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Breaking Away: The Novels of Gerald Vizenor

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By WOLFGANG HOCHBRUCK The Columbus quincentennial has already inspired numerous publications by both historians and authors of fiction. Historians so far have not come up with many hitherto unknown facts; most of their new "Columbus books" are rereadings and reinterpretations of what has been around for quite a while. With authors of fiction, of course, the matter is different. Two "Columbus books" by authors with a Native American background deserve particular attention: *The Crown of Columbus* by the team of Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris,¹ and *The Heirs of Columbus* by Gerald Vizenor.² On the one hand, the Erdrich-Dorris product is a well-written and entertaining novel that largely conforms to the demands of the contemporary book market. On the other hand, Vizenor's work is what Kirkpatrick Sale has called "an inventive, experimental non-novel,"³ a volume of fantastic tales that are beautiful, satiric, and, like the book's predecessors, at times bewildering.

The Heirs of Columbus is Vizenor's fourth novel, but the epithets *inventive* and *experimental* are qualifiers that have been accompanying the author ever since his first, *Bearheart*.⁴ Even a superficial look at some formal qualities identifies it as belonging to the category of fiction termed "postmodern": the story line is only thinly penciled in and becomes almost invisible at times, and not much of the action is causally accounted for. There is much provocative satire of current political and intellectual issues and pursuits, ranging from U.S. foreign and education policies to Native American tribal sovereignty, from feminism to genetic therapies and the restitution of tribal objects and human remains. As usual in a postmodern novel, readers gain little insight into individual characters, either their motivations or their development. A special feature of Vizenor's prose, however, and one that links it ironically to TV family sagas, is that in an ever-present and ever-possible *retour au personnage*, characters from *Bearheart*, *Griever*,⁵ and *The Trickster of Liberty*⁶ reappear in *The Heirs of Columbus*. Events and motifs from the other three novels are also alluded to frequently—too frequently, perhaps. First-time readers of Vizenor will have difficulties with this allusive technique. However, the constant recurrence of familiar figures and moments is not only an addictive language game in a postmodern frame of narration, but it also creates an intertextually related corpus of texts that recalls similar corpora in the oral tribal tradition.

Not that *The Heirs of Columbus* would conform to romantic ideas of "Indian" literature all sprung from oral roots. In fact, conform is one thing Vizenor's

novels hardly ever do. Quite the opposite. One basic similarity among the four novels is that they break out: they break out of conventional narrative, break away from established language forms, and from the beginning they have sidestepped the formal patterns judged typical for Native American fiction by critics and the book market. A second basic similarity is their humor, which borders on the comical on one side and on deep sadness on the other. In the following remarks I shall try to point out several of the aspects of "breaking away" in the four novels.

BREAKING AWAY FROM CONVENTION. "Breaking away" in terms of both language and *topoi* is not accidental but part of a program, inspired by personal experience and imaginative confrontation with contemporary critical theory.

Philosophically, I think we should break out of all the routes, all the boxes, break down the sides. A comic spirit demands that we break from formula, break out of program. . . . I suppose I am preoccupied with this theme because the characters I admire in my own imagination and the characters I would like to make myself be break out of things. They break out of all restrictions. They even break out of their blood. . . . They break out of invented cultures and repression. I think it's a spiritual quest in a way.⁷

Bearheart is a novel about a group of tribal mixed-bloods and other "weirds and sensitives" in a futuristic setting, who, rather than succumbing, break out of the general pattern of destruction and violence encircling them. They travel south from the Anishabe homelands through what is left of the United States, at a time in the near future during the foreseeable process of economic and environmental collapse. Only a few of the "Circus pilgrims," as they call themselves, survive and escape through the solstice window in Pueblo Bonito, New Mexico, become vision bears in another world: "That morning when the old men were inhaling the dawn and laughing through the first winter solstice sunrise, Proude Cedarfair and Inawa Biwide flew with vision bears ha ha ha haaa from the window on the perfect light into the fourth world" (B, 243). There is a numeric problem here with mythological worlds, for to several Native peoples the present world is already the fourth. Within the context of *Bearheart*, nowever, the pilgrims' progress (of course, this is one of the intertexts) into the fourth world makes the one they leave the third, which is what tribal politicians have claimed on several occasions: that their reservations are actually part of the Third World. This single incident may serve to exemplify the technique employed throughout: the mixing of traditional references and contemporary political or social satire.

and, when they couldn't run any farther, they stood in the middle of the highway and waved and waved and waved.

We got to Salt Lake City the next day. Laetitia was happy to see us, and, that first night, she took us out to a restaurant that made really good soups. The list of pies took up a whole page. I had cherry. Mom had chocolate. Laetitia said that she saw us on television the night before, and, during the meal, she had us tell her the story over and over again.

Laetitia took us everywhere. We went to a fancy ski resort. We went to the temple. We got to go shopping in a couple of large malls, but they weren't as large as the one in Edmonton, and Mom said so.

After a week or so, I got bored and wasn't at all sad when my mother said we should be heading back home. Laetitia wanted us to stay longer, but Mom

said, no, that she had things to do back home and that, next time, Laetitia should come up and visit. Laetitia said she was thinking about moving back, and Mom told her to do as she pleased, and Laetitia said that she would.

On the way home, we stopped at the duty-free shop, and my mother gave Mel a green hat that said "Salt Lake" across the front. Mel was a funny guy. He took the hat and blew his nose and told my mother that she was an inspiration to us all. He gave us some more peanut brittle and came out into the parking lot and waved at us all the way to the Canadian border.

It was almost evening when we left Coutts. I watched the border through the rear window until all you could see were the tops of the flag poles and the blue water tower, and then they rolled over a hill and disappeared.

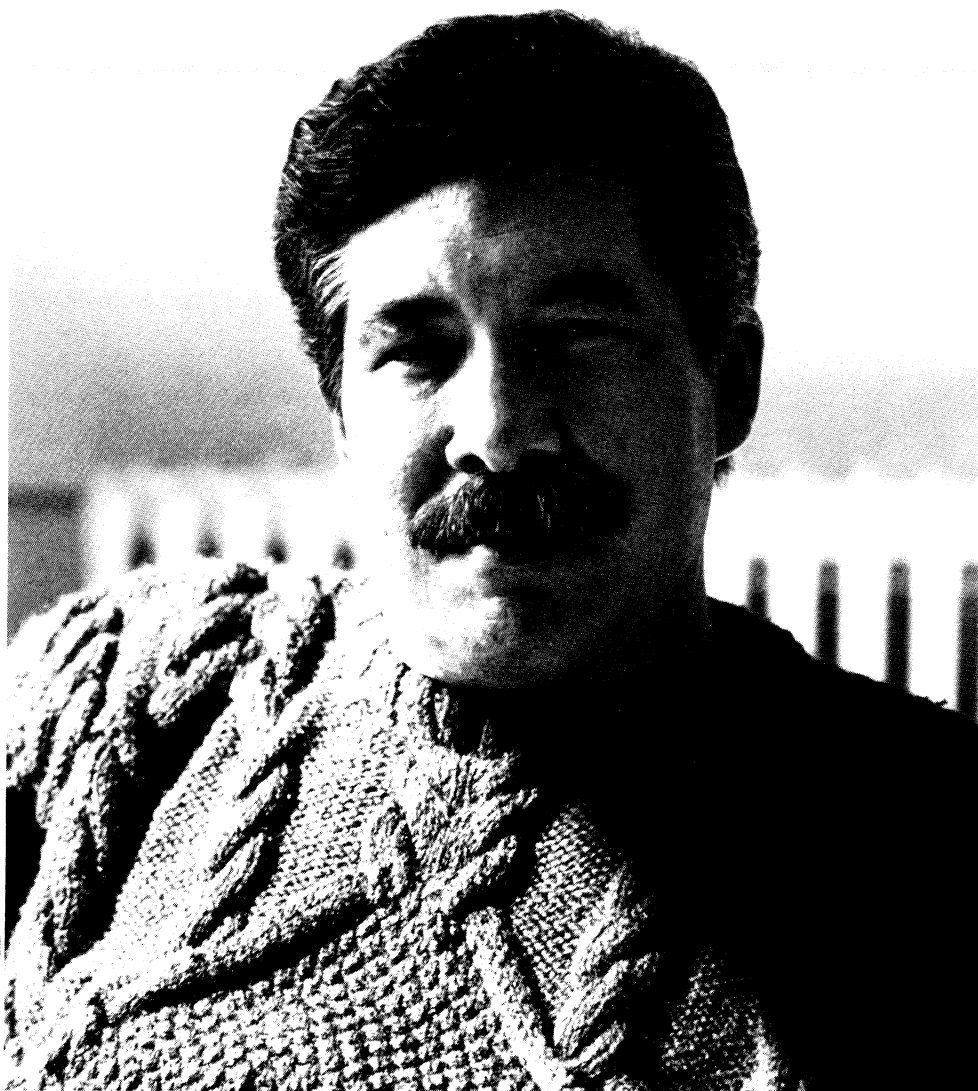


Photo: Francisco Photography

THOMAS KING

When the novel first came out in 1978, reviewers praised Vizenor's handling of tribal myths and oral tradition but gasped at the amount of overt sexuality and seemingly gratuitous violence. Vizenor's own approach was that, by including the violence he had experienced himself and observed around him, he was offering a lesson: "It's exactly the lesson I offer about violence. American culture has denied violence, but permits it in entertainment. . . . I think the way this culture works is dangerous. To deny violence is to create victims, ultimate victims, people who can be controlled merely by the symbolic appearance of violence."⁸

Political satire and eruptive violence were not the only aspects of breaking away in *Bearheart*. The novel also defied the image of Native American literature developing at the time as a result of the commercial success of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, James Welch's *Winter in the Blood*, and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*. The image was that of the single, young, alienated, usually male "Indian" hero trying to come to terms with his experiences in a divided world. Living somewhere between a tribal and a white identity, he finds consolation in returning to his roots and adapting tribal traditions to contemporary needs. All three of the abovementioned novels worked along these lines, and they were the most successful Native American novels of the 1970s. The characters and events of *Bearheart*, however, would not conform to this pattern. They were not heroes but victims of terminal creeds; the survivors in *Bearheart* are at best "ambiguous saviours."⁹ Most of the "Circus pilgrims" are painfully aware of their identity, with all its limitations and sometimes with the lack of them, as in the case of Pio Wissakodewinini, the mixed-blood mammoth parawoman stuck halfway between the sexes (*B*, 79).

During the seventies a number of critics and reviewers were trying to find theoretical models that would fit the emerging Native American literature. Borrowing from the social sciences, the search was on in particular for the presence and influence of the "Indian" oral tradition on the literary texts. Subsequently, Native American literary productions were in danger of being seen and treated only as extensions of oral tribal cultures, which they were not. Tribal oral traditions continue independently, even though in some cases the traditional oral and the new literary culture coexist today in tribal cultural practice.

Oral traditional material was unmistakably present in *Bearheart*,¹⁰ but unlike several of his contemporaries, Vizenor never made a secret of the fact that some of his sources were literary. Furthermore, tribal traditions are only one of many influences on the text. In a spirited review Kenneth Roemer pointed out that, apart from "an Anishinabe storyteller," intertextually related contributors and influences included "several famous and popular authors (Dante, Chaucer, John Bunyan, Jonathan Swift, Henry Fielding, and L. Frank Baum), several modern American

writers (Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., Carson McCullers, and Hunter Thompson), one film director (Fellini), . . . and two Native American authors (Leslie Marmon Silko and N. Scott Momaday)."¹¹ *Bearheart* was the first truly postmodern novel by an author of Native American descent, and thus in 1978 was indeed a novelty on the literary scene. Although it never achieved the success of the three other novels noted above, it did open literary spaces and escape routes for Vizenor and other authors.

Success came with *Griever: An American Monkey King in China*, which won the Fiction Collective Prize and the American Book Award. To date, it is Vizenor's most conventional novel in terms of narrative structure and development of characters. However, Vizenor broke away from established patterns by placing *Griever* in China at a time when Native American novels generally did not venture from limited regional settings. The fact that the mixed-blood protagonist Griever de Hocus is a university professor was a novelty as well: apparently, in the 1980s "Indians" were not conceivable as members of a college or university faculty, at least not on the predominantly white-oriented book market. Four years after *Griever*, and following Welch's *Indian Lawyer*, Erdrich and Dorris introduced a nontenured, mixed-blood assistant professor in *The Crown of Columbus*.

Some of Griever's irreverent and comic actions are based on Vizenor's personal experience as a visiting professor at Tianjin University, but what is more important is the satiric (and sometimes autocritical) treatment of those experiences. Vizenor leaves no doubt as to his critical view of post-Mao China: "Communist cadres . . . took the best seats and called it a cultural revolution" (*G*, 86), Griever says, trying to get a seat for an old woman on the bus. Liberating chickens in the market and running away with a truckload of summarily convicted prisoners, Griever is identified by Chinese eyewitnesses as Sun Wukong, the Mind Monkey from olden stories. Chinese bureaucrats are depicted as helpless in the face of trickster humor. Likewise, official speeches, "translated inanities,"¹² are all the more poignant because they are simply rendered truthfully (*G*, 179). Again, traditional material and political satire work hand in glove, complementing each other.

The idea that only tricksters will survive inimical environments such as urban Indian reservations and a so-called communist gerontocracy may allow for a fictional transfer of the American tribal trickster to China, but some doubts remain concerning the compatibility of Native American trickster concepts and characters from the Chinese opera tradition. However, not only the interpretation of the Monkey King as the trickster was an innovative and provocative step. At the time of the book's publication China was apparently opening up to the West. *Griever* pointed out the strict limitation of this opening as involving solely the economic sphere. Vizenor's creative parody

of communist petrification contradicted official U.S. policy, and the Tiananmen massacre proved the accuracy of his observations.

Because it seemed to give uncritical preference to American political ideologies, *Griever* left readers with ambivalent feelings. *The Trickster of Liberty* calmed their fears. Here the American myth of liberty is subverted in political irony with the erecting of a monument titled *Trickster of Liberty* on Indian land. Planned in enormous proportions and intended as a counterpart to the Statue of Liberty, the Trickster statue is never finished; work is halted at crotch height—a typically sexual trickster image, and a political commentary on the situation of liberty and democracy. The main target, however, is the politics of the American Indian reservation system; it is an easy target, one might say, but the aspect of breaking away from the established pattern lies in the fact that every party involved is satirized, the U.S. administration as well as tribal bureaucrats and the self-styled “Indian” radicals.

Trickster is both the shortest and the least violent of Vizenor’s four novels. Usually figures are harassed by nothing worse than See See Arachnid’s special breed of parasitic testicle ticks, “bred to attack authoritarian personalities” (*TL*, 118). Still, satirizing the leaders of the American Indian Movement came close to butchering a sacred cow. Not that Vizenor’s critique of Indian radicals was a novelty in his writing—LaVonne Brown Ruoff has drawn attention to parallels between his journalistic coverage of AIM activities in the 1960s and 1970s and several events and characters in *Trickster*¹³—but it had never been so prominent in his novels. The hypocrisy of radical activists posing for the media with braids and bone chokers is exemplified in the figures of Coke de Fountain (who shares some features with Dennis Banks) and a spurious tribal author called Homer Yellow Snow (*TL*, 111 ff., 114). Even these “invented Indians” are treated with gentle satire, however; they are allowed a “last lecture on the edge” and then are discharged into a new identity (*TL*, 107, 118).

The Heirs of Columbus does for fiction what Kirkpatrick Sale’s *Conquest of Paradise*¹⁴ did for history, only that, rather than deconstructing the Columbus myth and the Columbian heritage, it sets out to subvert them ironically. Columbus’s flagship is afloat on Lake of the Woods as the *Santa Maria Bingo Barge*, run by Stone Columbus, a direct descendant of the ancient mariner, himself a descendant of early Mayan explorers and seafarers who originally discovered the “Old World.” The idea of Columbus’s spawning a new type of man, himself being “the first American” (a phrase repeatedly heard and read these days, from *Newsweek* to George Bush’s 1991 Columbus Day address), is savaged in the depiction of Columbus as suffering from an “enormous clubbed penis . . . a disease of fibrous contracture” (*HC*, 31). Finally, when Stone Columbus leads his motley bunch of followers, friends, and animals to the west-

ern island of Point Assinika with the intention of founding a new nation there, the myth of Columbian discovery and settlement is undone through a reverse reenactment.

Breaking away in Vizenor’s novels means not the careful correction of “Indian” stereotypes and the (re-)construction of an esthetic and philosophical system the way Silko handled these problems in *Ceremony*. It means, rather, the exposure, subversion, and disruption of many fixed images and myths from the “Indian” stereotype to political myths in China and America, on and off the reservation.

BREAKING OUT OF STANDARD LINGUISTIC FORM. Starting with *Griever*, Vizenor’s novels began containing epilogues. The purpose in *Griever*, with its foreign setting, real background, and numerous references to Chinese literature, was somewhat self-explanatory. In *The Trickster of Liberty* a prologue joined with the epilogue to form a narrative frame. Unlike *Griever*, this later novel also introduced independent chapters composed in a different rhetorical-dictional key: written in the form of essays, they quoted and parodied poststructuralist modes. Woe to those unfortunate readers who stubbornly insisted on reading *Trickster* from the beginning only! Thinking that this was to be the style and tone of the whole novel, some certainly must have fallen victim to a language game by which Vizenor had broken out of narrative prose conventions. Later, in *Heirs to Columbus*, the essayistic style at times breaks out of the epilogue and intrudes into the narrative proper.

Experiments with language have been one of the main features of the modern novel, pushed to the extreme by Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*. With reference to such experiments, Vizenor himself told Joseph Bruchac: “I like playing with words and I think part of it is a mixed blood tribal effort at ‘deconstruction.’ I want to break the language down, I want to reimagine the language. . . . I still haven’t broken very far out of grammar. I’ve broken out of the philosophies of grammar, English language grammar, but I haven’t broken out of the standard grammatical structure.”¹⁵

When Vizenor first started writing his imaginative prose, the response was mixed: one reviewer of *Word-arrows*, a collection of stories published in 1978 that marks the transitional phase in the author’s style, found this style “often bulky and confusing.”¹⁶ Undaunted, Vizenor stepped up his efforts in *Bearheart*. Mixing tribal voices (Anishinabemowin and Lakota) into the English text and restyling language with neologisms, unusual compound phrases, and parodies of officialese, he created a heteroglottal kaleidoscope of voices and tones. Only the tribal languages were not affected by the general destruction of linguistic order that accompanied the general mayhem.¹⁷ Chinese in *Griever* is employed mainly to disrupt the monoglottal structure, but then there are subtle differences between the Confucian and Zen-inspired Chinese spoken by the ordinary people and the cir-

cumstantial jargon of the bureaucrats. *Trickster* relied on different voices rather than languages, being largely dialogic in form and scenic in structure—after the complicated prologue, that is. In *The Heirs of Columbus* tribal names from *Bearheart* reappear, and some of the dialogues recall *Trickster*; but on the whole the text relies less on different languages than on a system of colors, recurrent phrases, and metaphors.

Point Assinika was the first crossblood nation dedicated to heal the wounded with genetic therapies; the genes were implanted, but the children need [sic] more than genetic codes, more than protein simulation; the heirs were overclouded by thousands of children with genetic diseases, more than they could touch with stories and humor. Chilam and the blues came at the right time to heal; the point was the last tribal nation in the world that would honour their dream bodies and blue touch of creation. (HC, 144)

Within this example there are several ambiguous meanings, two phrases that keep reappearing throughout the text (“heal the wounded” and “genetic therapies”), and one neologism of the author’s own coinage (“crossblood”). The prominence of the color blue is obvious, and so is the metaphorical style. Of Vizenor’s treatment of metaphor, Elaine Jahner writes: “Metaphor, in this context, is no arbitrary process, but neither does it affect cognitive closure. . . . 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.”¹⁸

In *Heirs* phrases and metaphors like “stories in the blood” and “hand talkers” are repeated so often that they add to the structural coherence of the text. In this respect the novel shares some of the aspects of the epic tale as described by Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord: recurrent metaphors, motifs, and formulaic phrases are typical of oral ad hoc composition. Sometimes the repetitive patterns become so dense that they imprint themselves on the reader’s mind with the persistency of a meditative chant. In this atmosphere the constant backward and forward transformation of animal figures like Memphis the Panther attains a matter-of-fact quality that is both simple and beautiful. Finally, the whole novel conveys a sense of almost musical orchestration, an impression underscored by the fact that one of the mongrel dogs (one that consistently remains a dog), Admire, is apt now and then to “lick her blue lips and whistle a tribal tune from the *New World* Symphony, by Antonín Dvořák.”

In terms of style, none of Vizenor’s novels is easy reading. Not making concessions to a general reading public of course means only limited commercial success. Rather than aim for high sales figures, however, Vizenor continues to develop a style of his own, always breaking away in each new work from some aspects of his previous novel.

“LIGHTING OUT FOR THE TERRITORIES.” The classic “American” novel ends with new challenges and

destinies awaiting the hero, as in Huck Finn’s “lighting out for the territories.” William Bevis, in a 1987 article,¹⁹ explained that, contrary to this pattern, Native American novels were “homing in” texts, usually completing a circle. One problem of this typological analysis is that evidently several texts from the American literary canon are of the “homing in” type, whereas Vizenor’s novels are not, which would make them, in Bevis’s terms, typical of the American mainstream, which, again, they are not.

With reference to *Bearheart*, Brigitte Georgi-Findlay left the question undecided as to whether the escape of the survivors into a new existence as vision bears was “a withdrawal or a step toward a new beginning in a renewed world.”²⁰ Still, whatever reading may appeal more to the individual reader, the fact remains that *Bearheart* does not “home in”; it is quite literally a road novel in filmic episodes, and in the end there is no way left to travel but to “light out for the territories,” so to speak. In their escape the pilgrims leave behind Whitman’s sad and (formerly) beautiful world.

The end of *Griever* is also overshadowed by the sadness of flight from an inimical environment. Most of the time the avian dreamer Griever de Hocus escapes his frustrations by scratching “panic holes” and screaming into the earth (G, 70). In the end, however, he is forced to flee from communist China to Macao (an escape route actually taken in 1990 by the fugitive student leader Wuer Kaixi). The escape here—a literal flight in a reservation-built ultralight plane—is taken in good humor, but Griever leaves behind many panic holes as well as his lover and their unborn child, both murdered by the evil bureaucrat Egas Zhang. Again, the only chance of survival for hero and heroine (Griever is accompanied by the Chinese mixed-blood Kangmei and his pet rooster Matteo Ricci) lies in breaking out and away.

The Trickster of Liberty is the only one of Vizenor’s novels that leaves the characters in place. Here the breakout is more an economic and political one, a trickster revolution on the “rez”—or, in the words of Elaine Jahner, “fictional events forcing characters to bone up on their knowledge of Trickster’s modus vivendi [that] would have undone Henry Kissinger.”²¹

In *The Heirs of Columbus*, finally, the breaking away takes the form of an exeunt-all escape onto a (U)topian island off the West Coast and the fictional establishment of a new independent state, since no hope is left in the old system (recalling e.g. the Baltic states’ breakaway from the Soviet Union in 1991). Vizenor reinvents Columbus; knowing that the past five centuries cannot be undone, he at least projects a gentler future. The violence and destruction so vividly depicted in *Bearheart* are with us now, and they are one of the results of the Columbian dream. In fact, the image of a “healing nation” that Vizenor creates fictionally in view of a reality full of daily suffering is one of immense sadness. “Homing in,” then, is a

romantic signifier in a language game, and breaking away on escape routes is at least a tribal trickster possibility.

CONCLUSION. Native American literature today is about as multifaceted as that of any other minority group in the United States, and possibly more so. The initial concentration by critics, authors, and reading public on the examples set by a few leading authors has given way to an enormous diversity. This is fortunate: to accept literary antecedents as the ruling standard would have meant stagnation and virtual exclusion from experiment; to accept the stereotypical labels distributed by romantic critics would have meant an existence as invented Indians after all. Silko, Harjo, Ortiz, Allen, and other authors of Native ancestry did not overcome the stereotype of the Hollywood Indian in order for Native American literature to be caught in a new stereotype of circles, bone chokers, and "homing in." The truth is imaginary and not in anthropological records: "He untied the ties of the costumes in captured images . . . and bead over bead he performed a slow striptease, a ritual contradiction between two frozen photographic images from the timebound past."²²

"Breaking away" in terms of style, form, and topics is one of the trademarks of Gerald Vizenor's narrative fiction. With four novels and several collections of stories to date, he is one of the most prolific authors of Native American ancestry in the United States. He is also one of the most inventive, constantly trying to leave the most-traveled roads. Offering (never teaching) lessons and inspiring other authors as well as his readers in good humor,²³ he is above all a compassionate tribal trickster himself, or maybe, as Thomas King called him, "a Coyote with a word processor."²⁴

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¹ Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, *The Crown of Columbus*, New York, HarperCollins, 1991.

² Gerald Vizenor, *The Heirs of Columbus*, Middletown, Ct., Wesleyan University Press, 1991. Subsequent references use the abbreviation HC.

³ Kirkpatrick Sale, "Roll On, Columbus, Roll On," *The Nation*, 21 October 1991, p. 486.

⁴ Gerald Vizenor, *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*, Minneapolis, Truck, 1978; reprinted as *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*, Min-

neapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990. Subsequent references use the abbreviation B.

⁵ Gerald Vizenor, *Griever: An American Monkey King in China*, Normal/Boulder, Co., Illinois State University / Fiction Collective, 1987. Subsequent references use the abbreviation G.

⁶ Gerald Vizenor, *The Trickster of Liberty*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988. Subsequent references use the abbreviation TL.

⁷ "Follow the Trickroutes: An Interview with Gerald Vizenor," in Joseph Bruchac, *Survival This Way: Interviews with Native American Poets*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1987, p. 290.

⁸ Neal Bowers and Charles P. Silet, "An Interview with Gerald Vizenor," *MELUS*, 8 (1981), p. 43.

⁹ William Thackeray, "Halfbreeds: Ambiguous Saviours," *Book Forum*, 5 (1981), p. 357.

¹⁰ Cf. Wolfgang Hochbruck, "'The Last of the Oral Tradition in Electronic Word Processing': Traditional Material and Postmodern Form in Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart*," *Yearbook of the Association for the Study of the New Literatures in English*, 1991.

¹¹ Several sources and intertexts are listed in the review by Kenneth Roemer, "Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 4 (1980), p. 187.

¹² Anthony C. Yu, "Fulbright Monkey in China," *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, 11 October 1987.

¹³ Lavonne Brown Ruoff, "Woodland Word Warrior: An Introduction to the Works of Gerald Vizenor," *MELUS*, 13 (1986), p. 21.

¹⁴ Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy*, New York, Knopf, 1991.

¹⁵ "Follow the Trickroutes," p. 293.

¹⁶ Andrew Knauf, "Wordarrows," *Minority Voices*, 3 (1979), p. 67.

¹⁷ Wolfgang Hochbruck, "I Have Spoken": *Die Darstellung und ideologische Funktion indianischer Mündlichkeit in der nordamerikanischen Literatur*, Tübingen, Narr, 1991, pp. 234 ff.

¹⁸ Elaine Jahner, "Allies in the Word Wars: Vizenor's Uses of Contemporary Critical Theory," *SAIL*, 9 (1985), pp. 68 ff.

¹⁹ William Bevis, "Native American Novels: Homing In," in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, Arnold Krupat and Brian Swann, eds., Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987, p. 580.

²⁰ Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, *Tradition und Moderne in der zeitgenössischen indianischen Literatur der USA*, Cologne, Pahl-Rugenstein, 1986, p. 289. The translation is my own.

²¹ Elaine Jahner, "The Trickster of Liberty," *Wicazo Sa Review*, 6 (1990), p. 37.

²² Gerald Vizenor, "Socioacupuncture: Mythic Reversals and the Striptease in Four Scenes," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, Calvin Martin, ed., New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 186.

²³ Several authors who began publishing in the 1980s have named Vizenor as a source of inspiration or have been evidently influenced by his writings: cf., for example, Jim Northrup's stories in *Touchwood: A Collection of Ojibway Prose*, Gerald Vizenor, ed., St. Paul, Mn., New Rivers, 1987; and "Beth Cuthand," in *Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors*, Hartmut Lutz, ed., Saskatoon, Sask., Fifth House, 1991, p. 35.

²⁴ Thomas King, in a Wesleyan University Press program leaflet announcing Vizenor's *Landfill Meditation*, 1991.