“Everything Got Kinda Strange after a While:” Some Reflections on Translating Navajo Poetry that Should not be Translated

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SUMMARY
Inspired by an inquiry from a Navajo friend about why I had not published on a particular poem by Rex Lee Jim, this paper engages that question through three interconnected themes. First, there will be an analysis of the poem by Jim where I translate the poem but also place it within the context of Navajo concerns with k'é (reciprocity, generosity). Second, I turn to thinking through some of the issues brought out in the translation of the Navajo word ajik’eed as “one fucks.” This leads to questions about the ways that indigenous languages and their speakers are imagined and represented. Finally, I take up the foregoing issues as I reflect on my own translation practices. [Navajo, poetry, translation, vulgarity, moral responsibility]

“They told us these stories to make us think.”
Unnamed Navajo consultant

Introduction

The impetus for writing this article came from a series of text messages I received from a Navajo consultant. He asked me if I had written anything about the Rex Lee Jim poem that concerns “fucking in the fall.” I had replied that I had not written anything about that poem. He then asked me why I had not. He felt the poem to be a “strong poem” that inspired contemplation. His question gave me pause and my response was relatively vague and, I think, noncommittal and unconvincing. “I hadn’t gotten around to it” or something along those lines (a familiar excuse for most academics). So, this article is an extended reflection on why I had not written about the Jim poem about which my friend was asking.

There are three converging themes to this article. First, there will be an ethnopoetic analysis of the poem by Jim where I both translate the poem but also place the poem within a broader context of Navajo concerns with k'é “reciprocity, generosity, friendship, affection, peace.” I will also suggest something of a way of thinking about the poem based on a poetic principle of phonological iconicity or saad aheełt'éégo diitsʼaʼ “words that resemble each other through sound” that I have discussed in relation to other poems by Jim (see Webster 2013). Second, I then turn to thinking through some of the issues brought out in the translation of the Navajo word ajik’eed as “one fucks.” This
leads to questions—following Shaylih Muehlmann (2013)—about the ways that indigenous languages and their speakers are imagined and represented. Third, I take up the foregoing as I reflect on my own translation practices.

Saad Éí Nits’i’ilkees

When I first met Rex Lee Jim, he was teaching Navajo philosophy at Diné College in Tsaile, AZ. He had been born in Rock Point, AZ on the Navajo Nation. He was educated at Rock Point Community School (where there was a Navajo language and literacy program) and then later off-reservation in North Carolina and Colorado. He graduated from Princeton in 1986. He has published three books of poetry (Jim 1989, 1995, and 1998). The first two collections (including saad) are all-Navajo collections. The third volume is a trilingual collection in Navajo, Gaelic, and English (Jim 1998). There is also an unpublished collection of English-language poetry (see Webster 2004, 2009). He later went on to serve in the Navajo Tribal Council and, then, in 2011 became vice president of the Navajo Nation. Beyond this, Jim is also a Beautyway singer. I worked with him primarily during my fieldwork in 2000–2001 on the Navajo Nation. I interviewed him multiple times and I video-recorded several of his poetry readings as well.

The poem that forms the basis of this paper comes from Rex Lee Jim’s (1995) all-Navajo collection saad. The volume was published by Jim’s alma mater Princeton University through its The Princeton Collections of Western Americana. I have discussed this book elsewhere (Webster 2006, 2009, 2013, n.d.; Mitchell and Webster 2011), but here I note that the book is written almost entirely in Navajo (including page numbers and introductory materials). Elsewhere, I have translated and discussed two other poems from this collection in detail (see Webster 2006, 2013; Mitchell and Webster 2011).

Saad is not widely available on the Navajo Nation. I purchased a copy from Jim at a poetry reading in Window Rock in 2001. I documented Jim performing this poem at an informal poetry reading at the home of a mutual acquaintance on the Navajo Nation in December 2000 and, again, at the poetry performance in July 2001 at the Navajo Nation museum in Window Rock, AZ. At both performances the audiences were primarily—but not exclusively—Navajo. Navajos of all ages were in attendance at both readings. The event at Window Rock was billed as the “largest gathering ever of Navajo writers” to perform and was hosted by Navajo poet (and now Navajo poet laureate) Luci Tapahonso. Other Navajo writers who performed, besides Tapahonso and Jim, included Esther Belin, Sherwin Bitsui, Nia Francisco, Blackhorse Mitchell, Irvin Morris, and Laura Tohe.

Saad glosses into English as “word, language.” This is an example of what Gladys Reichard (1944:38) called “linguistic synecdoche,” where “the designation of a whole and a part” is accomplished “by the same term.” As Reichard notes, linguistic synecdoche is a relatively common feature of the Navajo language and is used in Navajo verbal art. Reichard (1944:38) makes this point as a part of a broader critique of reliance by would-be translators of Navajo verbal art on a fidelity to “literalness.” Such reliance on literal translations, as I have discussed elsewhere (Webster 2013), betrays a Western fascination with semantico-referential meanings (see Bauman and Briggs 2003; Haviland 2003). I will return to this point below, but here, now, I want to provide some of the
introductory material by Jim from *saad*. The following excerpt is from before the numbering of pages in Navajo (for ease of reference I have given the page numbers Roman numerals). I have translated the Navajo into English in conversations with Navajo consultants. While there are interesting things concerning the use of parallelism and verb stems here, I leave aside a discussion of the poetic and linguistic features of these introductory comments for another time. I have reproduced the spacing, punctuation, and formatting as found in the book.

*díí saad*
áłts'ísígo
bee ha’iidziihígíí
hane’ lq’ágo bił daashjash

*k’i’jií’ahgo*
ádaa ákontzhdinódzíí
ádaa tsinízhdoookos

saad éí nitsí’ilkees
saad éí na’iiłná
saad éí álástsií’ át’é dooleeł

(Jim 1995:vi–vii)

these little words
that are being said
can be tied in many stories

when they are untied
you will become aware of yourself
you will remember who you are

words will make you think
words will make you feel
words will become the seed

While much could be made of this introduction, I want to focus in on two points. First, when discussing the concept of poetry with Jim, I asked him how one would say *poetry* in Navajo. Jim told me on a variety of occasions that he used the form *hane’* (story, narrative) to talk of *poetry* in Navajo. Indeed, several other Navajos commented that poetry was *hane’* (see Webster 2004, 2009). While I have noted elsewhere (Webster 2004:70) that there is no referentially transparent form for *poetry* in Navajo, many poets I have worked with do talk of poetry in Navajo and use the terms *poetry, hane’, and/or hane’ naach’áqh “designed stories”* (among other terms). So, in the above, *hane’* can also be understood as akin to poetry. Just as, I might add, *saad* in the above can be understood as both “words” and “language” (plurality is here understood not by an overt grammatical marking but rather through the context in which the form is used).

The second point, which resonates with one local theory of poetry and narrative (*hane’*) as espoused by some Navajos (poet and nonpoet alike), is that poetry as *hane’* functions to make one think, to reflect, and that such reflection should then motivate one to engage in proper behavior (Mitchell and Webster 2011). Or, more broadly, as Jim writes, *saad éí nitsí’ilkees “words will make you think.”* I have, for ease of reading and based on conversations with Navajo
consultants, translated ádaa tsínízhdoookos as “you will remember who you are” and that has obscured the fact that the verb stem –kos is the same as the verb stem –kees in the next line (but with different aspect and mode shapes). Both are forms of –kééz “to think, to decide, to ponder” (Young and Morgan 1992:320). Stories, words, and poetry are meant to inspire thought. It is an active imaginative process that “unties” these words, stories, and poems and that leads to becoming aware of who one is. Like the quote concerning the telling of Coyote stories that begins this article, stories were told to make people think (Hill and Hill 1945:317; see also Toelken and Scott 1981). As I have discovered through conversations with Navajo consultants (see Mitchell and Webster 2011), in the poetry by Jim, that thinking is often about proper moral behavior. Or as Blackhorse Mitchell—Navajo poet, author, singer, and educator—explained it to me, Jim’s poetry can inspire recognition of the ugliness (hóchxo’ó) in which we—wittingly or not—are engaged (see Mitchell and Webster 2011). As a number of scholars have noted, for many Navajos hóchxo’ó “ugliness, disorder” and hózhó “beauty, order, harmony, control” are not just aesthetic considerations but also critical moral positions (see, among others, Reichard 1963; Lamphere 1969; Witherspoon 1977; Jim 2000; Mitchell and Webster 2011).\(^1\) Much ritual in Navajo is concerned with either preserving hózhó or restoring hózhó from hóchxo’ó (see Reichard 1963; Witherspoon 1977; Mitchell and Webster 2011).

Ak’eego

In what follows, I am guided by Alton Becker’s (1995:71) concern with a “linguistics of particularity” or, perhaps here, an ethnopoetics of particularity (see also Hymes 1981; Sherzer 1982; Tedlock 1983; Woodbury 1985; Friedrich 2006).\(^2\) For Becker (1995:73), “the goal is not a theory of language but something more like usefulness—usefulness in helping us make the adjustments necessary to understanding the Javanese, the Cree, our own neighbors, ourselves;” or, in this case, our Navajo neighbors. Explicit in that—as Becker (1995:73) notes following José Ortega y Gasset (1959)—is that all translations are both exuberant (saying more than was in the original) and deficient (saying less than was in the original)—that “each language is an attunement over time” (Becker 1995:397), and no two languages share exactly the same attunements. The following translation, as will become apparent, is both exuberant and deficient. It could be no other way.

Now let us turn to the poem. The poem appears on page dizdiin dóó bi’aq naaki (42). The translation, which I will discuss in more detail below, is based on conversations with several Navajo consultants and is informed, as well, by performances of this poem by Jim that I have recorded. I have relied most heavily on discussions with Blackhorse Mitchell and another Navajo consultant who wishes to remain anonymous.

ak’eego
hook’eegi
aalk’eedgo
ajik’eed

(Jim 1995:42)
In the fall
At the deserted home
Together
One fucks

When we look at this poem, we see that Jim focuses in on the homophonous noun stems –k’eed (fall, autumn; Young and Morgan 1992:347), –k’eh (place of residence, home place; Young and Morgan 1992:345) and the verb stem –k’eed (to copulate, to fuck; Young and Morgan 1992:347; my consultants provided the second sense). In the first line, we have the conventional word for “fall, autumn” (often written ‘aak’ee(d)) and the enclitic –go “during, in.” In the second line, Jim switches to the noun stem –k’ee. This line is composed of the prefix hoo- indicating space or area plus the noun stem and a locative enclitic –gi “at” (indicating relative proximity in space). The use of hoo- here seems to evoke a sense of “empty” or “deserted.” The third line is a bit more difficult to analyze definitively. It is either based on the noun stem –k’eed (place of residence, home place) or the verb stem –k’eed (to copulate, to fuck.) My consultants translated this line as “with the company of a guest,” “a time of plenty-ness” (here associated with the fall being the time of harvest), or “full of joy” (this form suggestive of the act of copulating). One way to segment this form is as the reciprocal prefix ál-, the verb stem –k’eed “to copulate,” and the relative enclitic –go “as.” The other way of segmenting this form would again have the reciprocal prefix ál-, the noun stem –k’eed (home place), and the subordinating enclitic –go (at). There is a pun-like ambiguity in this line, and one can sense that from the performance of this poem that Jim did in Window Rock, AZ on July 18, 2001.

Thinking about this poem as a performance, when Jim performed this poem in Window Rock there was a pause after the first line. The next two lines were said together without a significant pause between them. Then there was a pause between the third line and the fourth line, and it was only after the fourth line that Navajos laughed. With other poems, like the poem discussed in Mitchell and Webster (2011) or the first poem that Jim read from saad that night about pouting about a penis (see note 14), Navajos laughed after the introduction of chxaq (defecation, shit) and achxo’ (someone’s penis), which do not occur at the end of the poem. In this poem, Navajos laughed only after the final line was revealed. Having run line 2 and 3 together, a sense of continuity of noun stem form was established. It was after the fourth line that the third line could be reinterpreted not as “with a guest,” but rather as “full of joy.” The current translation attempts to maintain the power of the final line by translating the third line as “together” (highlighting the work of the reciprocal prefix) and thus creating ambiguity here.

The final line includes the prefix a- (thus), the fourth person subject prefix ji-, and the verb stem –k’eed (to copulate, to fuck). The consultants that I worked with all translated this final line with some form of the English verb “fuck.” I suggested to one consultant alternative translations such as “having sex” or “making love,” but he rejected both of them (I will note that I have only translated this poem with male Navajo consultants) and preferred “fucking” (I will return to this point below). In Navajo there are four persons (first, second, third, and fourth). The fourth person pronominal, as Harry Hoijer (1945:197–98) describes it, is used for “persons or beings psychologically remote from the speaker, such as, for example, an in-law or sibling of the opposite sex with
whom a respect or partial avoidance relationship must be maintained.” Reichard (1951:82) notes that, “the fourth person may be used instead of the second person by siblings of the opposite sex, or by those that want to indicate extreme respect in their relationship.” Conventionally, the fourth person is often translated into English as “one” and, indeed, one of my consultants translated the final line as “one is fucking.”

As in many of the poems in *saad*, Jim creates a dense sonic texture through the intensification of form through the repetition of sound. These sounds are often associated in *saad* with noun and verb stems (see Webster 2006; Mitchell and Webster 2011). As I discovered in working through a translation of a poem that repeated the sounds [chx] throughout, this consonant cluster evoked the verb stem -chxo’ (ugly, disorderly, out of control; see Mitchell and Webster 2011). Moreover, the insertion of the velar fricative as an optional expressive device not only connected with the verb stem -chxo’ (which almost always occurs with the expressive velar fricative) but also added an affective stance that indicated pejoration and depreciation. Indeed, in working through many of the poems in *saad*, Navajo consultants commented on the word affinities created through the repetition of sound. That is, the repetition of the key sound on the verb or noun stem often evoked other words that had a similar sound. Thus, as above, [chx]—repeated in each line of the poem—evoked an affinity based on phonological iconicity (sounds resembling other sounds) of the verb stem—chxo’.

In conversations with Blackhorse Mitchell, I came to understand the poem as a statement on behaving in an uncontrolled manner and the harm to which such unwitting behavior can lead. One way of thinking about that poem, then, was as an encouragement for the listener/reader to reflect (that is, think) about their own behaviors and whether or not, like the character of Badger described in the poem, they too were acting without thinking and thus causing harm to themselves. Indeed, many of the poems in *saad* are poems about Navajo morality. They are, in that sense, very much like the morally laden Navajo Coyote stories as described by Barre Toelken and Tacheeni Scott (1981). Jim (2004), I should add, has written his own English-language workings of Coyote stories (see also Webster 2004).

This poetic principle used by Jim is connected with a Navajo aesthetic informed by *saad aheell’éego diits’a’* (words that resemble each other through sound) or what we might call punning (see Webster 2013). The poetic work of the use of punning in Jim’s poetry was best encapsulated by a Navajo who had been listening to Jim read his poetry in December 2000 and remarked, “when you think about it [the sounds in the poem], the whole meaning changes.” Given this penchant by Jim to use the repetition of sounds to evoke phonological iconicity with homophonous forms in Navajo, how might we go about thinking about the use of –k’ee? As it turns out, one of my consultants made the connection as we were talking about the poem. He noted that this poem—with its dense use of [k’ee]—seemed a play on k’é (friendship, peace, affection, generosity, solidarity) and -k’éí (relatives). Gary Witherspoon (1977:81–120) discusses the importance of these two concepts in detail as they relate to a set of active affective behavioral ways of interacting (see also Lamphere 1977). K’é is a set of moral ways of interacting with others and puts a premium on solidarity, affection, generosity, and friendship.7 Relatives either through blood and/or clan are –k’éí (Navajos
have a set of matrilineal clans [see Aberle 1961; Witherspoon 1977]). Like most kin terms in Navajo, this form is inalienable and needs a possessive prefix (e.g., shik’éí [my relatives] or nihih’éí [our relatives]). While, as my consultant noted, words with—k’eed tend to be about “male sexuality” (see also Young and Morgan 1987:854–855), another Navajo consultant suggested that –k’eed now has a generalized sense of “sexuality”. For this consultant, the poem highlighted the relationship between male sexuality and kinship responsibilities and, more broadly, issues of moral responsibility as expressed through k’é.

What becomes most interesting here is the use of the fourth person subject pronoun (ji-) in the final line (ajik’eed). As I noted above, the fourth person is often used to show respect to either an in-law of the opposite sex or a sibling of the opposite sex. The prototypical example of this, based on traditional Navajo matrilineality and matrilocality, is between a son-in-law and his mother-in-law (Aberle 1961). The use of the fourth person here seems to index an incestuous relationship or one that violates Navajo mother-in-law avoidance practices (see Aberle 1961; Lamphere 1977; Witherspoon 1977). Historically, as David Aberle (1961:149–150) notes, “there was only one absolute avoidance in the Navaho kinship system: that between mother-in-law and son-in-law,” and he (1961:151) goes on to note, “a relationship of mild avoidance exists between brother and sister.” One manifestation of such avoidances and displays of respect was to use the fourth person pronominal instead of second (or third) person forms. This way of speaking is known as ‘adzoodzó saad (polite speech, a way of speaking, I should add, that some Navajos are concerned is no longer being practiced regularly). The use of the fourth person in this poem then indexes not so much respect but rather a lack of respect. Indeed, a term for incest among Navajos is k’éíni jík’eedí (the one who has sex with his relative). Where we find k’éí (relative), the fourth person jí- (one), and the verb stem –k’eed (here nominalized by the enclitic –í).

Such topics of violating incest prohibitions and of sexual excess are a not uncommon component of Navajo verbal art (see Hill and Hill 1945:335–337; Zolbrod 1984; Levy 1998); witness, for example, the familiar Coyote story where Coyote engages in an elaborate plot to marry his own daughter (see Hill and Hill 1945:335–338). While, as Paul Zolbrod (1984:10–11) argues, earlier recorders of Navajo mythic narratives like Washington Matthews, “arbitrarily deleted passages dealing overtly with sex,” such concerns with “sexual harmony” and “sexual imbalance” are important components in Navajo mythic narratives. When Navajo stories deal with sexual imbalances or sexual excess, they are often depicting hóchxo’ (ugliness, lack of control, disorder). One of the central goals of much Navajo ritual is to restore hózhó (beauty, order, harmony; see Reichard 1963; Witherspoon 1977). Jim’s poem, then, is a way for Navajos to contemplate (to think) about their own behaviors, their own actions. It is the beginning of a process of restoring order or bee hózhó nahoodoodleeł. As Toelken and Scott (1981:86) argue, “any kind of extreme like overinquisitiveness, obtrusiveness, intrusiveness, gluttony, and so on, is considered the kind of weakness which must be cured by ceremony, and is often in the meantime subject to laughter.” It should be added that one kind of extreme concerns “sexual imbalance” (Zolbrod 1984:11). One reason some Navajos laugh is to acknowledge, without stating explicitly, that an action is hóchxo’ and needs to be restored to hózhó. Indeed, as I noted above, when I have seen Jim perform this poem, many Navajos did laugh.
From Ajik’eed to Fuck

Having laid out something of the moral force of this poem, I want to turn to the question of the social lives of ak’eed and fuck. Here my thinking is informed by Elizabeth Povinelli (2006) on questions of how in the ethnographic literature on Australian aboriginals “that” (a deictic act of pointing) became “sex” and also with Muehlmann’s (2013:146) investigation of “things that shouldn’t get said in indigenous languages” and Cuca opaque challenges to certain visions of indigenous languages. Here, young Cuca opaque used indigenous swear words with, for example, NGO officials as a display of indigenous language competence. Such displays were predicated on the emblematic nature of the language and not on the NGO officials actually being concerned about the referential content of the language. On the one hand, as Muehlmann (2013) suggests, there has been a tendency to deny swear words exist in indigenous languages (but see LeSourd and Quinn 2009). Muehlmann argues that this denial of swearwords is bound up in stereotypes about romanticized views of indigenous peoples. There is, of course, another stereotype of indigenous peoples, and this is, as Muehlmann (2013:164) describes it, the “violent and obscene substance abuser.” Linguists and linguistic anthropologists—among others—have had to negotiate such stereotypes. Navajo poets, like Jim and Mitchell, are keenly aware of both the romanticized and negative stereotypes (see Webster 2012a, 2012b).

On the other hand, as Povinelli (2006) describes, there is also the process by which indigenous practices come to be understood in nonindigenous ways that create a feedback of recognition (see also Povinelli 2002). For example, Povinelli (2006:198) describes the early ethnographic work of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen among the Arrente and how “as Spencer and Gillen pointed to the action they understood as “sex”—using their fingers, diagrams, or demonstrative pronouns (”that”)—the index “that” would be slowly replaced by the indexical and symbolic function of “sex.” Such a transformation of “that” into “sex” then, entailed a displacement not only of a demonstrative pronoun by a noun phrase but of one system of meaning by another. “Sex” slowly rearticulated the total order of indigenous semantic and pragmatic meaning, entextualizing new value-laden references and predications, the where, when, with whom (or what), for what, and meaning what aspects of British-derived understandings of normative and non-normative sex acts. [Povinelli 2006:198]

Such transformations or realignments then should guide us to ask: How is that ajik’eed (or ak’eed) became “fuck?”

In looking at the Franciscan Fathers’ (1910:504) An Ethnologic Dictionary of the Navajo Language, one finds—under the topic “prostitution” no less—ashke’d (I practice fornication) (‘a- + sh- “I” + -k’eed [to copulate, to fuck]). Other examples of uses of the verb stem –k’eed are translated into Latin as conjungere (unite sexually; Franciscan Fathers 1910:504). The use of “fornication,” in the context of Catholic views, suggests that it was an act of sex out of wedlock and that it was “always gravely sinful” (Miller 2003:819). Fornication, in Catholic religious views, is not a neutral term but rather suggests engaging in sin. The Latin form obscures the Navajo form—neutralizing its vulgarity by way of the prestige of Latin and its limited readership—while “fornication” clearly assigns a negative (sinful) value to the form. The Franciscan Fathers attempted to transform
ashk’eed into “fornication.” Looking elsewhere, I could find no reference to –k’eed in Young and Morgan’s 1943 version of _The Navaho Language_. However, in both the 1987 version of Young and Morgan’s _The Navajo Language_ and in their 1992 _Analytical Lexicon of Navajo_, the verb stem is discussed, and they translate the verb stem as “to copulate.” Hoijer (1974:132), based on linguistic data recorded by Edward Sapir near Crystal, NM, in the 1920s, also includes a discussion of the verb stem –k’eed as “to copulate.” So then, among linguists and anthropological linguists, there had developed a tradition of translating the verb stem –k’eed as “to copulate.” Yet, neither “to fornicate” or “to copulate” were forms offered by my language consultants.

Though Washington Matthews may have erased sexual themes from some of his work with Navajo mythic narratives, in 1934—near Lukachukai, AZ (where I did much of my field research in 2000–2001)—the Navajo interpreter Philip Davis, who worked for Walter Dyk as he recorded the “life-story” of Left Handed, Son of Old Man Hat, repeatedly translated some Navajo form into English as “fuck” (Dyk 1938:98). Son of Old Man Hat, according to Dyk (1938:xi), spoke only Navajo. Dyk did not speak Navajo. Son of Old Man Hat told his story in Navajo, and Philip Davis then translated the story into English (Dyk 1938:xi–x). Though Dyk (1938:98) represented the form in his book as “f—”, this did not stop a moral panic (Hill 2008) about the use of such terms (see Brill de Ramírez 2007:71). Oliver LaFarge (1938:6), who won the Pulitzer Prize for his novel _Laughing Boy: A Navajo Love Story_ in 1930, reviewing the book in _The Saturday Review_, had this to say first about “Indian interpreters” and then about the use of _fuck_: 

> The average Indian interpreter speaks faulty English, further degraded by vulgarism and bad grammar . . . More startling, and equally unnecessary, is the lavish use of the strongest of our four-letter words. Navajos are frank about sex; it is not shocking to them, wherefore they do not need by-words or pet names for its aspects. The words Left Handed used had, for him, no startling quality, but Dr. Dyk’s translations slap at the reader.

Note that the question of whether or not the use of _fuck_ was “startling” to Philip Davis is made irrelevant by LaFarge’s characterization of Davis’s linguistic capabilities consisting of “vulgarism and bad grammar.” It is the white reading public whose sensibilities are at stake (see Silverstein 1996; Hill 2008). LaFarge denies Philip Davis the—and it is singular for LaFarge—English language. In this, LaFarge is in keeping with a persistent image of Native peoples as incompetent speakers of English (see Meek 2006, 2011; Webster 2011). While an “Indian interpreter” like Davis might use _fuck_, certainly Son of Old Man Hat would not have used such terms. All of this, of course, denies agency in language use to Davis—who, perhaps unsurprisingly, remains nameless in LaFarge’s review.

Davis remains nameless in William Follett’s (1938:137) review of _Son of Old Man Hat_ for the _New York Times Book Review_ as Follett delves into the use of “fuck” in the book:

> Left Handed, when he recounts, for instance, his early adventures in sex, does so with a blunt physiological particularity, reproduced by the liberal use of the ancient four-letter colloquialisms. Maybe they are the best possible renderings. Maybe they
come nearer than anything else that English affords, in the sense of combining 
fidelity to precisely what the Navaho words said with avoidance of everything they 
did not suggest. But is that inherently a very likely possibility? The terms in ques-
tion are conventionally unprintable in English and have to be sketched by typo-
graphic hints. Are we, then, to presume that Left Handed resorted to a vocabulary 
conventionally inadmissible in Navaho and invested with the same sniggering 
associations?

First, as Jesse Sheidlower (2009) argues in her delightful book *The F-Word*, while 
*fuck* may have been “unprintable,” it certainly was often said.11 Second, the 
Navajo Reservation of the 1930s was not New York City, and for whatever reason, 
Philip Davis translated something said in Navajo—and it seems probable given 
the topic was male sexuality that it was some form based on the verb stem 
–k’eed—as “fuck” (and did so repeatedly). The “sniggering associations”—their 
indexical meanings—suggested by Follett tell us more about his views—his 
stereotypes—than they do of either Davis or Left Handed. Follett has read one 
context of use in terms of his own (dominant and dominating) assumptions 
about literacy, vulgarity, and persons. Sometimes—as we will see below—*fuck* is 
used in poetry by Jim as a vulgarity, sometimes, of course, *fuck* is merely one 
descriptor among many. Rob White (2002:163) argues that among Aboriginal 
youth, so commonly used are swear words that they are not felt to be offensive; 
they are “not experienced by them as ‘swearing.’” Muehlmann (2013:164) takes 
White to task for reproducing evaluative stereotypes of what indigenous “people 
should and should not be saying.” My view is that both claims are right in 
different contexts. Certainly, as Muehlmann argues, indigenous people are 
perfectly capable of using swearwords. On the other hand, linguistic forms— 
even swear words—do gain indexical meaning in localized contexts of use. They 
need not always be understood as swear words. There is nothing inherent in *fuck* 
that makes it a swear word. We see this, for example, in the use of *fuck* as an 
interjection or an emphatic infix (as used in English)—which, I might add, does 
not correspond to uses of *ak’eed*. When Follett writes that *fuck* is “conventionally 
unprintable in English,” he is here working in the service of a “monoglot 
standard” (Silverstein 1996) that not only describes some standardizing commu-
nity norm but also polices that norm. The question, which appears unanswer-
able, but must be acknowledged, is whether or not Philip Davis used *fuck* as a 
swear word. My more narrow point in using this example, however, is to show 
that *fuck* was in circulation among Navajos in the 1930s and that some form from 
Navajo was translated into English as *fuck*.

That practice has continued. When I was a graduate student in the mid-1990s 
at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM, a friend of mine there had 
grown up in a border town near the Navajo Nation. Knowing that I was study-
ing Apachean languages, he told me that he had learned a variety of Navajo 
swear words from Navajo classmates while in high school. Among the terms 
that he knew was *ak’eed*, which he said he learned meant “fuck” (he also knew 
a number of body-part terms for male and female genitalia). In such intercul-
tural exchanges as border town high schools, *ak’eed* came to be seen by some— 
Navajos and non-Navajos alike—as equivalent to *fuck* in some circumstances. 
Here a “referential transparency” (Haviland 2003:767) is assumed, where expressions and words are understood as having an unproblematic ability to be
translated across languages. But note, too, that it is not just referential transparency but a *pragmatic transparency* as well; that is, putative same “words” (referential transparency) will do the same kinds of indexical and pragmatic work across languages (pragmatic transparency). This is not only the assumption of the invariance of a “swear word” across contexts (a swear word is always a swear word) but that it is true across languages as well.

The border town and literary critiques (critics) are not the only sites for such interlanguage exchanges about assumptions of referential and pragmatic transparency. From social networking sites to Navajo keyboard applications for smartphones, Navajo has a wider and ever expanding presence. One such presence is the website “Navajo Swear Words” (http://www.youswear.com/index.asp?language=Navajo#.Ui3tTT94JwQ). On the website we find a list of the following forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Is This Accurate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Ak'eed</td>
<td>Fuck/Sex</td>
<td>🍂(67%) 🍂(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ch'iidii</td>
<td>Fuck!/God Damn it!</td>
<td>🍂(59%) 🍂(41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chxo'</td>
<td>Dick/Penis</td>
<td>🍂(89%) 🍂(11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Da'alzhin</td>
<td>Ass Hole</td>
<td>🍂(33%) 🍂(67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diigis</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
<td>🍂(67%) 🍂(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joozh</td>
<td>Pussy, vagina</td>
<td>🍂(83%) 🍂(17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiiya' sizini</td>
<td>Whore</td>
<td>🍂(100%) 🍂(0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ziz</td>
<td>Dick, cock, penis</td>
<td>🍂(67%) 🍂(33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baa ii</td>
<td>Sucks</td>
<td>🍂(29%) 🍂(71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chogi</td>
<td>Cock</td>
<td>🍂(18%) 🍂(82%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£eechaat'sita'ii biyaazh</td>
<td>Son of a bitch (lit.)</td>
<td>🍂(100%) 🍂(0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1.
Navajo “swear words”.
It is unclear where this list comes from, and I have no idea who has been voting or how many votes have been cast. Here again we see ‘ak’eed associated with “fuck,” but also “sex.” Furthermore note that the list above gives for ‘ak’eed as well as several other forms both a “vulgar” English form and a “nonvulgar” English form. The list itself seems inconsistent about whether or not these forms are actually “Navajo swear words.” Here again, even if ambiguously, in this interlanguage exchange, ak’eed and “fuck” are treated as somewhat equivalent. I need to add, as Povinelli (2006:198) reminds us, that “sex” is not a neutral descriptor but is also implicated within a whole clustering of values about “privacy, intimacy, shame, and titillation.”

“You Can’t Say the F word”

Such acts of referential transparency are not without their detractors. Note, for example, that ak’eed is not uniformly accepted as equivalent with “fuck/sex” in the table above. Indeed, as Muehlmann (2013:162–164) notes, there has been a tendency for arguments to be made that indigenous languages do not contain any swear words. Certainly, when I was doing research on Navajo poetry in 2000–2001, some Navajos did, in fact, articulate a language ideology that there were no swear words in Navajo. Luci Tapahonso had this to say in the popular regional tourist monthly New Mexico Magazine:

We believe that the wind comes in at the top of your head when your hair begins to grow, and every time you speak, it is the wind that speaks. So speech is sacred, and you are very careful about how you say things. The Navajo language has no cuss words and no profanity. [Baldinger 1992:35]

Take as another example the comments made by Navajo poet and storyteller Sunny Dooley to anthropologist Maureen Schwarz:

In Navajo, when you say it, it will happen. That’s why they tell you, you shouldn’t talk nonsense, you shouldn’t just blah blah blah, you know. You can’t be talking any old way . . . You can’t be saying things any old way, meaning negatively, you know . . . Like on television, you know, you hear people tell each other off, you know, and they don’t think anything whatsoever about the power of their words. You know, and maybe English is not that powerful. I don’t know. But it goes all the ways back to the fact that in Navajo, you can’t swear. You can’t say the “D” word, you can’t say the “F” word, you can’t say the “S” word. We don’t have those words in my language. [Schwarz 2003:10]

This language ideology is not uncommon on the Navajo Nation. Indeed, some Navajos have described one idealized contrast between white people and Navajos as in terms of a view that Navajos do not swear, but white people do (see Webster 2009; see also Gómez de García et al 2009; on Navajo language ideologies see also Field 2009 and Peterson and Webster 2013).

Here is it useful to look at another poem by Jim to see that he does use the English word “fuck.” This poem can be found in Jim’s (1998:13) trilingual collection. The poem is titled Tó Hááłí (Spring) (Tó [water] háá- [up and out] -l-í [to flow][water flows up and out]) and here is the relevant passage:
Here is Jim’s English version:

Where prayers were offered
People scream “fuck you”
Where people prayed
“Earth, my mother”,
“Water woman, my mother”
Where people related to the place,
“You want a good fuck?
Go see Sue or Mama”,
Are scribbled onto metal barrels.

According to Jim, in a conversation I had with him about this poem, the poem describes the actual conditions of the place Tó Háál that Jim is discussing. Tó Háál is a place name for what many Navajos consider an important place where Navajos often collect water. The poem, according to Jim, describes the graffiti that has been scrawled near this place as well as the kinds of things one can hear there. Given that English is the predominant language of literacy among Navajos, it is not unlikely that the language of the graffiti would be in English. The use of the English terms here seems to reflect a view—expressed to me by some Navajos—that white people or bilagáana do not use proper speech and that Navajos who speak in such a manner also lack control. The English forms contrast with the Navajo prayer in the above example. The prayer in this poem shows the parallelism associated with prayers in Navajo (the glossing is mine and is meant to highlight the parallelism in the Navajo) (see Reichard 1944; Field and Blackhorse 2002):

Earth, my mother it is told about
Water woman, my mother it is told about

The shift between the tightly parallel structured prayer and the vulgarity that both proceeds and follows it creates a heightened contrast between markedly different ways of speaking. Indeed, so obvious in the Navajo version is this prayer structure that there is no corresponding Navajo line that matches the third line of the English version, which says “Where people prayed.” Rather the parallelism of the two lines indexes prayer structure. The prayer structure is a
model of proper speaking. The vulgarity in English is a model of improper ways of speaking. Juxtaposed as they are, the contrast is striking. In this poem, we sense an expression of a view of Navajo as the language of prayer and English as a vulgar or, perhaps more accurately, hochxo’ (disorderly, ugly) language. Note also, that we find k’é (affection, generosity, peace) used in line five of this poem, and this is contrasted with the vulgarity that follows in the next line (including a reference to go “fuck” “Mama”). There has been a breakdown in the moral responsibility associated with k’é. Like Navajo Coyote stories, many of Jim’s poems are morality tales.

Now the Franciscan Fathers (1910:444–446) did document a variety of Navajo expressions that they termed “swearing”—including the form bizáhóchį́ (he is abusive, swears), which is also in use today as well (see Young and Morgan 1987:261). That form is analyzable as bizáhó- (his/her mouth) + -chį́ (to be dirty or ‘his mouth is dirty’). It should be noted, as Navajo anthropologist Wesley Thomas pointed out to me, that the “dirt” is localized in the mouth and not associated with thoughts or speaking (on the importance of this point, see Witherspoon 1977). Most of the examples that the Franciscan Fathers (1910:444) give are exclamations using dangerous beings such as “you female bear” or “you bear’s children.” Some do involve the use of terms for the dangerous being “ghost” (see note 11). One, for example, influenced by Christian beliefs (see Young and Morgan 1987:295), is ch’į́diitahgóó díníyá (go to hell) (ch’į́dii [ghost] + -tah [among] + -góó [toward, to] and díníyá [you are on your way to, you are going to go]). I have been told by Navajos that this is a particularly egregious statement because it has the potential to cause such a thing to happen and should not be used (see Webster 2012a). However, none of the examples given by the Franciscan Fathers concerns the use of the verb stem –k’eed.

“Everything Got Kinda Strange after a While”

So what kind of image is being created when Jim uses ajik’eed? Certainly, in creating an image of things gone morally awry at Tó Háálí Jim uses the English swear word fuck and does not use ak’eed. Let us go back to a conversation I had at a coffee shop in Farmington, NM in 2008 with a consultant as we were working through a translation of Jim’s ak’eego poem. After having worked through a poem that played with the relationship between the noun stem –chxo’ “penis” and the verb stem –chxo’ “pouting, sulking, ugly, disorderly,” we turned to the poem that is the focus of this article, and my consultant stated:

This is one another prurient, ya know, so ya know the whole realm of observation within the Navajo was very open, but ya know [looking around], everything got kinda strange after a while, now we’re very sensitive. (July 20, 2008)

My consultant here nicely encapsulates the history of contact between Euro-Americans and Navajos in the phrase, “everything got kinda strange after a while.” As this Navajo consultant pointed out, Navajos have become “sensitive” to the evaluative critiques of outsiders. When the consultant mentioned that things had gotten “kinda strange” he looked around Durango Joe’s, which was filled with non-Navajos. He was the only Navajo in the place, the rest were
Anglos or Anglo looking. The long strangeness, the interaction between Euro-Americans and Navajos, has led to “sensitivity” on the part of Navajos about the expectations and assumptions of the dominating and dominant Euro-American society. Where once there was openness about observations concerning sex, missionaries, Victorian morality (and its remnants), and so on have led to “sensitivity” about discussing such topics openly. Practices like we saw with the Franciscan Fathers’ translating ashk’eed as “I practice fornication” or Washington Matthews removing what he considered sexually explicit materials from the mythic narratives he collected are examples of the creation of this “sensitivity” that my Navajo consultant described. But so too are the evaluative discriminations invoked by Follett and LaFarge concerning Philip Davis’s use of fuck in Son of Old Man Hat’s life story.

It seems clear, when comparing these two poems by Jim, that ajik’eed and “fuck” are doing different kinds of indexical work. Fuck is vulgar in Tó Hááli precisely because it is in English. Ajik’eed, on the other hand, indexes sexual imbalance and a violation of k’é. So, to be sure, both poems evoke also hochxo’ or disorder and a lack of control. The poems are invitations for Navajos to think, to ponder, to reflect upon their own behaviors. Ajik’eed becomes “fuck” in the act of translation.

In many ways, as Anthony Woodbury (1993:112) notes, it is impossible to translate a form like ajik’eed into English without placing it in concerns about such on-going “sensitivities” (see also Becker 1995). As Woodbury (1993:112) argues, “even if a locally-adapted English effectively dispensed with social-class distinctions or with elaborate synonymies for excretion or reproduction lexicon, the norms of the wider English community could be invoked at any time, by insiders or outsiders, to evaluate the conventions of the local variety, making it characterizable in ‘mainstream’ terms as vulgar or refined.” Aware of this, when working with consultants on translating this poem, I would offer alternative translations such as “making love” or “having sex.” Neither suggestion met with acceptance and, instead, seemed to index prudishness on my part, an indication that I might also hold Victorian views and not be willing to talk openly about such topics. When I suggested such alternative translations, I inadvertently turned fuck into a vulgarity. I reinforced sensitivities.

Nor, I might add, do I wish to suggest that my consultants are somehow naïve about the senses of fuck. Mitchell, for example, went to boarding schools off the reservation, attended the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe, NM, and is college educated (including an MA degree from the University of New Mexico). He has traveled the U.S. and is an astute observer of American popular culture. In addition to being the author of Miracle Hill: The Story of a Navaho Boy (Mitchell 1967; reissued 2004), his own writings have dealt with a variety of topics including tourist expectations of Navajos and the Navajo Nation (see Webster 2011, 2012a). His use of fuck in the translation seems likely an attempt to call attention to the ugliness (hochxo’) evoked in the poem by Jim. He does at times want to shock Navajo and white sensibilities (see Webster 2012a).

Does ak’eed mean “fuck?” The most obvious answer is that at some times and in some places, ak’eed is translated into English by some Navajos as fuck. I might add, this doesn’t seem a particularly new occurrence. The imaginative
potentials and attunements of ak’eed (or ajik’eed)—as Jim poetically shows through the resonance of –k’eed with k’é and -k’éí—are certainly different than those of fuck (see Friedrich 1986, Becker 1995). But let me answer this question in another way: one Navajo I’ve worked with over the years has told me how, as a child growing up in California, she thought the word chaqq’ was an English word—one of many—for shit or defecation. She did not speak Navajo and did not know at the time that chaqq’ was a Navajo word for feces. As an English word, chaqq’ was one of many words for excrement. As a Navajo word, it needs to be translated into English. Here, of course, decisions—both exuberant and deficient—needed to be made.

Muehlmann (2013:152) decides against presenting Cucapá swear words in her work, out of concern for publishing such vocabulary because it might violate a “social contract” between her consultants and her or of adding “Cucapá swearwords . . . to the more idyllic archives of indigenous languages” (Muehlmann 2013:163). I have presented these examples, on the other hand, partly because Jim has published the forms and performed them in public, partly because they can already be readily found on the Internet, partly because I respect the translations of Mitchell and my other consultants, and partly—following some Navajo views on the matter—because such things should be openly discussed. I understand that not all Navajos will agree with this view. Like Muehlmann (2013), I am conflicted about the politics of the topic of this paper. That is one reason in my delay in writing this paper.\textsuperscript{18}

Finally, to return to the poem and some of its attunements, as one Navajo consultant explained to me, this is a “strong poem” because it inspires thought and reflection. Jim’s use of the repetition of the sound [k’ee] evokes for some Navajos connections between male sexuality (-k’eed), kinship (-k’éí), and moral responsibility (k’é). The use of the fourth person ji- in the final line seems to reinforce those connections. As with other poems in saad, Jim presents an image of a world as hochxpo’ (ugly, disorderly, out of control). For some Navajo poets—like Jim and Blackhorse Mitchell—it is important, as Mitchell told me, to “really describe the ugliness” that is happening (see Webster 2012a). In so describing, poetry as hane’ (story, narrative) can and should inspire reflection or, as Jim (1995:vi) writes in the introduction to saad, “adaa tsinizhdoooks” (“you will remember who you are”). That is the beginning of restoring hozhó (beauty, order, harmony, control). It seems both too much and too little to close by noting that Jim’s poetry is an attempt to make right the world.

Notes

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1. The interested reader is encouraged to consult Jim (2000) for his discussion of the importance of hózhó (among other things). It should be clear that my glossing of these two key terms are both exuberant and deficient as well.

2. As Paul Friedrich (2006:228) notes, ethnopoetic perspectives tend to reveal subtleties in the nexus of language, culture, and the individual (see also Sherzer 1987). For useful discussions of and applications of ethnopoetic perspectives beyond what is cited above see Hymes (2003), Sherzer (1990), Blommaert (2006, 2009), Kroskrity (2012, 2013), Webster and Kroskrity (2013), and the papers in Kroskrity and Webster (2013) more generally.

3. The form is cognate with, for example, Hupa –q’eeť̓ often translated in academic circles as “to copulate.” See Sean O’Neill (2008:236). In spoken discourse, some of my Navajo consultants said fu’ (with a word final glottal stop) and others said fuck. Some seemed to use both forms interchangeably.

4. The fall, according to traditional Navajos, is the beginning of the year. It is the time of harvest and of plenty. It is when the summer (shí) and winter (liai) meet or join. I have heard the fall referred to as “the joining season.” Sheep (among other animals)—important in Navajo beliefs—mate in the fall and are an important component of k’é (see Witherspoon 1977). It is possible that the noun stem –k’eed (aak’eed “fall, autumn”) and the verb stem –k’eed share an historical relationship (see Young and Morgan 1992:347). This thinking about the etymology of these words is an explicit goal of Jim in his poetry in saad or as he explained it to me, “most of my poems are written to stimulate thoughts, and that involves thinking about semantics and etymology” (see Webster 2006:44). These, then, would be other resonances for this poem.

5. The -gi locative enclitic contrasts with -di (which indicates a more remoteness in space). For example, a poster at Diné College had written “Learning Centerdi” on it. A consultant told me that the “Learning Center” was in another building and thus the more remote –di was appropriate. Had the “Learning Center” been in the same building, he went on, the more proximate –gi would have been appropriate.

6. For example, Young and Morgan (1992:345) translate hook’eed as “deserted place.” That the home is deserted has its own suggestiveness. Deserted homes are often deserted because of either a death there or an association with witchcraft. Then a hole is made in the north wall to allow the ghosts to exit. Such deserted homes are still found on the Navajo Nation. Given the topic of this poem, concerning potential incest, and with this potential association of death as well, one way of thinking about this poem is not just about incest or death but also witchcraft (see Kluckhohn 1967; see also Csordas 2013).

7. It is also a deeply Athabaskan moral value (see Rushforth and Chisholm 1991; Nevins 2004; Meek 2007).

8. Matthews, as Zolbrod (1997:xviii–xix) notes, was not entirely consistent on this point. As Zolbrod (1997:xix) points out, “sexually explicit burlesque” from the Mountain Chant was removed prior to publication by the United States Bureau of American Ethnology in 1887. Matthews, it appears, then self-published a five-page pamphlet of the excised materials.

9. I have maintained the Franciscan Fathers’ orthography here.

10. Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez (2007:71–72) takes a very different view of these issues and I encourage the interested reader to consult her work.

11. Sheidlower (2009:xx) points out that James Joyce’s Ulysses, which uses fuck in the novel, while published in 1922, was not legally allowed to be distributed in the United States until 1933. Joyce meant to shock. It seems less clear whether or not Davis meant to describe or to shock (or both). I cannot resist noting that on the next page of the The
Saturday Review from LaFarge’s review of Son of Old Man Hat, A Navaho Autobiography, there is a review by Ernest Boyd (1938:7) of Hugh Kingsmill’s The Life of D.H. Lawrence. Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover is full of the word fuck (though, as Sheidlower [2009:xx–xxi] notes, it was not legal in the US until 1959). Boyd’s (1938:7) review is largely positive, but I was struck by the following passage, ‘The author of ‘Lady Chatterley’s Lover’ and ‘The Rainbow,’ one is not surprised to hear, was such a prude that he objected to a faintly suggestive little French song that Katherine Mansfield sang at a Christmas party.’ Note that clearly fuck was printable outside the US at this time. Think here too of Henry Miller and the controversy over the Tropic of Cancer.

12. I also should note that most of the body-part terms listed lack a possessive prefix. So, for example, one finds chxo’ for “dick, penis,” but as a body-part term it is normally understood as inalienable and should take some possessive prefix (“achxo’ a- indefinite possessive prefix + -chxo’ “someone’s penis”). I will also note that Young and Morgan (1987:6) give “acho’” as “scrotum and testes, male external sex organs.” The insertion of the velar fricative [x] here indicates a pejorative, augmentative, intensive, or depreciative sense (see Mitchell and Webster 2011). Finally, words that begin with what appears to be a vowel in Navajo, more often begin with a glottal stop that is often only realized in combination with other prefixes. The fact that the author of this list of “Navajo swear words” includes the glottal stop word initial is interesting. The second term that is listed for “fuck! / God damn it!” is most likely ch’iidii “ghost.” For many Navajos, all ghosts are dangerous.

13. Jim is not the only Navajo poet to use fuck in their poetry. Esther Belin (1999), for example, uses fuck in her Ruby-inspired poetry.

14. Keith Basso (1979) has pointed out for Western Apache beliefs about the speech habits of white people, white people do not know how to speak properly.

15. See, however, Charlotte Frisbie (1978:304), who suggests that this form may predate Christian influences.

16. Briefly, that poem is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
nichxq’ & yee’ \\
t’óó \\
nichxq’ógo \\
inanichxq’ \\
achxo’ & baa \\
nanichxq’go
\end{align*}
\]

(Jim 1995: dízdiin dóó bi’qą t’ááhą’i [41])

As with another poem that Blackhorse Mitchell and I analyzed (Mitchell and Webster 2011), not only is Jim using the intensification of form through the repetition of sounds [chxo] to evoke connections (as he does in the poem discussed here as well), he also creatively uses the expressive insertion of the velar fricative to posit an affective stance towards the topic as well. Mitchell and I discuss this use of the velar fricative at length elsewhere (Mitchell and Webster 2011).

17. For an early example of a discussion of such sensitivities see Mary Haas (1951). I take up her work in more detail as it relates to Navajo poets in Webster (2012b).

18. I recall presenting a paper to a mixed audience of Navajos and non-Navajos in 2001 on another poem by Jim that I had translated with Jim. One Navajo audience
member objected to the translation because there was a sexual undercurrent to the translation. The sexual undercurrent was, according to Jim, a part of the poem. My position as a white anthropologist presenting this poem to a mixed audience certainly complicated the matter. That experience also made me hesitant to discuss such sexually suggestive poetry going forward. However, as I noted at the beginning of this paper, some Navajos have encouraged me to say something in writing about the poem and its contents.

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Zolbrod, Paul
