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As Golla notes, the only previously published evaluation of the linguistic evidence for California prehistory was a chapter in Michael J. Moratto's *California Archaeology*. In part 5, "Language Prehistory," Golla asserts the oldest stratum classifications to be Waikuri, Chumash, and Yukian, and these should not be classed as belonging to the Hokan or Penutian phyla until proven beyond current doubts. Golla evaluates the archaeological and comparative linguistic evidence for diffusion and displacement of languages, features, and peoples.

Other comparable works on California Indian languages do not match the breadth of information provided by Golla, nor capture the complexity of history, language contact, or diversity of languages in California in a true systematic form. William Bright provides ample bibliographic information (published and unpublished) in list form, while Leanne Hinton's *Flutes of Fire* imparts a sense of the cultural and linguistic treasures these endangered languages represent. Golla provides strong scholarly footing to anyone interested in language study, documentation, maintenance, or revitalization in one concise composition. It is precisely for this kind of work that The Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA) awards the Golla Prize; it awards those who make continued and significant contributions to linguistic scholarship and provide service to the scholarly community. For anyone interested in the Native languages of California, this text should be primary.

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**Chair of Tears.** By Gerald Vizenor. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. 152 pages. \$16.95 paperback.

In his latest novel, the scholarly trickster of Native survivance hits academia and hits it hard. While certainly not the first time that Vizenor has ridiculed the folly of fake or misplaced myths, the absence of academic irony, and the "shame game culture," this time his sarcastic irony renders a scathing indictment of the state of Native American studies in particular. The University of Minnesota seems to be still near and dear to his heart, although West Coast academia also figures prominently.

Running out of options following the abject failure of the previous chairs, Dean Slash and Burn takes the unprecedented measure of appointing Captain Shammer, a Native with no academic credentials, as chairman of the Department of Native American Indian Studies. What comes next is predictable: no one within Vizenor's intellectual reach is safe.

When Captain Shammer shows up for his new position as a resurrection of Gen. George Armstrong Custer, he institutes a reverse colonization of the department, starting with the removal of the faculty from their private offices to the conference room by means of a treaty termination notice. This move is met with resentment but only feeble opposition from the senior faculty. His tenure will end with the selling of the department to the highest bidder, appropriately, in a silent auction. Academic

departments can also leave a Trail of Tears. The previous lack of vision in the department is replaced by “cosmoprimitive visions and postindian revisions” (34).

The narrative is episodic, focused on characters, in the Anishinaabe tradition. While revisiting characters from the White Earth Reservation saga like Dogroy Beaulieu, the Native painter from *Shrouds of White Earth*—this time in a less prominent role—the novel can also be read as a dramatization of Vizenor’s critical studies. It provides another way of asserting his take on Native stories, which “create at their best a singular presence by natural reason, customary words, perceptive tropes, observant irony and imagic scenes. That aural sense of presence is the premise of a distinctive aesthetics of survivance. . . . The narrative of survivance creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism and victimry” (*Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*, 1).

Vizenor makes his readers witness the making of his novel by commenting on the process. When he talks about his grandmother inspiring him “to discover a sense of liberty in every word and sentence of a book,” he describes not only his creative process but also the readers’ experience with his narrative (100). Every level of his fiction—words, sentences, narrative clusters—dramatize that sense of liberty. Words are caught in motion and the unexpected, playful combinations create a strikingly insightful new vocabulary.

The mimicry of a cocktail of genres including, but not limited to, autobiography, genealogy, fiction, haiku, creative nonfiction, critical theory, storytelling, and memoir parallels the swirl of ideas meant to destabilize all fixed positions and institutional knowledge. The novel is populated with real and fake Native heroes, famous warriors, literary critics, politicians, philosophers, pop culture heroes, US presidents, real and invented characters, combinations of real characters, all challenging the very nature of fiction, imagination, and inventiveness. The trickster chairman wears different masks suited for different occasions such as: White Cloud, Chief Joseph, “Jesus Christ in a turkey feather bonnet,” John Wayne, or the Elizabeth Cook-Lynn “mask of weighty frowns to intimidate the native nationalists and militants” (30).

Vizenor defies any attempt to construe postindianness as a fixed identity. Instead, it is a concept in motion, fluid, open-ended, that refuses closure. It is alive, vibrant, and evolving just like Vizenor’s words, adjusted to reflect the sliding realities of his fiction. One way he redefines *Native* is by appropriating the dominant culture as part of it. Classic works of literature are converted into traditional Anishinaabe art forms, mocking the misinterpretation of Native traditions for non-Native audiences: Native students form The Chant Shouters and perform the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* by Dylan Thomas.

Psalm 23, probably one of the most recognizable staples of cultural identification, also suffers a makeover. In a Native yeller’s parodic intertextual approach to King James’s authorized version of the poetic prayer, the premise of the hierarchical positions is challenged and, thus, the promise of eternal life becomes not so enticing after all: “Yea, though I walk through the shadow of death in political science at the university, I will fear no evil” (60–61).

In Vizenor's world, the most grievous sin is lacking a sense of humor and taking oneself too seriously. The best way to test concepts and values is by making fun of them. No topic escapes this treatment, from departmental politics to Native aesthetics, and no topic is off limits.

One of the chapters, "Skin Dunk," explores the role that skin color, or "cosmetic authenticity" as Vizenor labels it, plays in academic politics and promotion. True to his nature as an equal opportunity offender, Vizenor's corrosive sarcasm targets "native deceit and fakery" and "progressive white lie liberals" alike. Captain Shammer hires Old Darkhouse, a shaman whose own heritage and lineage prove uncertain to say the least, as a consultant of "identity brews." He operates the Skin Dunk Center as a very exclusive tanning salon for those in search of a substitute identity, serving both Native and pale faculty with insecurities of race and identity. Business is so good that Captain Shammer becomes "concerned that so many party liberal faculty members were secretly dunk by appointment" and "the new complexion competed with the color of real natives" (73). Just when the trickster chairman is about to take up his concerns with the dean, things go really wrong and two older faculty members end up with marbled colored skin.

Neither are religion or gender politics immune to ridicule. Father Mother Browne, the priest with several hats, including a red one with the words "Postindian Pride" painted on it, sets out to prove that "a priest could become a woman" (76). The ironic reversal of Father Damien's exploits in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* by Louise Erdrich is hard to miss.

Mirroring the erasure of Native cultures through the destruction of their support systems, Denivance Press refuses to consider any original manuscript for publication, choosing instead to publish blank books. The move is not without merit. The books have "no content to distract the reader" (102), and they spare the academics "the shame of publication" (101). Academic appointments and promotions are made based on the number of the denial letters earned.

True to his activist roots, the author does not lose sight of tradition fascists or culture and heritage poachers.

Outlandish and playful, a combination of destruction and reverence (sometimes hard to tell apart), with humor and ambiguity the only constants, combining elements of irony, sarcasm, parody, comedy, satire, farce, and self-deprecating humor, this novel defies literary categorization. It is versatile, whimsical, uncomfortable, challenging, exploding in references and allusions; it's Vizenor at his best.

Vizenor's readers have never had any reason to doubt his propensity for humor, but this novel seems to be the most delightfully hilarious to date. There is one danger, though. If readers will not thoroughly enjoy this book, the irony mongrels will get them for sure.

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