

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and
Chapters

University of Nebraska Press

2016

Upward, Not Sunwise

Kimberly Jenkins Marshall

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples>

Marshall, Kimberly Jenkins, "Upward, Not Sunwise" (2016). *University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters*. 320.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/unpresssamples/320>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Nebraska Press at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of Nebraska Press -- Sample Books and Chapters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Upward, Not Sunwise

Upward, Not Sunwise

Resonant Rupture in Navajo Neo-Pentecostalism

KIMBERLY JENKINS MARSHALL

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS
LINCOLN AND LONDON

[Buy the Book](#)

© 2016 by the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska

Portions of chapter 2 originally appeared as “Navajo Reservation Camp Meeting a Great Success!': The Advent of Diné Pentecostalism after 1950,” in *Ethnohistory* 62, no. 1 (2015), used by permission of Duke University Press. Portions of chapter 3 originally appeared as “Soaking Songs versus ‘Medicine Man Chant’: Musical Resonance among Diné Oodlání (Navajo ‘Believers’),” in *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, edited by Monique M. Ingalls and Among Yong (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2015). Portions of chapter 5 originally appeared as “Non-Human Agency and Experiential Faith among Diné Oodlání (‘Navajo Believers’),” in *Anthropologica* 57, no. 2 (2015), used by permission of University of Toronto Press.

All rights reserved

Manufactured in the United States of America



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Marshall, Kimberly Jenkins, 1978– author.

Title: Upward, not sunwise: resonant rupture in Navajo neo-pentecostalism / Kimberly Jenkins Marshall.

Description: Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2015047851

ISBN 9780803269767 (cloth: alk. paper)

ISBN 9780803288881 (pbk.: alk. paper)

ISBN 9780803294950 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Navajo Indians—Religion.

Pentecostalism—United States.

Classification: LCC E99.N3 M388 2016

DDC 299.7/826—dc23 LC record available

at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2015047851>

Set in Lyon Text by Rachel Gould.

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations . .	vii
Acknowledgments . .	ix
Note on Transcriptions . .	xiii
Introduction: Resonant Rupture . .	1
1. The Oodlání Movement: Revivals, Research, and Relationships . .	21
2. Under the Tent: The Resonant Rupture of Ritual . .	55
3. <i>Háálá Ayóo Diyin</i> : The Resonant Rupture of Language . .	81
4. “God Never Listened to Country”: The Resonant Rupture of Music . .	101
5. Dancing in the Spirit: The Resonant Rupture of Nonhuman Actors . .	129
6. Embodying Healing: The Resonant Rupture of Faith Healing . .	153
Conclusion: Resonant Rupture, Sovereignty, and Global Pentecostalism . .	181
Notes . .	197
References . .	221
Index . .	239

ILLUSTRATIONS

Photographs

1. Oodlání tent revival . . 23
2. Hand-painted revival sign . . 24
3. Oodlání tent and arbor in early evening . . 25
4. Interior of an Oodlání tent during a revival . . 25
5. Evangelist Negiel Bigpond (Yuchi) prays for healing . . 29
6. Dancing in the Holy Spirit . . 30
7. Being slain in the spirit . . 31
8. Revival sign . . 32
9. Pastor Wallace Begay . . 33
10. Mrs. Beverly Joe . . 37
11. Women of the church kitchen . . 38
12. Mr. Eugene B. Joe . . 40
13. Author presenting Pastor Wallace with rug . . 52
14. Layne Joe . . 123
15. Oodlání praying to be filled by the Holy Spirit . . 139
16. Raising the tent . . 147
17. Global Pentecostal evangelists . . 183
18. Pastor Wallace in Benin . . 193

Maps

1. Navajo Nation . . 10
2. Shiprock region . . 35

Tables

1. *Háálá Ayóo Diyin* . . 95
2. Pastor Wallace's country music sermon, July 6, 2008 . . 118

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to thank for their assistance in creating this book. First and foremost, I owe a great deal of gratitude to Pastor Wallace Begay and the members of his church community, who consistently welcomed me graciously and patiently shared their thoughts on matters of great personal importance. In particular, I thank Beverly Joe, Eugene Joe, Pastor Alice Norton, Pastor Fred Smith, Elaine Joe, Michelle Joe, Laura Etcitty, Lydell Rafael, Barbara Jack Joe, Grandma Alice Joe, Betty Wagner, Grandma Rosie Lewis, Rita Naargo, and Jimmy Waters. For their openness and for the hugs, handshakes, and smiles I still receive every time I return, I feel quite honestly blessed. Of course, unparalleled thanks go to Pastor Wallace. I am very grateful for the time he took out of his busy schedule, over numerous lunches, phone calls, and cups of coffee to explain to me important aspects of Oodlání history, theology, music, and daily life. *Ahéhee' shi-Pastor.*

I also appreciate the support I received from other members of the Navajo Nation, especially the research assistance of Larry King and the language instruction of Dr. Wesley Thomas, Alice Wagner, and Lorraine Begay Manave. Manave, in particular, has been a constant source of guidance throughout this project, including providing instruction on Navajo orthography (although any errors in spelling are, of course, my own). Finally, I wish to acknowledge the Navajo Nation for allowing me to conduct this work. I have a deep respect for the Navajo mandate to oversee the research conducted within its borders and am particularly grateful to Ronald P. Maldonado and Tamara Billie of the Navajo Nation Office of Historic Preservation for guiding me through the acquisition of proper permissions and reporting.

In conducting this research, I have been very fortunate to have

been the beneficiary of financial support. Preliminary research during the summers of 2006 and 2007 was funded through the support of the Jacobs Fund of the Whatcom Museum Society and the David C. Skomp Fund of the Department of Anthropology at Indiana University. Special research funds for supplementary research in Phoenix, Arizona, were provided by a Grant-in-Aid of Doctoral Research by the Graduate School of Indiana University. Primary financial support for this research, however, was provided by a generous grant from the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund.

At the University of Oklahoma (OU), this work was supported by Junior Faculty Fellowships from the College of Arts and Sciences in 2012 and 2014 and by a Junior Faculty Fellowship from the OU Research Council in 2013. Preparation of this manuscript was covered by a Faculty Assistance Program Grant funded by the Department of Anthropology, the OU College of Arts and Sciences, the OU Research Council, and the OU Office of the Provost.

Just as my research would not have been viable without generous financial support, it would not have been intellectually possible without the generous academic support I have received from teachers and colleagues. At Indiana University, I am indebted to Professors Richard Bauman, Daniel Reed, Beverly Stoeltje, and Wesley Thomas, and I am grateful for the calm and confident guidance of Anya Royce and Ruth Stone. Jason Jackson, in particular, has inspired me as a teacher and scholar and has shown me dedicated and unwavering support that I truly appreciate.

At the University of Oklahoma, I am grateful to work in a department and for a college that both stood behind me fully and nurtured my success. In particular, I am indebted to Daniel Swan, who remembered to ask me, “But what have you been *writing* recently?” Thank you to all of my students, but particular thanks go to Susanna Pyatt, Miriam Laytner, and Justin Lund. This work would not have been possible without the logistical support of OU’s excellent writing center. Thanks to my writing coach Doc Hudson for getting me through a rough patch. And for reasons both writing-related and not, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my wonderful WRKD faculty writing group: Dan Emery,

Lisa Foster, Sarah Ellis, Ellen Rubenstein, Ronnie Grinberg, and Andreana Pritchard. In particular, the steadfast and patient support of Erika Robb Larkins has kept me writing.

Thank you to Charlotte Frisbie, who has been overwhelmingly supportive of my work from my very first contact with her, wherein she promptly invited me to come and spend the weekend at her farm. Thanks also go to my “committee-for-life” member Virginia Gorlinski.

At the University of Nebraska Press, I am particularly grateful to Matthew Bokovoy, Joeth Zucco, and Sally Antrobus. Thank you to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticism and helpful insights. All of the book’s shortcomings are, of course, my own.

I acknowledge the Penn State University Press, the University of Toronto Press, and Duke University Press for allowing the reproduction of short excerpts of previously published articles and book chapters that appear in the following manuscript.

Finally, I owe enormous thanks to all of my friends and family for their support during this long process. Thank you to Sarah Cluff, Ellen Salter-Pedersen, Lauren Miller-Griffith, Zohra Ismail-Beben, Evelyn Dean-Olmstead, Heidi Bludau, Angela Scharfenberger, Deborah Justice, Elise Anderson, and especially Rebekah Moore. You know why. Thanks to the Knee High families, and to Carol Jacob, Kate Vincent, and Noah Boone. Thanks to Rev. Marci Auld Glass. A special thank you to Cathy and Mark Bingham, Trisha and Gary Bean, and Jen and Brian Hunt. I love you all. My husband, Chris, has accompanied me to many places he would rather not have gone, providing the calm and safe resting place that I often needed. I am thankful for his unyielding support and encouragement. I am especially grateful to him for making it possible for me to be both a mother and a scholar. My sons, Jesse and Spencer, have spent their young lives in the shadow of this project, whether or not they realized it. Just the other day Jesse, six, asked me with surprise, “You’re writing a book?” My parents and sister have been consistently supportive of my studies, over the course of the past decade, in more ways than I can even begin to enumerate. It is from them that I first learned to

have joy in music, curiosity about the world, and wonder at the divine. For their confidence in me, I am forever grateful.

...

Proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to the Navajo Nation Museum.

NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTIONS

In general, verbatim transcriptions have been presented in this book as block text. Place holders (“like” or “you know”) have occasionally been deleted in order to support clarity of speaker intention. Ellipses are used to indicate the omission of a portion of the transcription without altering the meaning.

Occasionally I felt that the intention of the speaker was better communicated in an ethnopoetic setting of the text. Following Hymes 1981 and Tedlock 1983, this approach attempts to set text using lines, verses, and stanzas in such a way as to capture some of the beautiful artistry that constitutes much of the Navajo neo-Pentecostal verbal and musical repertoire.

In particular, I have used this approach in transcribing public oratory, such as the sermons of Pastor Wallace Begay (see chapter 4). These lines of public oratory are set in such a way as to highlight the underlying parallelism often present in these texts. I have also used an ethnopoetic setting to highlight parallelism when recounting private conversations from a few individual interviews (see chapter 2).

I also closely analyze a few carefully chosen texts. The first text consists of the lyrics and translation of the Navajo-language song *Háálá Ayóo Diyin* (table 1, chapter 3). Since this song was composed in Western verse-chorus form, I have set the transcription this way and used standard Navajo orthography to represent the original Navajo text.

The other main text discussed is a sermon by Pastor Wallace on the dangers of country music (table 2, chapter 4). In this text I have adopted certain ethnopoetic conventions for clarity and emphasis. Sentences are broken at distinguishable pauses and are grouped into numbered paragraphs by topic. Navajo-language text is presented in italics, and the English translation is notated

by braces, thus { }. For this text I adopted a two-column system to present side by side the mixed Navajo/English text as it was delivered and a fully English translation, so that the translation can be read directly along with the original. This method of transcription allows for ease of comprehension for those with no knowledge of Navajo while preserving the original text for those interested in neo-Pentecostal use of Navajo code-switching. In order to capture some of the sense of the performative moment, I use square brackets to indicate stage directions (e.g., [mimes drinking it]) as well as to indicate how something was delivered (e.g., [mimicking, high voice]). I also use angle brackets to indicate audience responses (e.g., <shouts of approval>). Finally, I have attempted to reflect some of the verbal artistry of Pastor Wallace in this transcription by using a line-ending dash (—) to indicate a strident vocal cadence he adopted for emphasis at the end of each indicated line in this sermon.

Through these techniques I hope I have succeeded in conveying some sense of the beautiful ethnopoetics of Navajo neo-Pentecostal expressive culture.

Introduction

Resonant Rupture

Skinwalker Stories

In the gathering dark of the small church kitchen, and while the raucous praise music of the tent revival thumps away outside, Ma Beverly tells me about the night that she was attacked by a skinwalker. “I was sleeping in my living room,” she says, “and I saw a figure come to our screen door. I saw all the makeup that he was wearing . . . painted all the way down to his toes. I saw what he had put on. And it was going to do away with me.”

Skinwalkers are terrifying apparitions, nefarious Navajo shapechangers who can curse and harm those who cross them. The stories tell about individuals who, through practicing unspeakable deeds on their loved ones and the dead, gain the power to take on animal form and travel at lightning speed across the dark desert. Even hearing stories about skinwalkers can invoke irrational fear, which we both felt. “What did you do?” I ask Ma Beverly breathlessly.

“Well, I got up,” she says. “I kind of yelled out, ‘Hey’ . . . I couldn’t even speak, you know. I was so shocked.” She pauses. “And then I called my son, Wallace. And then right there he said, ‘Let’s pray!’ He started praying for me . . . prayed over me with Psalms 91.

“And as he started saying the verse, I felt something just peeling off of me.” She motions pulling something like spider webs off her arms. “And I saw something coming off of me, and it was like a little bug . . . little bug like a beetle. It ran down from me and then it went down to the ground. I saw it. It had rough skin . . . like a horned toad. I saw that little bug that this person would have used to attack me. When Wallace prayed it just ran down, and into the ground.”

“Why did he attack you?” I ask.

“Because I turned away from . . . the religion.”

“The Traditional Way?”

“Yes.”

Beverly Joe is Navajo and part of an influential and growing religious movement of neo-Pentecostalism among Native Americans. Among Navajos (*Diné*), this movement is known as the *Oodlání* (believers) movement.¹ It is characterized by Navajo control, evangelical Christian theology, and charismatic (spirit-filled) worship. The *Oodlání* movement has been growing exponentially on the Navajo Nation over the past six decades, now claiming the allegiance of up to 60,000 Navajos—around 20 percent of the Navajo population.² In the summer months, the tent revivals of the neo-Pentecostal *Oodlání* movement have become ubiquitous across the Navajo Nation, located in the high desert Southwest of Arizona and New Mexico. Ma Beverly's son, Wallace Begay, pastors one of the many small, independently operating, and Navajo-run *Oodlání* churches. Pastor Wallace has no degree or formal ordination from any outside organization. His authority is based on nothing but the strength of his “anointing” in the Holy Spirit. Like other *Oodlání* pastors, he preaches and leads worship in the Navajo language to a congregation that includes his own extended family, and like his mother, he has “turned away from” Navajo traditionalism.

Turning away from traditionalism is fundamental to *Oodlání* neo-Pentecostalism. Just like pastors in the growing neo-Pentecostal movement in Africa, Latin America, and East Asia, *Oodlání* preach the biblical literalism of evangelical Christianity and practice the spiritual gifts of the Pentecostal revival: speaking in tongues, dancing in the spirit, and faith healing. Those who convert become “born again”; that is, they leave behind them a “life of sin” and enter into a new state as a “child of God.” Traditional religion is reinterpreted as flirtation with dangerous and inherently negative powers. *Oodlání* refuse to participate in the healing ceremonials of their relatives.

Given the rupture that Ma Beverly and Pastor Wallace have established with Navajo traditionalism, Ma Beverly's skinwalker tale may seem like a paradox. Some have argued that the persistence of beliefs about skinwalkers and witches among Navajo converts is evidence that the conversions are “soft”: that Navajos cannot really be Christian if they continue to believe in skinwalk-

ers. If they believe in skinwalkers, they must surely return to traditional practices in times of crisis. If they believe in skinwalkers, then surely their Christian life is a thin (and perhaps syncretic) veneer over a deeper continuity with timeless Navajo culture.³

In this book I use ethnographic data from field research with Oodlání believers to complicate the idea that their conversions are soft or inauthentic. If conversion is understood as the remaking of reality structures, the way Ma Beverly understands reality is fundamentally different from the religious worlds of her ancestors.⁴ Ma Beverly believes in skinwalkers and believes she was attacked by one. But she says she is not afraid of them anymore because she believes that her attacker was thwarted by the Christian God's superior protecting power under which she lives. In fact, the man she believes tried to witch her had a heart attack and ended up in the hospital. "God's power," she said, "overpowered his powers . . . and to this day he doesn't go against Christians again."⁵ Regardless of the trappings of cultural continuity that remain, Oodlání faith is fundamentally not based upon continuity but upon rupture.

The tension between continuity and rupture, inherent in globalizing religions, is the central topic of this book. In some senses, Native American adoption of Christianity has always involved some degree of cultural rupture. Indeed, forcible or coerced Christian conversion was one of the primary tools of the assimilative policies that typified U.S. relations with Native people for more than two centuries. Agents of Christianity (both churches and missionaries) have been intimately involved with the political, economic, religious, and social aspects of what has amounted to a sustained effort toward Native American cultural genocide.⁶ In the American Southwest, Christian agents have participated in assimilative programs by colluding with the colonial slave trade, utilizing forced labor in missions, and dispossessing Native people of land—disrupting communities in service of a Euro-American individualistic agricultural ideal.⁷

Christian collusion in Native American cultural genocide gained its most toxic form in the Christian-run boarding schools that commonly operated across the United States and Canada

in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In these boarding schools, modeled on the Carlisle Indian Industrial School of General Richard Pratt, Native children were separated from their families, forced to have their hair cut and to dress like Euro-American children, kept on a military schedule, and punished for speaking their own languages.⁸ These children were taught not only reading and writing but also industrial or domestic skills.⁹ Their presence was required at weekly chapel services and Bible studies. Christian-run boarding schools on the Navajo Nation operated until the 1950s without secular alternatives and were instrumental in promoting alienation from ancestral teachings and language, a disjunction that in turn provoked the contemporary economic and social challenges characterizing life on the Navajo Reservation.¹⁰

However, to focus too completely on this important history of violence against Native people would miss the very real agency some Native Americans have exercised through the medium of the Christian faith. By focusing on the ways that Christianity has been *practiced* by Native Christians, we can begin to see the ways in which Native Christians (both past and present) have used Christianity as a tool to assert and maintain cultural stability. Rather than taking the perspectives of the missionaries (typically the authors of archival accounts) at face value, historians and ethnographers alike have been attending to Native perspectives on the mission encounter, with the aim of discovering “what native people *made of* the Christian tradition” (McNally 2000b, 835). These accounts tend to emphasize how Native people have used Christian forms such as hymn singing (McElwain 1990; McNally 2000a; Lassiter et al. 2002), funerary practices (Kan 1999), interactional symbols (Schultz 1999), and language (Kidwell 1997; Nevins 2010) to preserve long-held values, community identities, languages, and kinship structures.¹¹ The figure of the native pastor has been of particular interest to recent historians (Lewis 2003; Tarango 2014), as a way of examining how Native control of Christian churches allowed for an emphasis on aspects of the Christian message that empowered Native cultures, languages, and epistemologies. And Andrea Smith’s

book about Native Americans and the Christian Right (2008) argues that contemporary Natives have used adaptable strategies of rearticulation to forge alliances with diverse Christian actors in order to advance Native causes such as sovereignty.

Without overlooking the hegemonic structures that limited the free choice of individual Natives, these studies have used the many voices of actual Native Christians (past and present) to highlight the development of a Native American theology (Kidwell et al. 2001).¹² This theology, based in Native worldviews and lifeways, tends to preserve an “ethos of religious relativism” (McNally 2000b, 847) that sees different approaches to the sacred as equally valid. Sometimes called an “all roads are good” model of ecumenicalism, relativism in situations of Native control promotes a sense of fluidity between religious traditions (particularly as they are performed, rather than confessed). An “all roads are good” approach assumes that all religious paths are based upon “the experiences of worthy elders and ancestors” and “all derive ultimately from the power of the Creator” (Jackson 2004, 192).¹³ What all this emphasis on Native agency assumes is that when Natives are in control, the vitriolic condemnation of the old ways that characterized the colonial approach to missionization will be toned down or even replaced with ecumenical respect.¹⁴

The recent wave of neo-Pentecostalism among Native Americans, however, complicates an equation that draws simple parallels between outsiders (promoting rupture) and insiders (promoting continuity). The Oodlání movement is a stark example of this complexity. Although Oodlání churches are (by definition) Navajo-led, Oodlání pastors do not “tone down” their opposition to traditional spirituality. In fact, they take the spiritual reality of traditionalist cosmology so seriously that their opposition goes beyond the modernist dismissal of rational Protestantism into all-out spiritual warfare. In contrast to Anglo missionaries who taught assimilation in boarding school and dismissed traditional lifeways as “superstitious nonsense,” Oodlání believe quite literally in the power of the traditional ways. They believe in skinwalkers. Or, as Ma Beverly put it, “The word that they do is real

too.” However, instead of mapping continuity with these powers, Oodlání turn this cultural continuity on its head.¹⁵

Which brings us back to the questions raised by Ma Beverly’s skinwalker story. In telling a skinwalker story, Ma Beverly was practicing a kind of cultural continuity: she believes she was visited by a skinwalker, and she talks about it in a traditionally recognizable way. She believes skinwalkers exist. But she believes that they get their power (to change shape, to speed across the desert night, to curse those who cross them) from the Devil, a figure entirely foreign to traditional Navajo cosmology. Can this really be viewed as cultural continuity?

Against Culture?

The ability of Pentecostalism to work simultaneously with and against local cultures as it globalizes has been described by Joel Robbins as one of the “paradoxes” of its vigorous spread (Robbins 2003b). The complicated nexus of continuity and rupture has emerged as one of the central themes in the growing field of the anthropology of Christianity (Lampe 2010). Formulating a theoretical framework that respects both the observable cultural continuities (Amster 2009; Chua 2012) and the rupture that converts intend (Meyer 1998; Engelke 2010) has become a central concern of this growing subfield, particularly when discussing global Pentecostalism.

Some scholars, for example, tend to emphasize the ways in which neo-Pentecostal converts emphasize rupture with traditional culture (Corten 1997; Daswani 2013). In Native North America, Kirk Dombrowski has been the strongest voice for this perspective, arguing that Tlingit and Haida converts actually constitute themselves “against culture” (2001). He explains ambivalence toward traditional ways as a reaction to the continuing colonialism expressed in the unfair and unequal distribution of resources legislated by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (Dombrowski 2001, 181). He argues that Pentecostalism is appealing to marginal community members precisely because of their marginality. Thus, argues Dombrowski, the appeal of joining the Pentecostal movement for those not benefiting in tradi-

tional cultural participation is in the way Pentecostal theology positions itself above culture. Pentecostals adopt a worldview in which, according to Dombrowski, “being Native American has no significance” (Dombrowski 2001, 15). Anyone, no matter culture or past, has the same opportunity to “become saved,” so marginality or affluence is irrelevant. Dombrowski states, “This dramatic denial of Culture per se—not just particular cultures—has special appeal to people whose particular culture has become an unbearable, unavoidable, undifferentiable burden” (Dombrowski 2001, 15).

In contrast, other scholars have questioned the totality of this abandonment, particularly since Pentecostal churches (especially neo-Pentecostal churches) are usually run entirely by indigenous actors. Rather than replicating a Western form of colonization, these scholars argue, the indigenous control of neo-Pentecostalism makes it eminently adaptable to the local culture. It thus represents a sort of indigenous appropriation that is about continuity and empowerment (Bastian 1993; Kiernan 1994; DiBernardi 1999; Manning 1980; Smith 2008). In Native North America scholars have emphasized the continuity of indigenously controlled neo-Pentecostal churches, viewing Pentecostal converts as continuing to value their traditional culture. This cultural continuity is expressed by regarding the natural world through a shamanic lens (Laugrand and Oosten 2009), or through the continued use of traditional sacred speech idioms in Independent Christian contexts (Nevins 2010). Continuity is also expressed, as highlighted by Clinton Westman, in the ways that Northern Cree Pentecostal converts promote traditional subsistence patterns and collectively organize (as Native Christians) for continued land use and subsistence hunting rights (Westman 2010a). He astutely asks, “Can a Cree-led congregation, meeting in Cree, in which elders counsel and heal their kinfolk, in which membership supports maintenance of ties between kinfolk and hunting partners, be ‘against’ Cree culture?” (Westman 2010b, 7).

Among Navajos the tension between the cultural continuity and cultural rupture of Navajo Christian converts has been a longstanding debate as well. Most scholars, understandably

invested in demonstrating the continuity of Navajo culture over time, have pointed out the many ways in which Christianity is incorporated by converts to access new modes of wealth or supernatural power but in very Navajo ways (Blanchard 1977; Shepardson 1982; Aberle 1982 and 1991).¹⁶ In Gladys Reichard's 1949 study of Navajo Christianity, she relates that a missionary "astounded" her by observing that "he did not know a single Navajo who 'truly understands Christianity'" (66). And as William Hodge summarized in his 1969 study of Navajo Pentecostalism, "I seriously doubt that these people had a comprehensive understanding of either conventional Christianity or Pentecostalism. Or, it may be that an understanding was there, but was rejected, and only those elements which could be fitted into a traditional conceptual framework were accepted" (89). These quotes highlight the degree to which scholars have remained skeptical that any real rupture accompanied Navajo participation in Christianity.¹⁷

On the other hand, this argument for underlying continuity is complicated by other authors who observe the contemporary conflicts between Navajo Pentecostals and Diné traditionalists. In her survey of the contemporary Navajo religious landscape, Charlotte J. Frisbie makes it quite clear that Navajo-led, independently operating "evangelical Protestants" (the group I have identified as Oodláńí) presently pose "the strongest challenge to the future of traditional religion" because of their belief that "traditional religion and its paraphernalia are the work of the Devil and thus, are in need of active destruction" (Frisbie 1992, 492). Other current ethnographic work among Navajos supports the "disruptive" presence of this religious movement, particularly in projects of language and cultural revitalization based in traditional Diné philosophies (see, for example, House 2002, 74).

I aim to clarify the complicated nexus of continuity and rupture on the Navajo religious landscape through the introduction of a new theoretical framework to explain the appeal of neo-Pentecostal conversion: resonant rupture. Drawing on a careful consideration of the complexities of cultural identification prac-

ticed by one particular Navajo-led neo-Pentecostal congregation in northwest New Mexico, I encourage looking beyond theologies and doctrines to see how continuity and rupture are navigated by Oodlání in performance. Resonant rupture respects the dramatic change wrapped into the Pauline model of born-again conversion (Robbins 2010), but it also explains the exponential growth of neo-Pentecostalism (above and beyond other forms of Christianity) through the way that neo-Pentecostalism can capitalize on the portable ambiguity of expressive forms.

Expressive Forms

There is a grand circular staircase at the entrance to the new humanities wing of San Juan College in Farmington, New Mexico, a town near the border of the Navajo Nation. One day I entered the building with a Navajo friend who was a professor there. I ascended the staircase, only to realize that she was no longer beside me. Without thinking about it, she had headed left up the stairs and I had headed right. When I caught up with her she teased me. “You know Diné go sunwise, right?”¹⁸

The cardinal directions—east, south, west, and north—orient Diné life. These four directions (sometimes with the addition of zenith and nadir) are symbolically linked to Navajo mythology, philosophy, pedagogy, and ceremonial practice. According to Diné educator Wilson Aronilth, “Our prayers, songs and values are interwoven with the four directions” (Aronilth 1994, 96). The Spirit of Dawn resides in the east, encouraging *Nitsáhákees*—the discipline of thinking and mental strength. Blue Twilight Spirit resides in the south, encouraging *Nahatá*—the discipline of learning and planning. Yellow Evening Spirit resides in the west, encouraging *Iiná*—the discipline of social growth and identity for life. And Folding Darkness Spirit resides in the north, encouraging *Siihasin*—the discipline of awareness and reflection (Aronilth 1994, 96). This symbolism of the four directions anchors Diné homes through the four *hogan* (house) pillars (Aronilth 1994, 107). It also anchors Diné in their homeland, through the spiritual geography of the four sacred mountains: *Sisnaajini* (Blanca Peak) in the east, *Tsoodzil* (Mount Taylor) in the



MAP 1. Navajo Nation. Erin Greb Cartography.

south, *Dook’o’oostíid* (San Francisco Peaks) in the west, and *Dibé Nitsaa* (Hesperus Mountain) in the north (Iverson 2002, 8–11). “*This is how they were placed for us,*” says Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso (1997, 39).

The cardinal directions orient not just Navajo geography but philosophy and spirituality as well. Sometimes called the *T’áá shá bik’ehgo na’nitin*, or sunwise path teachings, this movement through the four parts of the day (starting with dawn), through the four seasons (starting with spring), and through human life (from birth to old age) is seen a life principle, established by the Holy People, and guiding Diné people (Werito 2014, 27–28). It is a symbolic conceptualization of the “main stalk” of Diné philosophy, *Sa’ah Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhóón* (Farella 1984; Aronilth 1994, 96). Even contemporary Diné Philosophy of Learning (DPL), which is core to the curriculum at Diné College, is struc-

tured around this directional progression: *nitsáhákees* (thinking), *nahat'á* (planning), *iiná* (living), and *siihasin* (assuring).¹⁹

The Diné cardinal direction orientation is more than philosophy and ceremony. This “sunwise” path is part of the everyday aesthetics of generations of Diné. Cardinal directions guide the placement of homes, movement of people around space, and even the aesthetics of everyday objects, such as the tying of knots (Reichard 1963, 165–66) or how one ascends a staircase. Circular movement from east to north is a fundamental aesthetic orientation for Diné, operating at a subconscious level of “felt” rightness or, when violated, wrongness.

The felt attachment to aesthetic form is key to understanding how culture, all culture, continues through generations. The smell of grandma’s fresh-baked cookies adds a meaningful quality to the practice that we replicate even when store-bought cookies are much more convenient. We sing the lullabies of our mothers to our own babies, in part because of the emotional connections they contain. Feelingful connections to aesthetic forms are those that rely on our nonliteral minds: our sensations, feelings, and emotional associations.²⁰

In part, the feelingful connections we make between cultural practices and emotions lie in a layered history of experiencing them together. And when new cultural practices become tied to broader experience, they can come to be felt as an authentic part of collective identity. According to David Samuels (2004), feelingful connections allow us to understand culture as the dynamic product of cultural actors rather than the scripted and fixed repetition of “tradition.” Samuels argues that anthropologists and others tend to favor a “transparent” type of indexicality: the idea that Apacheness is made up of distinctly Apache language, foodways, and dress. The celebration of these forms, then, becomes linked to ideas about authentic Apache identity. He argues, however, that non-Native forms (such as basketball or country music) can also be seen as “sites for the play of deeply felt expressions of Apache identity” because of their long association with the social history of the community (Samuels 2004, 7). Samuels argues that identity is often tied to perceived or *felt*

indexicality, related to history: “This layering of people, places, events, and music is the thickening of experience, the knowledge of what it means and how it feels to be from San Carlos” (Samuels 2004, 39). So basketball and country music are felt to be authentically “Apache” cultural practices, not because they are unique to that culture but because their historical expression in local contexts has invested them with a *feelingful* connection to local identity.

Feelingful connections can be hard to pinpoint and examine since they are often subconscious and intuitive, but they are fundamental to the collective systems of valuation that we call aesthetics. Aesthetics are collective notions of quality based on feelingful (rather than rational) criteria. As Boas noted nearly a century ago, the “emotional attachment to customary forms” helps to explain why aesthetic forms tend to be stable over time (Boas 1955, 149).²¹

But the feelingful attachment to form does more than explain the tendency of artistic expressions to remain stable. This emotional attachment also helps to explain the general stability of cultures, a connection that was not lost on Boas. “The mind” he says, “becomes so thoroughly adjusted . . . to certain types of association between sense impressions and definite activities, that a resistance to change appears as the most natural mental attitude; if for no other reason, because it requires the effort of unlearning and relearning” (Boas 1955, 148–49). This does not mean that cultures cannot or do not change, only that individuals tend to be more comfortable with the familiar; whether in art, language, tools, or culture more broadly.

The connection between emotional attachment to form and cultural stability is particularly relevant given the current anthropological conviction that cultures do not reproduce themselves but are the collective accumulation of millions of tiny decisions made by millions of acting and choosing individuals over time.²² Aesthetics are an important factor in this configuration of culture, because they are the emotionally laden learned values that guide a feeling of “rightness” in what one does (Handelman 2007, 197), inform a sense of being “at home” in the body (Sheets-

Johnstone 2000, 360–61), and provide the groundwork for the cultural “common sense” of innumerable everyday actions: even the making of bread, the arranging of flowers, and the way we walk (Royce 2011).²³

One of the ways that anthropologists have studied aesthetic systems is through bounded performance events. From Milton Singer’s Indian temple festivals (1972) to Clifford Geertz’s Balinese cockfights (1973), cultural practices that are overtly artistic offer “a view of the world in which our ordinary understanding of who and why we are is brought to a heightened consciousness” (Royce 2004, 1). That is why I focus on Oodlání tent revivals as a space of “heightened” performances (Bauman 1975). Because they gather people together in a lit space in the desert night to sing praise songs, hear preaching, get healed, and dance in the spirit, tent revivals are events that reveal important Oodlání cultural values.

But aesthetic forms do more than reflect cultural values. They also serve as important sites of cultural contestation and change. Expressive culture carries with it a certain level of ambiguity that allows for the play of multiple meanings. This is what Samuels calls the “punning” quality of artistic culture, and is why, he says, expressive culture is able to operate simultaneously as a system of cultural continuity and change (Samuels 2004, 13). Using “intertextual” resources, performers can quote, parody, play with, or invert preexisting aesthetic forms in the creation of something new (Bauman 2004; Nevins 2010). Because expressive forms are based in practice, individual performers may use them as a way of gaining control of the social situation and actually enacting social change (Bauman 1975, 305). When Ma Beverly explains the efficacy of skinwalker curses as derived from the power of the Devil, she is actively transcribing the meaning of these curses and denying their continuity. This does not simply change the meaning of aesthetic forms; it actively rejects a prior “false” meaning. This is a type of directed culture change I call rupture, and it is facilitated by the ambiguous, creative, and feelingful nature of expressive forms.

In spite of the importance of expressive forms as sites for the

negotiation and construction of collective culture and identity, attention to expressive practice has been largely overlooked in the literature discussing Pentecostal rupture (Meyer 1998; Daswani 2013; Robbins 2007). This book is based on the idea that the ambiguity of expressive forms and the ability of performers to communicate conflicting meanings through them makes expressive forms the ideal foci for understanding how Oodlání reconcile multiple and contested subjectivities. By examining cultural practices with heightened aesthetic values (rituals, poetic language, singing, dancing, healing), we can uncover the ways that affective attachment to artistic forms can provide a type of deeply felt continuity even in the face of dramatic cultural rupture.

Eugene Joe likes to tell stories about his dad, who was a well-known and respected singer (medicine man) before becoming a well-known and respected Oodlání teacher. When I asked Mr. Joe whether Oodlání still valued the cardinal directions, he shared one of these stories with me:

My dad told me there were six directions, in humanity. It does not go with, you know, the traditional [four directions]. He says, “Man lives up and down. That’s his direction. You’re gonna go to hell or you’re gonna go to heaven. You’re gonna go to the right or you wanna go to the left? Or do you want to go forward or you want to go backward?” See, every direction is a symbol, isn’t it? For us to understand where we’re at. Which direction we’re gonna take. My father said, “There’s only one direction to God—that’s up. Not forward, upward.” (E. Joe 2008)

According to Mr. Joe, the meanings attached to the cultural symbols of the cardinal directions have changed for Oodlání. No longer does east symbolize dawn, beginnings, or the residence of Rock Crystal girl and boy at the heart of Blanca Peak. For Mr. Joe, a dedicated Oodlání, those are symbolic attachments created by humans. The real importance of directionality, for Mr. Joe, is the orientation to zenith and nadir: heaven above or hell below. For him, it is the way this orientation toward heaven dictates daily actions and morality that is primary.

So why continue to explain theology in terms of Diné cardinal orientation? Why did Mr. Joe's father pass on this teaching to him, in these cardinal terms, in the first place? The use of continuous expressive practices such as these in Oodlání contexts suggests that feelingful attachment to expressive form persists, but that the inherent ambiguity of these forms allows for the attachment of drastically different meanings. This is a property I call resonant rupture.

Resonant Rupture

In this book I explain how Pentecostal rupture is neither wholly assimilative nor wholly traditional but is a type of rupture enriched by “feelingfully” familiar aesthetic forms. Because of their feelingful connection to the past, these expressive forms (skinwalker stories, cardinal direction symbols) can suggest a type of cultural continuity. But in actuality they operate more like nonhumorous puns.²⁴ Their apparent similarity actually masks fundamental denial of similarity happening at the level of asserted meaning. Because this is a kind of rupture amplified by cultural relevance, I argue that it represents a type of resonant rupture.

Resonance is an acoustical principle that explains how certain vibrations amplify other vibrations but without assuming identical frequencies. Resonating chambers (such as the hollow body of a guitar or violin) amplify the sound of a plucked or bowed string. The resonant frequencies of a wine glass and the voice of an opera singer are the physical properties that explain the singer's ability to shatter the object. And brass instruments produce sound based upon the alignment between the harmonic overtone series (a mathematical arrangement of related sound-waves) and the vibrations of the column of air inside the horn.²⁵ When “resonant peaks” are achieved, the instrument produces a clear, well-focused, rich, and amplified sound (A. Myers 1997, 21).²⁶ Resonance, in this sense, is also a concept used in vernacular English. When students read about a new cultural practice, they may tell me “that article really resonated with me.” The sense of something new amplifying something else is key to both the formal and informal concept of resonance.²⁷