# An Ethnological Approach to Sister Nations' Verse: New Insights into Native American De-colonial Discourse

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## ABSTRACT

With an integrative approach combining critical discourse analysis, Gricean pragmatics and cognitive linguistics, this paper seeks to provide new insights into Native American women's verse as a *lingua franca* for the dissemination of social discourses at the intra and intercultural levels. To this end, it starts from the ethnographic notions of speech and discourse communities, applies them to the recently coined concept of *Sister Nations,* and goes on to explore their poetic production as a multidimensional anthropological practice performing cognitive, mediating and dialogical functions. *Sister Nations'* poems not only call into question the traditional definitions of genre and interpretative communities or serve as vehicles for the expression of a dual discourse of reconciliation and resistance, but also evidence the importance of figurative language in the interpretation of cultures and act as ceremonial dialogues between societies in conflict.

## 1. Framework, aims and object of study: *Sister Nations* as discourse and speech community

In the eyes of linguistic anthropology, also known as anthropological linguistics, ethnolinguistics and ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1972), certain socio-cultural groups can be looked at as *speech or linguistic communities* that, according to different currents of thought[1], may share specific worldviews, moral values, rules, attitudes and experiences, as well as code variants and even concrete genres with which

to materialize all the former in distinctive discourses, with a semiotics of their own and in permanent *dialogue* with other collectivities. One such community, the so-called *Sister Nations* (Brant, 1984: 10; Erdrich & Tohe, 2002: xv-xvi), is a gendered present-day version of the traditional Native American extended family, of great interest since it joins socio-cultural variables and articulates a dual multimodal discourse of reconciliation and resistance in its struggle for visibility within mainstream societies and against in-group oppression. The multidimensional analysis of *Sister Nations* verse as de-colonizing practice at the social, discursive and textual levels (Duranti, 1997; Fairclough, 1992) is precisely the major objective of this essay, following an integrative approach where critical discourse analysis, Gricean pragmatics and cognitive linguistics play a central role in the study of the relationship of signs to their producers and interpreters. Drawing on these three linguistic disciplines I will be tracing three distinct views of *Sister Nations'* poetry in their general context of continuity and decolonization. They will grant Native American women's poems the status of *cognitive*, *mediation* and *participation* practices, which more often than not tend to overlap. To do so I will provide examples from a pan-tribal corpus of 635 poems (Sancho Guinda, 2008) by contemporary Native American women (from 1917 to date), with which to put forward the mediating character of the genre on two differentiated planes: primarily as a *lingua franca* heir to the ordinary archaic practices of song and storytelling, cementing the myriad of tribal origins and socioeconomic situations and verbalizing the colonial experience, and additionally as a *doubled-edged* form of *intercultural communication* with the Euroamerican colonizer. *Double-edged* because it addresses and invites us to take part in the plural task of building meaning, but not without some restrictions. It is certainly reconciliation-oriented and accommodates a thousand-year-old oral tradition (e.g. the refrains, choruses, dialogical markers and rhythms recurrent in ceremonial storytelling, even later embedded genres like the riddle) into the written page and the oppressor's language, yet with discursive ploys that silence us or throw us into a disadvantaged position so as to regain control and make us understand their peripheral and painful place in history. These tactics pivot on a severe deictic demarcation and the idiosyncratic referential indirectness of Native American people which leads to the flouting of Grice's cooperative maxims.

Returning to our three strands of research, while critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) deals with the idea of authority and the legitimization of power and ethnic conflicts, Pragmatics revolves around the various forms of socialization (*i.e.* linguistic, multimodal, artistic, or ritual intentional meanings) and contributes to CDA methods through the speech act and politeness theories and the scrutiny of shared knowledge and social deixis. Equally subordinate to discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics serves to study individual and collective representations by means of the metaphor and conceptual integration theories, both enriching CDA praxis, as contended recently by van Dijk (1997, 1998, 2001 and 2003) or Chilton (2005: 36-41). Therefore, language will be regarded here as part of a complex pattern of actions and beliefs that give meaning to existence, not as an isolated component of culture. This entails considering interlocutors social actors and culture itself a process, which is continually

created, negotiated and redefined between participants (Geertz, 1973; Ochs, 1988; Mannheim & Tedlock, 1995: 3). For some of the aforementioned scholars, *Sister Nations* would be a speech community in so far as it is held together by frequency interaction patterns of a social nature, grounded in a shared set of norms and aspirations (Gumperz, 1962: 101 and 1982: 24; Hymes, 1972: 54-55; Romaine, 1994: 22; Silverstein, 1996: 285) or an "engagement in communicative activities" (Duranti, 1997: 122). In this sense, a speech community is not necessarily co-extensive with a language community for its boundaries are essentially social rather than linguistic, although internal variations (*e.g.* dialectal or of another sort) may be contemplated (Labov, 1972: 120-121). *Sister Nations* is, in this regard, a heterogeneous multilingual body whose textual production ranges from monolingualism (*e.g.* pieces written or told only in vernacular languages or in standard mainstream English), to bilingualism (*e.g.* in glosses, translations, parallel versions and as a frequent competence among Native individuals) and creolization (*e.g. Cree English* and Métis *Patois*). Other authors, however, lay stress on linguistic boundaries and behaviour (Corder, 1973: 53; Santa Ana & Parodí, 1998). At the same time, *Sister Nations* is a *discourse community*, since it makes explicit its common goals and agrees on its means of interaction (Bloor & Bloor, 2007: 9-10) to organize knowledge through speech and other semiotic practices (Foucault, 1984). Evident instances of the acquiesced politicization of Native women´s poetry are the statements of three of its most famous writers:

> "If I change one word, I change history. What did I say today? Do I even remember one word? Writing is oral tradition. You have to practice the words on someone before writing it down. (…)"
> (Marie Annharte Baker, Anishnabek, "One way to keep track of who is talking", *Being on the Moon,* p. 78)

> "I assert that poetry without politics is narcissistic & not useful to us. (…)"
> (Chrystos, Menominee, *Fire Power,* p. 129)

> "When we write, I believe that what we are doing is reclaiming our house, our lineage house, our selves, because I think we still have a spirit of cooperation that just underlies everything we do, (…)"
> (Lee Maracle, Salish-Cree-Métis, in Lutz, 1991:176)

The concept of discourse community extends the notion of speech community and underlines the possibility of developing specific discourses without face-to-face interactions, and until recently was applied to professional, business, or academic groups. Nowadays, massive discourse communities are possible thanks to the media, and owing to their lack of tangible presence, resemble more than ever Benedict Anderson's *imagined communities* (1983).

Inevitably, our object of study calls into question two other ethnographic notions key to interactional sociolinguistics, those of *interpretative communities* (going hand in hand with the idea of speech community) and *genre*. True, *Sister Nations* is a speech and discourse community that encodes and decodes meanings and whose membership is

chiefly based on the gender and colonizing experiences and a (most often) voluntary affiliation to a particular indigenous culture[2] or to vindicating pan-Indian movements. It does not totally rely on racial attributes or blood quantum criteria. Moreover, among its members there are urban dwellers assimilated to the western way of life, whereas others may live on reservations and follow traditional (tribal) customs, or merge both options by residing in cities as professionals and returning periodically to the reserve in order to participate in ceremonies and rituals. Such a kind of culturally nomadic tendency has been extensively documented by Zimmerman (1996: 90-91) and is illustrated by the intertribal *powwow*[3] circuits from late spring to early autumn in Canada and the US. Thus, Native mentalities and behaviors are diverse, a fact that clashes with van Leeuwen's definition of *interpretative community* (2005: 145) as organized around a "common lifestyle" consisting of the same values and attitudes. The term was originally coined by Fish in the mid-seventies and later expanded in his acclaimed *Is There a Text in this Class?* (1980), holding in essence that there is no division between text and reader, who "makes the text" depending on his/her subjective experience in one or more communities. An added complication arises with respect to *genre,* because many of the Native American women's poems under study innovatively mix and transgress other genres and do not simply correspond with Swales' static conception (1990: Chapter 3) as a "class of communicative event" identifiable, reproducible, culturally-conditioned and agreed, and resorted to by the whole speech community with a definite communicative purpose. Rather, in our case we should be speaking of a *disembedded* type of genre (Fairclough, 2003: 68-69): a category not quite clear-cut due to its partial or complete uprooting from the network of social practices where it initially developed. Let us keep in view that contemporary Native American poetry originated as storytelling, an ubiquitous everyday activity long before the European Contact (that is, as a pre-genre in Swales' terminology, 1990: 58-61). It could be monologic, dialogic or polyphonic, and aimed to heal and maintain cosmic harmony, narrate family dramas, bring material prosperity, celebrate, entertain and relieve the burdens of daily work, invoke spirits, seduce potential lovers, or moralize with plots involving tensions between good and evil and the consequences of threshold-crossing, a *leitmotif* in ancient tribal literatures. Octavio Paz (1974: 91) and Ernesto Cardenal (1979: 9) argue that poetry has been the first language of humankind, considering that some cultures are not acquainted with prose.

Over the centuries, nonetheless, Native American poetry has evolved in both mission and format to fulfill new social functions and adapt to changing contexts: today it has become a *lingua franca* of de-colonization in academic and popular spheres alike and focuses on airing injustice, debunking the colonial imaginary, and reinforcing tribal ways and their inherent miscegenation, simultaneously physical and cultural. As a result of the latter and opposing Swales' definition of genre, poems by North-Amerindian women are difficult to identify and reproduce, hybridize contents and stylistics from several cultures, and present unique creative peculiarities. They may assemble recipes, autobiographical extracts, epistolary salutations and diary-like fragments, myths, prayers, chants, ritualistic constructions, anecdotes and jokes, *stream of consciousness*

monologues*,* and countless parodies of Native American and Euroamerican texts and discourses. Genre choice, then, does matter. In Swales' words (2008), "a good telling of a tale can become the telling of a good tale". Further, researchers in narrative have related identities to cultural ways of telling, since narrators not only represent and evaluate reality but also establish themselves as group members through rhetorical and stylistic preferences (De Fina, 2006: 352). Consequently, it is not casual that female Indian poets consciously employ oral storytelling strategies such as accumulative repetition (characteristic of ritual performances like ceremonies, chants and exorcisms) and *pattern numbers (idem),* which consist of fixed rhetorical, syntactic, lexical and phonic organizations with sacred values. For instance, in oral narratives it is common to find an invariable number of stanzas within a scene, of verse lines within stanzas (see Sample 1, my emphasis) and of words and sounds in a line. Although tripartite and pentameter arrangements are common, number four is the most widespread pan-tribal symbol to generate a circular rhetorics. It evokes the axial cross inscribed in the medicine wheel, the cardinal points and the four winds, the seasons and parts of the day, the sacred herbal medicines (tobacco, cedar, sage and sweetgrass) and the components of the self (intellect, body, spirituality, emotion).

SAMPLE 1
- **We remember**
  - o Once fish swam
  - o these great rivers
  - o once the buffalo roamed
  - o these plains
- **We remember**
  - o The little Child picked
  - o blueberries while listening
  - o to the whispers of the
  - o cold wind.
- **We remember**
  - o The fine lines
  - o through the walk of life
  - o leaving our mark
- **We remember**
  - o The Great One
  - o who put us here
  - o land will take us
  - o back.

(Carrie Jack, Cree, 1992:131)

Accumulative repetition, rhetorical circularity and pattern numbers are fundamental elements in ritual, which is the most important instrument of social memory. In effect, rites and commemorative ceremonies exhibit a highly formalized and stylized language,

repetitive and hardly subject to spontaneous variation (which proves a practical mnemonic guarantee). This tandem identity/efficiency explains why the core message in many poems appears "ritualized"; that is, systematically reiterated (three, four or five times) and opening and closing the text. From a sociological standpoint, rituals are a form of overt recollection, quasi-textual symbolic representations of the community that restore stability and make collective reality intelligible through cognitive and motor (habit) memory. Besides this ideological function, their transmission of shared values reduces in-group dissension (Connerton, 1989: 23, 35, 38, 49). Let us not forget that in tribal ceremonies repetition seeks a hypnotic state of trance and loss of individual consciousness that favors fusion with the community and the universe. On the other hand , the insistent performativity of rituals turns them into action (see again Sample 1), due to the fact that for most Indian tribes there is no fissure between signifier and signified: referents are inextricably linked to their expression and words are believed to be spirited impulses that trigger creation. That is why the illocutionary practice of describing ceremonies while they are being conducted is so abundant across the Americas (Palmer, 1996: 69). Unlike myths, they are cults enacted, and their realization implies their acceptance and that of the underlying sets of rules, schemas and principles of classification operative in the community (Connerton, 1989: 23, 46, 93).

To conclude this preliminary general account, we need to take up the concept of dialogue, introduced right at the outset, in order to detail its accurate meaning within *Sister Nations.* These may be considered dialogic in a number of ways: firstly and with a motivational/attitudinal criterion, because the overall tone distilled by their texts is one of non-hostility, goodwill and respect toward the outgroup[4], all three traits pointed out by Wierzbicka (2006: 690) as constitutive of any dialogical interaction. Entering conversation, whether actual or metaphoric—and no matter its degree of obliqueness—presupposes at least a minimum commitment, since the pragmatic escape of silence, of opting out of the Gricean maxims, is always at the interlocutors' disposal (Thomas, 1995: 74-75). Secondly, the dialogic quality may be justified from a Bakhtinian perspective: any voice, inclusively "pristine" Native ones isolated from the rest of civilizations, does carry interdiscourses (Tedlock, 2003a: 296) and hence the ideas of a *disperse authorship* (Tedlock, 2003b: 286) or a *communal authoring function* (Wiget, 1994: 13) of Indigenous texts, consciously assumed by *Sister Nations* authors, some of which sign their work with the name of their tribes, as is the case of the Canadian poet Yukon. Other authors even choose to remain anonymous, a customary practice among the spontaneous contributors to the poetic sections in tribal journals, such as Mohawk *Akwesasne Notes.*

This ingroup heteroglossia finds expression in numerous genres and encoding techniques. Myths, claims Tedlock (2003b: 284), conjure up one another and are to be seen as different pieces (sometimes of identical beginnings but disparate resolutions) of the same tradition. The ritual language in poems, as observed above, exemplifies this common property of cognitive and discursive legacies, occasionally transmitted with "dialogues inside the main dialogue"—through chorus dynamics and "embedded dialogues" or "asides" to the audience, typical of storytelling. Other resources affirming

Native values are synechdoche, as the tribal knowledge mode par excellence, rhythmic and onomatopoeic effects (many of them imitating ceremonial drums), gossip-like discursive foci, or artistic typographic layouts. Yet, as a by-product of interdiscursivity and intertextuality, collective authorship should not only refer to former and present cohering inner discourses but also embrace the imprint of external ones. In fact, the third and last argument supporting Native poetic dialogicality concerns the subtle use of discursive techniques to establish or underscore relationship with the outgroup, as will be explained in brief. Despite all these features of involvement and multivocality, consensus is not to be taken for granted: Native American women's poetry does show engagement but notably reduces the reciprocal component. The written channel, to begin with, leaves little room for reply. Furthermore, the enunciating Native voice (*i.e.* the poetic subject's, not the poet's, ultimately responsible for the allocution) authoritatively steers cross-cultural dialogue and so increases asymmetry between the parties, though only at surface level. It must be borne in mind that First Nations' verse is ethnographic literature, and ethnography, quoting Tedlock's definition, is "the phenomenology of asymmetry, otherness and estrangement" (2003b: 280), which provides good reason to apply CDA. Also, adopting Cheyne and Tarulli's distinction (1999), influenced in turn by Bakhtin and Vygotsky, it could be said that formally Native American women's poetic dialogue is more *magistral* than *Socratic* (but not so procedurally speaking, as will be shown later on). Not all the obviously Socratic formulas, in addition, are truly functional: we may find misleading vocatives and questions that seem to appeal to the Euroamerican reader directly but are in reality part of a monologue and operate with covert illocutionary forces—for example, accusing speech acts instead of simple requests, as in Manyarrows' verses (1995: 14, Tsalagi-Eastern Cherokee): "watch and listen / just imagine you were in our shoes / our moccasins, our boots / for just one minute, imagine // that your people and cultures were extinct / dying, vanishing" (single and double slashes stand for consecutive and non-consecutive verse lines respectively). These dialogical forms are known as *anacretic* in Bakhtin´s terminology (1984: 108-112), as opposed to *syncretic* ones, and are interactively effective regardless of their expression.

Syncretic forms consist of the subtle discursive strategies previously commented in passing. They comprise *logofagic*[5] devices such as tropes (mainly metaphor, metonymy and irony) or the control of paratexts (*i.e.* translation notes and glosses, as in Sample 39) and riddles. They are intended to subvert power relationships by relegating the non-Native American reader to an initial passive role of listener and voyeur in the construction of meaning (see again Manyarrows' imperative "watch and listen"), which in the end becomes a communal task in the storytelling fashion. The whole process of decodification resembles an initiation *rite of passage* with its successive phases of separation, ordeal or test, and final reunion with the community (Jung et al., 1964: 128-136; Harris, 1980: 435-437). The question remains, however, as to which is the status achieved by the cooperative and successful Euroamerican reader within *Sister Nations:* is it one of full member, of ally, or of mere consented spectator? At the reunion stage, few poems display an explicit *affiliating pragmatics* that establishes common ground

but is insufficient for clarifying the matter, as shown by Belmore's stanza (1991: 167, Anishnabek): "Souvenir Seeker / I know you are not a bad person / free me from this plastic / Come on! Let's talk!".

## 2. *Sister Nations'* verse from a multidimensional anthropological perspective

Starting from Duranti's comprehensive overview of cultural theories (1997: 47-81) and from the principle that ethnographic texts are discursive products (Bloor and Bloor, 2007: 7) and in consequence a reflection of culture (Halliday, 1978: 2; Hodge and Kress, 1979: 1, 1988: 6; Williams, 1980; Mannheim and Tedlock, 1995: 6; Duranti, 1997: 39; Fairclough, 2003: 3; Bloor and Bloor, 2007: 6), if not its "tropes" (Silverstein and Urban, 1996: 1), my analysis will depart from the popular idea of culture as an invariable learnt model of behavior and interpretation of reality and will unfold along three convergent directions: a) a notion of culture as *knowledge* socially constructed and transmitted, b) its identification with a *system of participation* of social actors through speech acts within a community producing texts whose meanings tend to stem from juxtaposed voices, languages, dialects and styles and may cause or reflect imbalanced relationships among the participants, and c) its conception as *mediation* or interchange of worldviews between dissimilar (in this case even hostile) groups to foment or resolve conflict and modify their environment. As a process of construction and transmission of knowledge (i.e. as cognitive practice), Native American cultures elaborate and teach content (their mythical past and historical victimization) and procedures of interaction to accomplish the unstated principle of communicative indirectness mentioned previously, or to selectively hybridize Euroamerican values to ensure survival. As participation and mediation, the poems by American Indian women presume a common set of discursive norms with which they play by alternating approaching and distancing moves addressed to the non-Native American reader. The most remarkable approaching ones are the elocution of pragmatically affiliating expressions that sympathize with him/her and his/her inclusion in gossiping circles. Distancing moves include the use of stern deictic boundaries and flagrant FTAs, such as logofagia, raw over-explicitness and taboos. Their conjunction summons up the mechanics of tribal initiation rites and encourages a conceptualization of culture as a complex and dynamic assembly of interconnected practices.

2.1. *Sister Nations'* poetry as cognitive practice

It has been anticipated that Native women's poetry mirrors Aboriginal values from a double standpoint: *propositional* (ideational) and *procedural.* In the first case, the contents disseminated range from tribal ideology, patent in a trans-tribal mythical intertext with the figure of the *trickster* as protagonist, to the new Native American women's identities and the venting of colonization effects, be they a result of outgroup or in-community abuse. Procedural contents include rhetorical devices whose target is the production of oblique discourses (metaphor, metonymy, irony and parody, riddles

and silences). They take a great deal of shared cultural knowledge for granted and embody tribal philosophy as non-interventionist means of counter-colonial instruction of Native and Euroamerican readerships. Lastly, another set of procedural contents encompasses survival strategies like blending or conceptual integration (a mental repercussion of cultural and physical miscegenation) and ancient cohesive practices such as storytelling and gossiping, which represent a return to the traditional ways.

2.1.1. Propositional knowledge

As a cultural hero, the trickster is an overarching tribal icon—a comic holotrope (Vizenor, 1993) that conjugates ideational and procedural aspects. On the one hand, he/she stars in most narratives conveying the moral code and social rules of the tribe[6]. On the other, his/her *modus vivendi* in many plots is telling stories, the foremost medium Native American people had for cultural resistance. He/she is a survivor, a rambling rogue who gets over vicissitudes through humor, irony, and a sort of interstitial living similar to that of the Spanish picaresque, so he/she could be said to be an agent of subversion, selective change and reinvention in a story-line and meta-discoursal/social sense. Additionally, in spite of his/her lack of ceremonial and ritual meanings he/she epitomizes the mythical paradoxes of creation and destruction, order and chaos, individuality and collectivity, masculine and feminine, light and darkness, sacred and profane, or good and evil, constituents of every symbology (Eliade, 1955: 90) and profusely studied by anthropological structuralism—we may think, for example, of Levi-Strauss' mythical twins as *leitmotif* (1978: 47-55). Tricksters are at once animal and human, clowns and swindlers, social and antisocial, shamans and destroyers, heroes and victims, and sexually ambiguous ("two-spirited", in Indian terms). Currently they have evolved into cultural nomads who sway between discursive boundaries, as shown by Sample 2 (my emphasis), where Trickster Coyote posits an addiction to comic catharsis, as intoxicating as drunkenness, and makes a parody of the stereotypical discourse of Alcoholics Anonymous, alien to tribe members until alcohol wreaked havoc in their communities.

> SAMPLE 2
> – (…)
> – Being a coyote is not easy. The other night I
>   o was **at a meeting of Coyote Anonymous.**
>   o **"Hi! My name is Coyote and I´m a (laugh, laugh)aholic".**
> (Marie Annharte Baker, Anishnabek, 2001: 77)

The arising Native feminine identity is expressed with recourse to ancient and brand new metaphors. Traditional metaphors characterize indigenous females as fluid, cyclical and immanent beings through amniotic, astral and mineral images, also pervasive in cosmologic mythologies and legends. Especially captivating are the poems depicting lithomorphic fecundations, common in myths of origin (e.g. "creation began when stone / rolled down my throat", says the Cree-Dakota poet Connie Fife, 1992: 74). Stones and

rocks may act as fertilizing forces and complement the metaphor of the feather, essentially masculine and a conceptual synonym of mobility and chance--minerals, instead, are the embodiment of solidity, memory and immortality. As liquids and heavenly bodies (especially the moon, an ancestor—Grandmother—in many tribes), women are portrayed as flexible and nourishing, performing a primary creative function like an elementary looking-glass that confirms the existence of all creatures in an extension of the motherly role. This function, antagonistic to that of the devouring and destructive witch in fairy tales, has been long assigned by literary theory (Holbrook, 1989: 273) to female eyes and faces. Perhaps one of the most productive traditional metaphors is that of sewing/weaving, reminiscent of the pan-tribal figure of Spider Woman, another cosmic creator whose mythical bonds shape contemporary feminine identities (Sample 3). These assume multiple appearances, all of them assertive, healing, and wavering between genders, present and past, and the western and Native American cultures. Modern identity metaphors undertake the mission of generational guardians and reservoirs of strength for their communities, as declared by the Okanagan author Jeannette C. Armstrong (1991: 107): "I am the keeper of generations // I am the strength of nations // I am the giver of life / to whole tribes // I am a sacred trust / I am Indian woman".

SAMPLE 3

> o   She-spider
> –   blew the powder
> –   onto the deep deep wounds
> > o   and holocaust of USA
> > o   and global pains
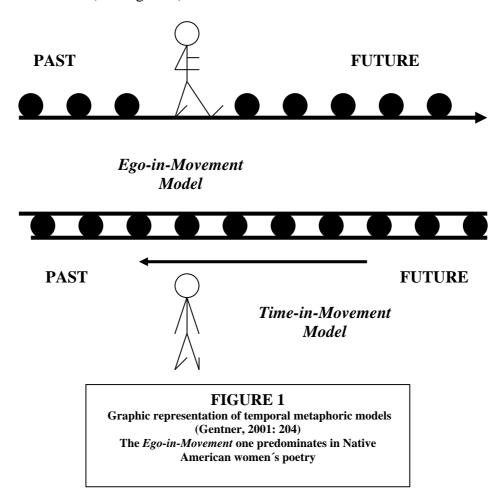> (Nia Francisco, Navajo, 1988: 326)

Concerning the report of colonial experience, Native American women's poetry can be interpreted as a global trope hybrid between epic and lyric, which turns it into a "novel postcolonial genre" (Rader, 2003: 128, 133). Here special notice should be taken of the term *postcolonial,* inaccurate for describing the current Aboriginal condition (since colonization by Anglophone and Francophone societies still persists) and gradually giving way to the alternative descriptor *de-colonial,* exclusively centred on the political and sociocultural struggle. In connection with its bardic function, some Native authors and critics conceive their poetry as a map of Indian exile (Gould, 2003: 21-33; Harjo, 2000), a banishment that acquires diasporic dimensions and demands culturally nomadic movements for everyday survival. This verse cartography helps to find the *psycholandscapes* lost or forgotten during the territorial, spiritual and cultural displacements suffered by First Nations peoples, and the mapping task is untransferable ("You must make your own map", states the Creek poet Joy Harjo, 2000: 21). The poetic map also delimits physical and emotional spaces of imprisonment, the most outstanding of which are cities, reservations, residential schools and the acculturated

alcoholic/drug-dependent self. Urban skylines connote phallic power and labyrinthine disorientation: "Look at the streets / All in parallels and perpendiculars / Spawning concrete erectiles, / Straight-ups, phallus-powers" (LaRocque, Cree-Métis, 1990: 341). The reserve is habitually a bleak place offering no opportunities whatsoever: "Connotation of Indian Act history / herding Indians into stockades onto reserves". (Skyblue Mary Morin, Métis, 1996: 16). And the atmosphere of residential schools is repressive, dehumanized, and sometimes brutal: "I was jailed at the residential school / For a crime I did not commit". (Jacqueline Oker, Beaver, 1996: 163). Within this same imagery of seclusion, addicted selves frequently manipulate agency and blame society for their own plight: "As liquor and drugs take hold of me / I am a prisoner can't you tell". (Kiju Kawi, Micmac-Maliseet, 1994: 130). On this indigenous map straight itineraries stand for the Aristotelian idealized cognitive model of journey, composed of an origin, a definite destination, a trajectory, a traveller (Lakoff, 1987: 68), and sporadically of landmarks and obstacles along the way. Native American wanderings, in contrast, go back periodically to some conceptual or verbal motif set as *locus* or *center,* of extreme importance in American Indian mentality for it represents the confluence of the personal and the communal. It is a sacred geography, atemporal and de-spatialized, a convergence point of the individual, the mythic and the cosmic largely emphasized by Eliade (1955: 42, 1957: 198), Gunn Allen (1986: 80) and the great pan-Indian spiritual leader and visionary Black Elk (1932, *passim*). This abstraction is fleshed out in Shirley Bear's verses (Maliseet, 1994: 70): "You are creator—you are created / East-West-North-South / Center- / Center- / Center-"). Circularity may so materialize at the conceptual, rhetorical and visual levels with the aid of iterative refrains and pattern numbers. It should be noted that, by and large, linear trajectories connote the forced erratic displacements caused by the Conquest, while circular ones symbolize harmony and voluntary journeys of de-colonization where the return to the past (*i.e.* to tradition and the memory of the elders) becomes necessary to face the future. Marcie Rendon's lines (1984: 220, Anishnabek) tellingly encapsulate this principle: "this journey backward will help me / to walk forward".
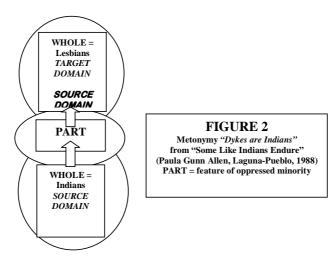
2.1.2 Procedural knowledge

We have just seen how *metaphor* proves to be an efficacious means of ideological transmission. Steen (1994: 176-182) spotlights its indirect explicative and emotive functions in literature, since it acts as a non-literal comparison with a higher informative density (and hence at a higher de-codifying cost) than analogy. Native women poets take advantage of these properties to instill their *sense-of-place* philosophy in their texts: if Indian reality and history revolve around a series of venerated/abhorred physical and mental locations, then time and actions may be "spatialized". In doing so, their predominant inclination is toward an *ego-in-movement model* (Borodistsky, 2000; Gentner, 2001; Evans, 2004) instead of a *time-in-movement* one. The former entails a moving observing subject who advances progressively with his/her context, where the past is situated at the back and the future at the front. In the latter model, the observing

subject is static and time dynamic, flowing like a river or a conveyor belt from the present to the future (see Figure 1).

**PAST**                                                                    **FUTURE**

*Ego-in-Movement*
*Model*

**PAST**                                                                    **FUTURE**

*Time-in-Movement*
*Model*

**FIGURE 1**
**Graphic representation of temporal metaphoric models**
**(Gentner, 2001: 204)**
**The *Ego-in-Movement* one predominates in Native**
**American women´s poetry**

A time-in-movement perception of reality presupposes an anthropocentric conception of nature (humans as privileged witnesses to cosmos) that does not tally with Native American idiosyncrasy, opposed to our Judeo-Christian "Chain of Being". Further, the ego-in-movement vision enhances our responsible role as "doers" of our own existence. The relevant consequence of these philosophical choices through metaphors is that they *teach how to live,* stressing the indispensable link with the past (e.g. Rendon's lines, 1984: 220). A second non-interventionist method of instruction is *metonymy,* the basic knowledge mode in tribal societies. Its referential function supports that of metaphor—a fact noted by Dirven (1993) and Radden (2000) in their idea of a metaphoric-metonymical continuum, and engenders a many-tribe oblique code to denote specific historical realities. What is more, anthropological studies like Augé's (1998: 30) support the thesis that every recollection is metonymic. A good case in point is the vivid *pars-pro-toto* schema of the noun phrase "black robes", substitute for the insensitive clergy in charge of the residential schools: "our / Sanctified oppressors: / black robes, /
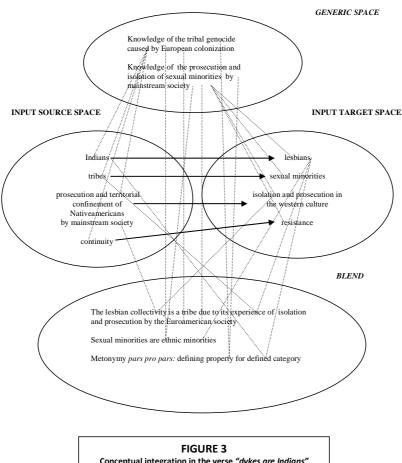
and colonists". (Bernadette Martin, 1994: 178, Atlantic Canada tribe). Metonymies make powerful conceptual and pragmatic tools: they may bias information (especially in contexts not shared by sender and addressee) or hint at it so that confrontation is avoided. They too can release strings of metaphoric evocations to activate common experience, or strengthen a given metaphor to increase its clarity or dramatic effect. A regressive rhetorics, for example, stands in metonymic relation with the medicine wheel and its associated philosophical values. Also prolific is the allusion to any element of the metaphorical schema of journey to indicate the course of history and the de-colonizing process: verbs of motion like *wander* or *travel*, nouns like *journey*, and the impediments to movement ("prisons"), such as cities, reserves, residential schools and addictions. From among all the Native metonymy varieties, three types stand out for their originality and pragmatic effects: *target-in-source, visual,* and *illocutionary* ones. *Target-in-source* metonymies are based on deductive inference: they reduce a semantic matrix domain to focus on one of its non-central elements, which is given conceptual prominence (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2000). A pertinent illustration is the predicative sentence "dykes are Indians"[7], a double metonymy (whole-for part-for whole) that equates two groups on the grounds of their respective experiences of marginalization and prosecution, and presents the following mapping (See Figure 2). *Visual metonymies* are actually a lateral variant of Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor PROXIMITY IS EFFECTUAL FORCE (1980: 170-173). They may depend on strict syntactic adjacency or on loose nearness (within a more or less ample line/verse/stanza span), but in any case they create ideological collocations with words pertaining to distant semantic domains. Through this procedure historic events are recalled, as happens with the battle of Wounded Knee: words like *wound, scar, blood, knee* and *battle* and their derivatives are placed within a narrow poetic environment to provoke connotation. As to the third metonymic type, called *illocutionary* (Panther and Thornburg, 1999), it formulates whole speech acts indirectly, mostly directives such as requests and orders and expressive acts like accusations and complaints (e.g. note once again Manyarrows' "watch and listen", 1995: 14). Its objective is to mitigate conflict and preserve negative politeness.



**FIGURE 2**
Metonymy *"Dykes are Indians"*
from "Some Like Indians Endure"
(Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna-Pueblo, 1988)
PART = feature of oppressed minority

Together with tropes, *riddles* make up the separation phase in the rite of passage of meaning construction. They leave textual interpretation up to the interlocutor/reader, preserving his/her personal autonomy and acknowledging his/her creative potential. For that reason they prove effective negative politeness strategies. But even more importantly, they are economic communicative devices that evidence the well-known Indian reverence for the word as an act of sudden and mysterious creation, due to the belief that reality comes into existence the very moment it is articulated. Words are spared because silence is just as powerful–a phenomenon noticed and captured by a host of multicultural wise-sayings and aphorisms that relate it to virtues like prudence, discretion and wisdom (*e.g.* "*Sprechen ist Silber, Schweigen ist Gold*", "speech is silver, silence is gold", *"La mejor palabra es la que está por decir",* "A nod is as good as a wink", etc.). Riddles have been (and still are), in addition, useful mnemonics for the transmission of oral literatures. Ronald and Suzanne Scollon (1981: 127) stress their pragmatic import among the Athabascans of northern Canada and Alaska, where this genre is deeply rooted and serves a threefold purpose: a) teaching without interfering with the interlocutor's beliefs and knowledge, b) complying with the group's positive politeness standards (*i.e.* modesty) by shunning boasts about one's oratory skills, and c) respecting social etiquette, as Athabascans prefer silence to interaction when they do not know their interlocutors well. These very goals, on the whole, may apply to a vast majority of Indian cultures. From the vantage point of CDA, riddles kindle asymmetry, although they bridge the Native-Euroamerican gap with a cooperative discursive contract (Maingueneau, 1996: 31) whereby both parties do accept their corresponding roles and the constraints derived from the fusion of oral and written channels. Euroamericans agree to guess without being clued and a spontaneous, unstable spoken genre is put onto paper. Hodge and Kress (1979: 13) point out its higher degree of tolerance toward contradiction than written prose, and in this line it can be compared with the Trickster figure, whose ambiguous and ludic character it emulates. Like him/her, the riddle moves between boundaries: the oral and the written, the separation and reunion phases of the initiation rite to build up meaning, and in general between back-and-forth discursive paths alternating past and present through binary discourses similar to those of mythical syncretism: be and not be Indian, have and not have a red skin, etc. Here are some examples: "*yo soy india /pero no soy / yo soy anglo / pero no soy*" (Carol Lee Sánchez, Laguna-Pueblo-Sioux, 1997: 236), "I'm too red to be white / And I'm too white to be red" (Shirley Flying Hawk, Micmac, 1991: 135), "but i am half child, half woman / i cannot be a white nor indian" (Willow Barton, Cree, 1990: 17) Riddles, in sum, bring order amidst chaos, the way Tricksters perform their eccentric shamanism.

The last device providing procedural knowledge is *blending* or *conceptual integration* (Fauconnier, 1985 [1994], 1997), which also implements a mediating function. It can be defined as a multiple metaphorical projection involving four or more mental spaces, instead of the two domains initially postulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980 [1986]). Two of them, known as input spaces (source and target) require some basal information gathering their common features (cultural, contextual and subjective)

to be mapped onto each other. Such information is contained in a generic space. The correspondences taking place between the generic and input spaces produce a new mental space, the blend, with its own emergent structure. Blends are usually employed pedagogically by Native poets to divulge new identities, explain colonization experiences and ensure continuity with a selective hybridization of mainstream and Amerindian values. However, being a mental cognitive device, it only becomes visible though analysis (Turner, 1996: 64). Figure 3 below reproduces the intricate blending implicit in Allen's verse "dykes are Indians". In it there exist multidirectional conceptual projections derived from the requisite knowledge of two facts (contained in the generic space): the massacre of Indians and the persecution of homosexuals by Euroamerican societies. These facts provide the figurative terms (the metaphors in the input source space) with which to better explain the reality of Native lesbians (in input target space). The matching between items from both input spaces is marked with solid arrows, whereas the sweeping and irradiating impact of the generic space assumptions and that of the input spaces on the blending corollaries are signaled with dotted lines.

**GENERIC SPACE**

Knowledge of the tribal genocide caused by European colonization

Knowledge of the prosecution and isolation of sexual minorities by mainstream society

**INPUT SOURCE SPACE**                                    **INPUT TARGET SPACE**

Indians → lesbians

tribes → sexual minorities

prosecution and territorial confinement of Nativeamericans by mainstream society → isolation and prosecution in the western culture

→ resistance

continuity →

**BLEND**

The lesbian collectivity is a tribe due to its experience of isolation and prosecution by the Euroamerican society

Sexual minorities are ethnic minorities

Metonymy *pars pro pars:* defining property for defined category

**FIGURE 3**
**Conceptual integration in the verse *"dykes are Indians"***

## 2.2 *Sister Nations'* poetry as mediation

Since they play on a set of rules shared by interlocutors, blending, metonymies and riddles can be taken to be mediating practices. *Taboos* take the same premise as starting point and equally induce a provisional separation during the interpretive process, this time not through silence but by means of a face threatening act (FTA from now on) that imposes undesired information on the addressee. By saying the unspeakable, social norms are transgressed and discursive limits end up being redefined and renegotiated (Butler, 1997: 228). Native women poets deliberately disclose messages that are over-explicit, too crude, or forbidden because of their shocking quality, and in this light their use of taboos may be understood as an approach to the Euroamerican outgroup. There are, however, more immediate and obvious instrumental reasons: the denunciation of colonial felonies and the vindication of an ideology of the erotic, synonymous with a shared vital pleasure in the Lordian sense (Lorde, 1984: 189-190). Halfe's lines bear eloquent testimony to the first one: "vagina raw, bleeding / stuffed with a beer bottle". (Louise Halfe, Cree, 1994: 93), and Brant's to the second: "Kissing me as you rose from my open thighs, I would taste the liquid of myself on your tongue" (2003: 124). Female Native poems incessantly turn to the erotic and admit its healing influence (Brant, 1994: 17), and so the new feminine identity breaks with the myth of the *terra incognita* (women and land as ready for penetration and exploitation), which accounts for the frequent open description of genitals and amatory acts and unchains a rich sexual imagery formerly repressed by colonizing discourses and qualified as pornographic. Curiously, pornography is the opposite of eroticism because it lacks its communal dimension and dissociates mind and emotion, and colonizers themselves were the ones to devise a "pornotropic cartography" (Loomba, 1998: 154) during the Renaissance and the Baroque, in which Africa and America were represented as semi-nude women embodying the duality virgin/prostitute.

Another variety of mediation is *gossiping*, a traditional tribal practice classified as a democratic form of communal history (Connerton, 1989: 17) which constructs social memory—a mode of cognition that confirms ideological tenets by commenting and criticizing. For some non-Native communication experts (Jones, 1980: 89) it is a feminine "gender-lect" specific to oral societies, whereas Native sources (Thornton, 2003: 30-31) hold it is sexually unmarked and simply phatically-oriented. Whatever the tendency and the subsequent scope of the speech community (whether unrestricted or strictly female), rumors and tattles use a language of intimacy to pass on rules and codes, which would justify their complementary study under the heading of "cognitive practices". As such, they might occupy an intermediate position between random gatherings and rituals since, like in any rite, there is a latent master narrative and participants are habituated to the act (it is repetitive, despite its shifting objects of criticism). Besides, they do accept it, although there are no formalized speeches, gestural performances, stylizations, stereotypes or action performatives anthropologists may know of. Gossiping does indeed transcend the psychoanalytic sphere to move into sociological realms, providing the group with inner equilibrium: everyone is susceptible of being pointed at and run down. The colonial subjugation and later dispersion and

confinement of Amerindian communities resulted in the censorship and eradication of any kind of Indian gathering, gossip circles among them. These lines from a popular Tinglit song, for instance, show the change of Native mentality as regards gossip owing to European influence: "Stop all this idle chatter, / Let me hear no more gossip! // You old maids and housewives," (popular Tinglit, 1990: 123). Its status as routine dropped from healthy socialization to idle and unproductive custom associated with the feminine. Contemporary Native women's poetry implicitly creates gossip-like circles by bringing into the limelight reprehensible acculturated females who have abandoned traditional roles and whose uncertain transformation may have been forced by western consumerism or by survival. Beth Cuthand's verses (1994: 262, Cree) seem to exemplify the first case: "Here she comes strutting down *your* street. / This Post-Oka woman don't take no shit. // She shashay into *your* suburbia. // She drives a Toyota, reads bestsellers, / sweats on weekends, colors her hair, / sings old songs, gathers herbs"). Interestingly, the ring of intimacy is circumscribed with the help of second-person singular pronouns (emphasis mine), which draw readers into the gossip and contrast with the provocative deictic demarcation detailed in the next subsection as one of the linguistic resources of participation. Gossip poems could be then treated as participation practices—the reader is taken in as part of the community—but their mediating property between ingroup and outgroup prevails: cultural change is reported through a socializing habit belonging to the old ways.

## 2.3 *Sister Nations'* poetry as participation system

Engaged in poetic dialogue, *Sister Nations'* poets seek to invert power relationships by limiting Euroamerican participation. They establish, in the first place, a *deictic demarcation* defining their trans-tribal ingroup through a pronominal reference (*e.g.* we, us, our, ours) opposed to that of the non-Native outgroup (you, your, yours, they, them, their, theirs). On these foregrounded deictic boundaries a *face-threatening showdown dynamics* is built. It starts by recognizing otherness: The colonizer's existence is not denied but attested to, addressed and appealed with vocatives such as "European" or "colonizer", then challenged and affronted with FTAs (mostly accusations and threats) segregating him/her and damaging his/her social image: " European thief; liar, bloodsucker. / I deny you not. I fear you not". (Lee Maracle, Cree-Salish-Métis, 2000: 50), "colonizer, my enemy / I will confront you and challenge you" (Donna K. Goodleaf, Mohawk, 1990: 87). A second method of subverting colonial power is the transgression of pragmatic cooperation maxims (most frequently of those of quantity and manner, and more seldom of quality and relation, both irony-bound) in a sort of poetic revenge that leaves the Euroamerican reader at a loss, a state compared throughout this paper with the separation and ordeal phases in tribal rites of passage. As for the quantity and manner maxims, closely connected, the impact of oblique or abruptly *logofagic* poetic discourses has already been commented on: indirect speech acts, tropes (metaphors, metonymies and ironies, these latter including parodies as intertextual or interdiscursive subtypes) and riddles (in reality parodies of a western

genre) remind us of crucial principles and events indirectly. Alongside these, the regressive rhetorics emblematic of Indian storytelling (accumulative and rhythmical repetitions such as pattern numbers and conceptual iteration), its characteristic *in medias res* openings and the usual taken-for-granted background references may temporarily obscure comprehensibility as well. The following poetic sample displays the three former features and a maximum degree of *logofagia* (that is, of silence through paratextual control) which confronts the helpless Euroamerican reader with a non-glossed vernacular language:

SAMPLE 4
– Wai yaa hai
– Wai yaa hai
– Wai yaa hai
– Biigiiyan Anishnaabe
– Biigiiyan Anishnaabe
– Biigiiyan Anishnaabe
– Biigiiyan Anishnaabe
– Biigiiyan Anishnaabe
(Jacqui Lavalley, Anishnabek-Pottawatomi, 1996:109)

Riddles, as before explained, deny explicit meanings but demand cooperation and submission to a shared set of rules. Taboos and other FTAs make attitudes of reconciliation and resistance compatible by at once approaching the outgroup with common grounds as well as with open protests, slights and offences. Infallibly, they harbour an intention of reuniting to renegotiate the flouted discursive limits and may sometimes synthesize cultural values by means of certain conceptual blendings, as the verses by Cree-Métis author Marilyn Dumont illustrate: "I'm gonna crawl outta my 'heathen'/skin and trick you / into believing I am the Virgin / Mary and take you to bed". (1996: 53). In them the poetic subject amalgamates the immaculate and promiscuous attributes of the colonial duality virgin/prostitute, applied both to unexplored continents and Aboriginal women. In this vein, sacred western icons are incontestably re-evaluated with a rebellious typography that functions as cognitive practice: capitals are omitted in the references to the Pope, the Virgin Mary or England, which constantly appear in lower case in Louise Halfe/Skydancer's poetry. Contrarily, small letters are persistently reserved for the first person pronoun "I" in the poems by Manyarrows and Menominee writer Chrystos, as a way to affirm communal values over Eurocentric individuality. Quality maxim flouts normally have to do with ironic reversals of the colonial ideology. Untrue or hyperbolic statements sustaining the colonial creed are the humorous point of departure necessary for self-(or collective) redefinition. Armstrong's "I am Indian woman" (1991: 106-107) is a clear exponent of this strategy of *in crescendo* assertiveness[8]: "I am a squaw / a heathen / a savage / basically a mammal // I am a sacred trust / I am Indian woman". The maxim of relation is transgressed instead to evince the incongruity of colonial realities and discourses. At

times, coherence breaks are paradoxically correlated with the cold logic of syllogistic reasoning, as is repeatedly found in the poetry of Cheryl Savageau (Abenaki). On other occasions it just reveals the chaotic effects of colonization, governed in turn by nonsensical rules, as in Sample 5:

SAMPLE 5
− Uncle Jack drinks because he´s Indian
− Aunt Rita drinks
− because she married a German.
− Uncle Raymond drinks
− because spats have gone out of style.
− Uncle Bébé drinks
− because Jeannie encourages him.
− Aunt Jeannie drinks because Bébé does.
(Cheryl Savageau, Abenaki, 1995: 54)

Finally, it is worth heeding that the signing of poems is another strategy of textual control aimed at gaining individual and collective visibility and preventing Euroamerican appropriation. Native American women poets undertake an updated version of the tribal authorial function, in between the anonymous and the private. Signed poems thus silence the traditional anthropological texts, manipulated by academic authorities and every now and then surrendering the genuine Indigenous voices to some better-or-worse skilled (or willed) field interpreter. Signatures, whether communal or personal, make up the newly assumed anthropological multivocality, take responsibilities for what it is said, commit in a counter-colonial pedagogy, and mold the modern ethnological dialogue—an intertext in continual progress.

### 3. By way of summary: Sister Nations' poetry from the social theory of discourse

This article has offered a panoramic vision of Sister Nations' poetry as cross-cultural communication, combining an inductive "microscopic" approach to signifiers and symbolic facts with a more abstract sociological outlook in accordance with Geertz's interpretation of culture (1973: 32-36): ideology is without doubt expressed through symbols and figurative language, by what has come to be termed as "style" or "form", as much as by literal meanings. It also makes known a multi-positioned mediated discourse (Scollon & Scollon, 2001: 544-545) engendered by the synthesis of content and form and focused on social reform through the re-education and persuasion of the addressee and fluctuating between cultures. Within the three-layered frame of Fairclough's social theory of discourse (1992), which distinguishes between a social, a discursive and a textual level, the multidimensional anthropological perspective tackled here has highlighted the mediated nature of Sister Nations' poems and attended to their bearing on cognition, mediation, and participation. As social practices they pursue a

visible presence in the media and a re-organization of power, unveil present and historical injustice and disseminate Native American ideology both propositionally and procedurally, from a multiple stance including gender, generation, ethnicity, degree of assimilation into the mainstream society, miscegenation with other groups, geography, and other possible factors of identity, providing ingroup cohesion as they interact dialogically with the Euroamerican outgroup. As discursive practices and along with firm autochthonous policies of editorial production and distribution, it is this dialogue that vetoes the interpretative monopoly of non-Native scholars, even excluding interlocutors momentarily to make them acquire by themselves an active role in the construction of meanings. We have likened such veto to a tribal rite of passage with its constituent phases of separation, test/ordeal and reunion. As textual practices these exclusions may adopt the form of FTAs and diverse logofagic devices (ranging from absolute silence and monolingualism to paratextual control) and include offbeat uses of typographic resources, tropes, intertextuality and parody, manipulations of agency, and of course a conscious genre choice that abandons full anonymity in favour of a collective authorial function. Most of these mechanisms of resistance are imbued with a reconciling purpose not always ostensible but discernible and extremely significant, as occurs with taboos and gossiping poetic circles, which respectively imply renegotiation and integration. In all, much of what I have been drawing attention to thus far has concerned the issue of identity, tied to the questions of spatiality and performance—identity is their effect and not vice versa (Bell, 1999: 3)—and requiring a synthetic and sequential reading of the factors mentioned above, especially of race and gender.

To honour Native American cyclical thought we may resume the broad orientation at the beginning of this paper and give this conclusion a stronger Hymesian turn: Sister Nations' poetry can be categorized according to the fruitful and clarifying SPEAKING model (Hymes, 1974: 55-60). Its physical setting is one of ongoing colonization within the First World, which unleashes a psychological state of insurrection and a longing for cultural definition. Participants are of diverse origins (Euroamerican, Native, halfbreed, and mixbreed) and share different assumptions and cultural codes. Interactional ends are informative (instructional) and persuasive, oriented at sociopolitical change. Addressees go through a tacit act sequence of isolation    test/ordeal    final reunion to decipher meanings in a ritual fashion. The key and the instrumentality are varied and mimetic, comprising multimodality, formal and informal registers, and the imitation of dominant discourses and Native American sociolects (e.g. Cree English), transposing the sacred, the ludicrous and the scatological. Norms are transgressed or reinvented from either point of view: interruption and audience choruses, among other ceremonial markers, are ordinarily removed from the communicative event, whereas the western poetic paradigm incorporates unaccustomed subgenres and becomes even more iconoclastic by expressing cultural friction straightforwardly. To summarize, through a disembedded genre, repository of ancient and contemporary tribal values, intercultural dialogue—yet with its many divergences and asymmetries—comes into being. It is in the hands of cultural and linguistic anthropologists to make it known and more understandable.

## Notes

1. I will divide them roughly into anthropological, such as Gumperz and Hymes' interactive approaches and Duranti's multidisciplinarity, and sociolinguistic, such as Labov's variationism or Corder's radical subjectivism, among others.

2. The different membership factors (genetic or blood quantum, genealogical, cultural and legal) may vary across tribes, but in every case the individual's feeling of belonging must be fully endorsed by the community.

3. The term *powwow* probably derives from the Algonquian word *pauau,* meaning a gathering of people. Today's *powwows* consist in large tribal or intertribal secular meetings that encompass singing, dancing, giveaways and honoring ceremonies in a public expression of Indian identity. They are an important vehicle for handing down traditions from one generation to the next.

4. The CDA distinction between *ingroup* (in our present case *Sister Nations*) and *outgroup* (here the colonizing Euroamerican societies) has been borrowed from van Dijk (1998: 161). Ingroup discourses point up the nuances of *difference, deviation, transgression* and *threat* posed by outgroup behavior (van Dijk, 2003: 56-58).

5. The term *logofagic* denotes a communicative situation in which silence and discourse do not oppose or contradict each other but fuse in an *intext;* that is to say, a text that does not incur phonocentrism or logocentrism (Blesa, 1998: 16-17, 229).

6. Coyote (for Great Basin, Plateau and Plains tribes, as well as in California and the South East of the US) and Nanabush (among the Algonquian cultures to the North-East of the US and in the Canadian South-East) are the most widespread tricksters. Other figures are Raven, Mink, Blue Jay,Hare, Rabbit, Raccoon, Badger, Spider, and anthropomorphic figures such as Napi/Old Man (Plains Indians) or Glooscap (Micmacs).

7. This rotund metonymy comes from the poem "Some like Indians endure", by Paula Gunn Allen (*Living the Spirit,* 9-13).

8. A mixture of servant, concubine, sinner and beast of burden (Erdrich & Tohe, 2002: xviii), the colonial term "squaw" was one of the most degrading insults directed against Native American women and abounds in explorers' diaries and settlers' manuscripts during the XVI and XVII centuries.

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