each language is an instrument which guides people in observing, in reacting, in expressing themselves in a special way.

—Kluckhohn and Leighton

The above remark by the ethnographers Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton appeared in their classic study *The Navaho*. They conducted extensive research among the Navajo Indians in the early 1940s and apart from other issues, they were interested in the relationship between language and culture. Their idea of the existence of different worlds based on speaking different languages bears a resemblance to the linguistic theory called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, that language shapes reality and, therefore, when one uses another language, one is entering a different reality.¹ Sapir believed that “language and our thought-grooves are inextricably interwoven, [and] are, in a sense, one and the same.”² His most provocative statement, which inspired research for many decades to come, was one part of his paper delivered at a conference in 1928 attended by both linguists and anthropologists. He stated that “[h]uman beings do not live in the objective world alone . . . but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. . . . The fact of

1. See Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 69.

2. Edward Sapir, *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1921), 232.

the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of a group."³

Benjamin Lee Whorf, expanding on Sapir's ideas, wrote that "the grammar of each language . . . is itself the shaper of ideas. . . . We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. . . ." ⁴ In his studies he compared a group of European languages with the Hopi language and came to the conclusion that differences in the linguistic area are mirrored in people's thinking and behavior.⁵ This theory has been broadly discussed and much criticized. However, it often seems to be echoed in works dealing with American Indian cultures. For instance, in their study Kluckhohn and Leighton assert that "[b]ecause of the structure of their language The People [Navaho] are bound to have mental processes that are, in some significant senses, different from those of English-speaking peoples."⁶ Similarly, Leanne Hinton, in her essay about the language of the Wintu tribe from California, says that our language does not limit us to certain viewpoints "but it does guide us strongly along particular mental pathways, and from this perspective, languages . . . are windows to whole systems of beliefs and values."⁷ There are studies suggesting that grammatical categories can indeed influence non-verbal behavior.⁸ Could this mean that languages are indeed the gates to different worlds?

This provocative thought also emerged during my interview with Hope Coriz (Comanche/Santa Clara Pueblo). She speaks English and two American Indian languages. She has never heard of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis but those two must have been very happy somewhere in the linguists' paradise when she spoke about her experience. After she learnt two American languages that do not exist in a written form she learnt English and, according to her, it changed her way of thinking: "English is so different, so linear, oriented on a subject, time is precisely specified." She also mentioned the belief of many Native people that if they learn English, especially in a written form, it changes them: "There are certain ceremonies you cannot practice any longer because your mind changed."⁹ The question remains as to what extent this could be generalized, but in any case it explains why, in the

3. Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality*, 209.

4. Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1967), 213.

5. See Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, 138.

6. Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton, *The Navaho*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 208.

7. Leanne Hinton, *Flutes of Fire: Essays on California Indian Languages* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1994), 69.

8. See, e.g., John B. Carroll and Joseph B. Casagrande, "The Function of Language Classifications in Behavior," in *Readings in Social Psychology*, ed. Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Hartley (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958), 18–31; J. A. Lucy, *Grammatical Categories and Cognition: A Case Study of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

9. Hope Coriz, personal interview, April 6, 2001.

more traditional pueblos, only the native language can be used for ceremonial occasions.

Among ethnographers and anthropologists there were only some who took time to learn the language of the tribe they studied. However, I share the belief with Gary Witherspoon, who studied the Navajo culture, that the best entry into another culture is through the language.¹⁰ He suggests that “it is through language that the world of the Navajo was created, and it is through language that the Navajos control, classify, and beautify their world.”¹¹ To understand this concept we need to abandon, according to Witherspoon, the Western metaphysical notions that separate mind and matter, suggesting that what goes on in the mind is subjective, while that which occurs in the world of matter is objective. Navajo philosophy assumes that “mental and physical phenomena are inseparable, and that thought and speech can have a powerful impact on the world of matter and energy.”¹² The Navajo world was created by *Diyin Dine’é* (Holy people) who “thought the world into existence”; their thoughts were realized through speech, song, and prayer.¹³ According to the Navajo, thought is the inner form of speech. In order to clarify this idea, Witherspoon explains that all natural phenomena, such as the earth and sky, the sun and moon etc., also have inner forms. They are called *bii’astí*—“an animate being lies within.” These beings have human-like characters and appearance. People also have inner forms that are called *nitchí bii’sizíinii* (in-standing wind soul). As Witherspoon suggests, this in-standing wind soul is thought to be in control of one’s body, thoughts, and actions.¹⁴ The Navajo believe that the Holy wind is within the individual from the moment of conception; some differentiate between the female and male parts of the wind, stating that four months after conception the wind grows and causes the first movements of the unborn child.¹⁵ Like Witherspoon, McNeley also stresses that the Western reader has to deal with words and phrases that are difficult to translate, since for some American Indian expressions and phrases there are no satisfactory equivalents in English.¹⁶ *Nílch’i*, meaning Wind, Air, or Atmosphere, “gives life, thought, speech, and the power of motion to all living things and serves as the means of communication between all elements of the living world.”¹⁷ From the Navajo point of view breath and wind play crucial roles. In his study Witherspoon comes to the conclusion that the act of creation starts with knowledge and culminates in speech: “In the Navajo view of the

10. See Gary Witherspoon, *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977), 7.

11. Witherspoon, *Language and Art*, 7.

12. Witherspoon, *Language and Art*, 9.

13. See Witherspoon, *Language and Art*, 16.

14. See Witherspoon, *Language and Art*, 29.

15. See James Cale McNeley, *Holy Wind in Navajo Philosophy* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), 33–34.

16. See McNeley, *Holy Wind*, xi.

17. McNeley, *Holy Wind*, 1.

world, language is not a mirror of reality; reality is a mirror of language. . . . Ritual language does not describe how things are; it determines how they will be."¹⁸

American Indians share a belief not only in the creative power of words but also in the power of thoughts. At the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century ethnographers in the Pueblos recorded the Keresan Pueblo Creation Myth. It is fundamental to the religious beliefs of the Keresan people. There are different versions of the myth, but they all mention Spider Woman, sometimes called Thinking Woman, who is known as a female creator deity. Some versions of the myth attribute the creation of the entire universe to her.¹⁹ In the Laguna Pueblo she is said to be "the creator of all."²⁰ Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko demonstrates this idea in her novel *Ceremony*. At the very beginning the reader is confronted with the creative power of thoughts and words:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman,
is sitting in her room
and whatever she thinks about
appears.

. . .

Thought-Woman, the spider,
named things and
as she named them
they appeared.²¹

It is also the power of an Indian witch's word that creates the whites and consequently all evil. Once pronounced, the story starts to live its own life; "[i]t *can't be called back*."²²

For American Indians it is of paramount importance to pronounce the words correctly during the ceremonies, because it is through speech that things come into existence. The aim of ceremonies is also to change things, to transform them. One needs to be careful when using words; repetition also plays a crucial role. When Lakota Indians invited me to take part in the sweat lodge ceremony, at the beginning the medicine man asked the participants not to sing songs unless they know the words exactly. Songs are sung to call in the Holy Beings and the wrong words would confuse them.

However, the notion that language is sacred and that words and thoughts create reality is not connected only with rituals. It is not just ritual language that is sacred; everyday speech is sacred too, because it is also endowed with creative power. Suzanne Benally (Navajo/Santa Clara Pueblo) explained in a personal interview that it is important to think carefully before one

18. Witherspoon, *Language and Art*, 34.

19. See Carol Patterson-Rudolph, *On the Trail of Spider Woman: Petroglyphs, Pictographs, and Myths of the Southwest* (Santa Fe, NM: Ancient City Press, 1997), 7.

20. Patterson-Rudolph, *On the Trail*, 8.

21. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (1977; New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 1.

22. Silko, *Ceremony*, 138.

speaks: "When I speak I change the air around me and you inhale the reality that I created."²³ Hope Coriz (Comanche/Santa Clara Pueblo) is advocating the same idea when she asserts that in the American Indian language everything one pronounces bears a sacred quality: "You need to be careful about what you think. Even when you start thinking about something, energy is created that some people can feel."²⁴ Rina Swentzel from the Santa Clara Pueblo states that when a person speaks his/her breath merges with other people's breath. Then the breath becomes part of the place and influences those who come after.²⁵ Here is the origin of the opinion, widespread among American Indians, that one should only think positive things and avoid negative thoughts. Witherspoon, who spent more than ten years in the Navajo reservation, describes how he was scolded for thinking about unhappy possibilities: "I was told that planning for the 'rainy' day would bring about 'rainy days' and that I had better forget about planning for 'rainy days' unless I wanted it to 'rain.'"²⁶

Thus, when Patsy Rodenburg asserts, "Most of us, I think, no longer trust in words. We have forgotten and, in some instances, have lost forever language's ancient mesmerizing power,"²⁷ it is obvious that she speaks only for part of the world. Many anthropologists, linguists, and writers have shown that words are powerful for Native Americans. The story is a tool of survival for Indians. According to Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo), it is the oral tradition that has prevented the complete destruction of the Indian web of identity in the post-contact period.²⁸ In American Indian cultures words, as well as stories, retain their ritual power. E. L. Doctorow's notion that "literature is less a tool of survival than it once was"²⁹ certainly cannot be applied to the Native American oral heritage. The importance of having stories echoes throughout the works of Native American writers. Stories provide moral guidelines, a sense of identity and belonging; they place people within the larger pattern, as the stories become a matter of community knowledge and concern, they prevent a feeling of withdrawal and isolation.

Josef Jařab states in his introduction to the Czech translation of Louise Erdrich's novel *Love Medicine* that the American Indians believe that "in the beginning was the word" but, unlike Christians, they take this literally.³⁰ For example, in their book *The Navaho* Kluckhohn and Leighton repeatedly

23. Suzanne Benally, personal interview, May 20, 2001.

24. Hope Coriz, personal interview, April 6, 2001.

25. Diane Reyna and Conroy Chino, dirs., *Surviving Columbus*, Videotape, PBS video, 1992.

26. Witherspoon, *Language and Art*, 28.

27. Patsy Rodenburg, *The Need for Words: Voice and the Text* (London: Methuen, 1993), 4–5.

28. See Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 45.

29. E. L. Doctorow, "False Documents," in *E. L. Doctorow: Essays and Conversations*, ed. Richard Trenner (Princeton, NJ: Ontario Review Press, 1983), 18.

30. See Josef Jařab, "Čarování s identitou," in *Od Poea k postmodernismu*, ed. Martin Hilský and Jan Zelenka (Praha: Odeon a nakladatelství H & H, 1993), 495.

stress that words are extremely important for this tribe: "They are things of power. Some words attract good; others drive away evil. Certain words are dangerous—only special persons under specially defined conditions may utter them. Hence there are specialized vocabularies known only to those who are trained in a craft or ceremonial skill."³¹ According to Kluckhohn and Leighton's findings, every family had some "good luck songs" that were believed to protect the family. These songs were regarded as important property and were passed on from generation to generation.³² Words are cherished by indigenous people and, even though they might not be used any longer by the younger generation, they are not forgotten. William Powers, for instance, writes in his study of the Lakota that the Lakota often talk about old sayings and phrases and what follows is a long explanation of the situation in which the word was used.³³ As Silko also points out, at the Laguna Pueblo "many individual words have their own stories. So often when one is telling a story and is using words to tell the story, each word that one is speaking has a story of its own, too."³⁴ It seems that Silko also shares the ritual approach to words. She explains that, while she was in Alaska writing the novel *Ceremony*, she missed Laguna so much that writing became for her a "way of re-making that place" and words functioned as sand paintings.³⁵ She was like a Spider Woman, Thought Woman—the Laguna Pueblo creator deity.

SILENCED VOICE—LOSS OF IDENTITY

In the course of history American Indian languages have been suppressed, sometimes to the point of extinction. The claim that the American Indian languages are primitive came hand in hand with the statement that the Indians were barbarians who needed to be civilized. The simple aim of these ethnocentric theories was to justify the colonization of the New World. The arguments were repeatedly used that the native languages are primitive because they are simple, concrete, and, like their users, inseparably connected with nature. Linguist Michael Krauss claims that out of 187 American Indian languages that are now spoken in the USA and Canada, 149 are no longer being learned by children and thus they are doomed to extinction.³⁶

Contrary to many immigrants to the USA who decide to teach their children only English in order to make their social and economic assimilation easier, the American Indians feel the loss of their native language as a loss

31. Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 260.

32. Kluckhohn and Leighton, *The Navaho*, 203.

33. See William K. Powers, *Sacred Language: The Nature of Supernatural Discourse in Lakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 37.

34. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 50.

35. Leslie Marmon Silko and James Wright, *Delicacy and Strength of Lace: Letters between Leslie Marmon Silko and James Wright*, ed. Anne Wright (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 1985), 28.

36. See Michael Krauss, "The World's Languages in Crisis," *Language* 68, no. 1 (1992): 4.

of history, a loss of identity. One of the most urgent tasks for them today is to preserve their culture in a rapidly changing world. In order to keep their culture tribes feel they need to keep their languages. Pueblo historian Joe Sando says: "If you want to have religion you have to have the language."³⁷

Many scholars, teachers, and community members, both Indian and non-Indian, are working hard to stop the process of the extinction of the languages. Tribal communities are developing teaching curricula and programs that would enable children to learn their native language; people have collected materials, made tape recordings, and published dictionaries. American Indians are forming tribal language committees, school and after-school programs, and evening language classes, they are audio-taping and videotaping elders, and researching tapes and field notes from university archives.³⁸

That the loss of the native language means the loss of the culture and identity of people is obvious in Silko's *Ceremony*. Auntie, one of the American Indian protagonists, wants her son Rocky to succeed in the white world but she is caught in a trap, because "[a]n old sensitivity had descended in her, surviving thousands of years from the oldest times, when the people shared a single clan name and they told each other who they were. . . . The people had known, with the simple certainty of the world they saw, how everything should be. But the fifth world had become entangled with European names: the names of the rivers, the hills, the name of the animals and plants—all of creation suddenly had two names: an Indian name and a white name. Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone. . . ."³⁹ For the Indians this is an alien idea and when Auntie's daughter starts drinking the people feel that they are losing not only her but, at the same time, also part of themselves. For Auntie's daughter there is no way back. Auntie tries at least to reconcile the family with the people. Following her old instinct, she wants "to gather the feelings and opinions that were scattered through the village, to gather them like willow twigs and tie them into a single prayer bundle that would bring peace to all of them."⁴⁰ But it is impossible; it seems that the English language has materialized and buried the Indian world: ". . . now the feelings were twisted, tangled roots, and all the names for the source of this growth were buried under English words, out of reach."⁴¹ The English language is recognized as a representative of a different, and in this case also enemy, world that has a destructive impact on the pueblo culture.

37. Reyna and Chino, *Surviving Columbus*.

38. Hinton, *Flutes of Fire*, 221–54.

39. Silko, *Ceremony*, 68.

40. Silko, *Ceremony*, 69.

41. Silko, *Ceremony*, 69.

ENEMY'S LANGUAGE CONQUERED

"I write in . . . the foreigners' language. I turn the foreigners' words against them. . . ."
—Haunani-Kay Trask

Having been involved in learning about and teaching American Indian cultures has, for me, always meant a search for appropriate words. Since my interest started with translation, this search was at first literary, the search for the right words that, in some cases, did not have Czech equivalents. In the field of literature it soon became obvious that the use of Western literary terms could in many cases be misleading and obscuring.⁴² Finding myself repeatedly caught and entangled in a web of Western perception of reality and the means of describing it and referring to it has probably been the most challenging part of this fascinating field of research. However, the issue of language and the importance of transmitting the agenda correctly seems to be of paramount importance for American Indians today and, in order to do justice to American Indian cultures and literatures, it cannot be avoided. American Indian scholars, teachers, and historians turn readers' attention to the topic, writers reflect this in both fictional and non-fictional works, and even the titles of American Indian conferences often incorporate the issue. During the Native Voices Symposium held in Tucson in June 2007 all the speakers addressed the relationship between American Indian culture and language and it did not matter whether they still spoke the native language.

Some of the contemporary American Indian authors can speak both their native language and English but the long years of oppression, forced assimilation, and a prohibition on using the native languages at schools and the fact that many of the writers come from mixed marriages mean that nowadays the majority of American Indian writers are writing in English. Yet this might change in the future and it will definitely be interesting to watch the development. Sherwin Bitsui, a young Navajo writer, has written that it was a shame to be a Navajo and speak the language when he was little but that now the situation is changing. He himself has learnt to speak Navajo and is a kind of ambassador for the Navajo language, encouraging young people in the tribe to learn their native language.⁴³ Written forms of indigenous languages have also resulted in the birth of new art traditions. For instance, the linguist and poet Ofelia Zepeda uses the O'odham language when writing poetry she calls *cegitoidog*—thoughts. Even some of the linguists have started to write linguistic and lexicographical essays in their native languages as well.⁴⁴

42. For an example see the debate about linear and circular time in the works of American Indian writers in Katherleen Sands and LaVonne Ruoff, eds., "A Discussion of *Ceremony*," *American Indian Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1979): 63–70.

43. See Sherwin Bitsui, "Indigenous Language and Poetry," Native Voices Symposium, University of Arizona, Tucson, June 2007.

44. See Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Encyclopedia of North American Indians: Native American History, Culture, and Life from Paleo-Indians to the Present* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 334.

A number of writers incorporate their native language into their work, and some go further—Navajo poet Rex Lee Jim is known for his radical attitude; he refuses to translate his poems into English. One reason he mentions is that he wants the Navajo audience to read in their native language, and he suggests that if he publishes the poems in both languages readers would read the English version since nowadays it is easier for them. That demonstrates the paradoxical result of colonization. Another reason he stressed and brought up during the Native Voices Symposium in Tucson is that some poems in Navajo could not be translated into English at all. Via the example of a very short poem, he demonstrated that using a specific Navajo word expects and even requires the audience to be knowledgeable about the Navajo culture and language. Should it be translated into English, the translation would, according to Jim, have to be accompanied by a long explanation and as such it is not feasible. Jim does not refuse to write in English but he claims that there are poems that come to him and he can only write them in Navajo, while he would think about others in English and write them in English.⁴⁵

The emergence of American Indian writers in the 1960s was seen as a new cultural phenomenon. As Josef Jařab suggests, there is a cultural tension in the expression *American Indian writer*, and it is, in fact, a result of the colonization of the indigenous people. Even the term *Indian writer* itself hides an inner cultural tension and it is a result of the process of the “civilizing” of the indigenous population. Native American writers who started to publish in the 1960s were often half-breeds and so, belonging to both worlds, they could venture to cross the border and they offered in English and in a written form what used to be only orally transmitted tribal wisdom and life experience.⁴⁶ However as the American Indian poet Joy Harjo (Muscogee) explains, “to write is often still suspect in tribal communities”⁴⁷ because it was through writing in the colonizers’ languages that the indigenous peoples’ land has been stolen and their children taken away. Indians feel that they have often been betrayed by those who first learned to write and to speak the language of the occupiers of their lands.⁴⁸ Some writers even challenge the written form, for instance Grace Boyne (Navajo): “[S]poken words have power. Thus, it is more meaningful to speak rather than to place the words on paper.”⁴⁹

Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird edited the long-awaited anthology of contemporary writings by native women of North America that was published under the title *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*. Writers included in the anthology are sometimes very radical, using terms such as “war” and

45. See Rex Lee Jim, “Oral Tradition and Reader Response,” Native Voices Symposium, University of Arizona, Tucson, June 2007.

46. See Josef Jařab, “Obřad jako scénář k naplňování životních příběhů,” epilogue to *Obřad* [Ceremony], by Leslie Marmon Silková (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1997), 282.

47. Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird, eds., *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language: Contemporary Native Women’s Writings of North America* (New York: Norton, 1998), 20.

48. See Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 20.

49. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 32.

“holocaust” when describing the situation of the American Indians in the USA today and the history of contact. It is also evident that American Indian writers in general have not yet come to terms with the languages of the colonizers, whether English, French, or Spanish. They call them the “enemy’s languages.” For many decades the language of the colonizer has been forced on Native Americans but, as Harjo explains, it was when the Native writers began to create with this new language that they named it theirs, “made it usefully tough and beautiful.”⁵⁰ The writers are transforming, “reinventing” these languages, and turning the images around “to mirror an image of the colonized to the colonizers. . . .”⁵¹ Many admit that they write because in this way they can control the way the native people are perceived. Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) feels that “whoever controls the image controls the population . . .” and that the writers must control the definitions, contexts, and images of Indians.⁵² Writers writing in English are, according to their words, trying to repair the devastating impact of “the language of Christianity.” As Connie Fife (Cree) confesses: “I write because I believe there are so many of our stories (personal) that need to be told and celebrated. . . . I write using an outsider’s tongue hoping that I can do honor to the words themselves, their value and meaning.”⁵³

Colonization has severed the bonds between the languages of the indigenous people and their cultural production. What has survived, though, is their way of perceiving the world. Luci Tapahonso (Navajo) says about the language of her tribe: “I consider the Navajo language to be the undercurrent, the matrix which everything in my life filters through. . . . Writing is, at times, an exhilarating challenge because I must, as near as possible, find the English version of what are essentially Navajo concepts or expressions.”⁵⁴ Emma Lee Warrior (Blackfoot) points out: “Yet though the sounds I hear back home are more English than Blackfoot, I find the stories told more from a Blackfoot-language perspective.”⁵⁵ Similarly, Gloria Bird (Spokane) writes: “In the long process of colonization, what has survived in spite of the disruption of native language is a particular way of perceiving the world.”⁵⁶ When comparing the works of Indian authors, the Choctaw/Cherokee literary critic Louis Owens notices that though they “write from very diverse tribal and cultural backgrounds, there is to a remarkable degree a shared consciousness and identifiable worldview reflected” in their novels.⁵⁷ Thus contemporary American Indian writers, though they often do not speak much of any Indian

50. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 23–24.

51. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 22.

52. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 151.

53. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 479.

54. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 315.

55. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 72.

56. Harjo and Bird, *Reinventing the Enemy’s Language*, 24.

57. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 20.

language any more, and though their Indian heritage may form only part of their ancestry, write about their conceptions of the universe. In this sense they are like translators or interpreters who, in the “enemy language,” tell or, using the Navajo concept of the Holy wind, breathe out the stories of a different world.

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