

Studies in American Indian Literatures

NEWSLETTER
of the
Association For Study
of
AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES

602 Philosophy Hall
Columbia University
New York, New York
10027

VOL. 9 / NO. 2

STUDIES IN AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES
Volume 9:2 Spring 1985

Editor: Karl Kroeber
Assistant Editor: Linda Ainsworth
Bibliographer: LaVonne Brown Ruoff

Table of Contents

A.S.A.I.L. Bibliography #8: Gerald Vizenor	46
Karl Kroeber, Introduction	49
A. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, Gerald Vizenor: Compassionate Trickster	52
Elaine Jahner, Allies in the Word Wars: Vizenor's Uses of Contemporary Critical Theory	64
Linda Ainsworth, History and the Imagination: Gerald Vizenor's <u>The People Named the Chippewa</u>	70
Paul Kleinpoppen, Review of <u>James Welch</u> by Peter Wild	81
Short Reviews	
Maurice Kenny, <u>The Mama Poems</u>	85
Bo Schoeler, ed., <u>Coyote Was Here</u>	85
William Bright, <u>America Indian Linguistics and Literature</u>	86
Notes	87

Illustrations in this issue are from Schoolcraft and include: Pictorial Representations of Tutelar Spirits of Chusco (p. 80) and Pictorial Notations of Meda Songs from a Music Board (p. 84).

GERALD VIZENOR

A.S.A.I.L. Bibliography #8

Books

anishinabe adisokan: Tales of the People. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1970. Traditional Ojibwe narratives originally published in the Progressive, the White-Earth reservation newspaper edited by Theodore Beaulieu (Vizenor's great uncle).

anishinabe nagamon: Songs of the People. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1970. Vizenor's interpretations of traditional Ojibwe songs based on Francis Densmore's translations.

Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart. Minneapolis: Truck, 1978; republished Saint Paul, Minn.: Bookslingers, 1979.

Earthdivers: Tribal Narratives on Mixed Descent. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981. Short stories and essays.

Empty Swings. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1967. Haiku.

Escorts to White Earth: One Hundred Years on a Reservation. Minneapolis: Four Winds, 1968.

The Everlasting Sky: New Voices from the People Named the Chippewa. New York: Macmillan, 1972. Essays.

Matsushima: Pine Islands. Haiku. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1984. Poetry.

The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Essays and Photographs.

Raising the Moon Vines. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1964. Haiku.

Seventeen Chirps. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1965; rpt. 1968. Haiku.

Slight Abrasions: A Dialogue in Haiku. With Jerome Downes. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1966. Haiku.

Summer in the Spring. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1965. Poetry.

Summer in the Spring: Ojibwe Lyric Poems and Tribal Stories. Minneapolis: Nodin, 1981. Reprint of volumes above, anishinabe adisokan and anishinabe nagamon.

Two Wings the Butterfly. Minneapolis: Privately Printed, 1962. Haiku.

Wordarrows: Indians and Whites in the New Fur Trade. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978. Stories and essays.

Short Fiction

"Anishinabica: Instant Tribal Coffee." Minneapolis Star, 1981.

"I Know What You Mean, Erdupps MacChurbb." In Growing Up in Minnesota: Ten Writers Remember Their Childhoods. Ed. Chester Anderson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976, 79-111; rpt. Minnesota Monthly, December

1977, and Minneapolis Tribune, December 1978.
Fictionalized autobiography.

"Land Fill Meditation." Minneapolis Star,
Saturday Magazine, February 1979.

"MacChurbbs and the Celibate Juicer: Winter
Quarter Lecture Notes." Metropolis Magazine,
February 1977.

"Migration Tricks from Tribalness." Minnesota
Monthly, February 1978.

"Paraday at the Berkeley Chicken Center."
Metropolis Magazine, April 1977.

"The Psychotaxidermist." Minneapolis Star,
Saturday Magazine, August 1978; rpt. in The
Minnesota Experience. Ed. Jean Ervin.
Minneapolis: Adams, 1979.

"Rattling Hail Ceremonial." Minnesota Star,
Saturday Magazine, April 1978.

"Reservation Cafe: The Origin of American
Indian Instant Coffee." In Earth Power Coming.
Ed. Simon Ortiz. Tsaile, Ariz.: Navajo Com-
munity College Press, 1983, 31-36.

"White Noise." In White Noise, The Fellin
Sisters, and The Man of Sorrows. Gerald
Vizenor, Lon Otto, and Jonis Agee. St Paul:
Fodder, 1983, 1-13.

"Word Cinemas." In Book Forum, American In-
dians Today Issue. Ed. Elaine Jahner, 5
(Summer 1981). Selection from Four Skin, an
unpublished novel.

Dramas

Harold of Orange. Film and unpublished screen-
play, 1983. Minnesota Film-in-the-Cities
Award; 30-minute film starring Charlie Hill
(Oneida). Available on film and video cas-
settes from Film in the Cities, 2388 University
Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55114. Phone: 612/646-
6100.

A Season for All Things. Washington, D.C.:
Office of Economic Opportunity, 1967.

* * * *

Introduction

Gerald Vizenor possesses remarkable skill
at inventing and depicting tricksters. To
understand them so well, he must be one. As
both Professor Jahner and Ruoff rightly observe
in the essays that follow, Vizenor frequently
presents himself as a compassionate trickster.
He can also be an extraordinarily funny one.
He favors the genially deadpan manner of his
hilarious film's hero, Harold Sinseer. Harold
borrows money on the pretext of paying the
expenses of his grandmother's funeral in order
to repay an earlier loan, obtained on the pre-
text of paying the expenses of his grand-
mother's funeral. This trickster is a living
mise en abyme.

But the trickster is also a dark, even a
tragic figure. However funny, and he can be
very funny, indeed, Vizenor seems to me of
contemporary Native American writers the most
searching and troubling critic of modern
Indians' situation within American culture.

The scarifying profundity of his exhibitions of sour ironies intrinsic to the "Renaissance" of tribal peoples is unique. He is the only Native American writer with command of the intellectual tools of poststructuralism and with the skilled courage to risk experimental language and dare the invention of literary forms. Yet none of his work sinks to aesthetic game-playing, even when it is playful. Vizenor seeks to expose the more subtle forms of insult and injury by which contemporary society destroys the realities upon which depend significant values of tribal peoples. He begins a forthcoming essay, "Socioacupuncture," with a vivid definition of the process of debasement.

Roland Barthes shows that the striptease is a contradiction; at the final moment of nakedness a "woman is desexualized." He writes in his book Mythologies that the spectacle is based on the "pretence of fear, as if eroticism here went no further than a sort of delicious terror, whose ritual signs have only to be announced to evoke at once the idea of sex and its conjuration."

Tribal cultures are colonized in a reversal of the striptease. Familiar tribal images are patches on the "pretence of fear," and there is a sense of "delicious terror" in the structural opposition of savagism and civilization found in the cinema and in the literature of romantic captivities. Plains tepees, and the signs of mocassins, canoes, feathers, leathers, arrowhead, numerous museum artifacts,

conjure the cultural rituals of the traditional tribal past, but the pleasures of the tribal striptease are denied, data bound, stopped in emulsion, colonized in print to resolve the insecurities and inhibitions of the dominant culture.

Later in this essay Vizenor brilliantly illustrates his point with a comment on the perverseness in Curtis' photographs.

Curtis retouched tribal images; he, or his darkroom assistants, removed hats, labels, suspenders, parasols, from photographic prints. In one photograph entitled "In a Piegan Lodge" the image of an alarm clock was removed from the original negative. . . . Curtis invented and then possessed tribal images while at the same time he denied the tribal people in one photograph the simple instrument of chronological time. The photographer and the clock, at least, appear more interesting now than the two tribal men posed with their ubiquitous peacepipes. Curtis paid some tribal people to pose for photographs; he sold their images and lectured on their culture to raise cash to continue his travels to tribal communities. He traveled with his camera to capture the neonoble tribes, to preserve metasavages in the ethnographic present as consumable objects of the past.

Vizenor is a "difficult" because disturbing writer, perceiving--and finding names for--the dangerousness of neonobility and metasavagery. His verbal skill owes much to his self-attained intellectual sophistication. His clear-sightedness, I suspect, owes much to the social sophistication produced by his journalistic experiences, especially of the complicated uncertainties of hard urban life. But whatever the sources of his unusual ability, his accomplishments are of an intricate impressiveness and possessed of a power to unsettle unmatched among present-day American Indian writers.

Karl Kroeber
Editor

* * * *

Gerald Vizenor: Compassionate Trickster

Gerald Vizenor (Ojibwe) is one of the most prolific Indian authors writing today. To have published so extensively in so many genres is a remarkable achievement for any author, Indian or non-Indian. Now primarily known as a prose writer, Vizenor began as a poet, publishing early in his career such volumes as Raising the Moon Vines (1964), Summer in the Spring (1965), Empty Swings (1967), Slight Abrasions (1966; with Jerome Downes). His Seventeen Chirps (1965; unpagged) has rightly been praised by Louis Untermeyer as Haiku "in the best tradition" (book cover). Divided into poems on the four seasons, this collection contains such strikingly beautiful images as "Spider threads / held the red sumac still / Autumn wind" or "The quick wind / Drags the leaves like sled runners / Down the tin roof."

The major thrust of Vizenor's work--whether poetry, prose, or drama--is the examination of the interrelationships between the tribal and non-tribal worlds. His commitment to the traditional origins of his own Ojibwe heritage is reflected in two books: anishinabe nagamon (1965) and anishinabe adisokan (1970). The former is a collection of traditional Ojibwe songs that Vizenor reinterpreted, using Francis Densmore's literal translations and incorporating Ojibwe words. His delicate rephrasing is exemplified in these lines from a dream song: "sound of thunder / sometimes / i pity myself / while the wind carries me / across the sky, across the earth / everywhere / making my voice heard" (p. 54). Vizenor focuses the reader's attention on the beauty of individual lines by placing each stanza on a separate page. Both anishinabe nagamon and anishinabe adisokan, reprinted in 1981 as Summer in the Spring: Ojibwe Lyric Poems and Tribal Stories, are accompanied by notes, Ojibwe pictographs, and vocabulary.

anishinabe adisokan is a collection of traditional stories about Ojibwe life, customs, and religion originally published in the White Earth reservation newspaper The Progress (1887-1888), edited by Theodore Beaulieu, Vizenor's great uncle. A valuable collection in itself, anishinabe adisokan is also important because it introduces several myths Vizenor incorporates into his own creative work. Among these is the myth about the origin of the most sacred Ojibwe rite, the midewiwin ceremony, that elucidates Vizenor's frequent references to the bear, cedar, and task of the culture hero. Another myth Vizenor uses in his later work is

"Manabozho [The Ojibwe culture hero] and the Gambler."

Much of Vizenor's work deals with the struggles of the Ojibwe and other tribal peoples to cope with the dominant society. His poems published in Voices from the Rainbow (1975; hereafter VR) and Songs from This Earth on Turtle's Back (1983; hereafter Songs) voice themes that dominate his prose. In "Indians at the Guthrie," Vizenor vividly portrays the lives of contemporary urban Indians: "Once more at wounded knee / sniffing glue in gallop / sterno in bemidji / cultural suicides / downtown on the reservation" (VR, 31; Songs, 264). As "Tribal Stumps" reveals, Vizenor's own father was destined to become one of these cultural suicides: "My father returns / with all the mixed bloods / tribal stumps / from the blood soaked beams of the city" (VR, 32).

Vizenor vividly describes these struggles in four collections containing his news articles, essays, and stories: The Everlasting Sky (1972), Tribal Scenes and Ceremonies (1976), Wordarrows (1978), and Earthdivers (1981). The first two books consist primarily of Vizenor's news articles about contemporary Indian life on the reservation and in the city. The last two are fictional accounts of Indian-white relations organized around specific themes. In Wordarrows, Vizenor describes the "cultural word wars" in which "the arrowmakers and wordmakers survive the word wars with sacred memories while the factors in the new fur trade separate themselves in wordless and eventless social and political categories" (viii). In Earthdivers, he focuses on the modern earthdivers, descendants of the mythic earthdivers

who dove below the water to find a bit of earth to place on turtle's back. By blowing on the earth and casting it about, the Ojibwe culture hero created the world. For Vizenor these modern earthdivers are mixed-bloods, "tribal tricksters and recast cultural heroes, the mournful and whimsical heirs and survivors of that premier union between the daughters of the woodland shamans and white fur traders" (ix). These earthdivers "dive into unknown urban places now, into the racial darkness in the cities, to create a new consciousness of coexistence" (ix).

These four books contain memorable portraits of real people who defied yet finally were overcome by the dominant society. In "Buried in a Blue Suit," from The Everlasting Sky (reprinted in Tribal Scenes and Ceremonies), Vizenor pays tribute to John Ka Ka Geesick, traditional Ojibwe trapper who was both humiliated and immortalized by a white society that dressed him in a blue suit, turkey feather headdress, and green blanket for an official souvenir postcard photograph, and after his death at age 124, insisted that he be buried in the same suit and given a Christian funeral service.

Especially moving is "Sand Creek Survivors" from Earthdivers, which describes the circumstances surrounding the death of 13-year-old Dane Michael White (Sioux), who hanged himself in a Minnesota jail. White had been jailed as a runaway for 41 days because the courts denied his request to live with his grandmother and could not decide where to put him. To emphasize the continuing assaults on tribal people by the dominant society, Vizenor

intersperses his account with passages describing the massacres of the Cheyenne at Sand Creek and the Blackfeet at the Marias River and Black Elk's vision of destruction.

The case that fascinates Vizenor most is that of Thomas White Hawk, a Sioux premedical student originally condemned to death and then sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering an elderly white man and raping his wife. Vizenor suggests that White Hawk was driven to violence by cultural schizophrenia. White Hawk, neglected by his Indian parents and orphaned at 12, became the foster son of a rigid white guardian who set high goals for the young Sioux and abandoned him after his arrest. In Thomas White Hawk (1968) and Tribal Scenes and Ceremonies, Vizenor reprints his news articles on the case. In the "White Hawk and the Prairie Fun Dancers" section of Wordarrows, he recreates his investigation, providing vivid portraits of White Hawk, haunted by his crimes; the sheriff, determined to protect his prisoner from mob violence and his country from such communist-front organizations as the Civil Liberties Union; and the minister's wife, infatuated with the imprisoned White Hawk. These portraits are some of Vizenor's best work.

Satire, however, is the genre Vizenor most frequently uses to convey the conflicts between the tribal and non-tribal worlds. (Vizenor uses the word tribal rather than Indian because it suggests a "celebration of communal values which connect the tribal celebrants to the earth" [Earthdivers, xxi]). The closer Vizenor's satire is to reality the more effective it is. His stories in the "Downtown on the

Reservation" section of Wordarrows effectively chronicle the word wars between tribal people and the dominant society, wars Vizenor understands as a mixed-blood Ojibwe, who was raised both in Minneapolis and on his father's White Earth Reservation, and as the former director of a Minneapolis Indian Employment and Guidance Program. "Laurel Hole in the Day" vividly depicts the futility of such programs. The well-meaning director, presumably Vizenor, finds jobs and an apartment for an Ojibwe family newly arrived from White Earth, only to realize that his action has started them on the road to failure in the big city. Realizing that their tribal friends and neighbors are eating them into the poorhouse, the couple moves to a white neighborhood, where loneliness drives them to the tribal bars for companionship. The wife, abandoned by her husband who has been fired for absenteeism, returns to her tar-paper shack on the reservation, where she is reunited with her husband and gives up her dream of urban paradise.

Vizenor's descriptions of the cultural wars ring true because he accurately depicts both the underlying causes of these wars and the nature of the wounds suffered by tribal people. Many of these wounds are self-inflicted, as Vizenor makes clear. In "Socio-dowser" from Earthdivers, Vizenor describes the efforts of an Indian center to locate its vans, purchased with federal funds to transport Indians to industrial education classes but impounded by the state because they were used by center staff and clients for travelling bingo games and other businesses. Rallying to the cry of "Give us back our land and our vans," the center board hires a shaman to help in the

search. For Vizenor the center has become "more like a colonial fort dependent on federal funds, than a place for visions and dreams in the new tribal urban world" (143).

Such self-destructiveness is not limited to tribal centers, as Vizenor demonstrates in his stories about the fate of tribal studies programs in academe. One of Vizenor's best stories in Earthdivers is "The Chair of Tears," which describes the efforts of Captain Shammer to auction the Department of Tribal Studies for sale to the highest bidder. Hired without interview, application, or academic credentials because the department wanted an unknown mixed-blood, Shammer is renowned as the founder of the Half Breed Hall of Fame. Vizenor deftly satirizes the blood-quantum issue in such departments by describing Shammer's plan to hire Old Darkhorse as skin-color consultant. Founder of the California Half Moon Bay Skin Dip, Darkhorse darkens light-skinned mixed-bloods by dunking them in his Skin Dip.

Shammer is first to realize that rumors "about tribal troubles in higher education are the structural substitutes for adventures on the mythical frontier" (7). The character types who mount the assault are those who led the radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s: Sarah Blue Welcome, a self-named white feminist and the first uninvited guest speaker at student protests for control of the tribal studies department; Four Skin, her full-blood Indian male hand puppet; Bad Mouth; Touch Tone, famous for long-distance calls to reservations; Fine Print; and Token White. Vizenor all too accurately depicts the administrative and student

pressures that have led to the destruction of such departments.

Entrepreneurship is not limited to tribal studies programs. Ingenious mixed-bloods establish business empires in the city and on the reservation. One such entrepreneur is Martin Bear Charme, a Turtle Mountain Ojibwe from North Dakota, who hitchhiked to San Francisco to study welding under a federal relocation program. After he abandoned welding, he hauled refuse to a worthless mudflat, where he established his own Landfill Meditation Reservation, now worth millions. A philosopher as well as businessman, Martin also teaches a seminar on Landfill Meditation.

In Vizenor's unpublished screenplay Harold of Orange, Harold Sinseer exhibits similar enterprise. Previously successful in persuading a foundation to finance his miniature orange grove (a potted orange tree), Harold now seeks \$200,000 to grow a coffee grove (a potted coffee tree). Harold predicts that coffee will revolutionize the tribal world. He persuades his warriors that reservation coffee beans will saturate the world market and disrupt international coffee markets, and he convinces foundation board directors that coffee will both block the temptation of tribesmen to drink alcohol and foster radical political discussions in reservation coffee houses. Harold has cast off the role of street radical and speaker in church basements: "The money was good then, but the guilt has changed, so here we are dressed in neckties . . . The new tribal entrepreneurs of the oranges and pinch beans . . ." (11). Harold asks only that the foundation

give him funds to "market pinch beans in peace . . . as long as the rivers flow and the grass grows . . ." (17). As one of the foundation directors realizes by the end of the play, Harold, with his fry bread, oranges, and coffee, is really in the traditional breakfast business. Vizenor's screenplay won the Minnesota Film-in-the-Cities award and has been made into a 30-minute film starring Oneida comedian Charlie Hill in the title role.

The most complex of Vizenor's works is Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart (1978), a satirical and allegorical epic cycle that combines elements of classical and Western European epics and American Indian oral narratives. The protagonist is the culture hero/shaman Proude Cedarfair. In his quest for ritual knowledge, Cedarfair journeys across the United States, whose culture has been destroyed by the disappearance of energy resources. Cedarfair moves backward in time to achieve harmony with nature. Vizenor's descriptions of the four worlds of Indian people combine the emergence and migration myths of Southwestern tribes with the flood myths of the Algonkin-speaking tribes. Cedarfair begins his journey in the third world, which evil spirits have filled with contempt for the living and fear of death. He must reach the fourth world, in which these spirits will be outwitted by using the secret languages of animals and birds. Accompanying Cedarfair on his journey is a bizarre collection of followers that represent various figures from Indian mythology, as well as human vices and virtues. Episodes in the novel denote stages of the ritual quest and incidents occur without explanation, as they do in American Indian hero cycles.

In his books and in his screenplay, Vizenor uses many other aspects of American Indian oral tradition. He embeds traditional myths in his novel and his stories. For example, in Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart, the epic battle for life waged between Belladonna Winter Catcher and Cedarfair and the evil gambler Sir Cecil Staples, monarch of unleaded gasoline, is an updated version of the Ojibwe myth "Nanabozho and the Gambler" that Vizenor includes in anishinabe adisokan. Vizenor uses an animal-husband myth in his stories of Lilith Mae Farrier's sexual relationship with her boxers, included in both Wordarrows and Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart.

Vizenor also uses the traditional Indian motif of transformation. This is exemplified in his novel by Bishop Omas Parasimo's penchant for wearing "metamasks" of other pilgrims' faces. Animal, especially bear, transformation appears more frequently than any other form. Vizenor makes clear the significance of this to his work by citing Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere, in which A. Irving Hallowell states that animals are believed to have essentially the same sort of animating agency as man: "They have a language of their own, can understand what human beings say and do, have forms of social or tribal organization, and live a life which is parallel in other respects to that of human societies" (quoted in "Sociodowser," Earthdivers, 145). Vizenor's emphasis on bear transformation is explained by that animal's role as the renewer of Ojibwe life in their mide ceremony. In Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart, two characters possess bear power: Cedarfair, who speaks with the

voice of the bear and takes on bear form permanently after he reaches the fourth world, and Zebulon Matchi Makwa (Wicked Bear), a talking writer and drunken urban shaman who offends everyone with his foul stench. In Earthdivers, those with this power are Martin Bear Charme and Father Berald One, the shaman who dreams of blue birds and bears, dresses as a priest, and wears an overshoe on one foot.

The trickster/transformer figure from Indian oral literature pervades Vizenor's recent work. Although the trickster as mixed-blood entrepreneur is one of Vizenor's favorite subjects, Vizenor also creates characters that reflect other aspects of the trickster. For example, in Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart, Beneto Saint Plumerio (also known as Bigfoot) possesses the enormous genitals and sexual appetite of the traditional trickster. Vizenor even portrays himself as a compassionate trickster. In both Earthdivers and Wordarrows, the author often appears as Clement Beaulieu, wise fool, truth speaker, and storyteller, or as Erdupps MacChurbbs, "shaman sprite from the tribal world of woodland dreams and visions" (88).

Vizenor prefers to appear in his work as an observer rather than as central character. An exception to this occurs in one of Vizenor's best works: "I Know What You Mean, Erdupps MacChurbbs: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors" in Growing Up in Minnesota: Ten Writers Remember Their Childhoods, edited by Chester Anderson (1976). Vizenor reveals episodes from his childhood and adolescence that provide insights into his sensitivity to the plight of urban Indians who suffer and sometimes die (as

did his father) in the back alleys of Minneapolis-St. Paul. Because so little has been written about the problems of Indian children in the city, the essay is an important contribution to our understanding of how an urban mixed-blood survives youthful traumas. The essay also reveals Vizenor's early ability to create characters to act out his fantasies. The advice to Vizenor from his imaginary companion MacChurbbs captures the author's stance in much of his prose: "You have given too much thought in your life to the violence of terminal believers! Show more humor and give yourself more time for the little people and compassionate trickery."

Vizenor's work demonstrates considerable range. The strength of his work is his ability to depict with accuracy and humor the contrarities in Indian-white relations. In Vizenor's view, whites invented "Indian" as a new identity for tribal people in order to separate them from their ancient tribal traditions. To survive this cultural genocide, tribal people responded by inventing new pan-Indian creeds, ceremonies, and customs that have blinded them and whites to their true tribal heritages. Only through the visions and dreams of tricksters and shamans can both tribal people and whites be led to truth. As a compassionate trickster, Vizenor sees his literary role as that of illuminating both the sham of contemporary "Indianness" and the power of vision and dream to restore tribal values.

A. Lavonne Brown Ruoff
University of Illinois--Chicago

* * * *

Allies in the Word Wars:
Vizenor's Uses of Contemporary Critical Theory

Reading Gerald Vizenor means dancing around many a "concise wordpile" that has been transformed from our "cluttered culture" into the stylized narratives that are Vizenor's hallmark. That is a lot of dancing, requiring energy and the willingness to learn a few new steps. But the effort is eminently worthwhile, especially since his almost obsessive concern with the nature of language itself places him with precisely those scholars whose philosophical and critical positions have prompted agile intellectual side-stepping in all the strongholds of today's literary criticism.

Vizenor himself has given us directions on how to trace his affinities to other writers and scholars, with the most explicit and recent ones being the epigraphs for the narratives in Earthdivers. We are led to an extraordinarily diverse assemblage, among whom are Roland Barthes and Black Elk; Jacques Derrida and N. Scott Momaday; Elias Canetti and Yi-Fu Tuan. Ordinarily quotation represents reference to authority, but in Vizenor nothing is ever quite ordinary. The Earthdiver epigraphs are recognitions of intellectual kinship, an extended family of thinkers all of whom have arrived more or less independently at a position that insists on showing how dangerous taking anything for granted can be. Vizenor developed his ideas about how language shapes human lives and institutions through his own experiences of alienation. That his ideas have so many features in common with scholars like Barthes and Derrida is useful, convenient and a bit dangerous given the current, often ill-informed

infatuation with poststructuralists as guides or scapegoats. Nevertheless, as we look at points of convergence and divergence between Vizenor's thought and that of other leading contemporary intellectuals, we get valuable glimpses of how writers like Vizenor, remaining close to a traditional mythic system and seeking its points of connection with other systems, do indeed illuminate the broader and occasionally very confusing issues that are part of belonging to a world community flawed by a cruel history of cultural myopia.

Since the primary impulse directing Vizenor's work is his particular understanding of the "word wars" dividing peoples, it follows that when he assumes the guise of a compassionate trickster he shows how the dominant culture "invented" more than just the "indian" (which Vizenor always refuses to dignify with a capital letter); it has invented an entire supporting cast.

Continued observation of the ideological wild west show gave Vizenor the tilted perspective he assigned to Martin Mouse Proof, a character whose cultural transformation from "an oral to a written consciousness" occurred after hearing his first "three thousand words of school-defined English" (Earthdivers, 79). Vizenor, like Mouse Proof, sensed that the labels which seemed essential to the way writing functioned, were separating him from the very experiences that nourished his inner life and dreams. The question repeated over and over in the body of Vizenor's writing had an autobiographical origin. "Must we be severed from dreams and tribal visions to survive in cities?" In Vizenor's literary lexicon, words

not only sever, they also imprison. People have to beat down word walls and seek new connections.

Perhaps one of his most moving narrative meditations on the workings of language is his description of attending the funeral of a Sioux youth who had committed suicide in jail where he was being held because he kept running away from a foster home in order to visit his grandmother. Vizenor describes listening to a funeral sermon that was an attempt to turn people away from the horrors of the real situation: "the white apologists repress the revolutions in the heart." As the meditation continues, the relationship to a basic attitude toward language is clarified. "We should pull these words down, beat them on the altars until the truth is revealed, beat the sweet phrases from the institutions that have disguised the horrors of racism" (37).

When we read narratives like this one, we can see how directly and inevitably the experiences of tribal people lead to one of the preoccupations of Roland Barthes whose purposes as described by Terry Eagleton could also serve as commentary on Vizenor. "The 'healthy' sign, for Barthes, is one which does not try to palm itself off as 'natural' but which, in the very moment of conveying a meaning, communicates something of its own relative status as well" (Literary Theory, 135). Vizenor, who sensed so urgently and immediately the political dangers that result from loss of awareness of the arbitrary nature of the mythologies of our culture, also sensed the dangers of relativism, of living in a universe of shifting, purely arbitrary signs. He sketched the absurdities

of relativism in a satirical account of the "department of undecided studies" proposed as one of seventeen alternatives to the current situation of Indian Studies departments. A searching examination of how metaphors worked in his own Ojibway tradition helped Vizenor work out a philosophical position that grants a degree of certainty amidst arbitrariness and a writing style that develops as "double visions, peeled from visual experiences on the trail near the spacious treeline and transposed in tribal visual word cinemas" (Earthdivers, 166).

The very section in Earthdivers which demonstrates the meaning and importance of the techniques he calls cinematic is preceded by a quotation from Jacques Derrida which begins with the well-known statement "between the too warm flesh of the literal event and the cold skin of the concept runs meaning. This is how it enters into the book." The "word cinemas" are stories within stories within stories all written with as precise a set of references to visual, sensual detail as possible. The meaning lies between the stories, or in the way any one of them plays off against its enclosing frame. The reader has to step outside the story to see how it means anything; and this interpretive move is the primary connection between Vizenor and Derrida. It is an important one.

Derrida's own most succinct and accessible description of his overall agenda can be useful for readers of Vizenor.

To "deconstruct" philosophy would be . . . to determine from a certain exterior that is unqualifiable or

unnameable by philosophy--what this history has been able to dissimulate or forbid, making itself into a history by means of this somewhere motivated repression. By means of this simultaneously faithful and violent circulation of the outside and inside of philosophy--that is of the West--there is produced a certain textual work that gives great pleasure. (Positions, 6)

Vizenor is certainly aware of the "somewhere motivated repression" and of the fact that its frequent hidden quality adds to unconscious racism and the need to "deconstruct" certain premises. But his writings suggest at least two alternatives to Derrida's idea that the exterior permitting deconstruction is necessarily "unqualifiable or unnameable by philosophy." Vizenor's least complicated alternative is the claim that to the extent that non-European philosophies retain their otherness, they are a valuable exterior from which to evaluate the European; and the mixed-blood who belongs in both worlds at once is the natural deconstructionist. Vizenor also defines the mixed-blood as a mythic metaphor and this suggests his second, more complicated alternative, which has to do with the way he views the nature of metaphor in his own work and in his Ojibway tradition.

Metaphor, in this context, is no arbitrary process, but neither does it affect cognitive closure; it is no "terminal creed." Rather, one term is founded in the known and proven, the other in the possible and as-yet unknown--grasped only through our intuitive sense of the

potential meaning of what we perceive visually. The meaning and worth of the relationship established by metaphors needs to be tested, modified, adapted, but it is not entirely arbitrary or unnameable. Metaphors are "visual dream flights," with a clearly marked starting point and the requirement that their conclusions lead to beneficial connections which, in turn, reveal the incompleteness that leads to other flights, or, to change to another of Vizenor's fundamental images, to further earthdiving. Always though, earthdiving should bring up out of the sea of arbitrariness the stuff with which to build the turtle island, a real, if always incomplete, ground for meaning. So metaphor itself is always both inside and outside the system, deconstructing and reconstructing as people live out the meaning of basic metaphors.

Vizenor demands much of metaphors and he is in good, traditional company. Others like Vine Deloria and Paula Gunn Allen are saying in different ways that the metaphysical assumptions governing tribal approaches to the way myths function provide fundamental balances to the history of European philosophical speculation. Vizenor has listened to several sets of questions and answers and he has made many of the questioners into honorary tricksters and earthdivers. This honor society, with its worldwide membership, continues to goad all "terminal believers" and to make the world safe for visionaries.

Elaine Jahner
Dartmouth College

* * * *

History and the Imagination:
Gerald Vizenor's The People Named the Chippewa

The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories. University of Minnesota Press, 1984. 172 pp. Photographs. Bibliography. \$22.50 cloth, \$12.95 paper.

It is perhaps a truism of modern history that they who control the past control the future. According to this maxim, those in control have the power to shape memory to suit their own requirements of the future, naively or uncaringly expecting those without control to pay homage to this vision. Official history is most credible then when all those people who remember a different story have been robbed of their memories.

Thinking that in large part the Native American population had been robbed of its memories, nineteenth-century ethnographers hurried into the field to document what were generally acknowledged to be dying cultures. Many of these ethnographies record in gruesome detail the condition of peoples stripped of their land, stripped of their language, without many of the implements of their material culture, and without any memory, or only vague memory, of the past. Kindly intentioned as they were, these documents nevertheless offer testimony to the accuracy of the official history, which depicts the "redman" as the loser in a battle for land.

Because the most telling yardstick was control of the material wealth of this country, it was widely held that Native American culture could not survive. Moreover, there was a

tendency to eulogize the passing of a largely unknown but uncorrupted culture and to lament, if it were to survive at all, the coming of an acculturated and assimilated Native American. There has been a tendency to view most cultures in such either/or terms. One either "clings to" an unworkable past or gets swept away by the tidal wave of modern life.

The ability to view the Native American fairly and honestly has been hampered, therefore, by the role he has been assigned in American history, as well as by the definitions of culture. Gerald Vizenor's The People Named the Chippewa challenges on two fronts, first that his own Chippewa are to be identified with the Indians who populate American history textbooks, and second that the continuance of Chippewa culture rests on adherence to a set of inflexible rules governing behavior.

To do so, Vizenor turns to what has been most long-lived among his own Chippewa: he looks to the oral storytelling tradition. There he finds not the repository of tribal traditions that can be reconstituted whole, without change, in the present, but evidence that something vital has never been lost. The figure that best represents this vitality is Naanabozho, the "compassionate woodland trickster."

In the "Prologue" to The People Named the Chippewa, Vizenor tells the story of the creation of the first earth. Naanabozho travels the earth searching for his mother who has been abducted by evil spirits. After traveling great distances, Naanabozho comes upon the wigwam of the great gambler. The gambler

challenges Naanabozho to a game; if the trickster loses the tribal people will lose their lives and their spirits will be consigned to the flesh eaters in the land of darkness. The great gambler misjudges his opponent, however, and Naanabozho, using some deception of his own, wins the game.

The trickster is such a compelling figure for Vizenor because he is an embodiment of "the realities of human imperfections":

More than a magnanimous teacher and transformer, the trickster is capable of violence, deceptions, and cruelties The trickster is comic in the sense that he does not reclaim idealistic ethics, but survives as a part of the natural world; he represents a spiritual balance in a comic drama rather than the romantic elimination of human contradictions and evil. (4)

It would be wrong then to reduce the Chippewa story of Naanabozho's meeting with the great gambler to its simplest terms: good triumphs over evil. Indeed, the story ends as Naanabozho takes one last turn; if he wins the great gambler loses his life. Turning again and again to the idiom of comedy rather than to that of tragedy, Vizenor disallows such a simplistic view of history as well.

Along these lines, Vizenor tells us that the Chippewa themselves can accommodate several different versions of their own beginnings. Nineteenth-century anthropologists tended to see variations as evidence of the corruption of a "pure" culture that existed some time in the

past. Vizenor quotes from the recent work of Kroeber, Tedlock and Ong to argue differently. They, along with Vizenor, challenge some of the assumptions inherent in discussions of so-called "corrupted" variants. They question whether such assumptions apply to works from primarily oral traditions. They tend to emphasize the artistry of the storyteller, rather than quibble about the authenticity or accuracy of the text. Vizenor says:

The teller of stories is an artist, a person of wit and imagination, who relumes the diverse memories of the visual past into the experiences and metaphors of the present. . . . The tribal creation takes place at the time of the telling in the oral tradition; the variations in mythic stories are the imaginative desires of tribal artists. (7)

Notice that Vizenor does not say that the storyteller retrieves or recaptures or testifies to historical facts; instead he relumes, rekindles, re-illuminates.

And thus we come to one of the key terms for Vizenor: imagination. If we can concede that colonial America won the political struggle over land rights, Vizenor cautions us against such a concession regarding the tribal identity. In the stories the Chippewa tell about themselves he finds the true strength of his people. They did not relinquish the ability or freedom to imagine themselves when they relinquished their lands. Nor do their imagined selves conform to the "official" view. Speaking of the differences

between tribal views and those of anthropologists and historians, Vizenor says:

Traditional tribal people imagine their social patterns and places on the earth, whereas anthropologists and historians invent tribal cultures and end mythic time. The differences between tribal imagination and social scientific invention are determined in world views: imagination is a state of being, a measure of personal courage; the invention of cultures is a material achievement through objective methodologies. To imagine the world is to be in the world; to invent the world with academic predications is to separate human experiences from the world, a secular transcendence and denial of chance and mortalities. (27)

The term "culture" itself imposes boundaries, restricts freedom and is the ideological equivalent of the reservation. Liberated from theoretical categories, the Chippewa can get out from under the weight of either "preserving" the past or "adopting" the ways of the white man.

Having said as much, we can confront the irony imbedded in the title to this book. "Chippewa" and "Ojibway" are the names given to the people of the central woodlands by the colonists. The word that tribal people used to refer to themselves was Anishinaabeg. For Vizenor, the distinction between Anishinaabeg and Chippewa is not one of mere semantics. The "collective name [Anishinaabeg] was not an

abstract concept of personal identities or national ideologies." The "family" and not the "nation" was the "first source" of personal identity. The collective identity came through sharing a language with other families and by sharing the dreams and visions expressed in the myths and stories.

The identity of these tribal communities was, therefore, more fluid than we can perhaps understand. Without the restrictions imposed by a "scriptural" past, the Chippewa's identity was fixed and constrained by nothing but the circumstances governing the present of individual lives. It is in the present, after all, that the stories are told and for the present that they have meaning. Tribal traditions may help to reinforce tribal identity but they do not necessarily add up to circumscribed culture and history.

In writing the history of the people named the Chippewa, Vizenor must take pains to clarify such distinctions between history and identity. The history of the Chippewa is one of resistance and capitulation to the "historical identity" invented and imposed by the invading whites. The people named the Chippewa about whom anthropologists and historians have written are not to be confused with the Anishinaabeg of the woodlands nor should they be equated with the people who live on the reservations of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Canada. The woodland tribes did not bear many of the allegiances attributed to them, and the present-day Chippewa, long separated from the woodland, can not live out but only "express romantic instincts, dreams and visions of the wilderness" (100).

Vizenor would seem to be arguing that unless and until the people named the Chippewa can accept that they can not be the Chippewa and the Anishinaabeg at the same time, they will not be able to exercise the control over the past that will allow for a vision of the future. The Chippewa can not hold onto romantic dreams about the past without continuing to conspire in the victimization of traditional cultures.

There is in all of this a fierce honesty that comes from living on the edge, perched somewhere between despair over how well the Chippewa have learned the lessons of the dominant culture's history and a kind of free-spirited zaniness over having reasoned out for oneself that none of the rules apply. Freed of invented cultural restraints, he can take a critical look at the histories written by cultural conspirators William Whipple Warren, George Copway (Kahgegagahbowh), and Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby). He can also assess the aims of the American Indian Movement in less than favorable terms:

The poses of tribal radicals seem to mimic the romantic pictorial images in old photographs taken by Edward Curtis for a white audience. The radicals never seem to smile, an incautious throwback to the stoical tribal visage of slower camera shutters and film speeds. The new radicals frown, even grimace at cameras, and claim the atrocities endured by all tribal cultures in first person personal pronouns.

Some militants decorate themselves in pastiche pantribal vestments, pose at times as traditionalists, and speak a language of confrontation and urban politics. The radical figures were not elected to speak for tribal reservation people, nor were they appointed to represent the interests and political views of elected tribal officials.

Such self-appointed saviors as Dennis Banks would seem to pose as big a threat to the survival of the Anishinaabeg as do the racist policies of the U.S. government.

The vast majority of the Chippewa get lost in the cracks and crevices created by these ideological word wars. These are the ones for whom Vizenor may well have written this book. They include the students at a private college who "were asked to define the word Indian during a special program on tribal cultures." Among their definitions we find the following:

Indian is a cultural nationality.
Real Americans.
A member of the mongolian race.
A human being.
A wild savage.
Indian means man. (108-109)

They would include, too, the estimated half of the tribal population that is chemically dependent on alcohol (118). There is, as well, Cora Katherine Sheppo, who "smothered her grandchild because he had been 'spawned by the devil'" (146). Trapped between some vague knowledge of

tribal religion and Christianity and a psychiatric diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, Cora Sheppo will live out what remains of her life in a state mental hospital.

Neither pan-Indianism nor radical politics will do much to help the Cora Sheppo's of this world. These factional ideologies depend in their own ways upon the acceptance of the historical identity imposed from without. Traditionally, the Anishinaabeg did not predicate the present reality on a past reality. Survival then depends in large part on their willingness to forego a historical identity. Ironically, those who seek a historical identity gamble away all claims to an Anishinaabeg identity.

Vizenor is, of course, less polemical than this review makes him sound. Identified as he often is with the "compassionate woodland trickster," he does nevertheless prefer to live in the realm of the possible. Freed of the trappings of an imposed identity, either from within or without the tribal community, he is free to imagine himself and the world of which he is a part.

In the "Epilogue" to The People Named the Chippewa, Vizenor includes a narrative, originally translated by Peter Jones, an anthropologist killed by tribal people while doing research in the Phillipines.

Something else I will relate concerning what the people of old have said. Whenever any one died, it was common for him to rise from the dead; and so he would give an account of

what it was like at the place where the dead go. A very large road leads to the place where go those who have died. A great many one saw walking straight west where leads the road.
. . .

In various forms appeared they who danced, even upon their heads they stood when they danced. And this was why the people of old used to say whenever anybody died: "Don't ask anybody to accompany you." They pointed out to one the way straight towards the west. . . .

And then there at the grave they sometimes kindled a fire and cooked food, when they were mindful of one that had died. Food, tobacco, and fire they placed there. And then over there at the place where the ghosts were arrived the food.

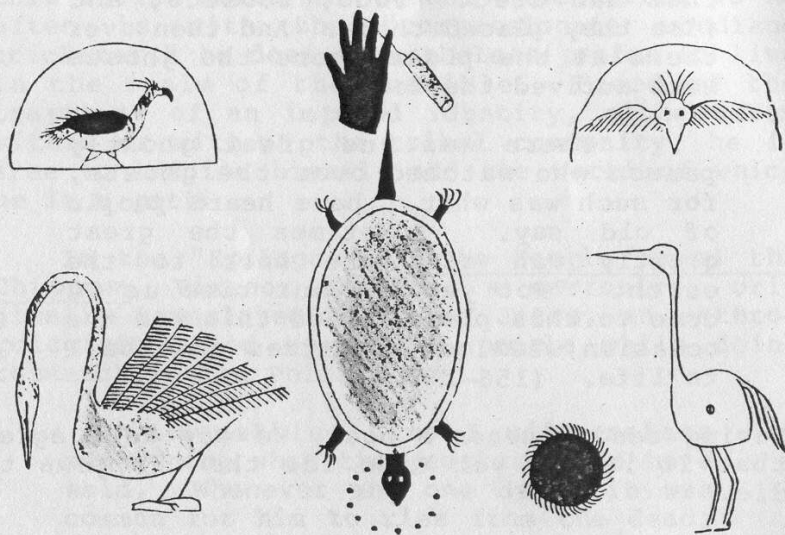
There was one great ghostly person who watched over the ghosts, for such was what I have heard people of old say. Sometimes the great ghostly man sent one back to the earth. "Not yet is your time us to come to this place." And this was the occasion when one sometimes came back to life. (156-157)

Having read Vizenor's book, we may well agree that it is not yet time for the Chippewa to die.

Throughout his career, Gerald Vizenor has exhibited a willingness to experiment with and to work in a variety of forms--he was a reporter, he has written poetry, a novel, and a filmscript. It should come as no surprise then that he has ventured into yet another arena. The People Named the Chippewa is not just "revisionist" history though. Instead it poses some serious historiographical questions. The "Indian" of American history, largely a creation of the colonists, has had such a damaging effect on the Native population itself that we can only wait to see if its influence can be eradicated.

Linda Ainsworth
Columbia University

* * * *



Peter Wild, James Welch. Boise, Idaho: Boise State University Western Writers Series, No. 57, 1983. 49 pp. Bibliography. \$2.00 pb.

James Welch is Peter Wild's third contribution to the always useful, frequently excellent "Western Writers Series." Wild, himself the subject of a forthcoming number in this series, is more widely known as a poet than as a critic. His evaluations of Welch's three books--Riding the Earthboy 40, Winter in the Blood, and The Death of Jim Loney--can be explained in part by his own literary concerns. Briefly, he thinks very highly of Welch's Earthboy poems and finds Winter to be of nearly equal interest in certain of its episodes. Loney, on the other hand, strikes him as "a badly flawed novel, not worthy of [Welch's] best work." Fortunately, even those readers who disagree with Wild's opinion of the third book will find James Welch to be a well-written, usually judicious introduction to one of America's finest novelists.

Wild is careful from the outset to distinguish between examples of Native American literature that are admirable because of their inherent aesthetic value and examples that receive a sympathetic reading merely because of their authors' tragic tribal history. Welch's work, he points out, belongs in the first category. Though possessing an insider's knowledge of the Blackfeet and Gros Ventre people of Montana, Welch writes about them with objectivity, retaining a clear sense of his heritage while rejecting clichés of "Indianess."

On the whole, Wild's chapter on the Earth-boy poems stresses Welch's assimilation into the Euro-American world of letters. Drawing comparisons from such poets as Robert Bly, James Wright, and Pablo Neruda, Wild maintains that Welch's success depends not so much on his being a Native American as on his ability to imbibe and build upon the latest poetic trends. For instance, he views certain of Welch's lines as having been composed "almost as if in passionate response to Neruda." Wild himself has been called a surrealist, and he is visibly pleased to note the surrealism of Welch's poems. His close readings of such poems as "The Man from Washington" are first-rate. In them he remains consistently free of jargon and alert to nuance. His obvious respect for Welch makes this part of his essay a pleasure to read.

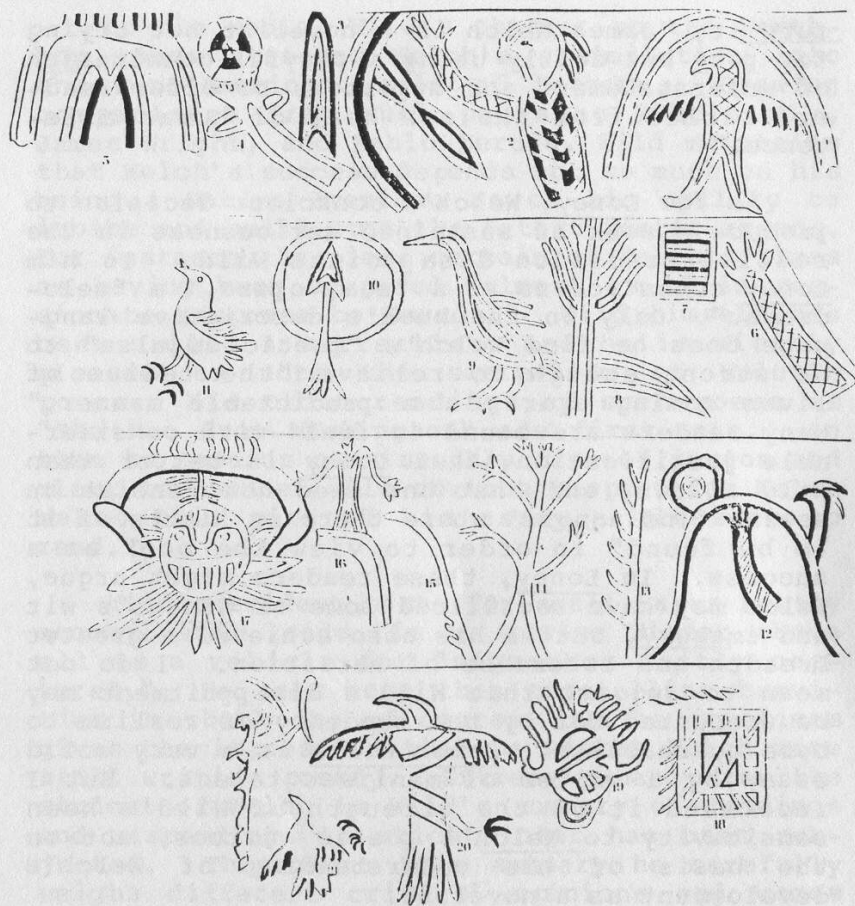
Wild's evident taste for small tasks neatly accomplished leads him to praise Winter above all as a vehicle for "vignettes deftly captured." He sees more than crystalline brevities in the book, of course, but he sometimes gives the impression that he wishes Welch were still writing poetry. Extremely handy for the student of Welch is Wild's summary of readings and misreadings to which Winter has been subjected. Throughout this summary he carefully weighs different critics' opinions and comes down hard on what seem to him to be overly earnest treatments of the book--namely, those that focus on bitter social comment or on Blackfeet folklore. He concludes that writers such as Reynolds Price have the right idea when they take into account Welch's considerable comic talent as well as his ability to portray Native American alienation. As Wild himself

puts it, "James Welch is a novelist not crying for pity but deftly using a playful combination of understatement and hyperbole to offer readers riches from the ash heap of human existence."

As for Loney, Welch's conscious decision to produce a work of sustained seriousness in the realist tradition disappoints Wild. To him Loney comes across as a "soap opera," a "melodrama." Only in the book's descriptive language does he find Welch's "poetic impulse" to be strong enough to relieve "the tedium of lives coming apart in a predictable manner." Many readers are bound to feel--with considerable justification--that Loney is better than Wild allows, and that one need not "insist on seeing 'Indianness' where there is little of it to be found" in order to view the book as a success. In Loney, these readers might argue, Welch may have sacrificed some of Winter's wit and imagery, but he has also achieved a greater breadth and coherence of narration. I do not mean to suggest that Wild's disappointment may be accounted for by the tendency of realism to bore surrealists. James Welch is a very solid essay by a writer of manifest talent. But I recommend it on the strength of Wild's keen sensitivity to Welch's poetic virtues, not on the basis of his understanding of Welch's development as a novelist.

Paul Kleinpoppen
Columbia University

* * * *



Maurice Kenny, The Mama Poems. White Pine Press, 73 Putnam Street, Buffalo, NY 14213, 1984. 40 pp. \$5.00 pb.

This is probably Kenny's most powerful and surely his most personal collection. Here his consistent theme of the possibility-impossibility of home focuses on the specifics of familial memories. A harsh but unembittered honesty runs through these poems that convey a sense of fragmentariness true to recollections of what one has often tried to forget. Kenny never flinches from the recognition of loss and waste; regret and sympathy do not smother his remembered anger, remembered pain. When one has read these poems, one knows why Kenny has become the poet he is. The collection thoroughly deserves the American Book Award for 1984 it received.

* * * *

Bo Schoeler, ed., Coyote Was Here. Published by Seklos, Department of English, University of Aarhus, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark, 1984.

An interestingly diverse collection of essays by some of the most perceptive Native American writers. Wendy Rose contributes a remarkable essay from the schizophrenic position of Indian and Anthropologist, and is skillfully interviewed by Carol Hunter. Simon Ortiz surveys with powerful candor his life and writing, and Paula Allen is her usual lucid, original, thought-provoking self in "This Wilderness in My Blood: Spiritual Foundations of the Poetry of Five American Indian Women," fine appreciations of Joy Harjo, Linda Hogan, Mary Tallmountain, Wendy Rose, and Carol Lee

Sanchez, concluding with a brief, shrewd self-commentary. James Ruppert writes sensitively on Ray Young Bear (and Ortiz), and Joseph Bruchac discusses the modern "longhouse" tradition through illuminating analyses centered on Peter Blue Cloud and Maurice Kenny. Ward Churchill concludes the volume with a selection of poems from Indians of seven tribes illustrating that the ghost dance spirit flourishes in younger Native Americans' poetry.

* * * *

William Bright, American Indian Linguistics and Literature. Mouton: New York, Berlin, Amsterdam, 1984. xi + 159 pp. \$9.50 pb.

It is the second part of this volume, mainly a reprinting of previously published essays, that for SAIL readers will be of most interest, so Part I, "Studies in American Indian Linguistics" will be ignored in this brief notice. Part II, "Studies in American Indian Oral Literatures," discusses (repetitiously, because of verbatim reprinting of separate essays) the work of Hymes and Tedlock seeking to define specifically literary features in traditional Indian narratives. Bright presents analyses of two Karok texts based on a "combination" of Tedlock's and Hymes' approaches (though Bright's work is primarily Hymesian), and an unanalyzed translation of several brief Coyote-travels-from-the-center-of-the-earth stories. Although Bright is not much concerned with literary characteristics or qualities beyond verse and line structuring, it is good to have his independent evidence of the existence of a "poetic" form in Karok tales analogous to that Hymes has found in Chinook

texts. Literary scholars who have had to contend with Derrideanism for more than a decade will probably find Bright's short defense of "The Virtues of Illiteracy" somewhat quaint, but he does criticism good service in urging us to remember the costs of our literacy.

* * * *

Notes

Subscribers who read Russian will be interested in the publication in Moscow in 1983 of I Stand in Good Relation to the Earth, compiled and edited by Dr. Alexandr Vaschenko, which consists of translations into Russian of prose by Momaday (the source, of course, of Vaschenko's title), Silko, Vizenor, Sanchez, and Storm; poetry by Momaday, Niatum, Welch, Silko, S. Ortiz, Vizenor, and Young Bear; and some of Vine Deloria, Jr.'s commentaries. Vaschenko has published a number of articles and reviews on Native American literature and is currently at work on a monograph, "Native American Epics," and hopes to publish in a couple of years translations of the autobiographies of Black Hawk, Black Elk, and Geronimo.

* * * *

John Bierhorst's Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature, out of print for several years, has been reprinted by the University of Arizona Press (\$10.95 pb.). Originally published in 1974, the book contains translations of "Quezalcoatl: An Aztec Hero Myth," "The Ritual of Condolence: An Iroquois Ceremonial," "Cuceb: A Maya Prophecy," and "The Night Chant:

A Navajo Ceremonial." Bierhorst's introduction to each selection gives the reader new to these materials important background information. Though a book of extraordinary scholarship--as the notes to each section clearly indicate--the author's main aim is to reveal the "genius of mythic literature." This is an important work, the notes and introductions making it particularly useful in the classroom. We are glad this volume is back in print.

* * * *

A t t e n t i o n

Teachers Librarians Scholars Poetry Lovers

On August 1, 1985, SAIL will publish a collection of a dozen expanded and updated bibliographies of contemporary Native American writers. The collection, approximately 60 pages, will be available before August 1 at \$5.00, \$3.00 on orders of 10 or more. The price after August 1 will be \$7.00.

Studies in American Indian Literatures, the Newsletter of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures, is issued four times a year. Annual subscriptions are by the calendar year and are \$4.00. For back issues and special publications by SAIL contact the editor, 602 Philosophy Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027, to whom contributions and subscriptions should be addressed. Advisory editorial board: Paula Gunn Allen, Gretchen Bataille, Joseph Bruchac, Vine Deloria, Jr., Larry Evers, Dell Hymes, Maurice Kenny, Robert Sayre.

Studies in American Indian Literatures 1985
@ SAIL. ISSN: 0730-3238