

CODE-SWITCHING IN *HOUSE MADE OF DAWN*

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Abstract. *The diglossic role of Spanish and Towa in House Made of Dawn is explored as a possible expression of factionalism at Jemez Pueblo. The interruption of the narrative voice by Spanish utterances is interpreted as an implication of social distancing and as strengthening the novel's theme of estrangement. The strategic lexical code-switches to Towa, which occur within these stretches of Spanish speech, are examined for their semantic motivations and for their potential as devices for achieving textual disjunction.*

In his memoir, *The Names*, N. Scott Momaday reminisces about a respected old medicine man who personifies the preeminent ethic of life at Jemez Pueblo.

"He always greeted me heartily in Spanish, and there was much good humor in him. There are certain people whom you are simply glad to see at any moment, anywhere, for they hold themselves to their lives very peacefully and know who they are, and Francisco Tosa was one of these." (*Names*, 127)

Francisco's character in *House Made of Dawn* may derive from this elderly neighbor of the Momaday family while living at the Pueblo. And just as Francisco Tosa greets the young Scott in Spanish, the fictional Francisco conducts his interior monologues in the same language with brief, but strategic, code-switches to Towa, the tribal language of Jemez. Since speaking to oneself, which can be regarded as a verbalization of thinking, typically occurs in one's native, or at least dominant, tongue, the exclusive use of Towa would seem the more expected vehicle for Francisco's cognitive processes. Thus, the choice of Spanish is particularly intriguing, as it may reveal the tensions of factionalism at Jemez and the associated psychological response by members of subgroups of distancing themselves from the majority community.¹

Previous critics have dealt extensively with the novel's theme of estrangement, isolation, and displacement. Among them, Robert Nelson regards Abel's early-confused spiritual self as having dire consequences for his psychological well-being, and Bernard

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Selinger identifies rupture and disjunction as the novel's guiding principles. In addition, Mathias Schubnell contrasts Abel's alienation from Jemez traditions with his grandfather Francisco's role

"as the teacher and guardian of the traditional Pueblo way of life. He represents the old generation of the tribe which possesses the cultural heritage and strives to preserve it by handing it down to the next generation." (104)

What has been largely overlooked, however, is that, though seemingly well integrated into and committed to the Jemez way of life, Francisco also struggles with a fragmented life story.

Primarily focusing on Abel's isolation, critics cite his not knowing his father, an outsider of a neighboring tribe, as an early contributing factor (Schubnell 105). Yet Abel's grandfather's patriliney is even more mysterious and, possibly, more disturbing, because its surrounding secrecy seems to have permitted an incestuous relationship. The identity of Francisco's father is cryptically divulged when Porcingula, Francisco's lover and possibly his sister, playfully teases:

". . . and had he not been sired by the old consumptive priest? And had he not been told by his father who she was?" (*Momaday House* 205)

Scarberry-Garcia theorizes Abel's shrouded origin and painful psychological journey as having been patterned after the widespread Southwestern mythic hero twin's adventurous search of their unknown father, a deity. Francisco may have preceded his grandson Abel in a similar quest.

Notwithstanding his seemingly passionate commitment to Jemez religious life, as an illegitimate youth Francisco may have encountered considerable difficulty integrating himself into the ceremonial structure. Although Jemez individuals, like other Pueblos, belong to matrilineal clans, the presence of Spanish Catholicism has infused such a patrilineal bias that, unlike other Pueblos, admission to one of the two kiva moieties, Squash or Turquoise, is based on the father's membership (Sando 425).

However, tribal communities are not so homogenous as they may appear to outsiders at first glance. In some cases, disagreements, especially over esoteric ceremonial procedures, have escalated into seemingly irreconcilable schisms. In other cases, population movements have contributed to a considerable amount of socio-religious stress. Archeologist Alfred Kidder, director of the excavation of Pecos Pueblo, infers that the general Pueblo culture area has been contracting for more than a thousand years and that individual communities have constantly been receiving increments of population from destroyed or voluntarily abandoned towns (Parsons Jemez v). At times overloading the religious systems of their hosts, these newcomers have introduced additional rites and priesthoods whose incorporation has often resulted in factionalism.

This kind of religious factionalism may have facilitated Francisco's youthful entry into the otherwise rigidly closed Jemez ceremonial structure, an event his putative father much laments in his diary.

"He is one of them & goes often in the kiva & puts on their horns & hides & does worship that Serpent which is the One our most ancient enemy." (*Momaday House* 51)

More specifically revealing in this context is Francisco's memory of his prominent participation in the Pecos Bull Dance:

"And once he, too, had been the bull—twice or three times, perhaps. He could not remember how many, but he could remember that it was done honorably and well." (*Momaday House* 80)

Since the impersonation of the Bull, during the Pecos patron saint celebration, is restricted to individuals of bilateral Bahkyush (Pecos) descent, Francisco apparently claims membership of that lineage through his mother. Thus he is able to take advantage of an exception to the otherwise inflexible criteria for ceremonial participation. Though the textual clues are again very cryptic, Susan Scarberry-Gracia surmises that the Bahkyush witch Nicolás teah-whau is, in fact, Francisco's and Porcingula's mother (149).

The origin of the Pecos faction at Jemez Pueblo dates to the resettlement in 1838 of about twenty linguistic kinsmen from moribund Bahkyula (Pecos Pueblo), eighty miles by trail to the east (Kessell 458). Reflecting on the Jemez's attitude of pity toward these poor immigrants and their descendants, Momaday calls attention to the Pecos' enduring compensatory pride and sense of separateness.

"These immigrants were a wretched people, for they had experienced great suffering. Their land bordered upon the Southern Plains, and for many years they had been an easy mark for marauding bands of buffalo hunters and thieves. They had endured every kind of persecution until one day they could stand no more and their spirit broke . . . The people of the town must have looked narrowly at those stricken souls who walked slowly toward them, wild in their eyes with grief and desperation. The Bahkyush immigrants brought with them little more than the clothes on their backs, but even in this moment of deep hurt and humiliation they thought of themselves as a people." (15)

Even though the Pecos immigrants have held civil offices at Jemez, such as governor of the Pueblo, and have been allowed to add their Native priesthoods (Eagle Watchers Society) and Catholic rites (Pecos patron saint celebration) to the Jemez ceremonial calendar, their descendants continue to be regarded as quasi-outsiders.

In her ethnographic fieldwork at Jemez in the 1920s, Elsie Parsons becomes acutely aware of this cleavage between Pecos descendants and Jemez "old-timers." In particular, she reports on

"the scorn expressed by a Pecos descendant in opining that "these Jemez people don't know anything," and in describing a meeting of the Old Men where it was plain that the only ones who knew anything were the chiefs of the Pecos societies, including the chief of the tabö'sh who had married into Pecos lineage." (Jemez 135)

Momaday echoes this defensive self-perception by the Pecos of their position in the Jemez ceremonial hierarchy.

"The Eagle Watchers Society was the sixth to go into the kiva at the summer and autumn retreats. It was an important society, and it stood apart from the others in a certain way. This difference—this superiority—had come about a long time ago." (15)

Sixth also means last, and as such reopens the old wounds of indignities suffered by emigration and by exile from the shrines in the sacred ancestral grounds along the headwaters of the Pecos River, to which yearly pilgrimages still take place.

During the Spanish colonial era, Franciscan missionaries, such as Fray Alonso de Benavides, describe the Pecos as belonging to the same ethnicity and speaking the same language as the Jemez:

"y aunque estos Indios son de la nacion Hemes, por estar aqui solos, y deviados de su territorio, se tiene por nacion aparte, aunque es una misma lengua." (Kessell 146)

This observation is supported by comparative linguists, such as John Harrington, who conjecture that the Pecos must have spoken a variety of Towa, though, no doubt, different from the one at Jemez (Hewitt and Bandelier 96).

However, Jemez tribal historian Joe Sando questions this assumption by arguing that "[w]hat few words are known of the Pecos language sound more like Tewa than Towa . . . The difference is also indicated by the old saying that someone was "just like a Pecos, fumbling for words." (149)

In fact, the only utterance Parsons was able to elicit from a grandson of a Pecos immigrant seems to reveal a contrast beyond mere dialectal differences.

"k'ota' dopo'e', how many of you came? The Jemez of this is:
kyuudy'a kyapo'e " (Jemez 130)

Whatever the genetic status of the Pecos language may be, it must have been largely unintelligible to the Jemez and, therefore, it seems to have provided another vehicle with which to mark the "foreignness" of the Pecos immigrants.

However, mutual unintelligibility between dialects of the same language is certainly not uncommon. Consider, for instance, the travails of the speaker of Californian English who finds himself navigating the dialectal waters of Chesapeake Bay, especially Tangier Island. Similarly, the Jemez dialect of Towa probably would have been problematic for the Pecos, not only in terms of acquisition but also, and more significantly, in terms of social identity. In addition to Towa, the Pecos bring with them a pidginized form of Comanche, at the time a prominent trade language of the Southern Plains, and a second language variety of Spanish (Kessell 439).

Out of this multilingual situation appears to have emerged a preference for Spanish in interactions between the Jemez and Pecos. This inference is supported by Joe Sando's assertion that "most men who immigrated from Pecos spoke better Spanish than they did the Jemez language" (37). In fact, a language shift, perhaps a historical re-enactment, is performed ritually during the Fiesta of Porciúncula, which celebrates the patron saint of Pecos, Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles de Porciúncula (Kessell 104). Sitting next to the ancient wooden statue of the patroness, the cacique, who is the head of the entire village ceremonial organization, and the chief of the Pecos Eagle Watchers Society are greeted by the older men by "shaking hands demonstratively with those sitting there and speaking to them in Spanish" (Parsons Jemez 97). In other words, the ritual implication seems to be that Spanish is the proper medium to deal with members of the "Pecos race," a term recorded by Parsons and, undoubtedly, translated from Spanish "raza" (Jemez 135). In New Mexican Spanish, the meaning of "raza" is narrowed to ethnicity, specifically "Mestizo people" or "Mexican American." Lexicographer Rubén Cobos cites the following utterances as a representative context: "Que es gringa la Mary?—No, es raza," (145). Thus the Jemez's application of the narrowed meaning of "race" to Pecos descendants agrees with such usage.

Since the colonial era, Spanish has served as a significant lingua franca among Puebloans, whose tongues belong to completely unrelated language families (Hopi, Zuni, Keresan and Tanoan). Though official records of church inspections tell of the friars' complaining bitterly about the poor quality of Spanish among the Indians of New Mexico and the resulting slow and poor transmission of the Catholic faith, the Native leaders of the Revolt of 1680 are able to unite the speakers of very diverse languages by relying ironically on the language of their enemy, though probably a pidginized form (Kessell 339).

Momaday captures this pragmatism when he portrays the Jemez as religiously withdrawn but outwardly seemingly receptive to cultural innovations:

"Their invaders were a long time in conquering them; and they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky . . . while in the discrimination of pride, they acquire from their conquerors only the luxury of example. They have

assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own, secret souls; and there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting." (58)

The names, gestures and language of their enemies continue to be borrowed into the twentieth century. Elsie Parsons even encounters a case of literacy in Spanish when

"in the house of José Antonio Pecos I heard read aloud one night a note of invitation in Spanish from the foremost man in Isleta to his compadre in Jemez to attend the baile de pinito that was to be given in Isleta on October third." (Jemez 5)

Thus, much as the Pueblo adobe churches with their colorful patron saint celebrations, Spanish has been appropriated as a necessary tool in compartmentalizing the village's internal and external spheres. Also, many Puebloans, especially the Jemez, refuse to teach their native languages to outsiders in order to prevent intrusions into and censorship of their ceremonial life (Kessell 338). As a result, the indigenous tongues have become increasingly associated with religious secrecy and ethnic privacy. Conveniently, Spanish provides an additional buffer.

The few Spanish utterances recorded by Parsons at Jemez reflect a non-standard variety, whose origins lie no doubt in fossilized second language competencies. Among the features are the epenthesis of an alveolar nasal in "muncho" (7, 54), the variability of adjectival gender agreement in "buena dia" (6), and in "mirror [espejo]. . . muy bonita" (53), the variability of prepositions *por* and *para* in "por bonito" (13), and the variability of the adjectives *mal* and *malo(a)* in "she was [era] muy mal" (49). Indirectly, Joe Sando acknowledges the prevalence of non-standard Spanish at Jemez, when he relates the experience of a local college student who found that "the Spanish in college was quite different from the speech her parents used around Jemez" (207).

On the other hand, the clearly documented non-standard quality of Jemez Spanish is not reflected in *House Made of Dawn*. Unlike Momaday's uncannily accurate portrayal of the non-standard features of American Indian English in the peyote prayers of Cristóbal Cruz and Napoleon Kills-in-the-Timber (see Bartelt), Francisco's Spanish productions reveal the decidedly idiomatic sense of a native speaker.

"He drew even and saw for an instant Mariano's face, wet and contorted in defeat . . . "Se dió por vencido" . . . and he struck it with the back of his hand, leaving a black smear across the mouth and jaw." (8)

By framing the Spanish utterance as a quotation, Momaday clearly underscores its spoken status. As such its insertion into the narrative voice describing Francisco's memory of his victory over a competitor in a ceremonial footrace needs to be regarded as a glimpse into his cognition. In other words, Francisco's speaking to himself in Spanish implies his thinking in the same language. Furthermore, the quality of his Spanish is not representative of the second language variety typically found at Jemez but approaches that of a native speaker.

This insistence on an idiomatic variety of Spanish subtly heightens its incongruous juxtaposition with Towa.

"Then he was on the old road to San Ysidro. At times he sang and talked to himself above the noise of the wagon: Yo heyana oh . . . heyana oh . . . heyana oh . . . Abelito . . . tarda mucho en venir." (7)

This code-switch from Towa to Spanish seems symptomatic of the general diglossic pattern associated with the Pecos faction. A travel song, which has the specific function of warding off evil, appeals for its preventive curative powers to the supernatural beings that dwell near the numerous shrines surrounding the Pueblo. Thus, such a text must be

properly performed in the language of the sacred landscape. However, the profane task of Francisco's meeting Abel at the Trailways bus stop on State Road 44 is more appropriately dealt with through the medium of Spanish (Momaday, *Names* 121). Specifically, the switch seems to be triggered by the memory of the Spanish diminutive form of his grandson's Christian name, "Abelito." Although Momaday avoids direct dialogues between Francisco and Abel, no doubt to underscore their inarticulateness and fractured relationship, there are hints that Spanish serves as their primary mode of interaction. One piece of evidence, to illustrate, surfaces briefly as a spoken phrase of encouragement, "Abelito! Ándale, muchacho!", interrupting the narrative voice of Francisco's deathbed memories.

At the deathbed is where frequently the polyglot's true native language or the diglot's dominant language demands its presence. Francisco's final ramblings also bear out this cognitive imperative.

"But each day his voice had grown weaker, until now it was scarcely audible and the words fell together and made no sense: "Abelito . . . kethá ahme . . . Mariano . . . frío . . . se dió por . . . mucho, mucho frío . . . vencido . . . aye, Porcingula . . . que blanco, Abelito . . . diablo blanco . . . Sawish . . . Sawish . . . y el hombre negro . . . sí muchos hombres negros . . . corriendo, corriendo . . . frío . . . rápidamente . . . Abelito, Vidalito . . . ayempah? Ayempah!" (195)

In this predominantly Spanish text, quite possibly Francisco's final words recalling the crucial events of his life-story, three calculated code-switches to the Towa lexicon occur. Since the concepts embodied in these Jemez expressions belong exclusively to the Native world, the shifts are again strictly of a diglossic nature.

Regarding kethá ahme, meaning "home", Momaday explains in one of his early essays that this expression

"bears critical connotations of belonging. Should someone say to the sun, "Where are you going?" the sun would surely answer, "I am going home," and it is understood at once that home is the earth. All things are alive in this profound unity in which are all elements, all animals, all things." (*Relations* 51)

For a world-view in which it is believed that Father Sun physically re-enters every evening the body of Mother Earth and is actually reborn every morning, the lexicon of a European language, such as Spanish, simply lacks the semantic arsenal. On the other hand, the premises of Catholicism typically require a great deal of cumbersome analogy in Native tongues. Thus Puebloans compartmentalize the contrasting concepts of the supernatural by assigning each to the lexicon of the culture from which they derive.

Though belief in one realm of the supernatural—that of witchcraft—is shared by the Pueblo and Hispanic communities of New Mexico, Marc Simmons distinguishes the origins of the two traditions. The Hispanic practice essentially continues the European heritage of Satan worship. The imprint of the Hispanic occult, which Puebloans certainly understand and fear, reveals itself in Francisco's utterance *diablo blanco*. However, the idea of the witch as a disciple of the devil is largely absent in the Native world-view. Instead, the potential for evil is ascribed to practically any deity that permits a witch to harnesses its destructive powers against his or her enemies. Thus, Francisco's second lexical switch, to Sawish, the Towa word for sorcerer (Parsons Jemez 139), makes sense in his remembering the albino Indian who curses his cornfields (Momaday *House* 67).²

² The critical literature largely misidentifies the albino sorcerer as Juan Reyes Fragua (e.g., Scarberry Garcia 14). Manuelita and Diego Fragua's albino infant, baptized in 1875 as "Juan Reyes" by Francisco's probable

Evil in the Pueblo world can also be unleashed by any deity that has been offended by a taboo violation. Setting into motion an imbalance, a taboo violation provokes retaliation from the supernatural which then threatens the entire community. Very much in this context, albinism is viewed as punishment stemming from a mother's breaking a taboo, such as disregarding village endogamy or engaging in incestuous relations (Parson, *Religion* 44). At Jemez, Parsons discovers that ignoring certain food restrictions, such as the excessive consumption of egg yolk, is also blamed for the birth of an albino child (Jemez 29). This prohibition appears to be a variant of the widely held belief among Pueblo Indians that a particular portion of an egg is bewitched (Simmons 81).

The relatively high incidence of albinism at Jemez Pueblo, physical anthropologists connect to the Pecos immigration (Jones). No doubt, the Jemez would not be surprised by that finding. An ancient source of witchcraft, Pecos Pueblo concealed, according to folk tales, in one of its kivas a giant horned snake deity and a sacred fire which was to be kept burning until the return of the mythical Montezuma, himself a powerful sorcerer (Simmons 127). Very likely, most, if not all, Pecos immigrants and their descendants, of whom the albino witch in the novel is one, are suspected to be practitioners of witchcraft.

The third switch, to Ayempah, is not quite as transparent. Although the term is not explained explicitly in the novel nor in any other of Momaday's writings, several critics are convinced that the Jemez conventional formula of greeting and leave-taking is involved. Robert Nelson informs that

"[t]he most authoritative textual reference that comes to mind is Momaday's reference to the word in his early essay "The Morality of Indian Hating," where he translates the interrogative version of it "Where are you going?"; Larry Evers, who knew that, nevertheless translates it "What are you doing?" in his seminal essay "Words and Place: A Reading of *House Made of Dawn*." My own paraphrase in that post ("go well") is pretty loose, and based on the imperative version of the word; according to an explanation of the word given to me by a resident of Jemez some years ago, as a question it comes close to "how are you going" or "how/why/to what end do you move?"; and like Hawaii's "aloha" it may be used both as a greeting (phrased as a question) and as a good-by blessing (in which case it means something like "[may you] continue to move in that way/to that end")." (E-mail)

Nelson's take on the term certainly supports the notion that a code switch would be triggered by the context of final leave-taking in Native terms.

Interestingly enough, however, in the essay cited by Nelson, "The Morality of Indian Hating," Momaday does not actually mention the term but only provides his translation:

"Where are you going?" That is the conventional formula of greeting at the eastern pueblo of Jemez, where I lived for almost twenty years.' (74)

In the novel, the term is also not listed when the narrative voice explores Abel's inability to engage in the greeting convention as a symptom of his psychological breakdown.

"Had he been able to say it, anything—even the commonplace formula of greeting

father, Fray Nicolás, would have been seventy years old in 1945, when competing with Abel in the chicken pull (Momaday House 50). Parsons, commenting on the incidence of albinism at Jemez Pueblo in 1922, identifies a fifty-year-old albino, Juan Reyes Fragua, as having a five-year-old albino nephew (Jemez 49). Jones's genealogy of Pecos immigrants and descendants lists Juan Reyes Fragua's albino nephew as Frank Fragua, born in 1916 (269). This latter individual would only be about three years older than Abel, who was born in 1919 and, thus, the more likely source for the character in the novel (Momaday House 13).

"Where are you going"—which had no being beyond sound, no visible substance; would once again have shown him whole to himself; but he was dumb." (58)

Also curious is the total absence of the term in Parsons' thoroughly researched ethnography, in which she only mentions "bueno" and "buena dia" as the greetings she encounters at Jemez (6). As an outsider, she may have been excluded from Native conventions of courtesy; nevertheless, it seems odd for her to be unaware of a common Native greeting. Unobservant she certainly is not, since she manages to wring out of her informants a great deal of secret religious information, a violation of trust still resented by the Jemez community (Sando 216).

Without a translation or a context within which to understand the Towa words in the novel, believes Holly Martin, the reader shares Abel's frustration and psychological fragmentation. However, rather than the omitted meanings, it is code-switching in and of itself which creates the desired effect. Thus this feature turns out to be not just an arbitrary act, nor simply an attempt to mimic the speech of a community but the author's conscious decision to offer a multiple perspective and an enhanced ability to express the subject matter.

The subject matter, it has been argued in this paper, concerns the underlying socio-religious stresses in the seemingly serene but exclusive Pueblo world. Among the most self-isolating and anachronistic pockets of American Indian life in the United States, the Pueblos nevertheless must absorb the shock waves imposed by change. The ever-shrinking population base, a phenomenon that apparently predates but is accelerated by European contact, leads to village consolidation, socio-religious restructuring, and factionalism. At Jemez Pueblo, the factionalism generated by the Pecos immigration provides an additional element for the novel's theme of estrangement, isolation, and displacement. The diglossic preference for the Spanish language by the Pecos faction provides a vehicle with which to express a social and ceremonial distance. In addition, Spanish/Towa code-switching heightens the novel's pre-occupation with rupture, disjunction, and fragmentation.

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PROMENA KODA U ROMANU *KUĆA OD ZORE*

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Istražuje se diglosična uloga španskog i jezika tova u romanu Kuća od zore, kao mogući odraz grupaštva u Pueblu Džemez. Prekidanje priče naratora povremenim iskazima na španskom interpretira se kao posledica socijalnog distanciranja, kojom se pojačava dominantna tema romana - otuđenje. Ispituju se i strategijska leksička prebacivanja na kod jezika tova, koja se javljaju u okviru delova teksta na španskom, u potrazi za semantičkom motivacijom i njihovim potencijalom kao sredstava za postizanje tekstualne disjunkcije.