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From the Editor

It is with great humility that I apologize for the computer generated “melt-down” in the last issue of the journal. At the last minute before the copy was to go to the printer, we had a few changes to make; as a result, our computer's “smart program” made its own adjustments elsewhere in the issue, duplicating lines and/or deleting lines at the bottom of some pages. In the rush to print and mail, the unintended changes were not detected. I apologize to the contributors and our readers. To reduce the chances of this happening again, we have purchased a new program that is more completely integrated with our word processing software.

“Not Exactly Like Heaven”: Theological Imperialism in *The Surrounded*

Laird Christensen

As ecology describes a world in which all beings are woven into interdependent communities by cycles of oxygen, minerals, water, and energy, an ecological literary criticism examines how human populations imagine their relation to the ecosystems that support them, for of all the survival traits evolved on earth, an analytical brain that manipulates abstractions has had the greatest environmental impact. While the remarkable capabilities of the human mind have enabled unparalleled creativity, our individual and collective self-absorption has too often led us to overlook our intrinsic dependence on ecological communities. Clearly, then, Lawrence Buell is correct in calling our environmental degradation a crisis of imagination, for it is only by imagining ourselves existing *apart* from ecosystems that humans can rationalize actions that devastate our sustaining processes (2). Since a people's values and subsequent notions of appropriate behavior are directly determined by how they imagine the human role on earth, literary critics conduct a cultural pathology by identifying unsustainable patterns within the weave of stories we tell ourselves about our place in the world.¹ Such reflection is essential if we are to develop ecologically conscious ways of seeing and behaving. In this light, D'Arcy McNickle's 1936 novel, *The Surrounded*, rewards an ecocritical reading by demonstrating that a people's beliefs and their economic interactions with their habitat are so intertwined that a disruption of one cannot help but affect the other.

Conventional histories of the European invasion of North America too often simplistically attribute the displacement of indigenous peoples to political policies and their military enforcement, largely neglecting the subtler agents of expansionism. In particular, the spread of Christianity weakened many Native cultures by disrupting traditional value structures and the economies that grew out of—and reinforced—their belief systems. In *The Surrounded*, McNickle specifically addresses Christianity's impact on the cosmology, values, and economy of western Montana's Salish community, and he exposes its role in undermining any substantial cultural resistance to an expanding American empire. McNickle identifies the Christian concept of eternal judgment as a wedge that forces the

Salish out of traditional patterns of relating to family, society, and ultimately the more-than-human world.² An examination of how *The Surrounded* depicts the continuum between worldviews and economies is more relevant than ever at the close of the twentieth century, for our society's pattern of environmental abuse must be understood as the tragic result of a continuity between how we perceive our role in this world and how we use the earth to fulfill our needs and desires.

The cultural homecoming of Archilde Leon that structures McNickle's narrative anchors a broader analysis of the social effects of theological imperialism on indigenous North American communities. Specifically, *The Surrounded* explores the circumstances that compelled many Native communities to accept a radically alien cosmology, and the Salish example is especially revealing because they urged the Jesuits to establish a mission in Sniél-emen. Having seen their traditional economy disrupted by scarcity of game and the reduction of their hunting territory, due largely to the arming of neighboring tribes by Whites, the Salish had listened hopefully as adopted Iroquois trappers told them of a new kind of power embodied in the crucifix of the Jesuit priests. "If they brought it to us," the old man Modeste recalls believing, "we would be strong again" (73). But when the missionaries finally arrive in western Montana, no such results are evident. Instead, the priests bring the Salish a new moral code that will effect a culturally lethal separation of the people from the social and ecological matrix of their traditional way of life.

The portentous meeting of Salish and Jesuits in the valley of Sniél-emen forms a symbolic tableau, and *The Surrounded* is a steady accumulation of tales that work to make sense of it. McNickle provides three accounts of the priests' arrival by the novel's elders, beginning with the idealized recollection of Archilde's mother, Catharine, whose "memory began on that day" (21). Her version of events, however, is called into question at the very moment of its narration by the acknowledgment that her father's words "were unnamed birds to her; she heard them fly about but did not know them, yet this is what they said" (21). Father Grepilloux's journal provides the next account, but his recollection is filtered in a way that tells more about the perspective of a novice missionary than about the actual events: "I thought they understood perfectly what this moment meant to them, and that in their hearts, they were praising the Author of their Beings," he writes (47). The final account is offered by the Salish elder, Modeste, who recalls simply that "the Fathers came to us here. They built a church. They baptized us," before slipping into the pensive silence

that ends his oral history of the Salish (74). Beyond these three specific ways of recounting the portentous meeting of cultures, the novel as a whole attempts to see it one more time—as the moment that announced the disintegration of the traditional Salish community.

In setting up this event, however, McNickle's presentation is as interesting for what it leaves out as for what it contains. The repeated attempts by the Salish to bring the Jesuits to Sniél-emen are historically founded, although Grepilloux mentions only two journeys and Catharine recalls three; only Modeste accurately indicates that four parties were sent to summon the priests. When Father Grepilloux describes his arrival as a member of Father Lamberti's party in 1854, this meeting combines historical details from Father DeSmet's 1840 summer visit to the Salish with his return in the autumn of 1841. One may wonder why McNickle chose to postpone the arrival of the Jesuits in western Montana by thirteen years. We know that he was familiar with the historical records since in the novel's prefatory note he cites both Father DeSmet and L.B. Palladino, a Jesuit priest who began compiling his history of Catholicism in Montana soon after his arrival in 1867. Despite the presence of priests among the Salish early in the 1840s, however, it wasn't until 1854 that the St. Ignatius mission—the model for McNickle's St. Xavier—was moved to its present location from the Pend d'Orielle River. By conflating the priests' arrival with the establishment of the mission, McNickle crafts a much more potent symbolic event. And by waiting until 1854 he avoids the Little Faro rebellion of 1847, when a Salish faction rose up to reject the Catholic presence in western Montana. If included, this incident would certainly have diluted the significance of his characters' eventual apostasy.

Perhaps McNickle's most significant deviation from the historical record is his omission of the corrupt form of Christianity already practiced among the Salish before the arrival of the priests. Influenced by Iroquois trappers, particularly one Ignace La Mousse, the Salish had incorporated Catholic practices into their rituals since the 1830s, when they were observed by Captain Bonneville. It is possible that these practices had been a part of Salish ceremonies even longer, since two dozen Iroquois trappers from the Caughnawaga Mission on the St. Lawrence River were probably a part of the Salish community by 1816 (Palladino 9-10). Father Palladino reports the lingering influence of Ignace La Mousse on the Salish:

[T]he Flat-Heads learned from him the principal mysteries and precepts of Christianity; the substance of the Lord's prayer; the Sign of the Cross and other practices

of Catholic devotion. The Indians strove, as best they could, not only to remember what they were taught, but also to put it into practice and live accordingly. They prayed at stated times, kept the Sunday, baptized those among them who were about to die, and marked the graves of the dead with the sign of man's redemption. (10)

Yet neither Catharine, Modeste, nor Father Grepilloux mentions any such practices in their various accounts of the "old ways." Once again McNickle's selective presentation of historical evidence amplifies the distinction between Salish values before and after the Jesuits' arrival, permitting him to craft a more dramatic contrast between the relative social cohesion of pre-Christian Sniél-emen and its subsequent disintegration.

McNickle presents the decision to summon the Jesuits to Sniél-emen as a logical step in a Salish tradition of technological and cultural innovations, and the remarkable sequence of tales told at Archilde's homecoming feast fixes it within a historical pattern. The first, described as "a very old story, the kind grandmothers told to grandchildren," recalls the acquisition of flint (66); the second tells of the coming of "the Thing that was to make life easy"—an iron axe (68); and the third, directed to Archilde by Modeste, recalls the acquisition of guns, which is followed in his narrative by the summoning of the priests. Perhaps the devastating lessons learned from their experience with firearms should have warned the Salish against seeking other forms of European power, but the rapid erosion of their regional influence left them desperate for change. True, firearms had evened the odds in their battles with the Blackfeet, but this was a Pyrrhic advance. "We thought guns would save our hunting grounds and make the old times return," recalls Modeste, but soon it was apparent that "this new kind of fighting just meant that more men were killed" (72). Firearms could not repair the damage done to Salish economic and social stability, nor could their traditional religion provide a satisfying response to the destruction of their way of life: "It was clear that something had gone wrong, the people had lost their power," Modeste explains. "So our wise ones began to say that we must find something new" (73). While McNickle clearly portrays the Salish decision to summon the Jesuits as a last resort, he is careful to represent the desperate logic of their willingness to accept the beliefs of the most powerful people they knew.

Yet the power in the priests' *Somesh* of two crossed sticks could not restore the old ways; rather, it symbolized a moral structure designed to prepare people for another life altogether. A moral code already existed

among the Salish that served them well: transgressions were confessed and punished in ceremonial fashion, which allowed the guilty parties to put their faults behind them while reaffirming their accountability to the community—"the whip covered the fault" (206). Such public accountability was necessary to a people whose system of beliefs and values was primarily concerned with the present welfare of the group, and there was no form of authority higher than the community itself to be appeased. The Salish did not pray to a divine arbiter for absolution or intercession; rather, as John Fahey observes, "in a society subject to the caprices of nature, prayer offered reassurance that all was being done that could be done" (13). They were individually aided by animistic spirit-helpers, but there was "no hierarchy of spirits, and the male sun [*Spokani*] approached most nearly their notion of a supreme being" (Fahey 13). Yet even *Spokani* was a created power, one of *Amotkan*'s several sons, and *Amotkan* in turn was the son of *Skomelten*, a powerful woman who existed before creation. Father Mengarini, who arrived in Montana in 1841, observes that "despite the power and nobility of *Amotkan* and *Skomelten*, these were not the deities the Flatheads worshipped. . . . Being very materialistic, the savages paid little heed to that which they could not see" (Lothrop 156). Yet it was precisely a single, invisible, morally demanding deity that the Jesuits wished the Salish to accept. The notion of one true god combating an antithetical force for possession of each person's soul was likewise alien to the Salish. True, *Amotkan* does contest the powers of *Amteep*, but John Purdy explains that this "chief of the lower world" is merely a deification of natural difficulties such as drought, famine, and even winter (144-45). The intrinsic Christian dualism taught by the missionaries necessitated a sharply defined moral division, reinforced by a system of corresponding eternal rewards and punishments.

Contrary to the mistaken recollection of Archilde's Spanish father, Max Leon, Father Grepilloux recognized that the Salish, "from time immemorial . . . have punished sinful action" by public whipping (50). The importance of confession to this ceremony eased the transition to Christianity once the priests substituted divine absolution for earthly punishment. However, the shift from public admission of sins to private confession to a clerical intermediary, and the serving of an equally private penance, tidily displaces one's moral responsibility to another plane of being, and the wrongdoing loses its explicit relation to the earthly situation in which it was committed. Cause and effect are split apart, and one's moral focus shifts to an abstracted eternity in another life. The social ramifications of the transgression become less important than the threat to per-

sonal salvation, and one's obligations to the community are largely stripped of importance—indeed, they may even be seen as a distraction to the Christian focused on attaining heaven.

In hunting and gathering cultures, spiritual practices generally remain grounded in present circumstances, with the larger temporal context extending through the solar year. So narrow a focus was troubling to Father Mengarini, who complained that the Salish are “concerned with neither the past nor the future” (Lothrop 149). By making people eternally accountable for their actions and threatening the unrepentant with a horrifying fate, the missionaries both removed the locus of moral responsibility from the community and shifted the motivation for appropriate behavior from the commonweal to the fear of infinite terror. To a people whose worldview traditionally emphasizes life on the present plane of existence, the threat of eternal damnation demands a tremendous epistemological and psychological leap. McNickle's novel graphically illustrates how Christianity infects the Salish with a debilitating sense of fear, particularly in the cases of young Mike Leon and Faithful Catharine, who rocks “back and forth in the gloom, frightened and uncomfortable in the knowledge the priests had given her” (21). Mike is even more traumatized by his fear of damnation. As punishment for sacrilege, Mike is locked in “a small room of unpleasant reputation” at the mission school where he is terrified to the point of an emotional breakdown (189). The other boys at the school know after hearing his screams that “he had been visited by the Evil One. . . . [T]hey were prepared to see the earth crack open at any moment and reveal the fires of hell” (191). When Mike returns home utterly transformed by this experience, Modeste diagnoses his fear as an illness, for “in the old man's mind, if you feared anything you were certainly sick” (198). From such a cultural perspective, to accept a religion that discourages inappropriate behavior with threats of eternal suffering is analogous to aspiring to contract a disease.

By contrast, the Salish tradition of public confession and whipping encouraged the wrongdoer to reconsider his or her actions in relation to present circumstances while reinforcing the cohesion of the community. Because moral codes are how a community expresses its common values, any violation of these codes affects the entire community. When one's fault is publicly confessed and punished, the community shares in the admission as well as the cleansing. As Catharine recalls, “in the old days you were whipped and no one spoke of it again. Your heart was free” (207). As one among many ceremonies—including the feasts and dances that celebrated transitions in life and seasonal cycles—the whipping

strengthened the community's bond by affirming its common purposes. And, like other rituals, it called attention to the way that individuals and the community are embedded in larger patterns of relation, both social and ecological.

For the Salish, as for most hunting and gathering cultures, society revolves around the extended family. At his homecoming feast Archilde wonders at his exact relation to Modeste, "who was either the uncle or brother-in-law of his mother. Indian relations, in the old style, were always a bit vague to him" (60). This is not surprising in a culture where cousins are called brothers and sisters, and as Catharine recalls, "it was only right that if you could go and live with your relatives any time you got tired of your place, they in turn could come to you" (172-73). Because families were defined so broadly, extended families were woven together throughout the tribe by marriage, and a bond formed by kinship is much more cohesive than any mere political alliance. Archilde describes this expansive familiarity in an analogy that is revealing in its organicism: "people grew together like creeping vines. The root of beginning was hard to find in the many that had come together and spread their foliage in one mass" (258). And yet, as traditional patterns of Salish society fell into neglect—either because they no longer seemed relevant or because they had been supplanted by Christian practices—the stability of the family structure itself began to crumble.

Catharine recalls a time when "a son might steal horses but a mother was respected," but a generation of Jesuit influence has taught Salish children to be ashamed of their parents (22, 113). In Archilde's case, this shame gradually mellows to mere embarrassment, and sitting beside Catharine at his homecoming feast Archilde "tolerated her and laughed at some of her cruder ideas about the world" (113). The dissolution of the Salish family structure that McNickle depicts certainly began before the arrival of the Jesuits in Sniél-emen, for the additional casualties resulting from the use of firearms in battle left many lodges fatherless. Modeste remembers that "[t]he old ones could say it had not always been thus, but the young ones thought they talked in dreams. For them the world has always been bitter" (72). As the elders' experiences seemed less and less applicable to the world that younger Salish knew, the larger constellation of traditional beliefs and values appeared antiquated and inadequate. This disillusionment was exacerbated by the shift in power and prestige that accompanied the settlement of Whites in Sniél-emen, and the disorder of the Leon family reflects the social decay among the Salish at large. There is no full-blooded Salish head of the household, and in fact, that role has been supplanted by Max Leon, whose immediate European origin is sig-

nificant. This literal marriage of Salish and European cultures results in a clearly dysfunctional family: "There was always this distrust, this warfare" (11).

The missionaries eagerly contributed to this confusion, both by positing a higher authority than the head of the family and by removing children from the influences of traditional Salish families whenever possible. Father Palladino reveals a great deal about the Jesuit motivation to establish mission schools when he insists that the Salish parent "is a much greater savage than the youth, since he has grown up in barbarism with age. Far, therefore, from being a factor of the child's education, the parent . . . becomes necessarily a positively uncivilizing agent and an insurmountable obstacle to its advancement" (82). The mission schools quickened the pace of familial dissolution and simultaneously helped to unravel the threads of Salish social fabric by redirecting the focus of one's primary moral obligation toward an outsider who claimed direct access to a frightening God. Recalling the downfall of her eldest son Louis, a renegade horse thief, Catharine recognizes that his transformation began with his schooling (131).

There is an ominous extension of this theme when Mike returns from school crippled by fear, but he is saved—at least temporarily—by the increasingly active role played by Modeste and the Salish community. Yet even as Mike and Narcisse escape an immediate return to the mission school at the novel's end, it seems clear that they are merely postponing the inevitable: "It made no difference whether they stayed at home or went to the mountains. When they were wanted, by priest or agent or devil, they would be sent for, and that was all" (286). They are in fact attempting to escape the consequences of a cultural transformation that has already shaped them, for as Modeste observes, "what our children are like they cannot help. It began before their time" (63). Indeed, the damage has already been done, for a second generation of social fragmentation has left the young ones without any stable community context within which to develop an individual identity.

The traditional organization of Salish society had much less to do with the distribution of power than with those ceremonies that reinforced a tribe's bonds by emphasizing its common purposes. What little governance actually took place among the Salish followed a form adopted from the plains Indians: a council met to decide matters of warfare or hunting that concerned the whole group, but aside from these concerns the headmen had little power. Individuals were not obligated to obey the suggestions of the council, and it was not uncommon for a family to move

away from its tribe if they strongly disagreed with the council's decision (Fahey 21). The missionaries were often frustrated in their attempts to use the tribal council to further their intentions, and as Father Mengarini complains, "there is no one law, no one ordinance, and consequently, no subordination among the citizens" (Lothrop 202). Therefore, the Jesuits' insistence on a more restrictive social order attempted to force the Salish into an ill-fitting, alien structure of relations, leaving the individual with no secure sense of his or her role in the community. Furthermore, the hierarchical nature of Christian theology bore little relation to a worldview that grew out of the patterns of seasonal change that are so important to hunting and gathering cultures.

The most fundamental patterns underlying any culture's worldview are derived from its means of subsistence, and in hunting and gathering communities a variety of myths and rituals embody the tribe's collective memory in ways that have proven to maintain economic stability. Ceremonies, such as the ritual storytelling we see at Archilde's homecoming feast, pass along vital information that sustains the wisdom earned by long-forgotten mistakes. Ethics, then, emerge from the body of experience that lives on in ritual. Sociologists of religion confirm the tendency of beliefs and values to evolve in conjunction with economies, reflecting the means of a culture's material survival while shaping attitudes and behavior accordingly. As Michael Barnes explains, "changes in economic and social complexity (as from primitive foraging cultures to more advanced agricultural-trading cultures) produce parallel changes in notions about the spirits and gods and in the form of stories about them" (vi). Because the Salish economy was framed by rituals that reinforced animistic connections between tribal identity and ecological communities, a continued dependence on hunting and gathering posed an obvious threat to the Jesuit agenda. Father Mengarini deplored the Salish hunting trips because "the nomadic, vagabond life which they . . . pursue as in times past, adhering to those ancient ideas, causes them to remain in their savage state" (Lothrop 207). Forcing the Salish out of their traditional economic patterns was a prerequisite to salvation and civilization, and it demanded an epistemological divorce of the people from their larger ecological community.

This is not merely an incidental effect of Christianization on the Salish; it is a nearly unavoidable result of the way that many interpretations of biblical tradition have portrayed the human role on earth. As Lynn C. White, Jr. and a number of other historians have shown, Christianity has been used to justify environmental exploitation in several interrelated

ways. Its monotheistic denunciation of animism has helped to desacralize the material world, enabling the forces of industrial capitalism to depict other members of our ecological communities as “commodities” or “resources.” Moreover, the complementary beliefs that *Homo sapiens* alone possess an eternal soul and that we have been granted dominion over all other creatures have fostered a view of humans as inherently superior to other species. (This position has its secular counterpart in the belief that human intellectual capabilities do not merely represent a distinctive form of consciousness, but the *highest* form.) Even those Christians who have committed themselves to an ecologically sustainable transformation of Western culture, such as Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., argue passionately that “human beings are not ‘simply’ one species among others,” and that “[a]ny improvement of the relations between human and other species will come about by better ways of exercising dominion” (387). Finally, there is considerable ecological danger in contrasting an ephemeral planet to an eternal afterlife, as was poignantly illustrated when President Reagan’s first Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, “announced that we need not preserve the forests because God would be coming soon to end the world” (Sanders 281). It is not difficult to understand how the belief in human dominion grew out of a Middle Eastern pastoral economy. Nevertheless, the ontological and ideological implications of such a worldview run counter to how we presently understand ecological interrelations, and to traditional Salish attitudes toward the biotic community that sustained them.

It is important to remember, however, that the indigenous economies of the Northwest had begun to deteriorate even before the arrival of the Jesuits. We can detect the first major economic shift in the early eighteenth century when horses arrived from the south, dramatically altering local consumption patterns. John Fahey observes that “a Flathead hunter who once prized his hard-won robe and his tipi of twelve to twenty-four hides now collected more [buffalo] skins than he could use” (18). Greater mobility also exacerbated territorial disputes between tribes who quickly outgrew historically sustainable ranges. The arrival of European technology further skewed the balance. This transition is succinctly illustrated by Modeste’s story of the “Thing that was to make life easy,” in which a man who possesses a new iron axe chops down every tree along a hunting party’s trail only to make a point to those who doubted his word (66). Modeste’s tale emphasizes the relationship between the power enabled by sudden technological advances and the potential to misuse that power until ethics can catch up to the new technology.

Wendell Berry proposes that the primary function of literature is to provide a stabilizing context when a culture's perspective is clouded by the power that comes with new technologies. "It was no thought or word that called culture into being, but a tool or a weapon," Berry writes. "After the stone axe we needed song and story to remember innocence, to record effect—and so to describe the limits, to say what can be done without damage" (8). By recounting such tales Modeste reminds his people of the limitations they have stumbled against in the past while trying to maintain their balance during the jarring transformations that technological and cultural innovations have brought about. Each subsequent acquisition may have enabled the Salish to achieve a series of short-term advances, but through the resulting imbalances with ecological communities these advances in fact worked toward the destruction of lasting economic and cultural stability.

Although the collapse of traditional Northwestern hunting economies was already in progress when the Jesuits arrived in Montana, the priests remained committed to their extermination, insisting that such economies had no place in a civilized world. As Father Palladino observes, "all human beings, no matter . . . how degraded and how savage soever some may be, can be civilized because all can be Christianized" (83). The explicit connection between salvation and civilization is telling. Because the Jesuits could not permit the Salish to engage in the sort of economy that might encourage them "to remain in their savage state," they had to teach them to participate in a different economy altogether—a pastoral capitalism that redefines the individual's relationship with both human and ecological communities (Lothrop 207). They would need to learn the sort of "shrewd husbandry" that Max Leon is praised for: a monocultural farming that roots them in the concept of private property and drastically redefines traditional social contracts, while simultaneously enabling the sort of profits needed to become full participants in a "civilized" commercial economy (178). Father Palladino explains that

although Christianity does not aim directly at the material culture of man, it is not less for that a most potent factor alike of his material civilization. For by condemning and reproving whatever is morally bad . . . religion attacks barbarism at its very roots; while by positive commendation of all that is morally good and honest, it provokes and stimulates man's energies and faculties to industry, study, labor, diligence and refinement within the reach of all the avenues of civilization and progress. (84)

Despite the Jesuits' attempts to redirect the Salish economy toward agriculture, however, *The Surrounded* contains no examples of successful Native farmers. Even though Archilde helps Max Leon with his harvest, he clearly has no plans to continue farming the land he inherits after his father's death. Most of McNickle's Salish respond to the prohibition of their traditional economic practices by relying on government handouts or engaging in illegal activities. There is a spiritual poverty in the void that opens between one livelihood that is forbidden and another that chafes against a lifetime of beliefs and practices, and it is here that the connection between values and economic activity becomes most evident.

Perhaps the sharpest illustration that McNickle offers to highlight the disparity between European and Salish economies is found in his description of Max Leon's harvest. While supervising his hired hands, Max is furious when one of his binding machines breaks down. Although the driver assures him that it will be easily repaired, Max strains against the pressure of having limited time to finish the harvest before the grain is overripe. He bristles at his necessary subservience to nature's schedule—a struggle which is echoed when the Indian agent, Mr. Parker, finds himself resenting the passing of spring: "It made a man realize he was at odds with nature" (279). When Max goes looking for Mike and Narcisse, who were ordered to bring water to the laborers, he finds them with Archilde engaged in a very different sort of economy: "They were lying quietly on a pile of driftwood in the center of the stream, waiting for a shy trout to get into position to be speared" (77). McNickle's artful pairing of these two methods of food production contrasts the sweat and anxiety of Max's commercial agriculture with the patience required to gain admission to nature's economy. Despite the romantic appeal of this latter option, in a world asked to support nearly six billion people it is hardly a practical alternative to large-scale monoculture. The vivid contrast of these incidents does, however, suggest the degree to which an economy that is aggressively *imposed* on an ecological community creates for itself obstacles that might be avoided if one mindfully seeks admission into the preexisting economy.

By diverting the people from animistically reinforced economic patterns, and by weakening Salish social cohesion with the threat of eternal damnation, the Jesuit missions deftly undermined the possibility of cultural resistance to Euro-American expansionism. Yet we must not forget that McNickle chooses to personify the church in the figure of Father Grepilloux, who is nearly a caricature of goodness. McNickle develops the paradox of a good man's destructive effects through the metaphor of a

starving mare that Archilde discovers wandering in the Badlands. Observing her misery, Archilde resolves to “put a rope on her, feed her, and trim her tail. It was the least thing a creature of feeling could do” (238). After a considerable chase that tires and lames the sorry horse, he succeeds in wearing her down enough to catch her, by which time she has little life remaining. As she lays suffering she groans “a final note of reproach for the ears of the man who had taken it upon himself to improve her condition” (242). When Archilde at last must shoot her to end her misery, the analogy between his good intentions and those of the Jesuits is ominously extended. Even Max Leon, who reveres Father Grepilloux as a saint, is forced to wonder at the influence of the church and its attendant progress on the Salish: “were they saved or were they destroyed? Bringing the outside world to them was not exactly like bringing heaven to them” (139).

McNickle’s story of how the best intentions of ethical men destroyed the Salish way of life reminds us how much power resides in the way we imagine our relation to the world. Moreover, his attention to the connection between beliefs and economies offers a valuable lesson in a time of severe ecological stress. Within the narrative of Archilde’s resistance to cultural genocide we find another of those stories that Wendell Berry tells us is so necessary to remind us of the limitations that we must learn with each step along the road to greater technological and cultural sophistication. The limitations that *The Surrounded* would remind us of concern an economy so abstract as to appear divorced from any practical dependence on the health of its ecosystem, and an inherited worldview that conveniently reinforces the illusion of human separation from our physical environment. But neither the demonization of Christian capitalism nor the romanticization of animistic Salish culture offers an easy solution to the environmental crisis we find ourselves in today. In showing how the revival of traditional practices fails to restore the Salish community, McNickle holds out little hope that we might find a cultural model in the remnants of our indigenous cultures. That is not to say, however, that we cannot learn a great deal from how traditional American economies have directly reflected the realities of their habitats. What seems especially important at this historical moment is that we begin to recognize the correspondence between what we believe about the world and how we act on it, so that we can envision what sustainable membership in ecological communities looks like. As science continues to supplant religion’s role of providing Western culture with cosmological and ontological explanations—for better or worse—we must begin to imagine a post-industrial

economy that reflects the no-longer-radical belief that humans belong to interdependent ecosystems. Perhaps *this* is a story that will guide us toward some timely sanity.

NOTES

¹ As sociologists and anthropologists have shown, a culture's *ethos*—which expresses its “moral and aesthetic style and mood” (Geertz 421)—inevitably reflects its fundamental *worldview*, which includes the culture's cosmology as well as generally tacit conceptions of “self, other, relationship, classification, causality, space, and time” (Kearney 1380). A culturally specific *ethos* emerges from the interplay of these concepts of identity, agency, and perspective as they are understood within the context of a shared understanding of the universe and a people's place in it. Furthermore, the fact that shared assumptions about causality, relationship, and classification are a part of a culture's fundamental perspective suggests that worldviews not only shape knowledge, but also that they shape *ways* of knowing, or epistemologies.

² While I admit the clumsiness of this hyphenated adjective, which comes to us courtesy of the philosopher David Abram, I use it as an essential and overdue corrective to our culture's casual use of “nature,” which perpetuates an old and pernicious opposition that we can no longer afford to believe in. I prefer it to another increasingly common alternative—“the nonhuman world”—because it seems to me that Abram's phrase is more likely to encourage an ecologically sound and humbling perspective.

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Deer

They hang her in the barn, head down, tongue fat,
dripping blood. I am left alone
for a moment, venture close to stroke dark fur
made rough by winter; that is when she is still
whole, intact, before butchering. I'm not sure
if they shot her or hit her by accident
with the truck, but she comes from the mountains
out of season so it is the darkness that counts, not
how she died. All winter long we'll eat her
in secret: steaks, stews, bones boiled for broth
and the dogs. But what I will remember are men's hands—
fingers stained with oil and blood—
the rough way they turn back the hide, jerk down hard
to tear it off her body. A dull hunting
knife cracks and disjoints the carcass.
Dismembers it piece by piece.
The hide disappears—left untanned, buried,
taken to the dump. For years afterward
I walk out to the barn, scrape my foot against
the stained floor beneath the crossbeam, never tell anyone
I've been taken like that:
without thanks, without a prayer, by hands
that didn't touch me the way a gift should be touched,
knives that slid beneath my skin out of season
and found only flesh, only blood.

Deborah A. Miranda

Multivocal Narration and Cultural Negotiation: Dorris's *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* and *Cloud Chamber*

Gordon E. Slethaug

"A Yellow Raft . . . deal[s] with people in a multi-ethnic environment *Bea Medicine* once said the Indian people have to be far more adept at manipulating a multi-cultural world than non-Indian people do because they have to live in both parts of it—the mainstream and non-mainstream—whereas mainstream people never have to learn those skills of working in both worlds." Michael Dorris (Wong 35)

In the late twentieth century, the use of multiple narrators has become an especially important technique in exploring problems of class and race. Indeed, it is something of a truism that multivocality has become an effective weapon of the racially and economically disadvantaged against various manifestations of cultural hegemony, for it undermines the notion of a central perspective or narratively controlling angle of vision, whether of an honorable first-person or truly omniscient narrator. In interviewing Michael Dorris and Louise Erdrich, Hertha Wong comments on the "community gossip" in their fiction, adding "We don't have an omniscient narrator to tell us how it *really* is. There is no one with authority that imposes some kind of order and stasis on a character or a character's life" (39). Similarly, in an earlier interview with Laura Coltelli, Dorris says of Erdrich's *Love Medicine* that "nobody in the book is right, that in fact it is community voice, that the point of view is the community voice and the means of exchanging information is gossip, and so consequently there is no narrator; there is no single protagonist, but rather it is the entire community dealing with the upheavals that emerge from the book" (22). As these comments intimate, Native American writer Michael Dorris is among a group of contemporary African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans who have developed various complex narrative strategies to deal with their struggle for self-definition, political and social status, and economic and educational opportunity.

Narration in the first of Dorris's two singly authored novels—*A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987) and *Cloud Chamber* (1997)—addresses the loss experienced by marginalized Natives in American culture, but the second novel opens the issue further, suggesting that whites and blacks also share losses, and that racial groups can work together to ameliorate

those losses and gain a new sense of community. For Dorris, then, multivocality is a means of identifying social injustices as well as discovering avenues to building community and ensuring unity and justice. His primary narrator, Rayona Taylor, who comes from three racial backgrounds and appears in both novels, witnesses and exemplifies many complex issues of a new multi-cultural and multi-racial America. The content and style of Dorris's novels are self-consciously negotiative of conflicting cultures and suggest that, while never easy, these divergent cultures will enfold themselves within one another and address and solve their problems together. For this reason David Cowart persuasively argues that Dorris's *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* "addresses itself to a politics of identity less Indian than simply American" (3). Surprisingly, Dorris's use of multi-cultural and multiplicitous narration has received little attention, which is especially curious since he uses narration so effectively to write against discrimination and to advance racial harmony.

Dorris's position as a writer is, then, quite complex, for in writing against discrimination and related forms of representation in literature, he takes a further step in advocating a new social paradigm. In this respect, he goes beyond textual transgression described by theorist Mikhail Bakhtin or resistance noted by such Native American writers as Simon Ortiz. As Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist mention in discussing Bakhtin's treatment of Rabelais, literature has a set of preconditions that, like culture itself, need to be written against: "A legal text is codified by the legal system, a literary text by the literary. The systems that texts manifest may also be thought of as ideologies. Ideology in this sense is locatable in all that texts take for granted, the preconditions held to be so certain by their authors that they need not be stated. . . . Ideology must be seen in a text's holes, in what it has felt it could leave unuttered" (299). Multivocality exposes cultural assumptions underlying traditional modes of narration, and, within such a multivocal text itself, each narrator's view must be positioned against the preceding one so that one voice transgresses, reconsiders, and rewrites another. For Dorris the process of rewriting is as important as that of transgression. Indeed, it is probably more important. At the time he was putting the final editing touches to *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, Dorris was asked about Native resistance in his writing, to which he responded, "Trying to come to terms with culture contact is often done in English because it speaks to an audience on both sides, but the resistance is often done in one's language" (Wong 34). Since *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* and *Cloud Chamber* are both written in English, they should, by Dorris's definition, be less about cultural resistance than nego-

tiation, but they are certainly founded on certain losses, which need to be disclosed.

Both *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* and *Cloud Chamber* deal with transgression against, and the loss of, the personal, familial, and tribal. Dorris describes a Native society with the vestiges of tribal customs and values, but does not appeal to lost origins as a means of explaining, mediating, or discounting modern-day problems of alcoholism, drug abuse, and broken homes. His three women narrators in *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*—Aunt Ida the family matriarch, Christine the alcoholic daughter, and Rayona the mixed-blood granddaughter—together present a matrix of Native social problems (both on the reservation and off), a certain indomitable strength, as well as the need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

These strong-minded, late twentieth-century female narrators share a family relationship but, nevertheless, have serious disagreements and are in need of reconciliation. Comprising three novellas narrated in succession by Rayona, Christine, and Ida, *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* explores varying personal and generational perspectives on a reservation in Montana. Though the women all have a connection to reservation life, two of them have for some time been off the reservation, and the youngest is a mixed blood—Native, white, and black—who only comes to the reservation as a teenager. Each, then, has lived a separate life and has a different outlook, which highlights the dilemma that Native Americans experience in trying to hold on to the remnants of their culture while accepting or negotiating aspects of the dominant white and black cultures. By comparing three lives and narratives, Dorris is able to explore the inherent difficulties of a daughter, mother, and supposed grandmother in negotiating their private, familial, and public domains, and to present positive heroic moments and strong role models.

Although *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* deals with the central issue of loss—the loss of the fifteen-year-old Rayona Taylor's virginity to a young Catholic priest, the loss of her mother's brother and grandmother's only biological child in the Vietnam War, and the imminent death of her mother through alcoholism (in *Cloud Chamber* we discover that she did die)—this loss is partially mitigated by the nature of the narrative itself. As each of the three Native women shares her perspective, the reader is able to piece together the strands of their lives, to which none of the characters individually has access. Each particular narrative traces the outline of the others, adding additional information and creating a personal, familial, and cultural tableau that suggests how their lives specifically and Native American cultures generally have been shaped by vari-

ous cultural and social influences, and the full extent of their common humanity.

In the book's image of hair, these are related "strands, the whippers of coming and going, of twisting and tying and blending" (372) that intertwine the characters in subtle and sometimes tragic ways. Although, as the Chavkins point out in interviewing Dorris, this imagery seems consciously planned and executed, extending to "Lee's braid, which symbolizes his political activism" and Foxy's, "which suggests something quite different" ("Interview" 202), Dorris denies that any of this was conscious. He is pleased that others notice, however, that the braiding provides a frame for the action: "Christine was braiding Rayona's hair at the beginning and Ida was braiding her hair at the end" (202). Braiding in the novel is, nonetheless, more than a narrative frame or the weaving of destinies for the narrator calls it the "catching and of letting go, of braiding" (372). The rhetoric of the entire statement on "braiding" is important not only as a recognition that personal narratives are woven together, but that narratives are about "catching and letting go," that is, recognizing personal and cultural problems and then letting them go through the act of speaking.

Dorris's "braiding" of narrative in *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, however, gives each speaker only one opportunity, for it is not a back-and-forth movement but rather the handing over of narrative responsibility. In *Cloud Chamber* he uses a similar technique to develop the lives of Ida and Rayona in their interaction with their extended family and the larger black and white American society, but extends the range and variety of narratives and novelistic segments. Here the braiding does go back and forth among the narrators, so that six of the eight have at least two opportunities to speak in the fifteen narrative strands. In this second novel, Dorris also includes three male narrators among the many females, which introduces the complexity of gender to this braiding, reminding the reader that the single Indian braid is as much a male as female way of arranging hair and, therefore, an appropriate symbol of universality.

In focusing on the image of hair in *Cloud Chamber*, he first describes the "black snake" or rope of Gaelic hair belonging to Rayona's white great-grandmother, Rose Mannion McGarry, who, as a firm Irish nationalist, has broken a personal vow by informing against her English lover and is ultimately responsible for his execution. This black snake of hair, then, highlights exceptional strength and potency, as well as treachery. At the book's end, Rayona Taylor's hair functions as a similar symbol of strength, and it is consequently no accident that she chooses the name

of Rose for her Native naming ceremony, but her hair does not have negative overtones: it is beautiful, ungovernable, seemingly self-directed, cannot be hidden or contained, and is the combined product of her black, Native, and Gaelic heritage. Dorris's connection of hair, braiding, and narration functions, then, to heighten an awareness of Native cultures, earn respect for them, and promote the role of strong, dominant women in American culture, but it also casts a skeptical glance at measures and actions that dehumanize people and lead to disruption and violence. Ultimately, braided hair comes to symbolize a multiplicitous, multi-ethnic culture, which manages to go beyond the limitations of a particular race, nation or gender, or the violence engendered by them.

Although *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* is arguably less universal in scope than *Cloud Chamber*, it, too, stresses accommodation over transgression and resistance. The first narrative strand of *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* belongs to Rayona, the daughter of Christine and granddaughter (though not biologically) of Aunt Ida—both Native Americans. She is also the daughter of Elgin Taylor, an African American with European American and Cherokee blood. Rayona is an immensely complex character, representing the integration of three races and cultures. This hybridity, emphasized significantly in both texts, especially with reference to language acquisition, does not destroy Rayona, but makes her stronger. Indeed, the main characters' knowing both a Native language and English suggests that they derive their strength from cultural diversity. Rayona goes to English-language schools in Seattle, but understands her Native language and is later able on the Montana reservation to correct a young priest on his vocabulary; her mother is more limited because, although conversant in both English and Indian, she has cast off too much of her Native culture; and her grandmother, who has been primarily restricted to the reservation, speaks mainly Indian, but hears English at Catholic mass, on the radio, and on television and can understand and speak it. Both older women represent unsatisfactory extremes in modern culture—unbraided strands of hair—but Rayona exemplifies the golden mean.

Although Rayona's father has no linguistic hybridity and, in *The Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, no narrative of his own, he is himself an integral part of the black communities of Tacoma and Seattle, Washington where he has moved from Kentucky and, for that reason, serves as a symbol of national migration and, if you will, border crossing. These homes are filled with the sounds of English-speaking media and with the icons of contemporary American culture, though to varying degrees; their customs and

habits are informed by Native and African American traditions. For these reasons, Rayona knows that she is different from other girls her age, and, although she might in some way try to be like Ellen DeMarco, her fellow worker at the Bearpaw Lake State Park who occupies a privileged, white, East Coast position, she cannot succeed, ultimately falling back on her own resources in dealing with life. She neither wholly rejects nor fully accepts either the dominant white culture, her Native tradition, or her black heritage, but attempts to negotiate them all.

Although Rayona accepts the hand that fate deals her, including being frequently abandoned by her philandering father Elgin, neglected by her alcoholic mother Christine, and seduced by a young priest on the reservation, she does not rage against that destiny, but fatalistically tries to comprehend and work within it. When her mother, who has been hospitalized for liver and pancreas failure as a result of her alcoholism, flees to Montana, Rayona accepts this flight, although she does not understand it. Upon their arrival in Montana, the animosity between her mother and grandmother, leading to another stage in Christine's flight, is even less comprehensible, but Rayona accepts that, too. And Father Tom's act of seducing and abandoning Rayona en route to a spiritual retreat in Helena forces her to accept a summer job at the state park, until she acts assertively, returning to her mother's residence on the Montana reservation after standing in for her cousin Foxy Cree in a rodeo rough-riding event. Until this latter phase, Rayona passively goes along with the actions of others. Even so, the seduction is never again raised as a problem or issue, but seems to lead to her own self-definition and independence.

With her return to the reservation, Rayona learns of her mother's fight with Aunt Ida over her deceased uncle Lee's affection, Christine's fast and self-destructive life in Tacoma and Seattle, and finally her debauchery, alcoholism, and terminal illness. Rayona also learns of Lee's importance to her mother; her only sibling, he was the center of her life until his attachment to Dayton. In her narrative segment, the second strand or plait of the braid, Christine elaborates upon the central importance of her brother's place in her affections. His friendship with Dayton strips Christine of her unique relationship with Lee, causing her to goad him into signing up for the draft, and ultimately leading to his tragic death in Vietnam. This sense of responsibility haunts Christine, and his death separates her from Aunt Ida who holds Christine wholly responsible. It is also a responsibility that she cannot ever share with her daughter, inferring that complete understanding is never possible, even among family members.

What neither Rayona nor Christine apparently ever knows, however, is that Lee is Aunt Ida's only child. In the third strand of the narrative, Ida reveals to the reader that no one in the community except Father Hurlbut knows that Christine herself is the illegitimate offspring of Aunt Ida's father and her mother's sister Clara. In reality Christine is both Aunt Ida's step-sister and cousin, but Aunt Ida accepts the responsibility for Christine and, to preserve the family's reputation, deceives the community into thinking Christine is her daughter. Though she never allows Christine to call her anything other than Aunt Ida, she is in all other respects a mother to her and a grandmother to Rayona. This darkly hidden family secret seems never to be revealed to the community, and, while the reader becomes party to it, Christine and Rayona do not—though Aunt Ida suggests that she may tell Rayona the truth at some future time. Christine and Rayona are gradually taken back into Aunt Ida's affection during Christine's final sickness, but the secret may forever form a barrier, or it may simply be the kind of private secret that every person has and which will never be revealed. The image of braiding is, then, critical in another respect, for in a braid the hair is only partially visible; much is hidden under the surface. In personal relationships and narrative, then, there is a substructure or agenda that is not revealed at once—or perhaps ever.

Lee's place within these three narrational recursions of lack and loss by the grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter is critical to an understanding of the novel. In certain ways these narratives weave around an absent center: Rayona never knows her dead uncle but comes to discover the hurt that Christine feels over his death; Christine's relationship with Elgin begins the night that she learns Lee is missing in action, so this love and the later birth of Rayona are founded upon loss and guilt; although Aunt Ida loved Christine as a daughter, she cannot forgive her involvement in Lee's decision to volunteer for the war and holds her accountable for his death and her great loss.

Added to these personal losses is the community's loss of Lee. Everyone knows that he is bright, handsome, and gifted, that he is true to Native customs, and that he may one day take over the leadership of the tribe. He could have helped the tribe regain its good opinion of itself and negotiate its place politically and culturally within the larger Montanan and American context. His death represents a missed opportunity. More than that, however, his death in the Vietnam War suggests how Native American causes have often been sacrificed to national agendas and wars. This is personally tragic for Lee, politically tragic for his tribe, and culturally tragic for Native Americans collectively because their own devotion

to the “great warrior tradition of . . . Indian people” (*Yellow* 170) has been used to commit them to a national agenda which need not be theirs. In some significant way the Vietnam War was partly one of race, and the Natives’ perception of their racial ties with Asia might have prevented such involvement and commitment, but it did not; their own ideals, lives, brotherhood, and ethnicity were sacrificed to a white national ideal. The loss at the center of these narratives is, then, the loss of kin (uncle, brother, and son) and the loss of tribal, cultural, and racial identity, integrity, and empowerment.

The loss that the three women experience does not lead to hostility, anger, and rejection of white culture. *The Yellow Raft in Blue Water* is a novel about dialogic negotiation of voices and places within society. Dorris realizes that Native cultures are part of the fabric of European American and African American cultures. As a writer, he does not extricate his characters from this complex matrix and indeed suggests that the multivocality and heteroglossia must lead to a dialogue about the possibilities of co-existence. Dorris’s works are about the reality of multiculturalism, the overcoming of losses, and the negotiation of cultural identity. The three-fold multivocality of this text and the eight-fold multivocality of *Cloud Chamber* strongly bring home the need to hear the stories of those inside and outside one’s own family and tribe in order to discover better ways of living together. As Rayona remarks after she tells her story to Evelyn at the Bearpaw Lake State Park: “There’s a weight off me. I said it all out loud and the world didn’t come to an end. I listened to my story, let loose, running around free in the morning air, and it wasn’t as bad as I expected” (106). Telling her story does not, however, ultimately liberate Rayona or free her from herself, family, and tribe, but it begins to help her understand them. Similarly, hearing others’ stories will not free people completely from social structures and controls, and personal guilt, but they go some distance towards that release. This notion of braiding, then, may be considered a traditional Native way of fixing hair, may serve as a traditional emblem of Indian cultures (Owens 218), and relates to narration, which is relevant to the Native oral tradition of including many stories and tellers and also to a relatively recent postmodern manner of narrating fiction: it is simultaneously the oldest and the newest.

Though not about narration per se, a supporting image of braiding is the bracelet given by Christine to Elgin. Although their initial passion turns into a stormy relationship, this “bracelet made of three different kinds of metals—iron, copper, and brass—twisted together” and “supposed to bring good luck” (183) seems to withstand marital trials for Elgin

never puts it away. Consequently, whether of hair, narration, or twisted metal, braiding suggests that something stable and organized emerges from the difficulties of human relationships and is finally what matters.

The image of the yellow raft itself seems symbolically to encapsulate and contain the various images of braiding—the hopes and losses within the book—but especially that of Rayona herself: like Lee, it becomes the fixed point of their dilemma. It is, after all, the place where Rayona loses her virginity and where she is forced to realize her independence.¹ Rayona says, “Somewhere in my mind I’ve decided that if I stare at [the raft] hard enough it will launch me out of my present troubles,” but then she has to admit that “If I squint a certain way, it appears to be a lighted trapdoor, flush against a black floor. With my eyes closed almost completely, it becomes a kind of bull’s-eye, and I’m an arrow banging into it head-first” (*Yellow* 104).² The yellow raft represents both promise and loss, frustration and hope, simultaneously it seems, but beyond that it represents some kind of profound transformation. As Dorris explains in his interview with Allan and Nancy Feyl Chavkin, this idea of initiation, loss, and recovery came out of a related childhood experience on such a raft when he had a serious and moving conversation with a Holocaust survivor (198). The raft, then, is concurrently one thing and other, an image of entrapment, catastrophe, and renewal. This sense of ambiguity assists the readers in understanding the complexity of ethnicity and narrative in culture and accepting the differences.

Dorris’s *Cloud Chamber* is also marked by loss and reconciliation, and the symbol of a fast-food restaurant supersedes the yellow raft, further intensifying dialogism and assisting in recuperation. Rose, the Irish foremother who is responsible for her English lover’s death, misses him terribly but cannot tell anyone of her role in his execution, the reasons underlying her flight to America, or the fact that her favorite son Andrew is the offspring of their love affair. This secret loss accounts for her bitterness but also her strength. Such is also the case with Bridie who, although she marries Rose’s son Robert, in reality loves his brother Andrew who becomes a priest and tragically dies. This secret loss accounts for her bitter and tyrannical nature but also her strength. Although Bridie and Robert’s daughters have their losses—Edna never marries though she desires it, and Marcella’s husband disappears—they have a reserve of strength but not the bitterness. In each of these instances, loss tempers the steel of their emotions, making strong and independent women, regardless of race. Indeed, at one point Dorris clearly negates the importance of race in building character and universalizes the factor of loss:

when Elgin Taylor complains to his white mother about his anger over his confusion of racial identity, she counters, "Try being a woman, just for a day . . . I am a human being cast in a dramatic production, just like you, just like everyone . . . Don't tell me your identity crisis. I've lived mine since the day I learned how to attract my papa's attention" (204). Later, in his own narration, Elgin confesses that, though he is "heart-wasted" (238), he feels no rage over his identity and acknowledges that it is no worse than anybody else's. This view is later echoed in Rayona's "nobody's normal . . . Are they?" (295).

At the conclusion of *Cloud Chamber*, as Rayona's relations gather in Montana for a powwow in honor of her naming, these various losses are balanced by family unity. Taking the blame for her father's attempts to sneak some chicken out of the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet, Rayona pays the family debt to the restaurant by working there one whole day, during which her aging, white grandmother Marcella and great aunt Edna arrive from Kentucky. When the cook suffers a relapse of mental illness, the three women pitch in and solve the problem of feeding the hungry diners, serving excellent food and cementing their family ties. The restaurant becomes a symbol of whites, blacks, and Natives working together to achieve social harmony at the level of popular culture (instead of government policy or social theory). The activity of common work and mutual goals supersedes the braiding of the first book, becoming a symbol of racial accord and equality. This is the modern version of the original Thanksgiving that, according to Dorris in "For Indians, No Thanksgiving," never happened (*Paper* 228). Such a plausible dinner in a fast-food restaurant places the Native population firmly in the present age, able to cope and change, and deal with a variety of problems.

In a 1991 essay, Dorris asks: "will it turn out, once again, that the only good Indians, the only Indians whose causes and needs this country can embrace, are lodged safely in the past, wrapped neatly in the blankets of history, comfortable magnets for our sympathy because they require nothing of us but tears in a dark theater?" (*Paper* 264). Dorris never allows his Native population to stay in the past, nor does he depict them without problems, but he demonstrates that they are strong, resourceful people—women and men—who can work out their differences, though some of their secrets will never be revealed nor all of their problems solved. Dorris comments that Pilate in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* does not have a navel, which symbolizes cutting "off the whole chain of being back to origination" (Wong 38). Dorris clearly wants his characters to cope with the present rather than retreat into some absent and irretrievable past.

Problems may, he suggests, be solved only by acknowledging a multi-cultural society in which everyone has a voice. Many contemporary writers give voice to marginalized groups, but, I would argue, Dorris's voice is among the strongest in asserting the value of multi-cultural acceptance and negotiation in a postmodern age.

NOTES

¹ In several interviews (e.g. Chavkin "Interview" 201; Schumacher 179; Wong 36) Dorris remarks that Rayona was originally conceived as Raymond, a male, and it seems that this raft scene was constructed in that earlier period. This observation raises an interesting question about the relationship of this young man and the "lustful priest" (Chavkin "Interview" 201) and perhaps accounts for the obscurity of the representation of the "sexual experience" (Schumacher 179). This homosexual experience is related to Christine's anxiety as a young girl, when her advances to Dayton are mysteriously rebuffed and when, as a result, she is so dead set against Lee's involvement with Dayton. Later, after Lee's death and some time before Christine arrives back on the reservation, Dayton's reputed homosexuality has been the subject of a scandal. Perhaps Dorris is suggesting an even greater degree of marginalization in his characters than is readily apparent and consequently the exceptional emotional effort that must go into the process of transformation and reconciliation. Perhaps, as well, sexual transgression, including homosexuality, is a significant leitmotif.

² In talking about such radical transformations, Louise Erdrich uses a very similar kind of image. She says of a certain woman, "But, you know, she's realizing her power. She's realizing she can say 'No,' which is something women are not taught to do, and that she can hit the sky like a truck if she want. Yes, it's transformational" (Bruchac 101).

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Gerald Vizenor: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism

Linda Lizut Helstern

General Studies

- Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: of Oklahoma P, 1996. The energy in orality is dialogic, and storytelling in Native traditions, according to Blaeser, is both to utter and to hear—reception and participation. She grounds her thesis in the creative power of words and thoughts in Native belief systems, where speech is often found inappropriate. In Vizenor, who also uses nonlinguistic sounds or vocables, silence often becomes a dialogic device to engage the reader. His thematic emphasis is liberating static monologic words (dead voices), in particular the sign Indian, by employing such strategies as ambiguity, a rhetoric of gaps, and an indeterminacy through which meaning accrues/expands in a sequence of contexts analogous to Eco's definition of the Baroque. In each case, Blaeser finds a theoretical analog in the reader response theories of Wolfgang Iser. She also draws on Terry Eagleton's theories of code-conforming, code-productive, and code-transgressive texts to show how Vizenor teaches us new ways of reading. Blaeser considers the entire Vizenor oeuvre, especially haiku and creative nonfiction, devoting about 20 pages of text to Vizenor's five novels. (See separate entries for *Bearheart*, *Griever*, *Trickster of Liberty*, *Heirs of Columbus*, and *Dead Voices*.)
- . "Gerald Vizenor: Writing—in the Oral Tradition." Diss. Notre Dame, 1990. An expanded version of this dissertation, which investigates the techniques Vizenor uses to approximate the dialogic of the oral tradition in his writing, has been published as *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*.
- Chang, Kuo-Ching. "Self-Empowering Revisions: History, Politics, and Literary Practice." Diss. The University of Rochester, 1992. Chang explores how Jean Rhys, E. L. Doctorow, Seamus Heaney, Gerald Vizenor, Thomas Pynchon, and Adrienne Rich revision the relations of politics to cultural history and recenter marginalized subjects in Western culture.
- Hochbruck, Wolfgang. "Breaking Away: The Novels of Gerald Vizenor."

World Literature Today (Spring 1992): 274-78. Considering Vizenor's first four novels, Hochbruck points out the differences between Vizenor's work and the novels in the early Momaday/Silko tradition which have defined the canon of contemporary American Indian literature for such critics as William Bevis ("Homing In"). Vizenor's break-away techniques include breaking the molds of many fixed images and myths (the ironic subversion of the Columbus myth in *Heirs*), political satire (the Chinese bureaucracy in *Griever* and the AIM leadership in *Trickster*), eruptive violence, the use of non-regional settings like China, and the use of stylistic and language experiments such as the word/phrase repetition in *Heirs* that lend a structural coherence to the text in the manner of the epic and oral tradition. While aligning them with postmodern novels in the thinness of story line, provocative satire, and lack of insight into character, Hochbruck also notes in their connectedness of plot and character a kinship to the Native oral tradition and the television family saga.

Jahner, Elaine. "Allies in the Word Wars: Vizenor's Uses of Contemporary Critical Theory." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.2 (1985): 64-69. Jahner notes that Vizenor's theoretical position for deconstructing the semiotic foundations of racism evolved from the traditional tribal mythic system independently of contemporary literary theory, though Vizenor seeks connections between systems. He sees dangers both in relativism and in the lack of awareness of the arbitrary nature of the mythologies of Western culture. In his analysis of the workings of metaphor (visual dream flights) in Ojibway tradition, the known of experience is connected with the unknown "intuitive sense of potential meaning." This incompleteness leads to further flights or earthdiving to bring up the stuff for building the turtle island, "a real, if always incomplete, ground for meaning." Metaphor, always both inside and outside the system, deconstructs and reconstructs. The cinematic techniques Vizenor uses in *Earthdivers* inscribe stories within stories within stories such that meaning lies between the stories or the way any one of them plays off against the enclosing frame.

—. "Cultural Shrines Revisited." *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (Winter 1985): 25-30. For Vizenor, language is never innocent and requires outwitting. From his early belief that writing destroys the life of the oral exchange, he has come to the position that the oral tradi-

tion stays alive in the distances between contraries and that these distances are fields of vision. Creation is ongoing (and the old myths will work in old settings), but metaphor requires true visualization. In his use of the symbolic potential of specific visual settings as terms for mythic metaphors, Jahner notes that "with his emphasis on the visual in oral narrative, Vizenor is on solid traditional grounds" because of the meanings called up in traditional stories that still inhere, unconsciously or consciously, in space, color, and form. Jahner points out Vizenor's use of Donald Davidson's explanation of metaphor as ambiguity/doubleness in *Earthdivers*.

- Laga, Barry E. "Shadow Distance: A Gerald Vizenor Reader." Review. *American Indian Quarterly* 20.1 (Winter 1996): 121-23. Noting that Vizenor's oeuvre is almost monolithic, Laga suggests that an anthology organized by genre is reductionist yet sees the value in encouraging the web of connections between works. He feels that early work is lacking here.
- Lee, A. Robert. Introduction to *Shadow Distance: A Gerald Vizenor Reader*. Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan UP, 1994. Introducing Vizenor as an inveterate naysayer to stereotypes of the American Indian, Lee shows him in such unconventional poses as teacher of film. This is the most complete biography and publishing history available on Vizenor and provides new slants such as his self-publishing career as founder of Nodin Press.
- Lincoln, Kenneth. *Indi'n Humor: Bicultural Play in Native America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. Lincoln sees Vizenor's prose as a rip-off of trickster humor and an intercultural insult: exceeding boundaries (with the implication that they do not know the tribal boundaries) is a particular problem for "urban mixedbloods." He views *Bearheart* as "carnage, cocksucking, and throwaway dirty talk" and *Griever* as the victim of red-white American racism. Vizenor's film *Harold of Orange*, by contrast, delights Lincoln.
- Murray, David. "Crossblood Strategies in the Writings of Gerald Vizenor." *Yearbook of English Studies* 24 (1994): 213-27. See *Trickster of Liberty*.
- Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown. "American Indian Literatures: A Guide to Anthologies, Texts, and Research." *Studies in American Indian Literature: Critical Essays and Course Designs*. Ed. Paula Gunn Allen. New York: MLA, 1983. 281-309. One six-line paragraph covers Vizenor criticism.

- . *American Indian Literatures: An Introduction, Bibliographic Review, and Selected Bibliography*. New York: MLA, 1990. In her series of bibliographic essays, Ruoff includes paragraphs on Vizenor's autobiography, nonfiction/short fiction, novels/film/poetry, translations, and critical writings, along with a selected bibliography of criticism about his work.
- . "Gerald Vizenor: Compassionate Trickster." *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (Winter 1985): 67-78. Reprinted in *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.2 (Spring 1985): 52-63; Series 2 5.2 (Summer 1993): 39-45. Ruoff elucidates Vizenor's key theme, the interaction between the tribal and the nontribal worlds, in a bibliographic essay that covers all his work to 1984. Of his satires, Ruoff notes that they ring true because of the accurate depiction of the underlying causes of the culture wars and the nature of the wounds suffered by tribal people, many "self inflicted, as Vizenor makes clear." Entrepreneurship, she points out, is a key activity for Vizenor's protagonists. Ruoff describes *Bearheart* as combining "elements of classical and Western European epics and American Indian oral narratives" and describing "the four worlds of Indian people" by combining "the emergence and migration myths of Southwestern tribes with the flood myths of the Algonkin-speaking tribes." Throughout his work Vizenor utilizes such elements of the oral tradition as plots, animal (especially bear) transformations, trickster/transformer characters, and an emphasis on dream and vision.
- . "Woodland Word Warrior: An Introduction to the Works of Gerald Vizenor." *MELUS* 13.1/2 (Spring-Summer 1986): 13-43. This essay repeats Ruoff's observations in "Gerald Vizenor: Compassionate Trickster," updated to include a significant section on *Griever* and a selected bibliography of Vizenor's writings by genre. Maintaining a commitment to his Ojibwe heritage, Vizenor wages war on the sham of contemporary Pan-Indianness with wry humor, according to Ruoff. She notes Vizenor's interest in theories of myth and language, fascination with Thomas White Hawk and Dennis Banks, and the various uses of masks, animal transformation, and tricksters in his work.
- Shöler, Bo. "Trickster and Storyteller. The Sacred Memories and True Tales of Gerald Vizenor." *Coyote Was Here: Essays on Contemporary Native American Literary and Political Mobilization*. Dolphin 9. Aarhus, Denmark: SEKLOS, 1984. 134-46. Generaliz-

ing from Pueblo ethnography, Schöler develops the idea of the creation of the world through speech, asserting that "language is thus endowed with an immanent creativity which makes it sacred in tribal society." He contends that in *Wordarrows* (1978) Vizenor adapts the oral tradition to print, countering post-contact "fragmentation of experience and alienation of the self" with words/consciousness-raising stories. Noting that satire speaks to a shame culture rather than Western guilt culture, Schöler suggests that Vizenor's quest as a writer is "to reactivate the sympathetic powers of satire": "As Robert C. Elliot argues, total belief in the power of the word makes the satirist an extremely powerful and feared person, since lives depend on his/her invective." Vizenor's "preoccupation with obscene and potentially taboo matters" is also related to social control, according to Schöler, in societies where deviance functions as catharsis. Turning to *Bearheart*, Schöler links the mixedblood and trickster with the idea of balance between good and evil. Imaginative freedom stands against the static and exclusive. The problem of defining Vizenor's genre (fantasy or realism?) is due to Western bias, which leads Schöler to a discussion of Vizenor's definition of trickster and his trickster characters and sprites. Imagination is a socio-political act for Vizenor, and Schöler notes, "Dreaming oneself into existence is not an escape but an act which is based on acute observations of natural and social phenomena. Transformation is dependent on participation in *all* life and on remaining receptive and imaginative."

Thompson, Craig Bunyard. "Speaking of Identities: The Presentation of American Indian Experience." Diss. University of California, San Diego, 1993. His abstract indicates that Thompson considers the strategies used to express Native American cultural identity and how these intersect with and contradict other categories of identity, including individualism, gender, and class. With the recognition that identity is created discursively and is, therefore, always in flux, Thompson examines cultural interpretations of Clackamas stories made in the 1920s, then Momaday and Vizenor. Thompson asserts that Vizenor, skeptical of notions of personal and collective identity, constantly returns to the question of what is lost in history. He feels that Vizenor's vision of freedom must be explained in traditional humanist terms.

Velie, Alan. *Four American Indian Literary Masters: N. Scott Momaday*,

James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Gerald Vizenor. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1982. Reprinted as "Vizenor: Post-Modern Fiction" in *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*. Ed. Richard F. Fleck. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1993. 155-70. Velie notes the crossover of materials in Vizenor's oeuvre beginning early in *Wordarrows* and the published poems and then *Bearheart*, where Lilith Mae Farrier and Zebulon Matchi Makwa both appear. In *Bearheart's* terminal creeds, Velie detects Eric Hoffer's "true believers." He discusses the importance of tricksters, especially the shapeshifting Chippewa Nanabozho, and sacred clowns to the text, referring to Radin on the former and Barbara Tedlock on the latter. Velie also points out Vizenor's kinship with non-Native postmodern novelists, whom he characterizes as ignoring the traditions of the modern novel, incorporating generous amounts of bad art into their work, being devoid of philosophical and aesthetic depth (finding no symbolism, only surface in Vizenor), and viewing writing as play. With *Earthdivers*, Velie sees Vizenor moving specifically to a consideration of mixedbloods and reviews historic attitudes toward them, as well as the issues of blood quantum and passing *for* Indian.

Interviews

Breinig, Helmbrecht and Klaus Lösch. "Gerald Vizenor." *American Contradictions: Interviews with Nine American Writers*. Ed. Wolfgang Binder and Helmbrecht Breinig. Hanover, NH: U P of New England, 1995. 143-65. Noting that Native American writers have more in common with the postcolonial literary experience, where there is yet no canon, than with American literature, Vizenor speaks of attempting to educate readers in two ways: to a literary consciousness of oral culture and to a concern with action and its results rather than with character, which he ties to book marketing strategies and social class. He espouses the tribal view that we all have the potential for good and evil within ourselves. Vizenor is specifically interested in restoring the pleasure in the imaginative figure that is transformational/nonrepresentational. Of *Dead Voices*, he observes that playing out the idea of transformation in the wilderness would have been romantic. Of the priest's masks in *Bearheart*, he notes that churches, nations,

states, and political processes are all masks. Vizenor speaks at some length on various facets of identity, including the political consequences of altering genetic material, the relationship between experience (dream/intimate, private, and public) and identity, and cultural affiliation, which he considers a matter of choice but also a matter of responsibility to the community once that choice has been made: "You have to be responsible for memory and history." Vizenor emphasizes that *mixedbloods are whole people*. The interviewers suggest that Ricoeur's "creative metaphor" may be a basic principle of Vizenor's writing.

Bowers, Neal and Charles L. P. Silet. "An Interview with Gerald Vizenor." *MELUS* 8.1 (1981): 41-49. Vizenor speaks to the link between haiku and dream songs, the intensity of imagery and mythical transformations. He says his move from poetry to prose developed from the need to educate readers systematically. Of the violence in *Bearheart*, Vizenor speaks to the denial of violence in American culture; when violence manifests itself, his characters (and Americans in general) do not know how to respond. In Japan, through the literature and the philosophy, he was drawn to acceptance of the contradictions in human experience, finding an attitude very different from the Christian holy war to end evil. Vizenor notes that in tribal cultures, creation comes about through an androgynous balance. He sees himself, however, as an "up-setter" rather than a "balancer" and frequently edits his own speech and writing as dangerously revolutionary. Being out of balance is, paradoxically, tied to the terminal creeds of invented Indians "stuck in coins and words like artifacts." Accepting that identity had once been very easy and comfortable for Vizenor, he has now come to believe that to counter the commodification of the Indian, "Some upsetting is necessary. In other words, an imbalance is created, so, to seek a balance, energies must be used to upset it." Vizenor does not feel that it is possible to translate the sense of place in oral literature into English, noting a vision-name-place connection in tribal languages that does not exist in English; he feels that reimagination and reexpression are more viable than translation.

Bruchac, Joseph. "Follow the Trickroutes: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor." *Survival This Way: Interviews with American Indian Poets*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1987. 287-310. Speaking to the personal importance of place, Vizenor suggests that only an "oral

tradition place” can be unchanging and that is necessary in moments of fear and confusion. He speaks of his love for a Minnesota cedar grove, a hill in St. Benedict’s Catholic Cemetery/White Earth Reservation, and bodies of water in general. Vizenor addresses his efforts to break down reader expectations in several ways. He speaks of tragedy/terminal creeds and comedy (requiring community), and asserts that Karl Kroeber and Dennis Tedlock understand both stories and the non-tragic nature of the Native worldview. He speaks about the storytellers in his family, especially his Uncle Clement Beaulieu, and the kinds of stories traditionally told: priest stories (especially stories of tricking priests); stories of magic and faith healing and how things mysteriously disappeared; and stories about the resolution of tensions between the colonists and the Indians (more manipulative) and between the fullbloods and the mixedbloods (more affectionate). Bruchac makes two stylistic observations: that in his journalism Vizenor allows people to speak in their own voices and that his work depends upon accretion, the expansion, including variations and contradictions, rather than the modification of an idea. Haiku and story are closely linked for Vizenor: “What happens, if it happens, is that the reader takes it in and the words disappear. It becomes a visual event, which of course is the heart of a storyteller.” In developing his concept of mythic verism and comic attitude of his characters, Vizenor asserts that the truth of his work “comes from a metaphorical use of traditional energy and references.”

Coltelli, Laura. “Gerald Vizenor.” *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1990. 155-82. Vizenor here speaks of story as the center of the world and how contemporary stories come out of visual reference as the “recollection of multiple senses of an experience so that actually when you call upon an experience in memory . . . you can tell it from a number of points of view.” He addresses the difference between translation and the adjustments he makes for written form and notes how English differs from his tribal language (lack of connection to place, abstractness, emphasis on nouns). Connecting three key themes—anti-consumerism, anti-anthropology, and trickster traits—Vizenor asserts, “Anthropology is a material creation; a trickster is a spiritual, imaginative act. Anthropologists have things; tricksters are.” He reminds us that the trickster version of the creation

is a secular version of the creation story, not the sacred version. He emphasizes, however, that “there are no scriptural versions of oral traditional stories” and that cultures live and change: story remains a means of finding a way through the imaginative traffic. Vizenor suggests that it is easier for a dark-skinned mixedblood to pretend to a stable identity than for a light-skinned mixedblood. This is the only interview where Vizenor addresses the emotional impact of his experience as a community organizer, the amount of pain and suffering he internalized, his rage, and the victims who have been victims so long: “there’s no place to cheer them.” He speaks to issues of Indian identity, describing Curtis’s costuming of subjects and altered photographic negatives as the Barthes’s striptease in reverse, but notes, crediting Susan Sontag, that changing the image only gives the illusion of changing social conditions. Vizenor specifically addresses his interest in complicating the binary, taking “the simplest binary constructions, but I shift them to multiple meanings.” His techniques, he admits, have become more complex over time, as in gender shifts. He likens his mask strategy in *Bearheart* to theatrical gesture; by Griever, he is experimenting with pronoun shifts.

- . “Gerald Vizenor: The Trickster Heirs of Columbus.” *Native American Literature Forum* (University of Pisa) 2-3 (1990-91): 101-16. After a lengthy recap of the plot of *Heirs of Columbus* and its underlying philosophy of healing, Vizenor discusses Steiner’s position that language is only necessary to deceive, counter, take advantage of, or play (having once quoted Steiner: “language is man’s instrument to refuse the world as it is”). There is an extensive discussion of visual memory and the oral tradition—the multitude of stories that a single remembered scene can call forth, the one that is told being the one called for in a given situation. Stylistically, the oral tradition translates into writing in lyric repetition, dreams as a source of reality, storytelling by characters who thus have the opportunity to perceive and comment, and stories that start like trickster stories—on the run. Vizenor responds to a question about animal transformations in his work with the story of how Judge Beatrice Lord’s high tech moccasin experience enables her to understand the tribal world view. Vizenor speaks of the variety of tricksters, including trickster entrepreneurs, in his work, noting that the compassionate tribal trickster is little understood in an immigrant culture where people feel

vulnerable because they are seldom among people they know and understand: the trickster con man is better understood in America. He is adamant that trickster stories from the oral tradition not be reduced to simplistic moral lessons. Vizenor speaks at length about the process of collecting family stories and creating his autobiographical stories from single-word characterizations of visual memories. He recaps the ways in which postmodernism opened up in the tribal imagination: time abolished, dreams as a source of reality, stories never told in the same way because of the differing situation of the telling, a story told from different perspectives, trickster play in the language game, and the colonial imposition of translation creating a story unlike the original. Finally, Vizenor illustrates through a discussion of Momaday that all contemporary tribal writers are postmodern writers.

Isernhagen, Hartwig. "'Historical in a World of Postmodern Survivance' — An Excerpt from an Interview with Gerald Vizenor." *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 1995: 336-50. (Taped July 26, 1994.) Asked to explain his propensity for transgressing genres, Vizenor suggests lack of creative writing courses. He says that controverting mainstream presentations of tribal people, meaningless for him, is his easiest task as a writer, while "the most difficult is to find the underlying vision and shadow, to give some power to the character that's not merely a cartoon surface contradiction, binary, or just overturning." His expressed concern beyond deconstruction is transformation, which he explains by simplifying Nathalie Sarraute's idea of tropisms—upsetting the familiar tropes. Vizenor notes that only the names in *Wordarrows* are fictionalized. He agrees when Isernhagen observes that he is thoroughly modernist in his association of character with a notion of mystery and of language that tries to get at mystery by indirection. "But," he adds, "when it comes to racial binaries I am a postmodernist." Vizenor's difficulty with modernism is "the source of cultural experience that gives [the mythic] method of interpretation its meaning"—that and the fact that universalizing diminishes the impact of the particular experience. He elaborates on this, equating monotheism and Western notions of scientific truth. On the subject of nonrepresentational literature, Vizenor notes that even Native origin stories were told with tremendous variations and that the *serious* origin stories had tricky, playful counterparts. Vizenor does not see himself as a satirist but as a

powerful “voice of place and environment.” He feels that pure satire, dependent upon representation, is hardly ever communal, a hallmark of the comic and of his satirical comic; trickster stories in their avoidance of representation and their transformational qualities are not conventionally satirical either: the trickster amounts to nothing. Vizenor links his interest in depicting animal/human love relationships to missionary judgments of paganism in trickster stories. He calls violence in a text “an understatement of representation,” which evolves into an extended discussion of Vizenor’s various writings on Thomas White Hawk, the young Lakota murderer/rapist sentenced to death without a trial. Vizenor specifically acknowledges Bearheart as satire on an historic theme: western expansion encountering the savage is here reversed. He emphasizes that culture, here, is not representation but new acts of survivance, a new economy as a new way of life.

McCaffery, Larry and Tom Marshall. “Head Water: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor.” *Chicago Review* 39.3-4 (1993): 50-54. This interview focuses on *Griever*, going to China, the opera performance of Monkey King, and the trickster connection. Vizenor points to the connection between the Bagese’s stones (metaphors for stories) in *Dead Voices* and the original fragmentation of trickster’s brother stone into all the stones in the world. He defines the neologism *survivance*, more than surviving victimization, as a new kind of existentialism, a tribal or spiritual existentialism, which adds dream and the presence of previous experience to the classic Sartrean discovery of self through action.

—. “On Thin Ice, You Might as Well Dance: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor.” *Some Other Frequency: Interviews with Innovative American Authors*. Ed. Larry McCaffery. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996. 287-309. Included are a brief introductory essay and selected bibliography. Asked to address the tribal existential postmodern in his work, Vizenor speaks of what is both postmodern and oral: that the meaning of a story depends on the conditions of the telling and is never twice the same; there is an inherent danger in that the telling of a story is an encounter with the unknown, i.e., a good story, one that fits the moment, is a chance event. Just as Vizenor is interested in the concept of survivance and creating the condition of play, he is concerned with the modern lack of belief in storytelling, with genetic muta-

tion resulting from our chemical civilization, with the narrative possibilities in the looseness of historical accounting (e.g., accounts of Columbus). Vizenor points out that, despite his belief that his vision of liberation would be impossible confined to discourses of the real, his work is grounded in accurate historic and geographic detail. Finally, he emphasizes as ultimately important not how trickster stories relate to culture but the non-utilitarian nature of trickster stories.

Miller, Dallas. "Mythic Rage and Laughter: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 7.1 (Spring 1995): 77-96. Vizenor begins by speaking of the unnaturalness of silence and silence as power. He speaks to his attempt to develop a critical strategy "uniquely interpretive of Native American fiction," whose ideas focus on silence, transformation (including trickster narratives), episodic stories that have multiple topics with a kind of center but no closure, a worldview based upon chance/coincidence, and "a kind of interpretation as well as a story, sort of commenting on it as you tell the story and other things." He emphasizes that the author doesn't necessarily have to be Native American to develop a text with these elements of Native American expression. Vizenor speaks to the sources and editions of *Summer in the Spring*. Of Krupat and Swann's theories of Native autobiography, Vizenor agrees with the need to call up tribe/family before speaking of the self but vehemently disagrees with their assertion that Native writers find it difficult to use the first person, noting that both the naming tradition (nicknames, sacred names) and the shamanic tradition are highly individualistic though always tied to community. Vizenor talks about taking to haiku early, Basho's dragonfly theory of haiku, and the importance of its visual aspect. His novels, he explains, come from "soul anger" or "mythic rage": "And out of that comes a lot of anger, intensity, contradiction, chance." Vizenor discusses favorite language games: creating neologisms, building communal stories, and the difference between imagination and lying. Of his propensity to cite sources in fiction, he says, "That's because I don't see a great distinction between history and fiction. (Laughs.) A particular kind of fiction." Vizenor discusses irony in his work, using examples from *Trickster of Liberty*. Asked about what his French background might have to do with his (theoretical) "Sephardic interests," Vizenor responds, "I don't know, I'm a

whole person. I mean I'm not parts." Vizenor ends with a story about an anthropologist who discovers a link between White Earth *Anishinaabe* singers and Romanian gypsies.

Simard, Rodney, Lavonne Mason, and Julie Abner. "'I Defy Analysis': A Conversation with Gerald Vizenor." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (1993): 43-51. As a follow-up to a MELUS "Thomas White Hawk" session on 1 May 1993, the interview focuses largely on Vizenor's White Hawk essays and his plans for a new first person account of the making of those essays. Vizenor is highly critical of Truman Capote's refusal to take an advocacy position for fear of jeopardizing his ability to finish *In Cold Blood*. Even as he notes, "Film holds us passive. We can't engage in discourse," Vizenor expresses admiration for the film *Incident at Oglala* because it examines the judicial process without taking an ideological position.

Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart/Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles

Armstrong, Meg. "'Buried in Fine White Ash': Violence and the Reimagination of Ceremonial Bodies in *Winter in the Blood* and *Bearheart*." *American Indian Quarterly* 21.2 (Spring 1997): 265-98. Armstrong considers the body as the site of the inscription of power in a ceremonial rhetoric of wounding, violation, and evisceration. Noting that in American Indian literature ritual has become part of the dominant culture's stereotyped notion of Indian identity, she sees Welch's and Vizenor's works countering the idea that Indians are defined/made whole through their embodiment of ritualized identities by compelling recognition of the death of prior identities that mark a history of violence. *Bearheart* resists the stereotype through the "comic violation, dismemberment, mutilation, and immolation of any ceremonial body" encountered, "turning away from ceremonial redemption to the mechanics of power itself." For Armstrong, the relentless violence of *Bearheart* is "quite obviously, the genocide of American Indians," a term that denotes not only U.S. government policy but also becomes a metaphor for Vizenor's deconstruction of the sign *Indian*. Armstrong sees no epiphany in *Bearheart*, only visions of fragmentation. She considers how torture and death

have been turned into media spectacle and how the sacrifice of Indian and feminine (aligned in the novel) fuels cycles of lust and avarice. She contrasts the fetishizing of body parts with the transformative powers of love in the fluid shapeshifting bodies of Proude and Inawa Biwide, for change ultimately comes not from identification with any outside icon but from tearing apart what is inside the body—the imagination that binds the individual to the dominant symbolic order.

Barry, Nora. "Chance and Ritual: The Gambler in the Texts of Gerald Vizenor." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (Fall 1993): 16-22. Noting the vast number of games of chance played by tribal peoples, Barry describes the trickster as a potentially comic trope and the gambler as a potentially tragic trope. For Vizenor, who treats the Evil Gambler in *anishinabe adisokan*, *Interior Landscapes*, *Bearheart*, and *Heirs to Columbus*, "Chance brings together an evolving, not static world of ritual with the postmodern world of possibility." The game is never finished and never ending. Barry sees the gambling scene in *Bearheart*, because of Proude's association of life and death and his bear connection, as analogous to a Midewiwin initiation. In *Heirs*, where the windigo gambler withdraws because of Stone's dream of Black Elk's war herb, the new combination of stories affirms the continuing evolution of texts and ceremonies. Barry notes that Vizenor always includes the wind motif in his gambler stories.

Bergevin, Gerald W. "Theorizing through an Ethnic Lens." *Modern Language Studies* 26.4 (Fall 1996): 13-26. See **Literary Theory and Cultural Critique**.

Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. While noting that *Bearheart* introduces many of the themes, methods and metaphors Vizenor employs in later work, Blaeser is particularly interested in this novel as a code-transgressive text. Vizenor breaks down illusions of civility through the use of uncivilized language in order to "awaken an awareness of life's elemental forces," counters the entertainment value of violence, unmasks our personal terminal beliefs, and denies readers satisfaction, forcing us to arrive at a resolution outside the text. She treats Belladonna's episode at some length. Blaeser is also interested in Vizenor's stylistic nuances, such as prose "written in the spirit of haiku" (*haibun*) and the use of vocables like "ho ho ho ho" that express the sacred

spirit in midewiwin.

Blair, Elizabeth. "Text as Trickster: Postmodern Language Games in Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart*." *MELUS* 20.4 (Winter 1995): 75-90. Blair considers Vizenor's "paradoxical postmodern project" of inscribing the oral tradition within the written text, noting that his "mongrel texts" defy genre categories, amalgamating "satire, criticism and 'facts' in the same narrative package." In his first novel, *Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart*, Vizenor's strategies for outwitting the conditions imposed by language include decentering the text through a tale-within-a-tale structure and separating the reader from the text by the imposition of such conventions as multiple title pages, illustrations, dedications, and acknowledgments. Blair observes the differences in the 1991 revision titled *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*, which include retitling the frame, "Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart" in the earlier version, to "Letter to the Reader." Blair follows various characters and stories from *Bearheart* as they move through Vizenor's oeuvre, noting inconsistencies that cast doubt on the veracity or narrative stability of the storyteller and the texts. Vizenor, further, builds his house of word mirrors upon a naming strategy that assigns more than a dozen names each to Benito Saint Plumero and Zebulon Matchi Makwa. His names and masks evoke both the fluidity of identity and the fixing of Native names with tribal enrollment. Blair counters Maureen Keady's interpretation of *Bearheart* as an indictment of language, pointing out that language is here freed to become the stuff of play.

Hauss, Jon. "Real Stories: Memory, Violence, and Enjoyment in Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart*." *Literature and Psychology* 41.4 (1995): 1-16. Hauss finds in *Bearheart* a new rendering of violence that has become the "unthinkable routine," a rendering of history's suppressed violence of a visibly phallic character where progress makes the phallus a sacred totem. He notes that for Vizenor there is no golden age; even prehistory is a history of sellouts. Whereas the Lacanian "Real of history" leads to a repeat of the pain rather than its transformation, Vizenor studies moments of deadlock where a rechanneling of desire through the superego makes renewed eruptions of enjoyment possible along with the possibility of a new articulation of the socio-symbolic order. Hauss points out the various places in the narrative where confession of traumatic assault—return to the point where a character has been

scarred by violence—leads to the regenerative power of memory: Willabelle, Benito Saint Plumero, and Lilith Mae all find sympathetic listeners and, in Lacanian “symbolic suicide,” surrender their formerly stable articulations of identity and history (the real of traumatic enjoyment) and recover erotic desire. In the death of the Evil Gambler, Hauss sees an eruption of Fanonian counterviolence and an opportunity to question the role of violence in liberation struggles.

Hochbruck, Wolfgang. “Breaking Away: The Novels of Gerald Vizenor.” *World Literature Today* (Spring 1992): 274-78. See **General Studies**.

—. “‘The Last of the Oral Tradition in Electronic Word Processing’: Traditional Material and Postmodern Form in Gerald Vizenor’s *Bearheart*.” *Traditionalism vs. Modernism: Proceedings of the Annual Conference for the Study of New Literatures in English*, 12-15 June 1991. Essen: Die Blaue Eule Verlag, 1994. 89-100. Hochbruck is interested both in oral language and Native American oral tradition as it is presented in *Bearheart*, noting that Vizenor, unlike other tribal writers, does not present a coherent cultural ideal and does not lament the loss of tradition: tradition here is the bits and pieces of a postmodern language game. Hochbruck notes that several variants of the animal husband myth are told in the novel, each echoing and parodying the others. He also notes the use of the trickster, suggesting that *all* the characters have *some* trickster traits, but with important difference from traditional tricksters: compassion and a pattern of survival linked to the ability to change (form, appearance, or gender). Even as Vizenor shows American English as a language on the brink of collapse, he gives voice to the tribal and the animal with special focus on silence, especially through Proude and Inawa Biwide.

Kaganoff, Penny. “*Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*.” Review. *Publishers Weekly* 237.16 (20 April 1990): 68.

Keady, Maureen. “Walking Backward into the Fourth World: Survival of the Fittest in *Bearheart*.” *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (Winter 1985): 61-65. Keady explores language use in an attempt to come to terms with the novel’s brutal satire: it “shows the folly of those who hold words up like shields to protect them from reality” by “degrading words and using them to violate and degrade.” Confronted with the Evil Gambler, for example, the pil-

grims substitute words for strength. Their trials are designed to test who will sacrifice their personal creeds for reality (Proude and Inawa Biwide) and who will fall victim to their own vanities (the Gambler, Lilith Mae, Belladonna, Cozener, Coxwain, Sun Bear Sun); in an effort to explain Rosina's fate, Keady suggests that she demonstrates physical rather than a verbal weakness. Here good and evil are blurred and even the Gambler has suffered; evil in *Bearheart* is not the absence but the distortion of good. Keady views the frame chapter as a ceremonial prayer.

Klein, Carol. "Darkness in Saint Louis *Bearheart*." Review. *Library Journal* (1 January 1979): 130. In this brief review, Klein suggests that *Bearheart* lacks not only the conscious-raising quality of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* but "the literary innocence and lyric quality of Indian tales."

Linton, Patricia. "The 'Person' in Postmodern Fiction: Gibson, Le Guin, and Vizenor." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (Fall 1993): 3-11. Linton notes that the postmodern/post-humanist novel, where machine beings and animals without human language capability can exercise consciousness and agency, has disrupted our secure sense of what constitutes a person. *Neuromance* and *Always Coming Home* stand as her examples of the former, *Bearheart* as her example of the latter. Here, mongrels and crows have shamanistic power, and Lilith takes boxers for lovers. Linton feels that animal agency may be more difficult for us to accept than machine agency as we confront fears of losing something we have guarded as uniquely human.

McClure, Andrew. "Liberation and Identity: Bearing the Heart of *The Heirship Chronicles*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 47-59. Extending the work of Louis Owens, McClure applies Bakhtinian concepts to various aspects of *Bearheart* to show how Vizenor works to deconstruct the static, one-dimensional nature of Indian identity. Vizenor's Bakhtinian strategies include puns (*heirship* from the authoritative discourse of government bureaucracy/*hairship*, from AIM's authoritative discourse on Indian identity) and the "series" of the body delineated in Rabelais (body, clothing, food, drink, copulation, death, defecation) through which Vizenor effects a parallel between satire and trickster discourse.

—. "'Survivance' in Native American Literature: Form and Representation." Diss. University of New Mexico, 1998. His abstract sug-

gests that McClure's article "Liberation and Identity" is drawn from the *Bearheart* chapter of his dissertation, which considers how Native American texts challenge and resist such Euroamerican stereotypes as the noble savage, the doomed Indian, the stoic Indian, and the psychotic half-breed to achieve survivance. McClure focuses on four texts that breakdown these stereotypes in a negative or disturbing manner, also including *Life among the Paiutes*, *Cogwea*, and *Almanac of the Dead*.

Monsma, Bradley John. "Liminal Landscapes: Motion, Perspective, and Place in Gerald Vizenor's Fiction." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 60-72. Noting that Vizenor's work seems antithetical to the "homing in" paradigm posited by William Bevis, Monsma explores the relationship between land and language in four of Vizenor's novels (*Bearheart*, *Griever*, *The Heirs of Columbus*, and *Dead Voices*) and "Landfill Meditation." Even in *Bearheart*, Monsma cautions that the final ascent to the next world should not be viewed as an escape from time or place. In *Griever*, where Griever stands as the trickster of enormous appetites and inspired action while Hua Lian stands as trickster as culture hero, Monsma suggests that the ability to imagine new spaces does not necessarily transform sites of oppression. With "Landfill Meditation," he sees Vizenor initiating a re-territorializing project, continued through *Heirs of Columbus* (on the island, anyone can become a tribal person), and *Dead Voices*, where urban poverty reveals its spiritual dimension. Ultimately, Monsma likens Vizenor to the Chippewa trickster, creating new places from grains of sand. He concludes that in Vizenor's work, the "land survives not in representations of reality but as an active participant in linguistic play."

—. "Textual Tricksters: Interpretation and Social Transformation in Multicultural Literature." Diss. U of Southern California, 1995. Monsma considers the work of Maxine Hong Kingston, Ishmael Reed, as well as Gerald Vizenor, who is the focus of two published articles taken from this study. (See above and also *Dead Voices*.) In tracing trickster scholarship, Monsma makes clear the important connection between Victor Turner's theory of liminality and recent interpretations of the trickster.

Owens, Louis. "Afterword." *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. This essay is a variant of "'Ecstatic Strategies'" with its theme of trickster upsetting, including

the story of Owens's very upset students, discussion of terminal creeds, and focus on the semiotic construction of Indian/mixedblood identity.

- . "'Ecstatic Strategies': Gerald Vizenor's *Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart*." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. 1989. Ed. Gerald Vizenor. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1993. 141-54. Reprinted in *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*. Ed. Richard F. Fleck. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1993. 145-54. Though begun with a personal anecdote, this essay is the core of Owens's discussion of *Bearheart* in *Other Destinies*. Included here are an indictment of Faulkner, not only for Chief Doom but for his general confusion of Chickasaws and Choctaws, as well as praise for Ken Kesey's Chief Bromden (Broom). Showing how terminal creeds kill believers, Owens affirms Vizenor's mission of trickster liberation, noting that "essential to healing and freeing are responsibility and laughter."
- . "'Ecstatic Strategies': Gerald Vizenor's Trickster Narratives." *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1992. 227-40. In this exploration of mixedblood identity issues in the contemporary American Indian novel, Owens observes that, for Vizenor, the mixedblood and the trickster are metaphors that seek to balance contradictions and shatter certainties. As he works with the goal of testing and exposing the ideas of ideologues, Vizenor's definition of trickster discourse, further, resembles Bakhtin's definition of Menippean satire. *Bearheart* is his attempt to free the sign *Indian* "with its predetermined and well-worn path between the signifier and the signified" in a parody on pilgrimage literature like *The Canterbury Tales* and, more importantly, the American westerling pattern. Most of the characters in this novel, white or mixedblood, suffer from the illness of a terminal creed (what Bakhtin terms "authoritarian discourse"). The Evil Gambler, for example, believes in chance, while his necrophiliac henchman Cree Casket is a literal lover of the dead past. Chance plays no part in Proud's vision, and he beats the Evil Gambler by his refusal to deny human responsibility for ordering and sustaining the world we inhabit. Owens gives special attention to the Word Hospital where scientific precision stands opposed to the dynamic of the oral tradition and to Belladonna's assertions of identity in Orion. Just as

his characters live out their mythic identities, Owens notes that Vizenor finds his own mythic identity in the trickster as mediator between opposites, bringing from treacherous disorder a usually unintentional benevolence. He calls *Bearheart* “unarguably the most radical and startling of American Indian novels” and “paradoxically also among the most traditional of novels by Indian authors.”

- . “‘Grinning Aboriginal Demons’: Gerald Vizenor’s *Bearheart* and the Indian’s Escape from Gothic.” *Frontier Gothic: Terror and Wonder at the Frontier in American Literature*. Ed Joanne B. Karpinski, David Mogen, and Scott P. Sanders. Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson U P, 1993. (Revised and reprinted as “‘Grinning Aboriginal Demons’: Gerald Vizenor’s *Bearheart* and the End of Tragedy” in *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1998. 83-95.) While noting that Vizenor here inverts the paradigms of the American gothic, making doom resound not from the forest but “from the ruined machinery of a futurist Western civilization” as he “mocks the American myth with its sacrosanct westering journey,” Owens presents the same Bakhtinian perspective presented in *Other Destinies*. If the gothic Indian traditionally has been the static referent, the mirroring “other” at the dark heart of the continent, Vizenor gives the Indian freedom to laugh at himself and others, using the concept of terminal creed to “deconstruct the artifact of static ‘Indianness.’” Owens chooses Belladonna, the pilgrims’ encounter with the Evil Gambler, and the Bioavaricious Regional Word Hospital as examples. Fundamental to Vizenor’s deconstruction is the relationship between the written text and the dynamics of the oral tradition. The trickster, who embodies all contradictions and all possibilities, is Vizenor’s key, and he emphasizes values thoroughly consistent with Native American trickster tales: community, cultural dynamism, the delicate harmony between man and the world he inhabits, and man’s ultimate responsibility for that world.

Pasquaretta, Paul. “Sacred Chance: Gambling and the Contemporary Native American Indian Novel.” *MELUS* 21.2 (Summer 1996): 21-33. Pasquaretta considers gambling in *Bearheart*, *Ceremony*, and *Love Medicine*, noting that traditional Native American gambling stories feature a hero and his evil opponent in a high-stakes game of chance won by the exercise of wisdom, courage,

and self-sacrifice. He considers Sir Cecil Staples a cultural narcissist and an embodiment of the worst features of white American culture who constructs a life/death binary rather than a life/death continuum.

Rigal-Cellard, Bernadette. "Doubling in Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart*: The Pilgrimage Strategy or Bunyan Revisited." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 93-114. Rigal-Cellard delineates the intertextual relationship between *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Bearheart*, noting that both start with apologies to the reader, incorporate dreamers as the chief pilgrims (Christian's adventures are his dream), utilize allegorical naming, attack the Catholic clergy (in Vizenor via the Bishop's metamasks which turn Sister Eternal Flame, closer kin to the San Francisco Gay Parade's Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence than to any Catholic orders, into a murderer), and employ a comic strategy for didactic purposes. She sees doublings of the Valley of the Shadow of Death episode in the meeting with the cancer victims, of the Vanity Fair episode in Orion, and of the Doubting Castle and the Giant Despair episode in the meeting with the Evil Gambler, who cannot reach the good key that Christian finds on his own person. The doubling offers Vizenor, Rigal-Cellard suggests, the opportunity to show both an acceptance of and a divergence from the values of the West as he critiques through parody the Protestant idea that evil can be eradicated through a monomaniacal quest for good (pointing out the importance of Bunyan in Protestant missionizing). Vizenor's work exemplifies what he preaches, a "pure and generous humorous spirituality" with the potential to engender a new harmonious world order, no different from the goal Bunyan stives for through a "pure and generous Christianity."

Roemer, Kenneth. "Darkness in Saint Louis *Bearheart*." Review. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 4.1/2 (1980): 187-91. Roemer points out the hybrid nature of Vizenor's first novel, suggesting that "It should be approached as an ambitious attempt to blend these European written forms with Native American oral tradition." While likening this first version of *Bearheart* to a novel that might be written by a committee including Dante, Chaucer, Bunyan, Swift, Fielding, L. Frank Baum, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Carson McCullers, Hunter Thompson, Silko, Momaday, and Federico Fellini, he focuses his attention upon Native oral tradition. Roemer notes the inclusion of "The

Dog-Husband” collected by Stith Thompson in *Tales of the North American Indians*. He suggests that Vizenor incorporates the basic conventions of the five major types of traditional oral narratives: the emergence theme from origin narratives; the many and varied features of trickster tales; hero narratives (in Proudé’s narrow escapes and desire to lead the way to the new world); journey legends such as the “star-husband” describing journeys to places populated by strange creatures; and animal parent/spouse/lover narratives which detail visionary, mental, and sexual encounters between humans and animals. If Roemer objects to some of Vizenor’s word play, including the linkage of Pio, the transsexual parawoman, to Changing Woman, he notes that, except Sun Bear Sun, all of the characters who die meet their deaths as a result of their selfish passions, which disrupt balance and harmony.

Ruoff, A. LaVonne Brown. “*Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*.” Review. *MELUS* 8.1 (Spring 1981): 69-71. Ruoff notes the novel’s resemblance to a traditional hero cycle, Native and Western with its episodic structure (each episode a stage in a spiritual journey leading to emergence into the Fourth World) and elements of satiric allegory. She suggests that Vizenor’s two themes are the importance of moving back in time to rediscover our harmony with nature and ritual and transformation-metamask, human to animal, and male to female. *Bearheart* is not only a tale within a tale, but also contains embedded tales, and Ruoff shows Vizenor’s dependence on four stories/story types from the Native oral traditions: the origin of the Chippewa *midewiwin* in the resurrection of the dead sun-child into a bear who is transformed back into the sun-child at the threshold of the lodge (and Bearheart’s bear voice, accordingly, the voice of Indian self-renewal), animal husband stories, trickster-transformer stories (with Benito Saint Plumero, Zebulon Matchi Makwa, and Pio Wissakodewin all as trickster figures), and stories of the Evil Gambler.

Ruppert, James. *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1995. Ruppert is interested in using Iser’s concept of the implied reader to demonstrate that contemporary Native authors, who routinely draw upon two rich cultural traditions, are read differently by Native and non-Native readers and yet have the ability in both to restructure perceptions through discourse. He points out fundamental differences

in the construction of identities, which allow space for mediation: while Native identities are constructed on the basis of myth (leading to a discovered rather than a created identity) and/or community, non-Native identities are constructed psychologically and/or sociologically. In a chapter entitled "Mythic Verism: *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*," Ruppert addresses Vizenor's strategy of disrupting the expectations of both Native and non-Native audiences. Here, as in all of Vizenor's work, the author faces an inherent contradiction in putting the fluid verbal field into written form. It is the ability of the oral tradition to guide without demanding that affirms imaginative freedom/cultural survival. Ultimately Vizenor sees contradiction as inescapable. Even as he satirizes terminal creeds, you're never sure who is being satirized because of the contradictions embedded in the heart of his constructions. Ruppert points out how *Bearheart* works both mythically and realistically. Vizenor invokes such myths as the Evil Gambler, Changing Woman, and the Dog Husband story but not without changing them. In the last version of the Dog Husband story about the love of animals and who will eat whom (a story told in several variations in the novel), the implied reader sees a locutor/listener relationship and the story itself in discourse. Oral narratives provide Native readers with a familiar frame of appreciation, but these are quickly revised and contradicted trickster fashion. To see the novel as discourse shifts the production of meaning away from the author, who finds a parallel in Proude as the pilgrims' spiritual guide. While it is his responsibility to take each pilgrim as far as it is possible for him/her to go, Proude is not responsible for taking each one to the vision window.

Shöler, Bo. "Trickster and Storyteller. The Sacred Memories and True Tales of Gerald Vizenor." *Coyote Was Here: Essays on Contemporary Native American Literary and Political Mobilization*. Dolphin 9. Aarhus, Denmark: SEKLOS, 1984. 134-46. See **General Studies**.

Velie, Alan. *Four American Indian Literary Masters: N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Gerald Vizenor*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1982. See **General Studies**.

—. "Gerald Vizenor's Indian Gothic." *MELUS* 17.1 (Spring 1992): 75-85. Velie reads a desire for revenge in what he sees as a reversal of the traditions of gothic literature, using Leslie Fiedler's defini-

tion: the substitution of terror for love as the central theme of the fiction. He recounts a brief history of the Indian as villain from Early American literature through modern pop culture and suggests that race divides the good guys (Indian) from the bad guys in Vizenor's melodrama of the triumph of good over evil. Here the Evil Gambler loses, and Vizenor reverses the negative images of witches and the forest, both traditionally associated with Indians, while pointing out the evils of civilization. Velie also provides grounding in the traditions of Native American tricksters, seeing Trickster in Proude Cedarfaire, in his culture hero manifestation, and in Benito Saint Plumero and Zebulon Machi Makwa, as highly sexed buffoon/sacred clown.

- . "The Trickster Novel." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. 1989. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1993. 121-39. Velie uses Bakhtinian theory, as well as Vizenor's own definition of the trickster as semiotic sign, to show what happens when the trickster moves from the oral tradition into the novel, with *Bearheart* the only novel Velie is willing to define as a trickster novel. (Other novels have trickster characters who are amoral drifters fond of women and wine, who, callous and irresponsible, play tricks and are the victim of tricks, though essentially sympathetic to the reader.) Velie compares Vizenor and Rabelais in the use of folktale, hyperbole, and violence. He describes the chronotope of *Bearheart* as mythic verism, observing that it is possible to follow the pilgrims' exact route from Minnesota to New Mexico and that characters are biographically based.

Wiget, Andrew. *Native American Literature*. Boston: Twayne, 1985. Wiget ends his chapter on contemporary fiction with a brief summary of *Bearheart*, noting that it is related both to sketches in *Wordarrows* and to the Native oral tradition through its tricksters and Evil Gambler. He argues that the ending, a counterpoint to the strategies of the young AIM girl, absolves the novel of Velie's charge that it lacks "philosophical and artistic depth." (Wiget's approach to oral literature in this volume is criticized by Vizenor in his *AIQ* review [Fall 1985, 121-22] as old-fashioned in its focus on story types, its grounding in Bering Strait migration theory and ignoring of new theories of culture, and its lack of interest in the problematics of translation. Vizenor reserves his severest criticism for Wiget's propensity to categorize, particularly to catego-

size, tricksters.)

Griever: An American Monkey King in China

Blaeser, Kimberly M. Gerald Vizenor: *Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. Noting that *Griever's* market scene closely resembles stories told in *Interior Landscapes* and "Paraday at the Berkeley Chicken Center," Blaeser observes, "Vizenor recognizes these transformations of story and the transgressions of the genres as the common human experience. The mythic, the metaphorical, the personal, the historical, the fictional always inform one another; the shadows of each are always present in the telling of any of the others." She notes that Vizenor frequently creates "context by means of juxtaposition" and shows how the caged nightingale creates an allegory of the Chinese people with their parallel among tribal peoples in the U.S. She shows how Vizenor's indeterminacy, with its analog in Eco's concept of the Baroque, opens his work. Through the active reading process, for example, the term *luminous* expands from its connotation to "indwelling, spiritual power or near-visionary status," an outward sign of inner power in various characters. Connected with *blue*, first in *Griever's* link with the mute child and culminating in the bones of the children found in the pond, it becomes the marker of communication with another realm. The term also has two Chinese connections that might have bearing on this work: with the feminine ideal of beauty and with Fenollosa's description of the Chinese written character. Other strategies Vizenor adopts in his effort to keep the text open include describing particulars without offering interpretations, lack of closure in the plot line, pronoun switching to create androgynous transformations, multiple self-identifications, presenting the mixedblood as a trickster, and using trickster dialectic.

Helstern, Linda Lizut. "Blue Smoke and Mirrors: *Griever's* Buddhist Heart." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 33-46. Noting the origin of Chinese opera in traditional Buddhist temple fairs, Helstern explores Vizenor's extensive use of Buddhist stories in the development of plot and character. These go beyond *The Journey to the West*, the fictional account of bringing the first Buddhist scriptures from India to China, to include both stories about the Buddha and stories about the name/nature pun

and the soul as mirror in the Zen teaching tradition. Helstern amplifies the Buddhist symbolism of the cock, delineates the interrelated concepts of the monkey of the mind and the horse of the will, and explores the issue of mind and body in Zen painting and American Indian religious/artistic tradition.

Hochbruck, Wolfgang. "Breaking Away: The Novels of Gerald Vizenor." *World Literature Today* (Spring 1992): 274-78. See **General Studies**.

Lowe, John. "Monkey Kings and Mojo: Postmodern Ethnic Humor in Kingston, Reed, and Vizenor." *MELUS* 21.4 (Winter 1996): 103-26. Lowe calls for theorists Lyotard (in *The Postmodern Explained*) and Jameson to revise their assertions that the postmodern artist must renounce the therapeutic occupation based on the practice of postmodernism by three American ethnic novelists. Reed in *Reckless Eyeballing*, Kingston in *Tripmaster Monkey*, and Vizenor in *Griever* all utilize such postmodern techniques as pastiche, satire, decentering/defamiliarization through sudden shifts of tone, self-reflexion, and the pillaging of the past (Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction) and yet through the deployment of the trickster tradition serve to build their communities and achieve "personal, communal, and cultural wholeness." Lowe focuses heavily on Kingston but asserts that Vizenor braids together Native American, Chinese, and African American trickster traditions. He does not, however, provide support or show how the last functions in *Griever*.

Monsma, Bradley John. "Liminal Landscapes: Motion, Perspective, and Place in Gerald Vizenor's Fiction." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 60-72. See **Bearheart**.

Mutter, John. "Griever: An American Monkey King in China." Review. *Publishers Weekly* 232 (4 September 1987): 66.

Owens, Louis. "'Ecstatic Strategies: Gerald Vizenor's Trickster Narratives.'" *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1992. 240-50. Noting that *Griever* is both autobiographical and nonrepresentational/nonmimetic, Owens explores Vizenor's equation of crossblood and trickster identity, always denoting freedom from the masks of a fixed cultural identity. Although *Griever* has never fit easily into any niche, his blending of Chinese and Native American trickster traditions demonstrates "the trickster's ability to transcend spatial and tem-

poral repressions.” Griever’s outrageous liberated cock, named for a Jesuit missionary, adds a disturbing element to every situation, while his lack of success in freeing political prisoners provides a typical Native American trickster anticlimax. While noting the relationships with various characters from *The Journey to the West*, Owens focuses upon such key American Indian elements as the novel’s four-part structure, which signals ending, and the unbounded unity of the dream world and the waking world. He insists that this is an intensely political novel, both as an incomplete attempt to escape from the “readerly” novel and as a bitter indictment of a totalitarian state.

Rigal-Cellard, Bernadette. “Vizenor’s *Griever*, a Little Red Post-Maoernist Book of Cocks, Tricksters and Colonists.” *New Voices in Native American Literary Criticism*. Ed. Arnold Krupat. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution P, 1993. 317-47. In her four-part essay, Rigal-Cellard first attempts to characterize Griever as a trickster, briefly reviewing various studies of the Native American trickster; along with traditional trickster sex/lust, she finds Turner’s and Babcock’s concept of “between categories” especially useful. She also applies Vizenor’s definition of trickster as liberator. Noting the long history of satirizing one’s own culture in the guise of a foreign culture, Rigal-Cellard next explores “Socialist China as the Signifier of Mind Colonization”: China is essentially an American Indian reservation where all dissidents are assimilated as Native Americans. Rigal-Cellard points out that Griever’s movement through the city is based upon a British colonial map and that Vizenor attacks “not so much the Maoist revolution as the colonization that prepared it.” Among the Americans, “the decadent missionaries of this generation,” she identifies the anal connection between Luther Holes and Martin Luther and sees Hannah Dustan not only as captivity narrative heroine but as archetypal castrating white woman of Leslie Fiedler fame. In her third section, Rigal-Cellard considers Griever’s intertextual relationships with *The Monkey Grammarian* and *The Journey to the West* (with its own relationship to the *Ramayana*). She finds them in minor characters like Pigsie and Sandie and not deeply significant. She is more interested in Shitou’s Chippewa connection, Griever’s guiding vision, and Obo Island as the island that permits Naanabozho to escape his own shit. Rigal-Cellard’s fourth section addresses the sense of orality in the novel, citing the

injunction "Listen," Vizenor's epistolary frame, fragmentary dialogue, Hester as translator/lover, and the satire on official jargon. Here she also lists the novel's postmodern characteristics—genre mixing, verbal invention, collage, referenced quotations, and quasi-parody of many contemporary Native American texts, including Vizenor's own.

Sims, Cecilia Ann. "The Rebirth of Indian and Chinese Mythology in Gerald Vizenor's *Griever: An American Monkey King in China*." *Bestia* 3 (May 1991): 48-55. Reprinted in *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*. Ed. Richard F. Fleck. Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1993. Sims views *Griever* as the collision of traditional trickster myth with postmodern literature. Using Choctaw, Tlingit, and Winnebago (never Chippewa) trickster figures, she attempts to show how *Griever*'s character is created from a combination of Native American and Chinese Monkey King traits, drawn exclusively from Arthur Waley's *Monkey*, which Sims labels a "folktale." Sims finds no traditional trickster lust but only the emptiness of postmodern "panic sex" in *Griever*'s sexuality, yet she sees the conclusion of the novel as an optimistic postmodern expansion.

Trachtenberg, Stanley. "A Trickster in Tianjin." Review. *New York Times Book Review* (10 Jan. 1988): 18. It is "through a renewal of language," Trachtenberg notes, that Vizenor overcomes stale political realities as he treats contemporary Chinese contradictions: while remaining suspicious of foreign devils, the Chinese welcome such modern innovations as plastics and dermabrasion. In the end, the sad clown's "magical disregard for time and space collapses."

Westrum, Dexter. "*Griever: An American Monkey King in China*." Review. *Western American Literature* 23.2 (Summer 1988): 160. Westrum points out the element in Vizenor that seeks to trick authority into laughing at itself in a world where is and seems are two different things, and which we do not have to leave as we found it.

The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage

Ballinger, Franchot. "*The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Bar-*

onage.” Review. *MELUS* 16.4 (Winter 1989): 137-40. Ballinger quotes Vizenor’s own definition of trickster by way of explaining that the power of Vizenor’s characters lies in “language as a mental event” for a satirist intent on liberating colonized minds. He notes that Vizenor here retells some of his own stories, observing that such retelling is part of the traditional delight of trickster stories.

Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. Blaeser considers such trickster aspects of this text as its inversion of romantic expectations/expected stories about Indians in Mouse Proof Martin’s unconventional naming and the unnamings of “The Last Lecture.” She sees its highly episodic antiform as code-transgressive, noting that characters and stories from previous works are combined with new work. Blaeser notes that this work is highly theoretical, including a “critico-fictional” prologue that exposes the weaknesses of fallacious trickster theories through dialogue.

Boyarin, Jonathan. “Europe’s Indian, American’s Jew: Modiano and Vizenor.” *Storm from Memory: The Politics of Jewish Memory*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992. 9- 31. Also *Boundary 2* 19.3 (Fall 1992): 197-223. Boyarin’s scholarship focuses on ethnic identity. Here, he investigates the analogy Europe::Jew::America::Indian through two novels, contrasting the comic despair of Modiano with Vizenor’s comic fantasy of redemption. He notes that Vizenor demonstrates no illusory solidarity with the oppressed but cuts through the double bind of domination, “the stereotyped currency of identity,” the legacy of the representation of American Indians in ethnography. Observing that the Statue of Liberty is undergoing an extensive rehabilitation as Vizenor’s book is in process, Boyarin follows three lines of argument: the European and American tendency to monumental representations; the European and American tendencies to eulogize the other’s victim, which, he suggests, encourages amnesia about domination closer to home; and the juxtaposition of Native voices inside as a way of resisting amnesia and displacement.

Gish, Robert. “*The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage*.” Review. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (1988): 85-88. Critical of overly contrived humor and too-cute names, Gish unfavorably compares Vizenor’s novel to the magical realist

novel *The Road to Tamazunchule* by Ron Arias. Saying that the book raises questions of what degree literature should be moral and representational and that his personal bias is for a more traditional approach, he notes that Trickster follows the genealogical plan typical of contemporary Native American novels and introduces the Browne family.

Hobson, Geary. *The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage.* Review. *World Literature Today* 63.4 (Autumn 1989): 724. Hobson observes that this unusual family chronicle is a postmodern treatment of cultural history told with Vizenor's characteristic humor in his private lexicon.

Hochbruck, Wolfgang. "Breaking Away: The Novels of Gerald Vizenor." *World Literature Today* (Spring 1992): 274-78. See **General Studies**.

Jahner, Elaine. "*The Trickster of Liberty*." Review. *Wicazo Sa Review* 6.2 (1990): 37-40. Beginning with a reference to the events in Tienamen Square which followed the publication of Vizenor's story of the gift of a statue by the PRC to the Chippewa, Jahner characterizes Vizenor as ironic "in a manner that finally returns ideals to a purity that leaves no further need for irony." This is accomplished through his "trickster discourse" with its complete dependence on immediacies of style, which opens up whatever is closed in. Jahner provides Kristeva's definition of discourse, emphasizing the desire of Vizenor as locutor to influence the listener. She sees the 14 trickster members of his Browne family—all with personal vocations/approaches to healing transformations to overcome the sickness of the world, and with explicit ties to convent/monastic experience—as the "fictional and satirical representation of an awareness that renewal means getting out of the old ruts while naming them precisely and making them tools of renewal."

Kaganoff, Penny. "*The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage*." Review. *Publishers Weekly* 234.3 (15 July 1988): 61.

LaLonde, Chris. "The Ceded Landscape of Gerald Vizenor's Fiction." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 16-32. LaLonde considers the relationship of Wolfgang Iser's most recent theoretical studies, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* and *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*, to Vizenor's theory of fiction, with special interest in how Native texts negotiate boundaries. In his consideration of intertextuality, Iser defines *selection*, which

may be historical, cultural, social, or literary, as an extraterrestrial boundary crossing that not only brings to the fore the intentional object of the text (making the present absent) but also opens to perception those elements that selection has excluded (making the absent present). According to LaLonde, Iser's theory neither discards nor transcends the real world but produces a "double-voiced discourse" that enables us to see the real world. Iser uses the term combination for the production of intratextual relations at the lexical and semantic levels. This concept LaLonde illustrates through examples drawn from *The Trickster of Liberty*: the names *Terret / Terrocious*, *Pan-Anna* in juxtaposition to *Czolgosz*, and *White Lies* (defined both as broken treaties and written fiction) in juxtaposition to *shit*. LaLonde further looks at liminality in the stages of ritual posited by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, noting the importance of liminal spaces (doorways, windows, portals, thresholds, and borders) and times (solstices, equinoxes, dawns, dusks) in Vizenor's fictions.

Lee, Bonnie. "The Trickster of Liberty: Tribal Heirs to a Wild Baronage." Review. *American Indian Quarterly* 14.4 (Fall 1990): 437-38. Lee is relieved that Trickster is not as sexually explicit or as graphically violent as Vizenor's earlier work. She observes that the prologue exists as a device for teaching the nature and function of the trickster character and that the trick of the stories is to "elude historicism, racial representation and remain historical."

Murray, David. "Crossblood Strategies in the Writings of Gerald Vizenor." *Yearbook of English Studies* 24 (1994): 213-27. Illustrating Vizenor's many strategies for constructing contemporary Indian identity, Murray draws his examples from many texts, both fiction and nonfiction, including *Trickster of Liberty*. Two strategies he notes in passing: a deliberate blurring of genres ("always in an unstable and often exhilarating relation") and the repetition of the same material changed only marginally. He notes that Vizenor's identity vocabulary includes two terms, *crossblood* and *tribal people*, with the relationship between them ultimately undecidable. Through satire (not operating from its traditional firm moral standpoint/position of more knowledge but from its "magical connections with the oral tradition"), Vizenor uses humor to deconstruct the frozen tableaux of identity, implicating AIM members as much as Whites in perpetuating such notions as geopiety. He makes the reservation itself a crossblood space,

refuses to privilege his personal tribal past (understood “largely through reading and writing, not through any unmediated sense of Indianness,” and mixes urban and reservation landscapes in his work, making an urban landfill reservation a place of negotiation. For Vizenor, the crossblood is a trickster, like a rainbow effect that cannot be pinned down. Defining trickster as a semiotic sign, Vizenor emphasizes that the social and communal definition of language is crucial, the communal and comic standing in opposition to the individual and tragic. Murray points out the parallel between Lyotard’s rejection of metanarrative and Vizenor’s rejection of terminal creeds while demonstrating Vizenor’s understanding that “Any too easy identification between the mixed-blood urban trickster and the postmodern condition in general could create one more ‘white man’s Indian.’” He ends with Vizenor’s own words: “The trick is to *elude historicism, racial representations, and remain historical*” (*The Trickster of Liberty* xi).

Owens, Louis. “‘Ecstatic Strategies’: Gerald Vizenor’s Trickster Narratives.” *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1992. 250-52. Continuing his focus on the construction of Indian identity, Owens suggests that Vizenor’s highly episodic third novel might be considered the prequel for his first two: it is a family origin story framed by a theoretical discussion of tricksters and a satire on textual decoding. Ultimately, the seven surviving crossblood/trickster progeny of Shadow Box Browne and Wink Martin challenge values and creeds wherever they live, frequently off the reservation, attempting to free the “Native American” from artifactualization. Owens notes that Vizenor’s harshest criticism is reserved for self-deluding and would-be Indians but that even Indian educators/experts are not exempt.

Schmidt, Kerstin. “Subverting the Dominant Paradigm: Gerald Vizenor’s Trickster Discourse.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 7.1 (Spring 1995): 65-76. Schmidt provides a handy recap of most of Vizenor’s key thinking on the trickster, drawing on the Bruchac and Coltelli interviews. She covers no new ground as she addresses such trickster strategies as episodic form, the return of characters from other works, and Vizenor’s wordplay. She uses incidents from *Trickster* to illustrate trickster’s opposition to authority-creating social science methodologies and institutions,

trickster holosexuality, healing, and compassion.

The Heirs of Columbus

Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. Borrowing a phrase from the novel itself, Blaeser seeks to show that "humor has political significance." She catalogs the trickster reversals at the heart of the novel, noting that Vizenor includes both historical and contemporary references and playful misreadings of them to force the reader to examine the nature of truth and fiction as he seeks to overturn the "striven western gaze" that prevents liberation. If the genes of Columbus become the source of healing, Pocahontas remains an artifact, both her bones and her persona claimed by colonial culture.

—. "The New 'Frontier' of Native American Literature: Dis-Arming History with Tribal Humor." *Native American Perspectives on Literature and History*. Ed. Alan Velie. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1995. 37-50. *Heirs of Columbus*, along with Gordon Henry's *Light People* and poems by Carter Revard, exemplify how Native writers are working to unmask/disarm history, expose the hidden agendas of historiography, and return history to the realm of story. The writers utilize several strategies: reversals to change perspective; language that simultaneously mimics and ridicules historic documents; mixed genre forms "which refuse to honor scholarly distinctions between myth and history, history and story, autobiography and history, prose and poetry, etc. because they recognize and value the relationships among and inevitable overlapping of these categories;" and multiple dimensions/perspectives. Their literary style writes against "romantic linear history [that] ends with the tragic death or museumization of Indian people."

Cook-Lynn, Elizabeth. "The Trickster and Mr. Columbus." Review. *Los Angeles Times*. 8 September 1991: 1, 12. Cook-Lynn uses this forum to redeem Vizenor from exile among the literati. Because he works in the tradition of Native American storytelling (creating a work as incredible as any Native story), the normal novelistic plot is missing from this novel. Vizenor not only reaffirms such traditional tribal values as balance, including the balance of good and evil, he is a member of a family with a longstanding tradition

of critiquing federal policy, here related to Indian gambling operations.

Gray, James Allison. "Between Voice and Text: Bicultural Negotiation in the Contemporary Native American Novel." Diss. U of Wisconsin, Madison. 1995. Gray considers *Heirs of Columbus*, along with *Winter in the Blood*, *Ceremony*, and *Green Grass, Running Water* as dialogues between the oral and textual traditions. He is concerned with the preservation of the ontological stability of American Indian traditions and considers the rhetorical strategies aimed simultaneously at establishing and complicating notions of the "authentic." Gray accepts Bevis's metanarrative of "homing in," the impulse in contemporary Native American fiction toward reintegration with particular communities and landscapes and histories. In these novels, the Indian reservation serves as a Bakhtinian chronotope: as land both claimed from within and imposed from without, it stands as an analog to the relationship between the novel and the oral tradition. In each novel, the reservation is reclaimed by movement across the land, a trope for the performative/potentially transformative; the moment of transformation is figured or subverted in a storytelling scene; and a trickster figure serves to complicate notions of authentication, displacing moments of transformation into celebrations of process. Gray feels that in King and Vizenor, where trickster figurations are foregrounded, the ceremonial negotiation of balance "humorously undercuts itself." In *Heirs*, Vizenor refuses to allow the authenticating figuration of oral performance to "stand still for any refigured textual aesthetics of tribal presence." The silence of the mute child is authentic, rooted orality, ultimately providing the new border nation with the strength to ward off the windigo through the use of fixed language, in contrast with "Welch's reclamation of the oral and Silko's instantiation of the oral via style."

Harlow, Barbara. "George Washington Gomez by Américo Paredes and *The Heirs of Columbus* by Gerald Vizenor." Review. *Race and Class* 33.4 (April-June 1992): 102-04. Harlow brings together a story of the Mexican border written 1936-40 and finally published in 1990 and Vizenor's Canadian border story to suggest that the rediscovery of America has yet to be accomplished.

"*The Heirs of Columbus*." Review. *Publishers Weekly* 238.25 (7 June 1991): 108.

Hochbruck, Wolfgang. "Breaking Away: The Novels of Gerald Vizenor." *World Literature Today* (Spring 1992): 274-78. See **General Studies**.

Irmscher, Christoph. "Crossblood Columbus: Gerald Vizenor's Narrative 'Discoveries.'" *AmStudies* 40.1 (1995): 83-98. In contrast with Erdrich and Dorris's *Crown of Columbus* where the logic of discovery is reversed, Irmscher contends in *Heirs of Columbus* that logic is not simply reversed but subverted: Vizenor's novel calls into question the very possibility of narrative discovery itself, turning discovery from a nasty surprise into an unpredictable performance event. In traditional novels, the process of discovery, which implies the successful prediction/organization of events in which the future already seems disposed, is a metaphor for the process of narration, and discoverers serve as role models for novelists. While Irmscher recognizes two plot threads in attempts to recover the bones of Columbus and Pocahontas, he sees no plotline. Beyond a poststructuralist "series of displacements offering no final resolution," *Heirs*, like narratives in the performative oral tradition, is structured by repetition of the initial sexual contact between Samana Cay and enigmatic phrases like *blue* and *hand talker*, for which Vizenor offers no definitions. Irmscher contends that the various parts of Vizenor's narrative do not serve primarily as "'functions' of any single overarching narrative structure": fragments of stories are casually interwoven in the interest of narrative proliferation (more stories). Through his intertextuality, it would seem that Vizenor leads his white readers to enact earthdiving for more shards of cultural and historical meaning, and Irmscher takes his assigned role very seriously. He links a number of Vizenor's stories with their sources and is extremely well grounded in the Columbus literature, pointing out the untold irony of the title that makes the inheritance rights of the discoverer's heirs a metaphor for those of the discoverees. He sees a close connection between the revolt led by Louis Riel and the founding of the new nation at Point Assinika (Point Roberts), and connects Columbus with the "Eve hypothesis," to make him the common human ancestor. Irmscher is certain, finally, as Krupat is not, that Vizenor's work can help in developing an "ethnocritical" (differential, dialogical, interactive) approach to Native American literature.

Jaskoski, Helen. "*The Heirs of Columbus*." Review. *Studies in American*

Indian Literatures 4.2 (Spring 1992): 79-82. Jaskoski sees Vizenor primarily as a philosopher and Heirs as a framework for the presentation of ideas rather than a novel in the ordinary sense, a meditation on the notion of heirship where inheritance claims based on blood/descent contradict the idea of the invented self. As she herself says, "A good deal of *Heirs* explores the tension between self-definition and freely undertaken commitment on the one hand, and historial and physical determinants on the other."

Krupat, Arnold. "Ratio- and Natio- in Gerald Vizenor's *Heirs of Columbus*." *The Turn of the Native: Studies in Criticism and Culture*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1996. 56- 59. Krupat reads *Heirs* as an intervention between race/ethnicity and the values of chosen affiliation. Still he wonders in this anti-racist work why Vizenor gives prominence to ratio, suggesting that it may be his deliberate refusal to resolve contradictions. At Point Assinika, those who get to share tribal blood are those who share tribal values. Krupat asserts that Vizenor is no longer committed to the tribe, as African postcolonial writers, according to Appiah, are no longer committed to the nation: he is committed to pervasive human suffering.

Laga, Barry E. "Gerald Vizenor and His *Heirs of Columbus*: A Postmodern Quest for More Discourse." *American Indian Quarterly* 18.1 (Winter 1994): 71-87. Laga's interest lies in Vizenor's "widely varied means of (de)constructing identity and the conceptual systems that govern these identities," which began with the semiotic inscription of the gaze of Columbus. He begins with Vizenor's assault on his own signature in the novel, noting that for Derrida the effects of signature imply single source ownership but also nonpresence. Vizenor, he asserts, undermines his signature as author (sole source) by mentioning in the text the names of those he quotes, possessing in tribal fashion but not laying claim through copywrite, ideas argued in Beatrice Lord's courtroom. By this fragmentation of signature, Vizenor also creates a "social text" whose strands are interwoven akin to the oral tradition. To search for origins, for the definitive signature, is to fall into a textual abyss. The web of relationships destabilizes notions of tribal or racial identity to the point where such terminology is no longer useful. Vizenor further attacks notions of a stable, transparent reality through his concept of simulation and speaks directly to

the issue of the anthropologist's and historian's gaze. In *Heirs*, he also presents Native Americans as high tech scientists rather than mystic healers while positing the idea that the body itself is not a unitary organism but a construct of discrete parts that can be modified and rearranged. His genetic destabilization both undermines notions of tribal identity, allowing others to be assimilated into the tribes, and creates a new bond of identity with Columbus. Finally, he makes the tribal trickster "the ultimate sign of the divided, multiplied, corrupted signature." Laga likens Vizenor's trickster to Derrida's *undecidables*, trace, and *différance*. Trickster eludes the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, thereby destabilizing our very notion of identity. Freeplay allows the reader the pleasure of making connections in the text, which is only perceived within a contextual framework. If, however, "Vizenor systematically destabilizes identity, he does not dismiss the need for representation," extending visibility and legitimacy as political subjects. In *Heirs*, Vizenor constructs sovereignty as a work of imagination, a result of the play of language. The novel ultimately asserts identity through discourse.

- . "Posthistory: Negating and Negotiating Representations of History." Diss. Purdue University, 1997. For Laga, posthistory is "a political/cultural practice which attempts to maintain a certain degree of representation while simultaneously undermining its possibility." He uses *The Heirs of Columbus* as one (and the only Native American) example among four (three novels, one film). He articulates the same arguments presented in his article "Gerald Vizenor and His *Heirs of Columbus*: A Postmodern Quest for More Discourse." Here, however, Laga concludes that Vizenor's work is neither postmodern nor posthistoric but a "radicalized notion of Enlightenment" that completes the modernist project. Ultimately, Vizenor is a Romantic valorizing the unfettered imagination, appropriating the Western rebel hero who fights oppressive and authoritative forces, and seeking reform of the legal system rather than its abolition.

Monsma, Bradley John. "Liminal Landscapes: Motion, Perspective, and Place in Gerald Vizenor's Fiction." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 60-72. See *Bearheart*.

Osborne, Stephen D. "Legal and Tribal Identities in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 115-27. Osborne considers how Vizenor, disdain-

ing the myth of cultural purity, uses history and law as modes of encountering, engaging, and appropriating dominant cultural forms and narratives in *Heirs*, where he works over both the heroic version and tragic revision of the history of Columbus and, with a specific focus on tribal remains and artifacts, introduces the unsettling trickster into a court system dedicated to settlement. The bulk of the essay, however, takes pains to show that, despite its postmodern vocabulary, Vizenor's cultural perspective is consistent with Momaday's. Place is dependent upon imagination, closer to Momaday's idea of reciprocal appropriation (man invests himself in landscape and incorporates the landscape into his own fundamental experience) than to Bevis's metanarrative of "homing in." In considering Vizenor's characters as personae or masks, Osborne notes the consonance between Momaday's well-known pronouncement "our most essential being consists in language" and the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud and Lacan. He also notes that for Derrida, alterity is the fundamental condition for the construction of identity, and that the legal process (once a contest of physical strength or chance) and tribal identity are both essentially narrative. Vizenor's "stories in the blood" stand as analogues to Momaday's assertion, "We are what we imagine." In *Heirs*, genes are metaphors for stories, and as a comic figuration, the signature of Columbus underwrites a tale of creation and healing.

Owens, Louis. "The Heirs of Columbus." Review. *American Indian Quarterly* 17.1 (1993): 182. Owens defends Vizenor against charges of plotlessness as he recaps Vizenor's Columbus novel, which he considers "a brilliant appropriation of the master symbol of Euroamerican history." He emphasizes postcolonial language issues while mentioning Vizenor's trickster-satire and healing humor and placing him alongside such critically respected postmodern stylists as Robert Coover and Cormac McCarthy.

Roscoe, Will. Review. "Columbus' Comeuppance." *San Francisco Chronicle* 4 August 1991: 1, 11. Noting the frustration of contemporary Native American, usually mixedblood, artists with images from the unrecoverable past, Roscoe emphasizes how Vizenor updates them. Vizenor, he asserts, gets the ultimate revenge, by making Columbus one of his own—a tribal trickster healer.

Sale, Kirkpatrick. "The Heirs of Columbus." Review. *The Nation* 253.13 (21

October 1991): 487-88. Sale reviews six Columbus novels published for the quincentenary, calling Vizenor's "an innovative non-novel." He notes that not only has Vizenor done his homework but that, ironically, "He understands the wilder, irrational, half-mad parts of the Discoverer's soul as few people ever have."

Tucker, Debbie. "The Heirs of Columbus." Review. *Library Journal* 116.11 (15 June 1991): 108.

Velie, Alan. "The Indian Historical Novel." *Native American Perspectives on Literature and History*. Ed. Alan Velie. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1995. 77-92. Velie uses categories in Hayden White's *Metahistory*, an investigation of the process of writing history, in describing *Heirs to Columbus* and James Welch's *Fools Crow*. Both, he says, are emplotted as romances (where good triumphs over evil) and grounded in organicist arguments which find patterns in historical events—the mandate of the genes in *Heirs*. He notes that Vizenor seems to be responding to a suggestion by Samuel Eliot Morison, who said, "It only remains for some American patrioteer to come forward and claim that Columbus was really an Indian . . ."

Warrior, Robert Allen. "The Heirs of Columbus." Review. *World Literature Today* 66.2 (Spring 1992): 387. Warrior sees in Vizenor's trickster transformation of the Columbus story liberation in places we had not thought to look and an affirmation of tribal sovereignty in the heirs' creation of their new community at Point Assinika. Warrior explicitly links the Brotherhood of American Explorers with the Bureau of American Ethnography.

Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World

Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. *Dead Voices* serves as Blaeser's example of how Vizenor gets beyond the literary page and into the realm of experience through metaphor and intertextuality, through which the reader is invited to become listener and speaker, and a part of stories and ongoing conversations. Blaeser sees the voices of Beckett and Black Elk, who provide Vizenor's epigraphs, in the text. She finds three theoretical works to be especially significant intertexts: D. T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture* ("The Zen masters have a saying, 'Examine the living words and not the dead ones.'"); Valentin Volosinov's *Marxism*

and the Philosophy of Language (where “inner words” akin to Vizenor’s “words in the blood” stand in opposition to language “permeated through and through with false notions of passive understanding”); and Walter Ong’s *Orality and Literacy*, which observes the privileging of visual space by the written, a trend Vizenor counters in Chivaree’s story where just the sounds of words she does not understand have power.

Blair, Elizabeth. “*Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World*.” Review. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 17.1 (Winter 1993): 255-58. Blair notes that Vizenor treats his usual themes—contradiction, opposition, transformation (including the transformation of New Age medicine cards into mythic acts), and survival on the urban reservation—without the polemic or critique of previous novels. Working in pairs of opposites and including in the character Laundry a satire on the author himself, Vizenor interrogates the question of whether written words/laundered stories must be the burial ground of myth, determining that to write is to survive. In Vizenor’s Oakland, the garden is no paradise, but Vizenor wastes no time on tribal nostalgia.

Clements, William M. “*Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World, A Novel*.” Review. *American Indian Quarterly* 18.2 (Spring 1994): 247-48. Clements admires this novel for fixing in print the dynamics of oral storytelling, emphasizing the theoretical aspects of Vizenor’s introduction to *Summer in the Spring*, also included in this review.

Crum, Robert. “*Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World*.” Review. *New York Times Book Review* (8 November 1992): 18. Crum focuses on the dislocation of animals, seeing the novel as an effort to heal the spiritual wounds caused by the separation of modern civilization from the natural world. He sees the attempt to resurrect old myths as noble but is critical of Vizenor’s prose style and puppet characters, even as he acknowledges this to be a postmodern novel.

“*Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World*.” Review. *Publishers Weekly* 239.30 (6 July 1992): 37.

Evers, L. “*Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World*.” Review. *Choice* 30.5 (January 1993): 798.

Giese, Julie C. “*Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World*.” Review. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 19.2 (Spring 1995): 188-92. Giese praises Vizenor’s novel as a model

for approaching orality, providing insight into problems of reading transcribed oral texts and the traces of orality in novels by American Indian writers. Less sardonic than previous novels, it seems more successful in striking a balance in its excess as stories of the past and present “resonate synchronically.”

Gonzalez, David Julian. “Because of the Blood in the Water: A Novel.” Diss. U of Minnesota. 1990. Gonzalez is interested in issues of land and spirituality.

Krupat, Arnold. “*Dead Voices*, Living Voice: On the Autobiographical Writings of Gerald Vizenor.” *The Turn to the Native*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1996. 70-87. (Originally presented at the Modern Language Association, 1993.) Krupat sees *Dead Voices* as Vizenor’s most personal and autobiographical novel, blurring the line between fiction and autobiography to achieve an ethnocritical reading. He argues that Native cultures consider history to be more recent than myth, neither being fictional in the Western sense, and also cites Basso’s “Stalking Stories” on the traditional use of stories as wordarrows to teach proper behavior. He reviews Vizenor’s autobiography, publishing history, his interest in names and nicknames and their community linkage, and in the theory of using pronouns (the wanaki game is played by “we”). Krupat generally agrees with Wiget’s review of *Narrative Chance* but sees the possibility of applying what Vizenor says to the oral tradition approximated on the word processor per Hochbruck. Pronoun hunting creates a segue to Vizenor’s autobiographical transformation from squirrel hunter to word hunter (a story retold from the squirrel’s perspective in *Dead Voices*).

Lemon, Lee. “*Dead Voices*.” Review. *Prairie Schooner* 67.2(Summer 1993): 146. Lemon’s review briefly acknowledges Vizenor’s commitment to the absolute importance of keeping tradition alive.

Milun, Kathryn. “*Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World*.” Review. *Ethnohistory* 41.3 (Summer 1994): 481, 484. Milun sees Vizenor’s novel as a way of discussing the problems of ethnographic description today, which seeks to narrate a past that is present only in memory without using such monological categories as kinship, structure, myth, and ritual. The book stands as an example of how urban Indians might remember themselves and how to fashion a current identity in dialogue with the nonurban past, the totemic past having become a portable sanctuary in the mirror discovered by Bagese.

- Mitten, Lisa A. "Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World." Review. *Library Journal* 117.11 (15 June 1992): 104.
- Monsma, Bradley John. "'Active Readers . . . Obverse Tricksters': Trickster-Texts and Cross-Cultural Reading." *Modern Language Studies* 26.4 (Fall 1996): 83-98. As in his other published work, Monsma claims to be interested in inter-ethnic interpretations of the trickster. Here he again treats Reed's *Flight to Canada* and Kingston's *Woman Warrior* and *China Men* as well as Vizenor's haiku (simply summarizing Blaeser's observations) and *Dead Voices*. He notes that Bagese's injunction not to publish her stories places both the narrator and the reader in a double bind, suggesting that the way out is for readers to follow her other injunction to imagine our own stories, seeing ourselves as tricksters in the process. Monsma concludes with Gustavo Pérez Firmat's description of reading as a liminal activity, with our thoughts/notes in the margins.
- . "Liminal Landscapes: Motion, Perspective, and Place in Gerald Vizenor's Fiction." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 60-72. See **Bearheart**.
- . "Textual Tricksters: Interpretation and Social Transformation in Multicultural Literature." Diss. U of Southern California, 1995. Monsma's dissertation serves as the basis of the article "Active Readers . . . Obverse Tricksters" above as well as an article on *Bearheart*. See **Bearheart**.
- Warrior, Robert Allen. "Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World." Review. *World Literature Today* 67.2 (Spring 1993): 423. Warrior notes the ceremonial beginning of each story counterpointing the "wordies" as the enforcers of the hollow darkness of the city. A tone of "mature and constant calm" overrides Vizenor's typical aggressiveness.
- Weaver, Jace. "Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World." Review. *Christianity and Crisis* 52.12 (17 August 1992): 285-86. With animal transformations, trickster disruptions, and rebalancings, Vizenor offers antidotes for both the "plastic medicine men" and dead voices heard by non-Natives. Weaver sees in Vizenor's self-referentiality/re-telling of his own stories the creation of new tribal myths.
- Whitson, Kathy. "Dead Voices. Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories." Review. *Studies in Short Fiction* 31.1 (Winter 1994): 130-32. Whitson notes that Vizenor is reshaping trick-

ster tales in both books she considers. She points out the academic frame of *Dead Voices* and sees Vizenor addressing a number of contemporary social issues, including chemical civilization, using a system of contrasts: treeline/city, eye/ear, oral/written, wordies/non-wordies, soap-clean/natural body, I/we, dead voices/live voices. Where shape shifting is essential to survival, Vizenor warns of "the dangers of abandoning tribal and natural values."

Hotline Healers: An Almost Browne Novel

Bogenschutz, Debbie. "Hotline Healers." Review. *Library Journal* 122.7 (15 April 1977): 121.

Glancy, Diane. "Hotline Healers." Review. *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 10.2 (Summer 1998): 121-26. Glancy revels in Vizenor as a writer of ideas, a source of inspiration, and a creator of new words/new worlds, allowing the joy of his word play to trigger word play of her own. Asserting that half of *Hotline Healers* is written so that mixedbloods don't take themselves too seriously and half so they do, she deftly counters Sherman Alexie's argument that all Native literature needs to be accessible to the average reservation 12-year-old.

"Hotline Healers: An Almost Browne Novel." Review. *Publishers Weekly* 244.13 (31 March 1997): 62.

Senier, Siobhan. "Hotline Healers." Review. *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 17.3 (Fall 1997): 245-46. Senier pays tribute to Vizenor's humor and his Trickster strategies for subverting readers "'poised to hear the litanies of native creation and victimry'" while noting that his work is sometimes insiderish and very, very elusive.

Weaver, Jace. "Hotline Healers: An Almost Browne Novel." Review. *Wicazo Sa Review* 12.2 (Fall 1997): 145-46.

Short Fiction

Ballinger, Franchot. "Sacred Reversals: Trickster in Gerald Vizenor's *Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives on Mixed Descent*." *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (Winter 1985): 55-59. Ballinger elucidates connections between Vizenor's 21 mainly satirical stories and traditional American Indian trickster stories. In both, trickster is an elusive figure: "Like a subatomic particle, he defies final defi-

nition of time, place and character.” He is not a quality but a process, Vizenor agrees, always traveling, transgressing, becoming, transforming, making. The major source of his power lies in his “ambiguous marginality.” From his reversals and transgressions come creativity, magic power, and other special benefits (satire becoming a sacred reversal). Ballinger considers trickster to be the literary representation of the sacred clown or Heyoka and shows the spiritual healing power of Vizenor’s urban trickster characters, including Captain Shammer and Father Bearald One.

Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. See **General Studies**.

Haseltine, Patricia. “The Voices of Gerald Vizenor: Survival Through Transformation.” *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (Winter 1985): 31-47. Haseltine sees *Earthdivers* as a traditional trickster tale cycle intended to instruct on contemporary Native issues through satire. She provides substantial biographical background/publishing history. Contextualizing Vizenor’s three mentor/characters in *Earthdivers*, she connects the Pueblo clown with the Ojibwa trickster, traces the association between crows and wisdom, and notes that Frederick Baraga published the first Anishinaabe dictionary in 1878. The stories themselves are conversational dialogues on White-Indian relations. Haseltine notes that Vizenor’s intertextuality (importing Belladonna’s story into a new context) is like traditional storytelling. His incarnations of Custer, she asserts, serve as a goad to white liberals. She concludes with a review of trickster scholarship and Indian humor.

Jahner, Elaine. “Allies in the Word Wars: Vizenor’s Uses of Contemporary Critical Theory.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.2 (1985): 64-69. See **General Studies**.

—. “Cultural Shrines Revisited.” *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (Winter 1985): 25-30. See **General Studies**.

Velie, Alan. *Four American Indian Literary Masters: N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Gerald Vizenor*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1982. See **General Studies**.

Poetry/Haiku

Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*.

Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. See **General Studies**.

- . “‘Interior Dancers’: Transformations of Vizenor’s Poetic Vision.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 3-15. Blaeser here examines how Vizenor’s early poems prefigure his better-known prose with particular attention to his signature vocabulary. She notes the early appearance of such characteristic techniques as “the crossovers between and imaginative commingling of tribal mythic accounts, historical stories, family history, and personal stories, as well as the blending of experiences and stories from several cultural sources.”
- . “The Multiple Traditions of Gerald Vizenor’s Haiku Tradition.” *New Voices in American Literary Criticism*. Ed. Arnold Krupat. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution P, 1993. This essay duplicates information found in *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Blaeser here focuses on Vizenor’s haiku and translations of Ojibway dream songs, which have been linked in the minds of critics since Carl Sandburg’s 1917 review of Densmore’s *Chippewa Music*. Both document an intense moment of personal/spiritual awareness, or vision, to use the term most frequently used in the context of Native spirituality. Blaeser links the dream songs with Yaqui deer songs, both in their elliptical style and their connection with the larger community/Cosmic Unconscious. That what is present in the imagery alludes to what is absent accords with Vizenor’s project of breaking the boundaries of print: Vizenor, indeed, says that haiku is not a poem but “a hand beckoning” and feels that because of cultural tradition and belief, which emphasize oneness with the world rather than a subject/object split, most Native Americans have easier access than Whites to the realm of dreamscape via haiku. Blaeser notes that Vizenor’s haiku is characterized by vivid nature imagery, building by suggestion, tension created by unusual juxtapositions (the sentimental juxtaposed to the mundane or the juxtaposition of two apparently incongruous images), trickster consciousness administering a mild reprimand in haiku that concern human affairs (though in haiku never presented as strictly human), and reader engagement. She follows the haiku strategy into the construction of Vizenor’s prose imagery, noting the *haibun* tradition.

Lincoln, Kenneth. *Native American Renaissance*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1983. Lincoln devotes four lines of this book to one of

Vizenor's poems.

Traditional Songs and Stories

- Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. See **General Studies**.
- Glauber, Robert. "Summer in the Spring." Review. *Beloit Poetry Journal* 16.2 (1965-66): 39. This very brief notice wonders if the haiku-like quality of the dream songs is original or has crept into Vizenor's interpretations.
- McNeil, Elizabeth. "'The Game Never Ends': Gerald Vizenor's Gamble with Language and Structure in *Summer in the Spring*." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 19.2 (1995): 85-109. McNeil compares Vizenor's versions of trickster stories with those published in *The Progress* in the late 1880s, finding only minor editorial changes. She tells the history of the newspaper itself, provides some scholarly background on the trickster, and reads the Beaulieu versions against contemporary events, especially the issue of land allotment.
- Whitson, Kathy. "Dead Voices. *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories*." Review. *Studies in Short Fiction* 31.1 (Winter 1994): 130-32. See *Dead Voices*.

Drama/Film

- Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. See **General Studies**.
- Lincoln, Kenneth. *Indi'n Humor: Bicultural Play in Native America*. New York: Oxford U P, 1993. See **General Studies**.
- Pulitano, Elvira. "Waiting for Ishi: Gerald Vizenor's *Ishi and the Wood Ducks* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 9.1 (Spring 1997): 73-92. Pulitano finds both Beckett and Vizenor looking to language as a liberating force beyond the limits of dialectic and "logical" words as they investigate the "possibility of finding in language a new medium that reveals the reality beyond words." She demonstrates important similarities in the characters and linguistic strategies/language games of the two plays as Vizenor attempts to deconstruct the notion of static Indianness.

Silberman, Robert. "Gerald Vizenor and Harold of Orange: From Word Cinemas to Real Cinema." *American Indian Quarterly* (Winter 1985): 5-21. While complementing Vizenor for his skilled satire which tackles both white foundations and Indian warriors, Silberman addresses the problem of the density of Vizenor's language/intellectual content on the screen ("wall to wall words," as director Richard Weise described it). He notes the deftness of Vizenor's touch in approaching such issues as Indian drinking, where speaking critically could be taken as betrayal and speaking positively would be unrealistic. Silberman suggests the great self-consciousness and irony required by a writer like Vizenor who has chosen to keep alive the oral tradition. While noting that the cinematic treatment is very conventional, he comments that Harold's addresses directly to the audience at the beginning and end, breaking the cinematic frame, are not.

Creative Nonfiction

Ainsworth, Linda. "History and Imagination: Gerald Vizenor's *The People Named the Chippewa*." *American Indian Quarterly* 9.1 (Winter 1985): 52-53. This article stands as an important early assessment of Vizenor as a trickster historian taking pains to make a distinction between history and identity: that the people *named* Chippewa (a social science invention) are not to be confused with the Anishinabeg nor with the living peoples, and further, that the Chippewa must excise romantic notions about themselves and come to terms with the fact that they cannot, except in conspiring with their own victimization, be Chippewa and woodland Anishinabeg at the same time.

Bell, Betty Louise. "Almost the Whole Truth: Gerald Vizenor's Shadow Working and Native American Autobiography." *A/B Auto/Biography* 7.2 (Fall 1992): 180-95. Bell observes that in contrast with his fiction (drawing specific examples from *Heirs to Columbus*) where Vizenor satirizes dedication to binaries, in his autobiography, contrary to Wong and Brumble's views, Vizenor returns to a traditional half-breed space and the tensions and contradictions of a divided life: he is not a dialogic of many voices but a silenced, divided identity. Bell sees a close kinship with the cultural schizophrenic Thomas White Hawk. She reviews current theories which consider autobiography as fact and fiction as

well as theories of Native American subjectivity and the position of the half-breed in Native American literature.

Blaeser, Kimberly M. *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1996. See **General Studies**.

Gonzales, Irene. "Textual Stimulation: Gerald Vizenor's Use of Law in Advocacy Literature." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (Fall 1993): 31-35. By textual stimulations, Gonzales means "the methods, metaphors, theatrics, and drama of courtroom scenes." She notes that in his Thomas White Hawk piece Vizenor uses the court trial as a narrative skeleton but also uses "hidden transcripts" (utterances made to a restricted audience) to reveal the private feelings and thoughts of White Hawk. He thereby foregrounds issues of the underclass, domination, adventures, myths, Native consciousness, justice, individual and racial separations, transforming the historical subtext and producing a narrative of cultural empowerment.

Krupat, Arnold. *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*. Berkeley: U California P, 1987. Krupat excludes Vizenor's work from this study because of his self-described postmodern intentions.

Rigal-Cellard, Bernadette. "Naanabozho contre Chronos ou les ambiguïtés de l'histoire chez Vizenor." *Annales du CRAA*. Bordeaux: MSHA, 1989. 14: 19-31. Observing that in *The People Named Chippewa* Vizenor writes between two poles, transcendence and the impossibility of transcendence, Rigal-Cellard explores whether he is affirming history (linear time) or myth (cyclical time). Vizenor himself asserts that "the tribal creation takes place at the time of the telling." She introduces the Chippewa trickster, who opposes the Evil Gambler, and she contrasts Vizenor's history with Momaday's *Way to Rainy Mountain*, focusing on "invented Indians" and briefly recapping the various essays from the book.

Rodríguez, Juana María. "Gerald Vizenor's Shadow Plays: Narrative Mediations and Multiplicities of Power." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (Fall 1993): 23-30. Rodríguez sees "a Foucaultian nightmare of competing discourses acted out on the body of Thomas White Hawk" (the 18-year-old murderer/rapist sentenced to death in South Dakota), including the colonial narrative of civilization/savagry, the cultural nationalist narrative making White Hawk a victim of hegemonic powers, and an un-written feminist narrative making White Hawk a victimizer of

women. She sees Vizenor reframing the judicial and psychiatric discourses in terms of colonialism and power, deconstructing the tyranny of “pre-existing binaries by presenting a multiplicity of voices and power relations.” She notes that the position of the narrator changes each time Vizenor has told the story: journalistically in his advocacy pamphlet reprinted in *Crossbloods*, in the third person under the guise of fiction in *Wordarrows*, and in the first person in a planned account.

Stevenson, Winona. “Suppressive Narrator and Multiple Narratees in Gerald Vizenor’s ‘Thomas White Hawk’” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 5.3 (Fall 1993): 23-30. Vizenor incorporates into this text a number of character (intradiegetic) narrators who speak for themselves but only when the extradiegetic omniscient central narrator steps aside. Although this narrator’s identity and gender are not clear, he/she speaks to the death penalty without proselytizing, moves at will in time and space, and is strategically suppressive, using ellipses and italics to suggest rather than state. Psychonarration, flashbacks, and projection are used to evolve a personal history that strategically contextualizes White Hawk’s actions, decriminalizing and humanizing White Hawk and his Dakota identity. Stevenson identifies and explains how two types of extradiegetic narratees (reader/listeners) are produced by the narrative: latently activist Native Americans, for whom a suggestion of the relevant background issues is sufficient, and socially conscious non-Native liberals.

Literary Theory and Cultural Critique

Bellecourt, Clyde and Hartwig Isernhagen. “Gerald Vizenor: Negotiations of Difference and Value.” *Multiculturalism and the Canon of American Culture*. Amsterdam: Vrije U P, 1993. Isernhagen addresses the debate over the literature’s value as universal (sameness) or culturally specific (difference) with a critique of Vizenor’s own essay in *Narrative Chance*. He finds that Vizenor’s discourse, according to the general trend of postmodernism, is twinned with its own counter-impulse: “he avoids both a stance of victimization and one of simple empowerment,” for example. Demanding cooperation from the reader, “Vizenor evades responsibility for what the text says at any point, but he imposes on

himself the responsibility for what the text does as a whole." In other words, he "makes use of discourses that are built on principles of difference (fragmentation, juxtaposition, montage and collage, hermeticism, slippage) to establish a shared discursive realm in which agreement is possible, but not necessary."

Bergevin, Gerald W. "Theorizing through an Ethnic Lens." *Modern Language Studies* 26.4 (Fall 1996): 13-26. Bergevin feels that literary theory has a long way to go in engaging the special characteristics of multi-ethnic literature and that "an adequate theory of multi-ethnic literature should be both multicultural and critical." He suggests including Vizenor as a critic in Native American literature courses and speaks to the difficulty and value of coming to terms with *Bearheart* in the classroom.

Berner, Robert L. "Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance." Review. *World Literature Today* 68.3 (Summer 1994): 616. Berner wants a Vizenor translated into "plain English" and objects to stylistic muddle in the name of postmodernism while agreeing with the ideas Vizenor posits.

Churchill, Ward. "Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance." Review. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18.3 (Summer 1994): 313-19. Churchill criticizes the writing as "cliquish obscurantism" growing out of the author's "hyperinflated sense of self-importance." He sees no difference between Vizenor's concept of the "invented Indian" and the earliest Indians on European display. Churchill, who would seek to emulate Fanon and Memmi, warms to Vizenor when his subject approaches journalistic expose, as in his essay on the drug-dealing activist

Laga, Barry E. "Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance." Review. *American Indian Quarterly* 20.1 (Winter 1996): 119-21. Noting its theoretical grounding in Baudrillard, Laga sees Vizenor's book as a who's who of writers and cultural institutions who have participated in "simulating, falsifying, and misrepresenting tribal reality," a testimony to the absence of the tribal real. According to Laga, Vizenor counts Paula Gunn Allen and Russell Means as postindian warriors and legitimate Indian advocates, along with Luther Standing Bear. Laga suggests that in Vizenor's dense style, "accumulation replaces linear progression." He criticizes Vizenor for constantly creating binaries, categories, and labels and for a lack of self-reflexivity.

Lynch, Tom. "Politely Practicing Manifest Destiny." Review of *Manifest*

Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance. *San Francisco Chronicle* 15 May 1994. Lynch begins by defining the unfamiliar terms in Vizenor's title and then his strategy of "trickster hermeneutics," which provides the means for distinguishing between the continuation of manifest destiny ("simulations of dominance") and strategies designed to undermine it ("simulations of survivance"). Describing the essays as "critical poems," Lynch wonders if a sense of elitism keeps Vizenor from communicating with the largest possible audience.

Moses, L. G. "Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance." Review. *Choice* 31.9 (May 1994): 1496.

Roemer, Kenneth. "*Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*." Review. *American Literature* 66.4 (December 1994): 871-72. Roemer here focuses on Vizenor's strategy in constructing this book of essays related to the representation of Native Americans in fiction and non-fiction. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and the Epilogue address the basic concepts of oppositional discourses of simulation, while chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 address specific simulations (Columbus, Ishi, various media-created pan-Indian leaders, and casinos). Against the literature of dominance fashioned by such writers as Lynn Andrews and Robert Bly, Vizenor sets such postindian warriors of survivance as Standing Bear, Charles Alexander Eastman, and N. Scott Momaday. If Roemer is critical of the repetition inherent in Vizenor's catalog/collage of quotations, he also sees value in the juxtapositions themselves.

Wiget, Andrew. *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. Review. *Modern Philology* (May 1991): 476-79. Noting that Native literature had resisted theory, which tends to obscure its historic and cultural specificity, Wiget finds some useful work here but criticizes Vizenor himself for bad theory and bad writing. He suggests that Vizenor's handling of the trickster is self-serving and raises serious objections to the application of poststructuralist theory to elucidate oral literatures, finding it fundamentally unsuitable.

Petroglyph

Snow falls that night,
spreads heavy and smooth
like stone, like white granite.
It takes the sharp cut of deer tracks.
In nightgown and bare feet
she follows them, a string
of cloven hearts wandering up from the woods,
past the barn with its scents of straw,
cats, cobwebs; lapping the length
of the skinny tin trailer
where the girl had lain curled
in dreams of slow words; past
her father's red truck
asleep in the driveway, dents filled with snow,
tools covered in the bed made
fresh and clean, no traces
of labor, his sweat, jumbled scraps of lumber; down
the long driveway, to enter
mute pines and bare maples
at the mouth of the road that leads away.
She stands breathing in silvered swirls, heart
thumping; *this is as far as I go*. Snow
takes her print, curved half-moons
cut by the heat of childhood in her skin.

Deborah A. Miranda

Courtship and Seduction in American Indian Myths and Legends

Eric Sterling

Arnold Krupat and Leslie Marmon Silko, among others, argue that when one studies and interprets works of a culture, one must take into consideration the biases of one's own society. In other words, one must be careful to remember that all objects of study can only be seen through a particular and limited "lens." If a "lens" problem does exist, however, it exists, of course, in virtually any piece of scholarly analysis. For instance, if one were to write an essay on Shakespeare, a "lens" problem would obviously exist, if only because a twentieth-century scholar cannot write from the perspective of a citizen of Tudor-Stuart England. In the following essay, I have attempted to minimize this "lens" problem by supporting my ideas concerning American Indian codes of values with evidence provided not only by established anthropologists who have had extensive contact with American Indians, but also by people indigenous to the Native cultures I discuss. Such evidence suggests that although tribes from different geographic locations within North America possess dissimilar ways of life and sometimes have distinctive customs, their attitudes concerning what constitutes worthiness in a good husband remain constant. For example, in the past a prospective husband on the plains had to be adept at killing buffalo; someone in a northeast tribe who wished to impress a female had to be a talented hunter; one in a southeast tribe had to be a proficient farmer. These males, from different sections of North America, needed to prove their diligence and skill in order to attract the attention of a prospective bride and her father.

Because the bravery and worthiness of the male lover are archetypal and because the myths and legends of tribes gradually spread from one tribe to another, stories from different locations are often more similar than some people realize. In *Patterns of Culture*, for instance, Ruth Benedict says that a "clear understanding of the processes of cultural integration must take its point of departure from a knowledge of the facts of diffusion . . . [yet events such as marriage] are situations that each society seizes upon to express its characteristic purposes." Similarly, Martha Warren Beckwith, who recorded stories told to her by the Oglala Teton Dakotas, believes that "[a]s for the actual episodes in the stories, wide as is their distribution among Sioux groups I take it that very few are native. We

recognize too many world-wide elements or even complete plots of too complex character to argue for independent invention.” When Beckwith records an Oglala myth concerning two girls who marry stars, she includes a lengthy list of similar stories from other tribes. It can be reductive to make rigid demarcations between cultures and tribes, to suggest that because the Sioux and Blackfoot are different tribes, they cannot share commonalities. Generalizations are valid because all cultures share concepts of love and marriage even if they differ in regard to their style involving these concepts. No culture exists in a vacuum. In this essay, I select works that contain similarities and I support the generalizations with documented evidence by notable scholars, experts in the field of American Indian studies. Therefore, courtship and seduction myths of tribes as diverse as the Sioux, Blackfoot, Hopi, and Cochiti all demonstrate that females and the fathers of prospective brides evaluate male suitors more by their achievements than by social background and materialism; heroic deeds achieved during a quest, in fact, transform the protagonists into a higher social position and sometimes even lead to a concomitant acquisition of wealth.

The story “High Horse’s Courting,” related by Black Elk, demonstrates how the Sioux esteem bravery more than money. High Horse wishes to marry a pretty girl yet faces opposition from her father because he can offer him in return only four horses. He tries to elope with her, but she refuses because, as Harold E. Driver notes, elopement in the North American tribes “was rarely the approved method of acquiring a bride.” Instead, as J.W. Powell notes in *The Siouan Indians*, “Marriage was usually effected by negotiation through parents or elders.” Thus, in Black Elk’s story, the girl refuses to run away with High Horse because she “wanted to be bought like a fine woman. You see she thought a great deal of herself too.” Driver explains that “the social prestige of a woman, and that of her offspring and husband as well, was positively correlated with the amount ‘paid’ for her.” Likewise, in *Indians of the Plains*, Robert Lowie asserts that “[t]here was nothing at all derogatory to a girl in being paid for, quite the contrary. It must be emphasized that she did not thereby become a chattel.” The word “bought” does not necessarily signify a purchase; rather the word indicates that the girl wants High Horse to earn her through an act of bravery achieved during a test. Unfortunately, High Horse fails to comprehend, or perhaps he wants to win her quickly and easily; his two attempts to kidnap her fail, and his second try borders on sacrilege because he dresses as a spirit. After the aborted second kidnapping attempt, High Horse escapes from her teepee and evades the men who chase him

by hiding in a hollow tree. High Horse's failures are comic; his humorous misadventures are a significant parody of what the Sioux considered a proper manifestation of manhood. The mishaps of High Horse typify those of young men who are desperately in love and thus act recklessly and foolishly in their attempts to win the hearts of the girls they adore. His initial failures indicate that he must venture on a quest because he has yet to prove himself worthy of the girl.

Initially, High Horse relinquishes his endeavors to kidnap the girl and, accompanied by his friend Red Deer, separates from the tribe. The two encounter a Crow village, kill the horse guard, and steal one hundred horses from their enemies. Black Elk recounts how High Horse,

“drove the whole herd right into the village and up in front of the girl's teepee. The old man was there, and High Horse called out to him and asked if he thought maybe that would be enough horses for his girl. The old man did not wave him away that time. It was not the horses that he wanted. What he wanted was a son who was a real man and good for something. So High Horse got his girl after all, and I think he deserved her.”

The act differs from his attempted kidnappings because it benefits the Sioux and injures their Crow adversaries. Although High Horse acts cowardly in his failed abductions, he risks his life in the horse theft.

Courage, not possessions, matters to the girl's father. Although one may argue that High Horse steals the horses to offer payment for the girl, the audience must consider the alternative possibility, that he seizes the animals not for selfish motives, but to wound the enemy and to help his own people. The action restores his place in the tribe and consequently enables him to bring the horses to the teepee; the welfare of the tribe has been foremost on his mind, and his winning of the girl becomes his reward for his bravery and for placing the tribe first. Although the father has previously rejected four horses and now eagerly accepts one hundred as payment for his daughter, the number of horses proves irrelevant to him. The father, instead, concerns himself with how High Horse has acquired the animals. As Laine Thom points out, the acquisition of horses from enemy tribes “serves to elevate his tribal standing.” Money and goods prove significant only in that the suitor has earned them. Black Elk's summary comment—“I think he deserved her”—is significant because the Oglala Sioux warrior and medicine man asserts, from the Sioux perspective, that High Horse has earned the girl through his bravery.

Bravery, as opposed to wealth, also proves integral to courtship

in the Sioux legend “Brave Woman Counts Coup.” Red Horn and Wanblee Cikala (Little Eagle) desire Winyan Ohitika (Brave Woman), the beautiful daughter of the chief, but she focuses more on counting coup, wanting to avenge the murder of her brothers by the Crows before she marries. Before Brave Woman ventures to count coup, many warriors ask to marry her and offer horses, but she declines all proposals. The narrator points out that Red Horn is the most prominent suitor, for he is the son of a chief, and suggests that he possesses the best opportunity to win her. Red Horn contrasts with Little Eagle, who “was too shy to declare his love, because he was a poor boy who had never been able to distinguish himself.” With the material and social status as the only forms of competition, Little Eagle possesses no chance to win Brave Woman’s love and declines even to make an offer. However, when the Sioux attack the Crows, Little Eagle, unlike Red Horn, manifests his worth through bravery and self-sacrifice. When Brave Woman’s horse suffers a wound, leaving her standing and thus vulnerable, Red Horn ignores her because he does not wish to endanger himself, and he consequently preserves his own life. Little Eagle, contrariwise, dismounts and allows Brave Woman to take his horse (since his mount, being wounded, cannot support two riders). He continues to fight on foot until he is killed. Little Eagle’s rescue of Brave Woman results ultimately in a Sioux victory over the Crows because she inspires the warriors to heroic deeds.

Although Red Horn can now marry Brave Woman because she has counted coup and he has fought in the successful battle, he has squandered the opportunity through his cowardly inaction. Red Horn has disgraced himself in battle and thus, despite his wealth and high social position, proves unworthy of her. In fact, his cowardice costs him his social standing, for his fellow warriors remove his eagle feathers and break his bow. He loses his place in the tribe for his cowardice, just as High Horse recovers his standing through his bravery. The warriors lower Red Horn’s social position and simultaneously emasculate him, rendering him beneath Little Eagle. The reader may discern that Red Horn’s cowardice and Little Eagle’s bravery cause the two to change places in the social hierarchy.

The story of Little Eagle manifests the egalitarian nature of the culture. American Indian quests, unlike those in Arthurian legends in a feudal society, often involve those who are far from wealthy because Indians value counting coup and bravery more than material riches. Poor Indians, as opposed to Medieval peasants, could embark on quests because the social class system was far less rigid; Little Eagle’s devotion to

Brave Woman and his courage supersede his social background. Indeed, Marla N. Powers states that in order to woo a female successfully, a suitor must have “distinguished himself in the hunt or on the warpath, because ultimately her selection of an appropriate spouse would be based on the young man’s accomplishments. . . .”¹³ Consequently, Brave Woman selects the deceased Little Eagle, who never asked to marry her because of his poverty, as her husband, thus rendering her instantly a widow:

Brave Woman gashed her arms and legs with a sharp knife. She cut her hair short and tore her white buckskin dress. Thus she mourned for Little Eagle. They had not been man and wife; in fact, he had hardly dared speak to her or look at her, but now she asked everybody to treat her as if she were the young warrior’s widow. Brave Woman never took a husband, and she never ceased to mourn for Little Eagle. “I am his widow,” she told everyone. She died of old age. She had done a great thing, and her fame endures.

Her death of old age, as a widow, indicates that Little Eagle has earned her love forever, that because of his bravery, her promise is not transitory. J.W. Powell notes that in Sioux culture, sometimes “the bride was purchased.” In this case, Little Eagle purchased Brave Woman not with material goods, but with his courage. After the conflict, the warriors kill his horse, the one he gave Brave Woman during the battle, because Little Eagle will require it in the spirit world. The reference to the spirit world indicates that Little Eagle and Brave Woman enjoy a spirit marriage and may bind together in the next world as they could not in this one. The narrator’s editorial comment that concludes the aforementioned quotation indicates the audience’s approval of Brave Woman for valuing bravery over material goods and social position.

Just as Little Eagle triumphs over indigence, so Scarface, in the Blackfoot myth of the same name, overcomes his unattractive appearance and poverty to marry a wealthy and very beautiful girl whom everyone else desires; Scarface’s success depends on his ability to win the approval of not only the girl, but also that of the Sun, to whom she belongs. The numerous rejected suitors mock Scarface, saying sarcastically that the very poor man should propose because of his physical wealth and beauty: “Why don’t you ask that girl to marry you? You are so rich and handsome!”¹⁶ Their attitudes are explained by John C. Ewers in *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*, who notes that “[t]he institution of marriage among the Blackfoot offered men of wealth opportunities for wide selec-

tion of women for wives, while the marital opportunities of the poor were restricted. . . . On the whole marriages tended to be contracted between persons of nearly equal status.”¹⁷ Similarly, Frank B. Linderman reports in *Blackfeet Indians* that when a Blackfoot male wanted to marry a girl, she and her father had to consider “the young man’s breeding, prestige, and his power to provide properly for a family.”¹⁸ Scarface comprehends that he is clearly at a disadvantage because he lacks the resources to court the girl. Ewers claims in *The Blackfeet* that:

[m]arriage was simply solemnized by an exchange of gifts between the families of the bride and groom. . . . One or more horses were invariably given, along with robes or blankets and household goods of lesser value. . . . It was expected that the gifts returned by the spouse’s family should be more lavish than those they had received. . . . [The Blackfoot stressed to Ewers] the importance of the exchange of gifts in the old-time Blackfoot marriage ceremony.

Because he is so poor and has no living family members in the tribe, Scarface cannot participate in this Blackfoot custom of exchanging gifts between relatives, especially with the family of a wealthy girl. Nonetheless, Scarface asks her to marry him:

“Not as a designing person do I ask you, but openly where the Sun looks down, and all may see. . . . You have refused those who are young, and rich, and brave. Now, to-day, they laughed and said to me, ‘Why do you not ask her?’ I am poor, very poor. I have no lodge, no food, no clothes, no robes and warm furs. I have no relations.”

Scarface’s proposal manifests not only his humility (in contrast to the hubris of the other suitors), but also his respect for the Sun, for he proposes openly and honestly. His reference to the Sun’s presence symbolizes that he genuinely loves her, that he shares his heart with her, and that he hides nothing from her. Scarface’s sincerity and reference to the power of the Sun intrigue the girl, who values sincerity more than wealth or social position. She therefore accepts his proposal, with the provision that he receive the permission of the Sun.

Like High Horse and Little Eagle, Scarface must manifest his worthiness by embarking on a quest. Indeed, George Bird Grinnell says that before a young Blackfoot man “could marry, he was required to have made some successful expeditions to war against the enemy [in this case,

the trials during his treacherous journey and the great birds that he destroys], thereby proving himself a brave man. . . ." The girl sends him on his quest because she believes that he has already proven his worthiness by his heartfelt proposal and his reference to the Sun. If he were unworthy, he could not even attempt the journey. Yet Scarface must walk to the water's edge, cross the big water, and venture along the trail to the Sun's lodge.

People aid Scarface throughout his quest. An old woman prepares food for him and constructs seven pairs of moccasins for his journey; a wolverine teaches him how to find the Sun; and two swans carry him on their backs across the big water. Although one might argue that Scarface is lucky to receive such help along the way, it is his worthiness that causes the aforementioned helpers to aid him throughout his quest. Perhaps the omnipotent Sun has even sent them to help Scarface endure his ordeal. Grinnell, for instance, notes that the Sun was considered "a beneficent person, of great wisdom and kindness, good to those who do right,"²² and Scarface demonstrates that he is such a deserving person. Despite his misgivings and lack of confidence, Scarface never quits; his tenacity proves his manhood. The obstacles he encounters, such as the big water, test his devotion to the girl he loves. Yet the impediments do not cease when he arrives near the Sun's lodging.

Scarface, who is too poor to own nice weapons, discovers "a war shirt, a shield, and a bow and arrows. He had never seen such pretty weapons; but he did not touch them."²³ His refusal to steal, despite his need and the preciousness of the weapons, endears him to A-pi-su-ahts (Morning Star), who owns these belongings. These weapons appear not to lie on the trail accidentally; rather, they serve as Morning Star's test of Scarface's integrity. Scarface's honesty, which has already appealed to the girl, permits him to pass the test and brings him closer to marriage because his new friend's father is the Sun.

Scarface's final trial occurs when Morning Star ventures to the home of the great birds who kill people and who have murdered Morning Star's brothers. Scarface realizes that if he flees to safety, Morning Star will die, so he risks his life by stepping between his friend and the birds, subsequently destroying all the predators. Scarface acts without considering that he will receive a reward for saving the Sun's oldest living child, and this lack of greed again reflects his worthiness. The Sun says to Scarface, "My son . . . I will not forget what you have this day done for me." The Sun's comment suggests the true identity of Scarface's father, in which case the suitor is indeed worthy of the girl. Consequently, the Sun

{89} blesses the proposed marriage, gives Scarface two raven feathers as a sign to the girl,²⁵ and removes his scar.

When Scarface returns to the village on a very hot day, he sits in the sun for many hours. The people, not knowing his identity because he wraps himself in a robe, worry about this stranger, who must be very hot. They fail to comprehend that because the Sun watches over him, he is not as uncomfortable as they believe. Although the Sun is too hot for the rest of them, he protects Scarface. When the Sun goes down, Scarface removes his robe to reveal his fine new clothing and his face that now lacks a scar; the villagers admire him for his new clothes and weapons, but the girl respects him for his bravery and honor. And the raven feathers he earns signify his intelligence and foreshadow that he and his new wife will always possess plenty of food. Although his wife already possesses sufficient wealth for both of them, his worthiness, with the concomitant blessing of the Sun, makes him a suitable match for her.

As the preceding examples illustrate, American Indian myths and legends demonstrate not only the need for bravery and worthiness, but also the danger of becoming preoccupied with status. Similarly, a Hopi myth entitled "The Maiden and the Coyote" manifests that females who select their mates solely on the basis of status will suffer punishment for their hubris. In this Hopi myth, a beautiful Oraibi maiden rejects all the young men in her village as well as all the Cloud chiefs. Since she considers them all unworthy of her because of her great beauty, "she treated with contempt all attempts in that direction [marriage]."²⁶ Because she thinks that only a god will suffice as her husband, she therefore agrees to marry the rain god Pavayoykashi, who courts her while dressed extravagantly as a flute player, a Powamuy dancer, and a Katsina, and while holding arrows drawn in a quiver made of panther skin. It is significant that she desires to marry Pavayoykashi because he is the rain god, while she, being a Hopi, lives in the pueblos in the Southwest, where the staple crops (such as maize) depend heavily upon rainfall. Because the area receives so little rain, Pavayoykashi is precious to the Hopi and thus desirable to the beautiful maiden. Furthermore, his presence as a Katsina is relevant because Katsinas "are believed to intercede for the Hopi with the major deities and to bring rain. In fact, they also appear in the form of rain-bearing clouds."

Coyote Old Man, however, steals Pavayoykashi's clothes and proceeds to dress and paint himself as the rain god. The beautiful maiden, not discerning the difference because she preoccupies herself solely with her prospective husband's status, ventures with Coyote Old Man to his house, where they copulate. Carl Jung notes²⁸ that trickster figures such as

Coyote often invert the social hierarchy. Coyote reverses the hierarchy by virtue of his formlessness. He functions as an animal and then as a human being, and he effortlessly transforms into any shape that suits his purpose. However, Coyote surprises not only the characters in this Hopi myth, but also the audience, for no words in the work allude to his transformation.

Coyote rises socially by stealing the clothes, and Pavayoykashi's status experiences a concomitant decline. The maiden's foolishness becomes apparent when she cannot differentiate between a god and Coyote Old Man, especially when the former is her betrothed. Coyote Old Man's ability to dupe her manifests the superficiality of her relationship with Pavayoykashi and the god's unworthiness of her (despite her hubris, her beauty still makes her a prize). The clothes make the man (or, in this case, the god). Pavayoykashi is superficial, and she has agreed to marry him rather than worthy men in her village simply because of his high social standing and fancy clothes. Anyone wearing these ornate clothes, even Coyote Old Man, impresses her; deeds, bravery, and worthiness are inconsequential to her.

Although Coyote Old Man experiences punishment from the rain god, Pavayoykashi spares the maiden. The narrator states that as Coyote Old Man flees the rain god and the angry men of Oraibi, he "turned around and in a defiant way expressed his satisfaction at the victory he had gained over them, by successfully getting 'their' most beautiful maiden away from them, and the village. While he spoke he grasped his genitalia and showed them to his pursuers." The possessive pronoun "their" signifies belonging, indicating that she should marry someone from her tribe rather than proudly considering herself too beautiful for everyone. Coyote Old Man's fondling of his genitals suggests that the maiden, from his perspective, serves only one purpose; but the same holds true for Pavayoykashi, who desires her solely for her beautiful body. The maiden has seemed quite selective, yet only status and physical appearance guide her comportment; thus she copulates willingly with anyone claiming to be a god and wearing fine clothes. Preoccupied with status and materialism, she proves as shallow and as egocentric as Pavayoykashi and Coyote Old Man; thus she suffers for her hubris. Laura Thompson and Alice Joseph note in *The Hopi Way*, "[i]deally, the girl, but not the boy, is supposed to remain chaste both before and after marriage. . . ." Because the maiden in the legend does not obey this Hopi custom and is easily duped, perhaps she is not the great catch that the Hopi men consider her to be. Pavayoykashi does not punish her partly because her error proves self-destructive. Be-

cause she realizes that she is no longer chaste and “had cast herself away, she continued to lead a life of lewdness.”³¹

The Cochiti myth “The Industrious Daughter,” like the Hopi story of the maiden and Coyote, demonstrates that a proud girl will suffer the consequences for believing herself superior to her male suitors and thus refusing to marry. The industrious daughter’s beauty attracts the attention of the young males in the village, yet she rejects all of them because her desire to support her aged parents transforms into obsession. She supports her parents and herself by creating sashes and mantas for dancing costumes and then selling them to the males who wish to marry her. She enjoys constructing clothing and decides that because she makes a living with her clothing business, she does not need a husband. The daughter fails to realize that people purchase her clothing only in hope of receiving her favor; in fact, only her suitors buy her work. If she continuously rejected husbands, she would lose her customers and thus be unable to support her family. She fails to recognize that her husband could also support her parents because marriage involves not merely the couple, but also their kin. The industrious daughter’s hubris becomes so great that she behaves rudely towards the males, dismissing not only their attempts to marry her, but also the rainbow dance and other customs of the tribe. She believes that girls may support themselves and do not need husbands. A person with such a proud attitude clearly sets herself up for a fall.

Coyote causes the industrious daughter’s fall. In myths of tribes from various geographic locations, the trickster Coyote teaches people the danger of taking themselves too seriously. As Paul Radin points out, “Laughter, humour and irony permeate everything Trickster does. The reaction of the audience in aboriginal societies to both him and his exploits is prevailingly one of laughter tempered by awe.” Like the girl in the Hopi myth, the industrious daughter learns a lesson about pride from Coyote, who enjoys the instruction because he deflowers her in the process. As in the Hopi myth, Coyote engages in sexual intercourse with a female whom more deserving males wish to marry. When the other suitors discover that she, after rejecting their great gifts, settles for Coyote’s mere branch of black currants, they are “provoked that she would let him sleep with her for such a small gift.”³⁴ Because the story lacks a revenging god, Coyote emerges successfully with the girl and subsequently marries and has children with her. The myth shows the repercussions when a beautiful girl refuses to marry because of her pride. Indeed, Ruth Benedict says in *Tales of the Cochiti Indians* that “[t]he common Southwest treatment of

this theme [of a female who refuses to marry] involves the punishment of the girl. She must be trapped into marrying Coyote or into promiscuous intercourse. This is consistent also with Cochiti feeling.”³⁵ Thanks to her pride, the industrious daughter shames herself, loses the opportunity to marry a male in the village, and spends the rest of her life with Coyote in a house that is literally a hole in the ground. Although the girl intends initially to support her parents, after she marries Coyote she leaves them permanently, ceases her clothing business that has maintained them financially, and lives in a house so tiny that her parents cannot even fit into it.

In these myths and legends, courtship and matrimony reflect larger cultural values: a wise woman's expectations in her mate resemble criteria for worthiness and respect in the tribe. A male must earn his place in the tribe just as he must prove himself worthy of the woman. The couple exists as a unit within the larger circle (the family), which is a segment within the tribe. Women must accept their place in the circle and not let pride take them from it. “The Maiden and the Coyote” and “The Industrious Daughter” demonstrate what happens to females who think too highly of themselves and thus reject deserving suitors in favor of men who are unworthy. From the perspective of the narrators, the girls must passively wait for deserving males who have earned places in their tribes and thus in the girls' hearts.

These stories, we must realize, imply ideals rather than simply describe reality. The fact that these works imply that heroism and bravery should be more essential to prospective brides and their fathers than wealth and social status does not signify that materialism and social class were or are unimportant in American Indian cultures. Differences clearly exist between what should be and what is important. Nonetheless, the myths and legends not only attempt to teach about what constitutes a good husband and couple, but also seek to instruct about the virtues of heroism, honesty, and bravery.

NOTES

¹ See Arnold Krupat's *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1992) and Leslie Marmon Silko's “An Old-Time Indian Attack Conducted in Two Parts,” *Shantih* 4 (1979): 3-5.

² Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), pp. 242-243.

³ Martha Warren Beckwith, “Mythology of the Oglala Dakota,” *The*

Journal of American Folklore 43 (Oct.-Dec. 1930), p. 344.

⁴ Beckwith states that this "episode of a woman (or two women) married in Star country is common over the whole Plains area," and she lists references for the Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Dakota, Pawnee, Wichita, Arapaho, Assiniboine, Mandan, and Omaha (pp. 408-409).

⁵ Harold E. Driver, *Indians of North America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1969), p. 226. James R. Walker notes that in these rare cases, the man who attempted to abduct the woman was already married to her sister and thus staked a claim to her as well. Please see Walker, *Lakota Society*, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1982), p. 54.

⁶ J.W. Powell, *The Siouan Indians, Fifteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1893-'94* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1897), p. 178.

⁷ "High Horse's Courting," *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, ed. John G. Neihardt, 1932 (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1979), p. 69. Black Elk related the story to Neihardt perhaps in May 1931 (p. xix).

⁸ Driver, p. 224.

⁹ Robert H. Lowie, *Indians of the Plains*, 1954 (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1982), p. 79.

¹⁰ "High Horse's Courting," pp. 75-76.

¹¹ Laine Thom, *Becoming Brave: The Path to Native American Manhood* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992), p. 23.

¹² "Brave Woman Counts Coup," *American Indian Myths and Legends*, eds. Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 258. Jenny Leading Cloud related this tale to Erdoes at White River, Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota in 1967.

¹³ Marla N. Powers, *Oglala Women: Myth, Ritual, and Reality* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1986), p. 76.

¹⁴ "Brave Woman Counts Coup," p. 260.

¹⁵ Powell, p. 178.

¹⁶ "Scarface," *Blackfoot Lodge Tales: The Story of a Prairie People*, ed. George Bird Grinnell (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1962), p.94. Grinnell recorded the tale himself and published it in *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* in 1892.

¹⁷ John C. Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture, with Comparative Material from Other Western Tribes*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 159. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 249. See also Clark Wissler, *Social Organization and Ritualistic Ceremonies of the Blackfoot*

Indians, Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. VII (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1912), pp. 9-10.

¹⁸ Frank B. Linderman, *Blackfeet Indians* (St. Paul: Great Northern Railway, 1935), p. 10.

¹⁹ John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* 1958 (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1967), p. 99.

²⁰ "Scarface," p. 94.

²¹ George Bird Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales: The Story of a Prairie People* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1962), p. 211.

²² Grinnell, p. 258.

²³ "Scarface," p. 98.

²⁴ "Scarface," p. 100.

²⁵ Scarface acquires feathers because of his bravery just as Red Horn loses his feathers because of his cowardice.

²⁶ "The Maiden and the Coyote," *The Traditions of the Hopi*, ed. H.R. Voth, Vol. VIII (Chicago: Field Columbian Museum, 1905), p. 157. Qoyawaima (Oraibi) told the story to Voth sometime between 1903-1904 (see "Note", p. iii).

²⁷ Laura Thompson and Alice Joseph, *The Hopi Way* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1944), p. 42.

²⁸ C.J. Jung, *Four Archetypes: Mother / Rebirth / Spirit / Trickster*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, 1959 (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1969), p. 135.

²⁹ "The Maiden and the Coyote," p. 159.

³⁰ Laura Thompson and Alice Joseph, p. 60.

³¹ "The Maiden and the Coyote," p. 159.

³² "The Industrious Daughter," *Tales of the Cochiti Indians*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 98, ed. Ruth Benedict (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 226. Benedict recorded the tale in 1924 (ix).

³³ Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Bell, 1956), p. x.

³⁴ "The Industrious Daughter," p. 226.

³⁵ Ruth Benedict, *Tales of the Cochiti Indians*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 98 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 225.

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Further (Farther)

Diane Glancy

At a Wordcraft Circle Native Writers' Conference in Albuquerque in December, 1998, I was on a panel with William S. Yellow Robe, Jr., Bill Lang and Annette Arkeketa. We talked about Native theater. I'm not sure how to separate the voices, who said what and in what order they were said. Or even what exactly was said. But we discussed creating Native theater, and more importantly, creating new dialogue to talk about Native plays.

A script is a set of instructions (Yellow Robe began) which make a story the character enters. Or a character which the story enters. (Already the voices are mixed, and the text is taking on its own shape.) A story wants something but something gets in the way. How it is resolved is the character.

A play connects to a power source, which is a structure of action. A cord into a socket. Dramatic language is like electricity. Which is hard to explain. It accesses invisibility and all those things going to it. A play is a small town. With an interstate bypassing it. Yet connected to the power plant by the river. A new oral tradition with breath which is the condition of performance. A planet of being. A location. A vectoring which is a conflation of crossroads in different perspectives.

A Native play is maybe less constructed. Relying at times on campfire or lights from a trailer on the edge of darkness. Not moving to a clear finish with all kinds of imperatives, those little divisions between the spruce and the pines. But accessing the spirit world and the physical world. Combining the shadow world and the real world. Asking which is which? Is the shadow world the spirit world, and the real world, the physical world we live in? Or is the shadow world the real, and the real world we live in, the shadow? Or are both distorted until it only seems they are separate?

It is something like magic realism, but we have to invent Native terms.

A spirit walk.

Medicine walk.

Spirit riding.

(On the plane from Albuquerque, once it was over Minnesota, I

looked down on frozen lakes that had been crossed with icehouses and vehicles. I saw patterns marking the ice with hatchings that looked like broken glass.)

Shadow hopping.

Spirit hopping.

A story in the process of theory.

A shadow walk.

Imaginative realism.

Ritualistic imagination.

What is similar and what is not.

Trying out the terms for others to continue with.

Bulling a bulldozer.

A snowmobile on a frozen lake which is only sometimes frozen.

Magnetism.

A pull of boundaries into one another.

Accessible dualism.

Dualistic accessibility.

Boundary crossing (so that what is separated on a map—the definite lines between states, for instance, are not there when you look down—but being on the ground, there are only highway markers saying, entering Iowa, but otherwise the borders are invisible unless the Red River between Texas and Oklahoma).

Spirit scripting.

Script settings.

Calls

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS OF NATIVE WOMEN'S PLAYS

Editors of a forthcoming anthology of Native women's theater request unpublished or previously published plays by Native women writers from the United States and Canada. This project is in association with Project HOOP (Honoring Our Origins and People through Native Theater, Education, and Community Development), a recent initiative to advance Native theater in tribally controlled colleges and their communities, and will be published by the UCLA American Indian Studies Center.

Due to a tight publication schedule, review of submissions will begin May 1, 1999, and continue through July 1, 1999, for a projected publication date early 2000. Therefore, the editors would greatly appreciate receiving submissions as early as possible.

Guidelines:

- 1) Submit manuscripts (double-spaced) on 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Be prepared to submit the play on disk upon notification of acceptance.
- 2) On a separate page, include your name, mailing address, phone number(s), e-mail address, fax number, and your agent's information (if applicable).
- 3) Also include the copyright holder and copyright date, and for previously published plays, please include the name and contact information of the authorized permissions agent if other than the author.
- 4) In addition, please include a brief biographical statement and a production history of the play, including staged readings (if applicable).
- 5) Please send submission(s) and all requested information to:

Dr. Jaye T. Darby and Stephanie Fitzgerald
UCLA American Indian Studies Center
3220 Campbell Hall, Box 951548

Los Angeles, California 90095-1548
Inquiries: (310) 794-9997
Jdarby@ucla.edu

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Papers and panels are welcome on any aspect of Native American Literature. Topics to be considered will include: tribal sovereignty, narrative strategies, cultural mediations, interdisciplinary arts, literature and history, cultural contexts, and individual authors. We would also welcome panel discussions on such things as pedagogical methods, individual texts, authors, and film. Juried papers will be selected for a published volume of essays.

All queries concerning the content of proposals, panel discussion topics, authors, texts, theoretical approaches, and the actual program itself should be sent to:

Program Director: Dr. P. Jane Hafen
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All proposals, registration forms, and checks should be sent to:

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REVIEWS

**Grandmother, Grandfather, and Old Wolf:
Tamánwit Ku Súkat and Traditional
Native American Narratives from the Columbia
Plateau. *Edited with Introduction by Clifford
E. Trafzer. East Lansing: Michigan State
University Press, 1998. Notes, Bibliography.
Paper, ISBN 0-87013-445-0. XV + 326 pp.***

Through his skillful editing of this volume, Clifford E. Trafzer has made it now possible for us to appreciate fully Lucullus V. McWhorter's collection of Columbia Plateau tribal narratives. Donald Hines and others have published many of these stories previously, but this richly annotated, carefully edited, and elegantly designed volume finally does justice to the traditions, the tellers, and the transcriber of this remarkable body of stories. Grandmother, Grandfather and Old Wolf is so successful largely because Trafzer's Indian-centered historical/contextual approach is so well suited to the texts McWhorter left behind.

Trafzer has selected sixty-four narratives from the McWhorter Collection of the Holland Library at Washington State University. He was careful to retain all available information about the individual tellers, and the dates and occasions of the tellings. Trafzer chose primarily traditional stories of the *Wah-tee-tash*, or Animal People, who prepared the world and established order and law for the Human People whom they knew were coming soon. Beaver, Eagle, Coyote, Salmon, Skunk, Wood Tick and Flint struggle, scheme, and interact with Cold North Wind, *Tah-Tah Kleah*, the Five Sisters of *nChe-wana* (the Columbia River) and other important figures in these imaginative, detailed narratives.

Though traditional in many ways, these stories are not salvaged from a dead past of "pure," "classical" Indian legends or mythology. According to Trafzer, they represent a dynamic, vital body of stories that still breathes, changes, and teaches. McWhorter attributed the stories, mostly collected between 1910 and 1925, to several Plateau and even coastal tribes representing three different language groups; included are narratives from Nez Perce, Klickitat, Wasco, Wishram, and Yakama, as well as Nisqually, Puyallup, and Tulalip tellers. This diversity reflects a long history of sharing and cultural exchange among Plateau peoples. It also illus-

trates the reality of reservation life in much of the Northwest where, since the 1850s, large numbers of bands and tribes have gradually settled together on reservations such as the Colville, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Yakama.

McWhorter is well known to students of Indian literatures as Mourning Dove's friend and literary supporter, and as the heavy-handed editor of her novel *Cogewea: The Half Blood* (1927). He began ranching in the Yakima Valley in 1903, and for the next forty years he worked tirelessly to preserve the cultural history and defend the treaty, land, and water rights of his neighbors and friends on the Yakama Reservation. McWhorter lacked the precise collecting techniques or the linguistic training of Edward Sapir, Melville Jacobs or other anthropologists who recorded Native language stories told by "informants" from Klickitat, Wasco, and other Yakama groups early in this century. However, his English texts are more readable and exhibit more vitality, expressiveness and intimacy with the place, people, and storytelling traditions than most collections from the period. These narratives reflect McWhorter's primary concern: to convey the content of the translated stories accurately, so their meaning and significance might be comprehended.

As Trafzer points out, McWhorter sometimes managed to transmit the English styles of individual storytellers. Despite his inconsistent, improvised method of recording, which was often determined by the circumstances of each telling, many of these texts are idiosyncratic and immediate, as if close to what the listener heard. To promote this quality, Trafzer wisely retains non-standard English, and sometimes even undoes obvious changes to early versions, or uses McWhorter's "most original" draft. The following excerpt from Owl Child's wonderful "How Coyote Destroyed the Fish Dam at the Cascades: Distributing Salmon in the Rivers" illustrates how McWhorter sometimes captures interesting verb shifts, unique phrasing and ungrammatical constructions which might reflect the individual teller's style:

Coyote said:

"Yes! That is what I ought to do."

Coyote then went to where the wolves were roasting eggs. He put sleep on them and ate all their eggs. He rubbed egg on their fingers, about their mouths, then went away. Soon the wolves woke up. They see their eggs are all gone, but they are hungry. They look at each other, see egg on their mouths, "you eat the eggs, it is on your mouth." The wolves gathered more eggs,

built fire and began roasting them. Coyote sneaking up, came near. He put a sleep on the wolves, ate their eggs.
(94)

Though Trafzer strongly defends McWhorter's collecting work, he is aware of its limitations. "There is no doubt" he admits, "that McWhorter's reconstruction of the stories is a form of editing or that he is placed into the text through the written presentation of the story" (13). To his credit, Trafzer openly explains how he went about editing the texts for this edition. Of course, any written narrative fails to fully convey the nuances of the performance, audience interaction, laughter, or variations of volume and tone. Due largely to the absence of such interplay it seems likely that much of the spirited humor so integral in these stories will be lost on readers.

Unfortunately, the glossary of Native words that Trafzer promises in the introduction is missing from the book (20). Since Sahaptin, Wasco, and Salish nouns (such as Speel-yi for Coyote or Win-quat for The Dalles) are used frequently and unsystematically by McWhorter, the glossary would have facilitated reading. Still, despite this omission most terms are translated in brackets at the beginning of stories, or discussed in the rich contextual notes by both McWhorter and Trafzer.

What sets this edition apart are Trafzer's Native-centered contextual approach and his compelling introduction. He argues throughout that stories such as these are a true starting point for any understanding of Indian histories, literatures or cultures. "They are facts and truths of Native American cultures and communities," he writes. "They are at once history and literature, religion and law. . . a sacred body of knowledge that set[s] forth the doctrines of traditional Indian people" (15-16). Trafzer also skillfully weaves in the interpretive perspective of elders such as Mary Jim and Andrew George, whom he came to know during the many years that he lived and worked in Eastern Washington.

Kevin Dye

Native American Identities: From Stereotype to Archetype in Art and Literature. Scott B. Vickers. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998. 194 pages.

The issue of cultural identity has become quite a hot topic in literary and cultural studies. Recently, a number of books have been published that address ideas of Indian authenticity and identity, such as

Louis Owens's *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place and Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, edited by S. Elizabeth Bird. These books are but two of many, and while both examine the construction of the Indian in popular culture (and Owens's book involves an even more personal review of his own background), Scott Vickers's book takes a more detailed look at the way the Native American identity has been constructed since colonial times, rightly noting that "[issues of] identity cannot exist in a political vacuum or without economic viability" (xiii). Notions of identity are thus bound inevitably with politics, economics, and sociology; furthermore, identity carries epistemological weight—the latter because the way a culture views its indigenous groups has everything to do with its predominant "world" view, and because the way a indigenous group considers itself has much to do with its world view as well as the way it is viewed by the dominant culture. But the matter of identity is primarily political, because certain stereotypes that help generate issues of identity prevail on many fronts, and work to deprive Native Americans of their rights. In the preface, Vickers says, "This is a book about identity," and "[This] is also a book about history" (xiii), and I would add, "In addition, this is a book about racial politics and the harmful, self-satisfied illusions involved in stereotypes, but still, it goes further—it becomes a book about artistic revisioning, the way to higher ground." Vickers shows this revisioning process in the way some white writers and artists began to create more archetypal Indian characters, and he illuminates the path to higher ground in his examination of various modern Indian artists and writers who are working to overturn the dominant binary (Noble/ Ignoble) view of the Indian.

To that end, the author examines the image of the Indian in American culture, and the way language can both destroy and create identity. He argues that various colonial manifestos worked in collusion with Christianity to create and engender stereotypes while attempting to void Indian cultures with their own cultures and mythologies, and also, to supplant instead a "whiteness" that is the nature of Christian culture and identity. Keying off of these troublesome speculations, Vickers lays the groundwork for the book's central tenet: there is a bipolar differentiation between stereotypes, which construct identity from the outside, and archetypes, which construct identity from the inside. The stereotype of the Indian as being either "noble" or "ignoble" is well-known, a way to homogenize and thus marginalize a large number of diverse groups into simplistic either/or categories, but what makes Vickers's insight fresh is the way he juxta-

poses these still-prevalent notions with his discussion of the archetype. Using Jung as a source for his argument, Vickers states that stereotypes differ from archetypes because the latter work from within the individual consciousness, emerging to foster creativity, and ultimately engendering heterogeneity and individualism, as opposed to stereotypes, which produce a fixed model of identity. While both stereotypes and archetypes involve images and image-making, archetypes go further to express a living concept of identity, the idea of an individual as a creator, a world-maker. As such, archetypes function in opposition to any predominate view, taking on political connotations, since they run counter to any mindset that considers humans as being composed into hierarchies, as stripped of individualistic tendencies.

The book is also concerned with an examination of the semiology and psychology of conquest, and involves a lengthy discussion of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its general disregard for the integrity of the Native cultures, and the way it relied upon stereotypes of the Indian in order to justify its political machinations. Government officials who helped implement policies based on these stereotypes were serviced by several imperatives that demanded a basic ignorance of Indian culture that made the cultural and physical genocide of Native Americans amenable to both government officials and the white population at large: first, they placed the relationship with Indians into an either/or construct (it's either "us" or "them," so we must either kill them or make them into citizens); this idea is underscored by another imperative: the categorization of the human race into superior and inferior groups, as either Christian or heathen, civil or savage. It almost goes without saying that this posture was part and parcel of the BIA's treatment of Indians. A third imperative called for the Bureau to act in the best interest of its wards, which implied stereotypical notions that Indians were incompetent to manage their own land. This patronizing attitude takes on more sinister qualities when one realizes that the real question was the allocation and allotment of Indian lands, and that what the BIA was really deciding was how to best appropriate the resources of its charges. Thus what Vickers is pointing out is the BIA willingly perpetuated the popularized notions of the Indian in the name of opportunism. The mythos of Christianity has played a particular role in this conquest of Native lands, as it is a religion based on binaries and thus constructed an "Other" in order to best define the particular world with which it was dealing. The Indians, of course, were "Other," the heathen, those who stood on the way of progress and expansion, the force that opposed the triumph of certain American myths of Manifest Destiny and

the spread of civilization. Thus language works to destroy identity.

But much the book looks at the work of various artists, both white and Indian, and the way these artists employ and, later, go beyond stereotypes into the realm of archetypes. For example, Helen Jackson Hunt and Oliver La Farge, well meaning but still suffering under some romanticized notions of the Indian, attempted to represent the Native American in a more involved manner. Frank Waters, on the other hand, in both his fiction and ethnological works, portrays Indians as having a complex mythos on par with Christianity, thus going the furthest of any white writer (up until that time) in dissolving the stereotypes. In conjunction with his discussion of these writers, Vickers notes the alliance of the Taos Society of Artists, men such as William R. Leigh, Bert Geer Phillips, and Walter Ufer, who helped to effect a major revisioning of the Pueblo Indians, even while they occasionally lapsed into romantic portrayals of the Indians, due to "the commercial mandates of the new tourist trade" (82) which preferred glossy, homogenized art over realistic, complicated representations. Many white Americans became eager to buy "authentic" Indian art, it seems, as long as the art was of a certain, non-threatening type. Even the best of the Taos artists, Walter Ufer, made a large sum of money by painting the same picture of an Indian on a white horse (a Taos mountain rising in the distance), over and over, which he seems to have done in response to the demands of tourists. Money talks, sometimes, even for those who seem to have good intentions.

Vickers notes that the image of the Indian was, with few exceptions, created by the white author and artist; in other words, the *white* image of Native Americans is the one that has influenced the public consciousness. This image-making began to change in the early thirties, when "authentic" Indian art was encouraged by Collier's BIA administration; however, the ruling agency, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, attempted to limit the content of the Indian artists to those that reproduced the stereotypical Ignoble and Noble Savage themes. Indian artists then began to break away from these strictures in order to best express themselves; this in turn led to a dynamic outpouring of art that deconstructed the stereotypes and instead went far toward placing in their stead more realistic and archetypal Indians.

Finally, Vickers saves his best and most lengthy analysis for modern Indian writers, using as examples the work of numerous Indian writers and critics, but focusing particularly on the writings of N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Linda Hogan, Sherman Alexie, and Simon J. Ortiz. Vickers asserts,

Like their counterparts in the pictorial arts modern Indian writers have also been involved in a struggle to bring authenticity and individuality into a context of Indianness that is both tradition-based and attuned to the processes and forms of the modern world. (125)

This struggle, he goes on to note, was costly, because it forced the writer into a position of having to articulate his or her Indianness through the white man's language, since many Indians' native tongues were largely eradicated or suppressed by the white culture. How can one retain ties to tradition when the means of keeping those traditions are subverted and manipulated? Through appropriation and syncretism, and through the artist's individual employment of archetypes. Autobiography becomes the vehicle through which many writers would gain an audience, oddly enough, because, as Vickers writes, the concept of an individual history, apart from the tribal community, runs counter to "Indianness." One sees this idea at work with the way some Indians become educated, even becoming literary critics, while working to create an authorial voice as defined by Western concepts. But Vickers considers this syncretic impulse as the way that the Native writer revises, for even within this context, the Indian writers stay true to their selves. They now use the "power of the written word to deconstruct thematically the power of the written word, especially as it has been applied to the historically as a tool of colonialism" (130), while recasting tribal narratives and incorporating Indian worldviews and sensibilities into their work. Thus, writing becomes a "tool of decolonization" (130), a way to regain and rewrite identity.

Vickers's astute, sometimes painfully aware but always even-handed analysis of the Eurocentric binaries proves the need to move the image of the Indian into the realm of archetypes in order to effect change on a political and sociological level, and further shows that the modern Indian artists and writers have worked best in fostering this change, better than the sometimes misguided white artists and writers, who often attempted to simplify the Indian in an effort to make their work more palatable to a mass audience. While the binaries still exist in white American, and are so entrenched in the popular culture of this country that we should assume that we will have to wrestle with them for many more years, modern Native American writers and artists are deconstructing and revisioning, showing the way out.

Stephanie Gordon

The Meade Solution. Robert J.

Conley. University Press of Colorado, 1998. 164 pages.

The “Real People” novels. Robert J. Conley

[The Peace Chief. St. Martin’s Press, 1998. 340 pages. War Woman. St. Martin’s Press, 1998. 357 pages.]

Robert J. Conley is a storyteller, and a fine one. *The Meade Solution* shows him in a comic, even farcical mood. Given the pressures of the job market and the way the senior members of the Stanhope English department burlesque their way through the rituals of scholarship and teaching—the “fals and foul and wikked corsednesse” of cribbed lecture notes; “I have tenure. I don’t have to know anything”; a writer-in-residence who neither writes nor has anything intelligible to say about his students’ work; an autocratic department chair who tyrannizes mere sophomores (“You’re not going to like me. I am an intellectual snob.”)—one isn’t exactly upset when they are manipulated into retirement or meet with bizarre and fatal accidents.

Not that the graduate students are a particularly distinguished lot: an obese voyeur, a modest nymphomaniac who adores Rod McKuen, “Supercool” and his groupies (something about Stanhope seems frozen in the 70s). But Wahoo Meade, whether teaching freshman comp or befriending a custodian named Milton, tries at least occasionally to bring a voice of decency and sanity to an inane system where posturing is the norm, learning is virtually meaningless, conscience seems more honored in the breach than the observance, and anonymous undergraduates die by suicide.

As the story moves with an easy economy through a routine of meetings and conferences, silly turf wars, politic and impolitic sex, to a climactic shooting that merges bedroom farce and Shakespearean invective, Meade, with some incidental help from his friends, apparently engineers a clever subversion of the status quo, only to have it all begin again, and one finds oneself cheering for . . . well, maybe the writer. The book revels in the ingenuity of its various schemes, and Conley has a taste for eccentric characterization, a sharp pen for what one would like to call parody were the situations and characters not quite so familiar, and a

sense of quiet though pervasive irony. Even as he savages the academic scene, he clearly appreciates the spirit of Byron, Shakespeare, and Chaucer, if not of "Vonne-Gut" and the minor Romantic "drivellers."

While *The Meade Solution* is an enjoyable enough read, it might best serve to introduce readers who don't know Conley's work to his other writing, especially the narratives of the Real People series, a fictional recreation of the history of the Cherokee people in which legend, culture, speculation, and what is known of the historical record are woven through perfectly integrated personal dramas to tell a deceptively simple yet finally complex story.

The Peace Chief and *War Woman* are the eighth and ninth novels in the ongoing series. Like their predecessors, each has its own focus, its own story to tell, even as it skillfully advances the larger story. Conley has the virtues of a good storyteller, never getting in the way of the story he is telling, yet always keeping his audience in mind, unobtrusively recapping the larger outline within which individual histories are played out, and almost incidentally explaining such complications as language, marriage customs, gender roles, the development of governance structures, and the moral dynamic which defines the culture.

And what a compelling story it is. From the people's revolt against the corrupt power of the priests and the establishment of a democratic order (told in the first three novels, *The Way of the Priests*, *The Dark Way*, *The White Path*), through subsequent contacts with the Spanish, the French, and then the English, Conley details with understated ease both the indigenous culture of the Cherokees and the complex ways that culture was affected by interaction with other Native peoples and by European contact.

Conley speculates that the Cherokees had a written language long before Sequoia, which all but disappeared with the slaughter of the priests. Only one priest, having been sent west in search of rain, survives the uprising; returning home, he realizes that he alone now possesses the secret of writing, to preserve which becomes a sacred but dangerous burden. The story of another of those men sent for rain, Deadwood Lighter, is told in *The Long Way Home*. Captured by plains Indians, and then sold into slavery first in the Southwest and then to the Spaniards, he accompanies the brutal and ill-fated DeSoto expedition as interpreter and witness before finally escaping and returning home to tell his story.

The cultural conflict arising from the contact between Native and European peoples is explored in more personal terms in *The Dark Island*. Asquani, the mixed blood son of a Timucua woman enslaved and prosti-

tuted by the Spanish, feels like an outcast in his adoptive Cherokee culture. Curious about that of his unknown father, he seeks out the Spaniards, determined to learn their ways. But he is increasingly repulsed by what he finds and eventually leads an attack which drives them from their island fortress and away from Cherokee country.

The Europeans of course had introduced the horse, firearms, and rum, as well as a lust for material wealth and a radically different moral code. Earlier, in *The Way South*, Carrier, seeking trade with the southern tribes, had first heard reports of the monstrous Spaniards:

"You fed them. . . . They were your guests, and yet they attacked you. . . . What kind of men are these?"

And the question was more than rhetorical. Carrier wanted to know the answer. His head was full of questions about these strange men. Where had they come from? . . . What were they doing here? What was it about them that caused them to behave the way they did?

He joins an alliance to drive the Spaniards from Florida. (The historical basis for the novel is the unsuccessful attempt by Francisco de Garay to establish a Spanish colony in Florida in 1520). Later, following the skirmish, he notices that the Spanish do not return for the bodies of their dead, and again asks:

"What kind of men are these? . . . They let their dead lie on the ground neglected."

"I don't think they're real human beings," said Tree Frog. "They're some kind of animal that looks something like human beings. That's all."

But contact with the French teaches the Cherokees that not all Whites are the same, that they too have different tribes, different languages, different characters. The shifting allegiances between Native peoples and Europeans is deftly handled. And of course the Cherokee moral code can be just as mysterious to the Europeans. When in *The War Trail North* Young Puppy accidentally kills his friend Asquani, the Frenchman Tournier tries to console him: "Don't blame yourself, mon ami. . . . Un accident. It's unfortunate. Terrible. But these things happen. We go on." Little Black Bear has to explain to him:

"You don't understand. The ways of his people, the Chalaques, make no distinction between an accident and purposeful killing. When a Chalaque kills one of his own, then he or another member of his clan must die . . . to balance things between the two clans. That's their way."

That situation, with the stark simplicity of a Greek tragedy, is the impe-

tus behind *The Peace Chief*. Young Puppy, forced to spend a year of asylum in the peace town until that annual day arrives when all past wrongs are wiped clean, occupies his time by learning the priestly duties for the ceremonial year, the device that structures the novel. Tournier, interested in peaceful trade, brokers a peace between the Cherokees and their traditional enemies the Senikas, but his interest in ethnology also provides both perspective and a dynamic dimension to what is essentially a culture study. Young Puppy, having mastered the traditional rituals, becomes (as Comes Back to Life) the Peace Chief for the settlement of New Town, established to secure the northern border of the Cherokee land against encroaching Shawnees. The story is simple, and the telling of it apparently so, but woven through it are counterpointed stories of love and marriage custom (Comes Back to Life takes Asquani's widow as a second wife, and a love triangle is resolved when two best friends together marry the same woman); a system of justice and mercy that accommodates the needs both for revenge and for forgiveness; and a social structure that must frequently compromise between the conflicting needs of homogeneity and assimilation.

Many traditional stories of the Real People—the creation, the boy who goes to look for Thunder and meets Untsaiyi [Brass, the Gambler, whose story Conley ingeniously updates in his novel *Brass*], the Bear People, stories of the rattlesnake and the trickster rabbit—are assimilated into the larger narrative, perhaps most effectively in *The Way of the Priests*. The cynical chief priest who sends the men to find rain doubts the truth of the stories but exploits them for his own ends, and Like-a-Pumpkin, one of those sent, “found himself almost hoping that they were not true, for if they turned out to be true, the things awaiting them at the end of the westward journey were frightening.” And an old man laments: “‘They’ve changed the stories. . . . I thought I was the only one left who remembered. I thought no one cared anymore.’”

Yet the narrative, without sentimentalizing, but tempering the tradition with respect and pragmatism, argues implicitly that, however much their literal truth is brought into question, the stories must be remembered even as the traditional cosmology is increasingly challenged by other views. Deadwood Lighter says after meeting The Natchez: “I myself suddenly had some doubts about the things I had grown up believing. . . . Can we be right and all of the others wrong? I don’t know. Perhaps no one is right about those great mysteries.” Contact with European ideas offers an even greater challenge, and the growing skepticism is real and honest. Asquani is troubled by the differences between the biblical creation story and that

which he has learned, and his daughter will puzzle over similarly conflicting world views. The Real People believed that their world was flat and suspended from the heavens by long cords, and that the Sun crawled under the Sky Vault each day and crossed over it each night, but Whirlwind knew that the Spanish believed it was round, and she “thought long and hard about the two views of the world and decided that they might both be right. . . . Out there were whole other worlds that she could only begin to imagine.”

War Woman, impressive equally in its handling of character, theme, and history, may well be the best of the novels. Whirlwind, born after her father Asquani’s death and nurtured by the witch Uyona, early shows a powerful and even supernatural character. Often headstrong and even cruel as a child, and used to having her own way, at the age of sixteen she sets off on a journey to far-distant Florida, as had her grandfather Carrier. Accompanied only by her twin brother and Daksi, she meets and establishes trade with the mysterious Spanish, whose blood flows in her veins, and whose tongue she has learned from her mother. When they are attacked on the return journey by a lust-driven Spaniard and his hired bandits, Daksi is killed. She in turn kills his killer, thus earning the name *War Woman*.

Years later, pondering the consequences, both good and bad, of her trip to the Spanish, she concludes: “What was done was done. . . . She believed, as did all of the real people, that usually, at least, things happened because they were supposed to happen.” Such is the quiet fatalism that underlies the culture. Deadwood Lighter had expressed the same idea at the end of his account of the DeSoto expedition:

“I have given this matter much thought, and it seems to me that [we] would have been much better off had [we] killed all of the white men who showed up in this land on the first big boat. That is a violation of our code of behavior toward strangers, I know. But this time, I think, it would have been for the best.

“Of course, it does not matter what might have been. . . . The present is what it is. And then, too, perhaps it was all supposed to happen just as it did. I’m not wise enough to know these things.”

But it hardly keeps the characters, and especially *War Woman*, from taking decisive action. She eventually marries the Spanish trader Morales, learns the European way of business (and wealth), and, when gold is discovered in the Cherokee land, dictates the terms by which the Spanish will be

allowed to mine it—a percentage for her, and no Cherokee slave labor.

Her remarkable life culminates when at the age of 90—the novel spans the years 1580, when Whirlwind is 16, to 1654—she leads an expedition to reestablish a town at the site of a Powhatan town burned by the Jamestown settlers, determined to face the English and teach them a lesson. She is equally astute in her handling of the English and their Indian lackeys and in arranging a match for the lovestruck Doe in the Water.

Before that last confrontation, War Woman reflects on what her people, the Tsalagi, had been like in her youth and what they had become:

They had changed, and she had been the cause of some of the changes. Even that word. Tsalagi. The Real People, Ani-yunwi-ya, had been called Chalakee by the Choctaws, and that word had gone into the trade language. . . . Then the Spaniards had come and the French, and they had picked up the word from the jargon. Now even . . . a Real Person might say, “I’m Tsalagi,” rather than say, “Ani-yunwi-ya.” Ah well, she even caught herself saying it sometimes. I’m the oldest Tsalagi alive, an ancient Tsalagi woman, as old as the mountains and hills, as old as the very rocks, and older than the oldest trees. . . . Just let me tell you the things that I can remember, because I was there when they happened. I was there when they made the world.

Conley tells her story, and the story of her people, beautifully. It is very much worth the telling.

Jan D. Hodge

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