Translation and Resistance in Native North American Literature

MÁRGARA AVERBACH

On 4 June 1998, Serafina Cruz, a Colla from Salta, a province in Argentina, helped by Greenpeace, traveled to Brussels with two shares of the Tractebel company. With them, she could enter the shareholders' meeting and talk about the damages that the new gas pipeline would generate in the jungle. She was wearing typical Colla clothes, which attracted the media's attention, and even showed copies of the company's proposal to her people asking for their acceptance of the pipeline. "We don't want money, we want the pipeline not to cut the jungle. We cannot be bought," she said.[1]

Juan Namuncurá, an Argentine Mapuche, composes electronic music for a very unusual reason: "When I use computers in my music, I try to imitate the natural place where Mapuche music is developed. Without the computer, that would be impossible. It is very difficult to bring a lake to a theatre."[2]

These two episodes show a special kind of act of postmodern resistance, as defined by John Rowe in *Postmodernist Studies*.[3] Rowe states that in postmodern times, oppressed cultures have a special conscience of the postmodern situation and know how to appropriate the enemy's discourses and technology and obtain power through them.

In this essay, I try to use this idea—that of an inverted appropriation (oppressed cultures appropriating dominating cultures)—together with the definition of *translation* from Eric Cheyfitz's *Poetics of Imperialism*.[4]

According to Cheyfitz, all translation exerts a violence on the object being translated because it tries to express an idea through a significant which is not really equivalent. For instance, if you define a cultural institution such as the Algonquian *weroance*, as Cheyfitz explains in his book, as *king* or *emperor*, you are violating the term of the original because it is a term understandable only in a kinship economy, the type of economy the Algonquian tribes practiced. So both words, *king* and *weroance*, are inseparable from economic modes, one of them related to property and capitalism and the other, to kinship, which is defined by Eric Wolf in *Europe and the People without History* as a communal

mode, which writers such as Leslie Silko relate to female values.[5] Obviously, then, to say the weroance was a king or an emperor would be violating and transforming the original term. It is a case of false equivalents, words that try, unsuccessfully, to bridge an immense distance between cultures. When one culture translates another, it perverts the original; it explains it through ideas, institutions, and words that are not really equivalent. All cultural translation is, then, a violation of the other culture's identity, and, as all violent acts, it generates first an awareness of what is happening and then a resistance against the translation. Here I attempt to trace both stages of the process, the awareness and the resistance, in texts by Native American authors.

As a non-Indian, I would like to make clear what my position in this discussion is: As Cheyfitz himself, I cannot and must not try to analyze things as if I were a Native. I do acknowledge the problem of translation that the attitude I have just described would imply—it is clearly stated by the answers of many Native American authors when asked about the interpretations that white critics make of their work, answers that are generally full of distaste and even outrage.[6] Being a Latin American, part of a subcontinent that was and is dominated culturally and economically by other cultures, especially those of North America, what I want to do is understand (1) strategies depicted in Native American literature in which the dominated peoples take technology, ideas, languages from the dominant ones and use them for their own purposes; and (2) the way in which this process transforms the technology, ideas, and languages of the dominating culture, retranslating them completely.

The inverse appropriation I am talking about, including the appropriation of the English language as a vehicle of expression, has a result even at cultural level. Some cultural forms—of which the novel is the most obvious—are taken to new territories and turned into something else, something useful for the peoples who produce the process, a process Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird call "reinventing the enemy's language."[7] In this way, all Native American literatures written in English have one obvious characteristic in common: hybridity, as described by Homi Bhabha and other postcolonial critics.[8] Most Native American writers consider this hybridity and crossbreeding to be weapons in the fight for survival.

To give just one example of hybridity and the use of English, Leslie Marmon Silko says in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit*, "I have intentionally not written a formal paper because I want you to hear and to experience English in a structure that follows patterns from the oral tradition." But, she says, the result of this experience for white people "may be somewhat difficult to follow."[9]

The idea of fighting for culture is present in nearly all statements by Native American authors. Paula Gunn Allen, for instance, says that the work of Indian writers is "a means to preserve their culture."[10] Here she is speaking of politics

as well. Leslie Marmon Silko explicitly uses the word *politics*: literature, she says, is "the most effective political statement I could make," and it is always "*subversion*."[11] That is why it is so difficult to follow it from a non-Indian (defensive) point of view.

When she tries to explain what literature means to her own people and to all Indians, why they write, Allen links this activity (art) with Pan-Indianism: "[Literature] tells us who we are; it tells us what our history is; it tells us what we look like, and it tells us of the significance of our lives within the human community. It takes us out of the realm of oblivion, which is where we've been."[12] If Native American Nations live in kinship societies, Wolf would say, then literature is also felt not as something personal and individual but as a question of the people in general, and the use of the pronoun *we* is of outmost importance. As Simon Ortiz says: "You don't speak, you don't live except on behalf of your people. . . . So your voice is their voice in a sense, in terms of a collective communal spirit."[13]

Within this general idea of literature as weapon, this essay analyzes instances within Native American literature in which the author has depicted conscience of the attack of the false equivalents and/or rebellion (subversion) against these equivalents through appropriation and transformation of elements belonging to the dominant culture. These two moments of the fight against colonialism and the translation that comes with it are common to the experience of most First Nations in the Americas, because the experience of conquest itself was common to most of them. Therefore, my choice in texts is varied and tries to break genre, tribal, and gender frontiers. As Paula Gunn Allen believes, literature does develop a sense of Pan-Indianness without asking the different tribal communities to lose their specificity in the process.

BEING TRANSLATED

The violent translation whites make of Indians is a constant presence in texts by Indian authors. For instance, in the short story, "Apparitions," by Anna Lee Walters, as soon as the store employees see the Indian mother and daughter, they translate them as *Indians* in a discriminatory and insulting sense: for them, Mary Horses and her daughter are thieves or, at least, second-rate clients, people whom one can abuse easily without paying for it. In the same way, the soldiers who went to the Falkland-Malvinas war in Argentina were chosen among the half-Indian boys from the north of the country; boys coming from rich Buenos Aires families would have been much more difficult to carry south without causing a big protest. In Walters's story, the experience of being translated in this manner is explicitly horrid for mother and daughter and is explicitly related to the city as a place.[14] As the name of the short story indicates, white

people have turned Mary Horses and her daughter into "apparitions," ghosts, nonpersons, though the movement will be reversed at the end of the story.

Maybe the shortest summary of the idea of the city as a place where an Indian is translated and cannot be Indian anymore can be read in "The Old Man Said," a poem by Carroll Arnett Gogisgi: "Indian people were not / made to live in / cities, and none do. / Some reside there / but none live there."[15]

White culture's institutions also exert this kind of forced translation. For instance, in "Halfbreed Girl in the City School," Jo Whitehorse Cochrane defines the violence of translation in school and in the way the institutionalized social worker deals with discrimination.[16] Violence is even there in the graphic form of the poem:

> speak English speak English
> the social worker caws
> outside Canadian geese pass through your immediate sky
> if you were a Changer like Star Boy
> you could fly with those long-necks
> but you must stay and look out this window.

The girl has been attacked in school, but, when the social worker comes, instead of defending the girl, she tries to transform her into a white person, to translate her: she orders her to speak English rather than her own language. At the end of the poem, this violence is symbolized by the verb *swallow*:

> they want to strip us of our words
> they want to take our tongues
> so we forget how to talk to each other
> you swallow the rock
> that was your tongue
> you swallow the song
> that was your voice
> you swallow you swallow
> in the silence.[17]

The last word, *silence*, is one of the main metaphors of this kind of process for many authors: when Indians are translated into what they are not, they are condemned to silence, to *not speak*. Ultimately, if discourse is identity, they are condemned not to be. Silence means a lack of identity here, as in many feminist analyses of reality.

School has the same function in *Tracks*, by Louise Erdrich, in which Chippewa children are forced by the state to accept teachings that try to turn them into "Americans," to make them forget their origin and violate their specific tribal identity.[18] In the final scene of the novel, the description of Lulu, the girl

the tribe rescues from school, is a description of the violence of this translation in the white people's school:

> Your braids were cut, your hair in a thick ragged bowl, and your dress was a shabby and smoldering orange, a shameful color like a half-doused flame, visible for miles, that any child who tried to run away from the boarding school was forced to wear. The dress was tight, too small, straining across your shoulders.[19]

In this description, violence appears in verbs like *cut, smoldering, forced, straining*, in the symbolic fact of the size of the clothes, obviously too small for the child, and in her short hair, a style that goes against tribal tradition. The result is generally shameful, as it is with all people forced to abandon their identity in these works.

Apart from school, the other institution that is frequently accused of this type of translation is the army. Two well-known examples are the soldiers in *Ceremony*, by Leslie Marmon Silko, and *House Made of Dawn*, by N. Scott Momaday.[20] The army translates these two young Indians into American soldiers, something utterly different from their selves as part of their communal kinship societies:

> The first day at Oakland he and Rocky walked down the street together and a big Chrysler stopped in the street and an old white woman rolled down the window and said, "God bless you, God bless you," but it was the uniform, not them, she blessed.[21]

The consequences of this transformation into a uniform—a transformation that is false because it is empty and its promise is never fulfilled—are tragic for both of them: madness and emotional death. These are sicknesses that only tribal, communal knowledge can cure because only this knowledge speaks in the correct language and uses the correct medicine.

The whites have yet another weapon to translate the Indian, technology, which is related, of course, to capitalism, an economic organization opposed to the kinship systems. In Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, there is an episode that narrates this process with an incredible clarity in not more than two or three paragraphs.[22] In the episode, the traditional Eskimo recipe of fermented beaver tails for which the tails must be wrapped in paper or whale bladders and left in a warm place, gets transmitted via television to a small town where this tradition was lost. But the women who listen to the recipe replace paper or bladder for plastic, and as a result people die of botulism. The story is an example of false equivalents, an example of bad cultural translation: the recipe is transmitted through a technological media, with no human contact, in a kind of oral tra-

dition (television) that is absolutely non-Indian, and, through this technology, the women mistakenly believe that plastic, another technological creation, is equivalent to paper or bladder. Silko is retelling the story of a lack of awareness of the cracks between one culture and another, between one material and another, and between one way of communication and another (oral storytelling versus television). This is a lack of awareness of the violence that every translation implies, and it is dangerous. On the contrary, the act of narrating it is conscience. Narrating something is understanding it. In the interview in Laura Coltelli's book, Silko says that "the struggle is to make whatever language you have really speak for you," and she includes English.[23] Television would be another of these languages, a language, like the book, very far away from the "interacting" that Silko relates with oral storytelling, that moment that for her would be the "ultimate" one: "when you have a couple of storytellers and a really engaged, respectful audience." The passage in *Almanac* is retelling the same problem that Silko has with her books: turning into written a tradition that is mostly oral and still being able to make "the language speak for you."[24]

The same kind of revelation can be read in "Driving in Oklahoma," by Carter Revard.[25] From the title itself, there is a contrast between Oklahoma, the Indian Territory, and the verb *to drive*, which is related to the car, a technological object typical of Western culture in the twentieth century. This contrast is developed in a journey along a highway:

> white concrete
> gravities of source
> seventy miles an hour
> windvents
> highway
> a man halfway to the moon.

All of those elements have to do with white technology. The first sensation of the poetic *I* is happiness, liberation:

> I'm groovin down this highway feeling
> technology is freedom's other name when.

The word *when* is the hinge of the whole poem, and that is why it is left there, hanging at the end of the line. After this word, something completely different comes to the poem, and with it comes the conscience of the things technology lacks. The object or being that forces this change comes from Nature—a bird. The poet leaves the bird alone in one line, with total power over the poem. After the crossing with the bird, the poetic *I* understands that he is without something in the charming velocity of the car and feels nostalgia for times in which technology did not exist:

wanting
to move again through country that a bird
has defined wholly with song
and maybe next time see how
he flies so easy, when he sings.

This protest against technology reappears in *The Book of Medicines*, by Linda Hogan. In "The Alchemists," for example, Hogan presents scientific knowledge as the cause of poison and death: the alchemists try to turn lead into gold and they produce poison,

the mad soul of mercury
fell through their hands
through settled floors
and came to rest
silver and deadly
in a hidden corner
where it would grow.[26]

Here, the processes of translation interweave: the scientific experiments of the alchemists are described not in a scientific discourse but as a dialog in which the alchemist tries convince lead to turn into gold. This dialog resembles an Indian ceremony in which scientist and material are at the same level. Thus, Hogan commits the first act of violent translation, appropriation, in her way of narrating whites' science.

But the poem is about a problem of translation also because the alchemists consider lead an ill metal and want to "cure" it by turning it into gold. The whole concept violates lead's identity by reading it as not noble and therefore translatable as sick and inferior. To "cure" it is to turn it into something else, an element the alchemists' culture considers noble and valuable—gold.[27] This twisting is terrible; its consequences, horrid.

With this scientific metaphor, Hogan is rewriting the story of the pressure exerted by the United States on tribe members to become culturally "white," to let technology, the city, and the institutions such as the school and the army translate them into something else. The poem identifies science (the result of which is madness and death, symbolized by mercury) with the American dream.[28]

In a way, the poem emphasizes what Hogan says: "It is easier for a non-Indian to write a book about Indian people and get it published than it is for us. Our own experiences and our own lives don't fit the stereotypes."[29] This not fitting the stereotypes is part of a fight against the bad translations, the false equivalents of white culture.

When Hogan narrates scientific experimentation in an Indian way, as a ceremonial dialog—one must remember what Paula Gunn Allen says in *The Sacred Hoop*: ceremony is one of the main characteristics of the literature of Native Americans—she is reinventing the enemy's language. As Cheyfitz would say, she is retranslating it into something useful for the dominated people.

It is important to note, when trying to spot and understand these acts of rebellion, that many of these texts, especially those that can be classified as "novels", rewrite the genre itself. They change essential elements; for instance, they erase the difference between focus and background, they completely change the idea of hero or protagonist (because here protagonists are communal—they include Nature and are not related to the idea of "individual"), and they also add tribal elements, such as a holistic idea of the world and the importance of ceremony, all of which is carefully analyzed by Allen in *The Sacred Hoop*.[30] Novels such as *Love Medicine*, by Louise Erdrich, *Storyteller* and *Almanac of the Dead*, by Silko, *Fools Crow*, by James Welch, *Green Grass, Running Water*, by Thomas King, and others have started a new, hybrid way of writing novels.[31]

Within this rewritten genre, one of the more interesting examples of inverted translations as an act of resistance can be found in "Saint Marie," a chapter in the subverted novel *Love Medicine*. Marie Lazarre is a mixed-blood girl who, through a mistranslation of the kind discussed, uses white culture's codes, expectations, and beliefs to save herself: "they never thought they'd have a girl from this reservation as a saint they'd have to kneel to. But they'd have me."[32]

In this short story and chapter, Sister Leopolda tries to translate Marie Lazarre into Satan's worshipper and, therefore, into somebody whom she can torture and punish with the supposed objective of "saving" her (though, if one goes on reading the whole series of the saga, the objective could also be revenge and the aim to kill or damage Marie specifically). At the beginning of the story, Marie feels deeply attracted to the promise of religion. She *wants* to be translated. This lack of conscience of the meaning of the process is extremely dangerous for her, and, in the moment in which she narrates the story, she knows it: "I was like those bush Indians who stole the holy black hat of a Jesuit and swallowed little scraps of it to cure their fevers. But the hat carried smallpox and was killing them with belief." If she accepts translation, Marie will risk death. She will be saved only if she resists.

The shock that prompts resistance is the moment at which this violent translation becomes physically painful.[33] But Marie is not saved by rejecting religion, just as Betonie does not reject white society completely in *Ceremony* and the characters in *Almanac* do not reject technology at all. She is saved when she appropriates white society's beliefs for her own purposes. When Leopolda at-

tacks her hands with fire, Marie profits from religious ideas (or accepts Leopolda's statements, according to the version of the story that one chooses), stating that she has Christ's stigmas and is a saint. Marie understands that if she is a saint, the whole of the convent will have to kneel in front of her. She will be saved from the violent translation Leopolda wanted to apply. Now she and not Leopolda will have the power of the word: if she is to be translated, she will not allow them to translate her as Satan's worshipper but as Saint Marie.

This type of act reappears in *Tracks*, in which, in order to rescue the child from school, the Chippewas will have to deal with legal instruments taken from the whites' culture: law and bureaucracy. Nanapush, the grandfather, understands this when he states, "To become a bureaucrat myself was the only way that I could wade through the letters, the reports, the only place where I could find a ledge to kneel on, to reach through the loophole and draw you home."[34] Nanapush decides not to reject but rather to use these instruments, and he succeeds in doing so. In the last scene, when the girl comes back, she is still identified by metaphors of rebellion: she is still a colt, a horse no one has been able to dominate, an Indian the school has not turned into a white girl in spite of the short haircuts and the small orange dress.

The white culture's technology and science can also be used against their creators. In *The Book of Medicines*, Hogan does so many times when she uses Western scientific knowledge to express an Indian view of the world. In "Crossings," for instance, she uses the theory of evolution as a background for her description of the "crossings" that join the world as one:

> Sometimes the longing in me
> comes from when I remember
> the terrain of crossed beginnings
> when whales lived on land
> and we stepped out of water
> to enter our lives in air.[35]

In other poems, she uses geology and astronomy in the same way.[36] In all of these poems, the whites' science is an instrument to express the world as a whole, as an organism: in all of them, Hogan is translating science into the Chickasaw culture.

Perhaps the best short example of this type of resistance through appropriation and translation can be found in *Almanac of the Dead*, which is clearly a novel full of crossed translations. For example, white policemen use Lecha's skills as a clairvoyant to find the corpses of disappeared persons, and television uses her and them to get good ratings. In both cases, Lecha, an Indian, puts a skill that Western culture does not believe in to the service of Western institu-

tions and media. But Lecha knows what she is doing and does it for her own purposes, both economical and ideological. The same strange crossings can be found when the figure of the Indian guide appears in the story of Alegria, the architect. The guide will make Alegria and her party lose their way, but he will also make them find themselves.

The episode of the translation of technology from *Almanac of the Dead* takes place in Alaska, as does the story of the beaver tails. Again, as in nearly all of these examples, storytelling is at the center of things. In this case in particular, as Kimberly M. Blaeser writes in *Buried Roots and Indestructible Seeds*, storytelling is not only "a way of understanding the past; it can teach a way of living that guarantees future survival."[37]

The Yupik community of the small town of Lecha, Alaska, meets often in front of the town's only television. In those scenes, there is always one witness, Lecha, and two women whom Chefitz would call translators: Lecha's friend Rose and the old unnamed Medicine Woman. Rose translates from English into Yupik and the Medicine Woman translates culturally in an act of resistance similar to the ones we described at the beginning of this article.[38] The Medicine Woman, of course, is also a trickster figure, and that typically Indian character is part of the resistance.

The old woman is very interested in the weather maps transmitted by satellite, so Rose explains to her what those images mean: that is to say, she translates the images. Rose makes it possible for the old woman to understand a representation of weather that the Yupik community did not know. The translation makes the old woman realize "the possibilities in the white man's gadgets."[39] She realizes that "white people could fly circling objects in the sky that sent messages and images of nightmares and dreams, but . . . [she] knew how to turn the destruction back on its senders."[40]

This quote summarizes the kind of countertranslation being discussed. Satellites ("circling objects in the sky") send cultural pollution to Alaska; for instance, recipes that lead to false equivalents and to poison and death ("nightmares") or, in the best of cases, objects of desire as plastic or money ("dreams," which, ultimately, as Tayo and his uniforms would say, are also destructive). The old Yupik turns this destruction back against the whites, and to do that she rewrites and ceremoniously transforms the weather maps. Her ceremonies reorganize the image around a non-Western idea of representation and do so with traditional elements such as the "recitations of the stories" and the rubbing of a weasel fur against the screen of the television set.[41]

To understand fully the significance and importance of this story within an enormous novel in which stories are almost innumerable, one must take into account the way Native American critics discuss these texts. Here is where

"translation" is obviously better understood from the inside of Native American thought. Critical approaches such as Allen's *Sacred Hoop*, Silko's *Yellow Woman* (edited by Melody Graulich), and Louis Owens's essays can help in understanding, for instance, the importance of ceremony in the story.[42] Ceremony is a completely non-Western element here, and a key to the whole episode is the fact that this element is the one that clearly organizes all others.

The old woman understands the representation of the weather maps as a Yupik, not as a white person. For her, the representation is not independent from the fact of climate, and therefore it can modify climate; they are related. According to her worldview, the crack between words and things described by Foucault does not exist.[43] Therefore, the representation has a power (which western culture would call "magic" or "supernatural"), and this power can touch the world outside itself. Representation is a text with powers that go beyond the text. In her ceremony, the old woman uses the fur and the stories to modify the representation of weather on the television screen and, thus, the real weather in Alaska. She translates the weather maps to a Yupik view of language, ceremony, and representation and then uses the maps for her own purposes—crashing the planes of the invaders.

To try to see this translation as Silko herself does, let us use her own words in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit*, "when I use the term storytelling, I'm talking about something that comes out of an experience and an understanding of that original view of Creation—that we are part of a whole, we do not differentiate or fragment stories and experiences."[44] From that lack of fragmenting or differentiating comes the power of the Yupik woman's actions. In *Almanac of the Dead*, the plane-crashing spell is described:

> She rubbed the weasel fur rapidly over the glass of the TV screen, faster and faster; the crackling and sparks became louder and brighter until the image of the weather map on the TVscreen began to swirl with masses of storm clouds moving more rapidly with each stroke of the fur. Then the old woman had closed her eyes and summoned all the energy, all the force of the spirit beings furious and vengeful.[45]

The spell joins two cultures and two technologies that do not function at the same level: here the Yupik culture, the Yupik ceremony, is the one that leads and the one that has the power.

There is another turn of the screw in this episode. The old woman states that, other than the weather maps, television does not surprise her because when she was a child

> she had watched a medicine woman who took a small quartz crystal found at the edge of the river and used the crystal to see exactly what

people living hundreds of miles upriver were doing. Medicine people had quartz crystals that performed like tiny tiny television sets.[46]

Here, Silko goes back to a concept that she repeats in her first two novels when she retells the origins of white people according to the Laguna Pueblo.[47] The story states that, although white people are destroying the Indian tribes, the truth of the origin of whites is something that only Indians know; Indians were there before. Here, in *Almanac*, the general idea is the same: the old Yupik woman uses the whites' television technology to crash the planes of the company that has brought that technology to Alaska and is using it to destroy the earth, but the truth is that she had already known something similar to that technology before. She is appropriating—and, in a sense, also recovering—old knowledge.

The use she makes of the weather maps is part of a conscious fight. She destroys the planes because she knows what the planes are doing to her land. She *subverts* the maps for her people. The intentionality is made evident in two scenes: she does what she does when and because she wants to. In the first of these two scenes, the old woman tells Lecha that she will not do anything to the plane that Lecha plans to take back south. She will let the plane arrive safely. In the second one, Lecha has a talk with a man on the plane who works for an insurance company. He shows her a map of all the places where planes had crashed in the last few years. Lecha listens to that story of tragic and sudden changes in the climate and feels something that Indian characters feel a lot in Silko's literature: "Much of Lecha's life had been spent listening to people when she already knew the story they were telling, and more."[48] Lecha knows that what puzzles the insurance man is something that she understands completely: she has witnessed it and has seen the appropriation.

For the insurance man, the destroyed planes evoke the legend of the Bermuda Triangle. Silko uses this legend in a plural, almost infinite way: the story of the old Yupik woman could be read as a rewriting, a countertranslation of the legend of the Bermuda Triangle and its electromagnetic fields that turn the machines crazy on planes and ships. But Silko is also telling us that the Bermuda Triangle story is probably another violent translation of the defense acts of Medicine people in the Caribbean, people who know how to create an electromagnetic field with a ceremony. White people, who do not see the world in this very related, ceremonial way, interpret this defense as a "legend."

The problem is that white culture cannot translate that story, as it does not have any equivalent in its culture. It can only disbelieve it and is therefore impotent in front of it. That is why the insurance man's last words are the words of a blind man. He does not have a way to represent certain ideas, and, there-

fore, he denies them, translating them as entertainment, lies: "None of that stuff is true, you know. It can all be explained," he says to Lecha.[49]

In the man's mind, the word *explained* refers to rational, scientific thinking, the kind of thinking related to the words *electromagnetic fields*. And the interesting thing for a study of appropriation is that those words are also used in the Indian retelling of the story: after all, what the old woman does *is* to create "electromagnetic fields" on the television sets with a fur in a ceremony that empowers these fields to change the map and, therefore, the climate in the world outside the television set.

In a few brief pages, this episode illustrates the idea of turning translation and crossing between cultures into a weapon. This episode and the many others in Native American contemporary writing are literary rewritings of the acts of Serafina Cruz and Juan Namuncurá in Argentina. It is impossible to force shareholders to listen to the Collas' reasons if the tribe does not have the necessary knowledge to buy shares and use them to be admitted to the meeting. It is impossible to use the woods and the lakes to make music far away from them unless one has the technology to do so. But Serafina Cruz bought the two shares for a very different reason than to make money, and she was not interested in buying more. And Juan Namuncurá uses technology to produce natural sounds, which is not the most common use white musicians make of it.

"Lecha had seen what the old Yupik woman could do with only a piece of weasel fur, a satellite weather map on a TV screen and the spirit energy of a story," Silko explains.[50] The elements of the resistance act (the spell of the plane crash) are hybrid in nature: a weasel fur, the whites' technology, and the power of modification of the Indian idea of representation, expressed in stories and constructed within a ceremony. The center of the ceremonial power is, of course, narration, the story itself. Narration is the center in all of Silko's literature and in the literature of many other Native American authors. This power is related to the Indian idea of narration, such as that found in the works of Allen, Owens, Silko, and Bruchac, among others: if representation can change the object represented, then narration can change the world. Just as Betonie does in *Ceremony*, the old Yupik woman knows how to end a story correctly and how to use whatever she has around her to achieve this end, including television technology.

At the end of Silko's novel, the reader is presented with a vision of the world that is completely Laguna in nature although it does not reject technology and the language of the enemy, English. The holistic view of the world that is analyzed, for instance, in the classic text by Vine Deloria Jr, *God is Red*, and repeated in the last quotation by Silko ("that we are all part of a whole") is the basis of the appropriation and the text's hybridity.[51]

The world is one and should be understood in the Indian way. This knowledge is the main basis for the profound sensation of triumph and hope with which many texts end, such as *The Book of Medicines, Love Medicine, Tracks, Fools Crow, The Light People, Ceremony, House Made of Dawn*, and many others.[52] In *Almanac of the Dead*, a paragraph before ending the many stories of the book with the prophecy of victory embodied in the stone serpent, Silko states this idea explicitly.[53] Sterling, the character who is at the center in this last part of the book, understands that the stone serpent he has seen does not announce the end of the earth, as some people have interpreted. "The snake didn't care if people were believers or not; the work of the spirits and prophecies went on regardless. . . . Humans had desecrated only themselves with the mine, not the earth. Burned and radioactive, with all humans dead, the earth would still be sacred."[54]

This quote is about the importance of the earth itself, earth as sacred and unique, as whole. It is also about the faith human beings may have in it. Faith in the sacredness of the earth is important, according to *Almanac*, but not indispensable. It is possible to change the world with an oral or visual representation of it, with the power of stories, as the old woman does in Alaska, or with a political rebellion, as Angelita La Escapía, Lecha's sister, and the Hopi try to do. Both ways are not differentiated: they are both sub-versions, different versions of the story, but if there was not even one human being left to perform these ceremonial and political acts, the earth would still be sacred and would endure.

In these endings, in spite of the power of Western culture and its violence and intention to translate, violate, and destroy all other cultures, the earth, which is the basis of most Indian cultures, is still there. And it is still possible, as Silko says in her essay to "work to make English speak for us." If these works of literature can tame, change, and translate English into explaining a different view of the world, then things will go on, life will go on, "survival this way," to use the famous poem by Simon Ortiz, will be possible.

NOTES

1. "Nosotros no queremos dinero, pedimos un cambio en el trazado. No estamos en venta." *Página 12* (Buenos Aires, Argentina), 5 June 1998.

2. Mapuches live in the south of Chile and Argentina; "Al incorporar computadoras a la banda trato de imitar el ambiente natural donde se desarrolla la música mapuche. Sin la computadora, eso sería una tarea imposible. Es muy difícil traer un lago al escenario." *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, Argentina), 3 June, 1998.

3. John Rowe, "Postmodernist Studies," in *Redrawing the Boundaries*, ed. Giles Gunn and Stephen Greenblatt (New York: MLA Press, 1992).

4. Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

5. Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1982).

6. See interviews in Laura Coltelli, *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

7. Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird, eds. *Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writing of North America* (New York: Norton, 1997).

8. See, for instance, the various proposals in *The Post Colonial Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995): "Fossil and Psyche," by Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (185–90); "Of the Marvellous Realism of the Haitians," by Jacques Stephen Aléxis (194–99); "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," by Homi K. Bhabha (206–13); "No Master Territories," by Trinh T. Minh-ha (215–19); "White Forms, Aboriginal Content," by Mudrooroo (228–32); "Who Can Write As Other?" by Margery Fee (242–49); "The Alchemy of English," by Braj B. Kachru (291–96).

9. Leslie Marmon Silko, "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective," in *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 48.

10. Quoted in Coltelli, 18.

11. Quoted in ibid., 147 and 148.

12. Quoted in ibid., 18.

13. Quoted in ibid., 110.

14. Anna Lee Walters, *The Sun Is not Merciful* (New York: Firebrand, 1985), 90.

15. Carroll Arnett Gogisgi, "The Old Man Said," in *Songs from This Earth on Turtle's Back*, ed. Joseph Bruchac (New York: Greenfield Review Press, 1983), 10.

16. Jo Whitehorse Cochrane, "Halfbreed Girl in Her City School," in *Dancing on the Rim of the World*, ed. Andrea Lerner (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990).

17. Jo Whitehorse Cochran, "Halfbreed Girl in the City School," in *Dancing at the Rim of the World*, 41–42.

18. This protest against forced education in white institutions is a topic in Native American literature, and it appears many times in short stories, poems, and novels by Silko, Momaday, Ortiz, Alexie, Brant, Allen, and others.

19. Louise Erdrich, *Tracks* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 226.

20. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Signet, 1977); N. Scott Momaday, *House Made of Dawn* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

21. Silko, *Ceremony*, 42.

22. Leslie Marmon Silko, "The North," in *Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 138.

23. Quoted in Coltelli, 144.

24. Quoted in ibid., 145–46.

25. Carter Revard, "Driving in Oklahoma," in *Ponca War Dancers* (Norman OK: Point Riders Press, 1980), 25.

26. Linda Hogan, "The Alchemists," in *The Book of Medicines* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1993), 55.

27. See Tzvetan Todorov's *Nosotros y los otros* (México: Siglo XXI, 1991) and Michael Foucault's *Genealogía del Racismo* (Altamira, Montevideo, 1992).

28. Hogan, "The Alchemists," 55.

29. Quoted in Coltelli, 78.

30. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

31. See my essay "Cuentos de autor aborigen en los EEUU: rasgos generales," in *Libertad y marginación: actas de la Asociación Paraguaya de Estudios Americanos (1986–1987)* (Asunción, Paraguay: 1987).

32. Louise Erdrich, *Love Medicine* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 43.

33. Ibid., 48.

34. Erdrich, *Tracks*, 225.

35. Linda Hogan, "Crossings," in *Book of Medicines*, 28.

36. Linda Hogan, "Breakings," in *Book of Medicines*, 30.

37. Kimberley M. Blaeser, "An Introduction," in *Buried Roots and Indestructible Seeds*, ed. Mark A. Lindquist and Martin Zanger (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

38. Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*, 151.

39. Ibid., 155.

40. Ibid., 156.

41. Ibid.

42. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman*, ed. Melody Graulich (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

43. Michel Foucault, *Las palabras y las cosas* (Barcelona: Siglo 21, 1984).

44. Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of Spirit*, 52.

45. Ibid., 156 and 157.

46. Ibid., 156.

47. Silko, *Ceremony* and *Storyteller*.

48. Silko, *Almanac of the Dead*, 160.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., 159.

51. Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red* (New York: Laurel, 1973).

52. James Welch, *Fools Crow* (New York: Viking Books, 1986); Gordon Henry, *The Light People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

53. Ibid., 763.

54. Ibid., 762.

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