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stuff—shit and beavers both—but with a clearer sense of the balance that such excesses aim for.

In this western pornographic culture, Vizenor's exploitation of the trickster's license in narratives like *The Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*, for example, could be, and has been, read as offensive. In *Dead Voices*, the gentling of the excess seems to be part of Vizenor's imagining of a female trickster-narrator. Although the trickster is, as Vizenor says, a "holosexual" figure, Bagese performs fewer of the functions of the male clown and more those of a tribal boundary-keeper. Like the "testick" fleas in *The Trickster of Liberty* that are trained to bite only the testicles of authority figures, the satire in *Dead Voices* seems to target deserving objects.

Vizenor's readers will find pleasure in these stories, as well as a useful starting point for considerations of oral and written dynamics, of context, and of the continuously transforming identity of the tribal urban dweller. In telling Bagese's tales, Laundry narratively evokes the communal play of identity. Chance flickers in the heart of these stories, including the chance for those "wordies" who, like Laundry, struggle to read "through the ear and not the eye."

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The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains. By Lee Irwin. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. 316 pages. $26.95 cloth.

I have always been interested in peripheral, nontraditional topics. A study of such topics often unveils something about a larger, more fundamental reality. Perhaps my training as a phenomenologist leads me to the apparent marginalia. In any case, I was delighted when I was invited to review *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains*, by Lee Irwin, because it focused on dreams —a nontraditional topic—with the aim of revealing their centrality to the Plains Indians' individual and collective existence. (This text is volume 213 of the Civilization of the American Indian Series.) I became even more enthusiastic after Irwin rejected a traditional psychoanalytic approach to his subject matter and instead promised to follow "the historical school of descriptive phenomenology . . ." in his investigation of

dreams and visions (p. 4). The author was not only focusing on the right topic; he was applying a new (prepsychological) method to this subject matter.

The goal of *The Dream Seekers* is, in Irwin's words, "to illustrate the historical significance and centrality of dreams and vision in the formation of traditional Plains religious identity" (p. 3). Moreover, *The Dream Seekers* attempts to show "that among Plains and Prairie people, dreams and visions are a fundamental means for social and cultural transformation" (p. 189). To support this view, Irwin examines 350 dreams of twenty-three groups of Plains Indians, carefully reviewing and analyzing the dreams in order to uncover certain recurring themes and reach several general claims. In the end, there can be no question that *The Dream Seekers* offers new and genuine insights into the dream experience of the Plains Indians. I know of no other source that so thoroughly makes clear from an ethnological perspective the preparatory rituals an individual (or group) employs to receive a dream and the associated power. Likewise, *The Dream Seekers* offers original comments on the dream experience itself—the receiving of the dream and the transference of the dream's inherent power. The depth and breadth of his scholarship are manifest not just in the body of text; they are seen in 564 endnotes, an afterword, two appendices, a bibliography, and an index. (The foreword, written by Vine Deloria, Jr., is of great interest not only because of its introductory value but also because of Deloria's all-too-brief diatribe against the adherents to the New Age movement.)

However, ethnographic scholarship alone is not enough to support the thesis of *The Dream Seekers*. The text contains two weaknesses that undermine its originality and potential value. First, in spite of his initial pronouncements, Irwin does not consistently and rigorously apply the phenomenological method in this text. The dream experience of the Plains Indians is not phenomenologically examined, and the initial promise of the text goes unfulfilled.

Phenomenology is a philosophical method that describes, analyzes, and interprets data of immediate experience. The goal of phenomenology is to return to the original data of human experience and to provide a conceptual clarification of these data by delineating the constitutive structures that make them what they are. Thus, to examine the dreams of the Plains Indians from a phenomenological perspective would mean examining the constitutive structures of the dreamer and his/her dreams. Such an

examination should include, but need not be limited to: (1) the dreamer as embodied consciousness (and dwelling in space and time); (2) others and the dream as given; (3) language (versus speech) and the basis for "mythic discourse."

Irwin does not examine any of these topics and, accordingly, he never delineates the constitutive structures of the dreamer's very existence. Because he does not provide such a delineation, he struggles in the second half of the text. From chapter 7 on, Irwin focuses on the problematic nature of transference of the dream experience from the dream recipient to his/her community. This transference, which gives the dream its transformative powers, is neither simple nor straightforward. Irwin correctly notes that dreams are sacred, secret, and mysterious. In addition, the individuals and community recognized that the power of the dream would vanish if spoken carelessly or informally or, in most cases, if spoken at all. But, in fact, the Plains Indians did share their dreams and they shared them through speech (even if it meant developing a secret or esoteric language), through reenactment and re-creation of the dream, or through physical icons that both manifest and express the dream. But Irwin never adequately describes how this transference can occur. He clearly recognizes that "dream sharing is problematic" (p. 165). He goes so far as to say that addressing this matter is "an essential part of the phenomenological structure of dream communication," but he never provides such a structure (p. 165). He cannot because he has not previously provided a phenomenological description of the constitutive structures of the dreamer and the dream. A return to the phenomenological tradition (manifest, for example in Heidegger's *Being and Time* or *Poetry, Language and Thought,* or Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception)* would have provided him with the foundation necessary for a description of such transference. Likewise, such a description would have allowed Irwin to push the boundaries of his study and explore in detail such apparently marginal topics as collective dreams, male v. female dreams, double woman dreams, sexual dreams, self-mutilation, sacrifice, and the abuses of visionary power. It also would have allowed him to describe the importance of dance as a mode of dream reenactment, a phenomenologically rich topic he almost completely ignores.

The second weakness is related to Irwin's failure to adhere to the phenomenological method. He never adequately justifies his choice of his subject matter. Any study of dreams is self-limiting.

In this case, the self-limitations are even greater. The 350 dreams that serve as the basis of study in *The Dream Seekers* are available to Irwin only after at least three levels of intermediation: (1) the dreamer must remember his/her dream; (2) the dreamer must reveal his/her dream to someone; and (3) the revealed dream must be translated from its indigenous language into English. Each level poses a possible dilution of the meaning and effect of the dream; each level threatens to undermine his efforts, because Irwin must provide the reader with certain assurances that his conclusions rest on a viable body of evidence. In addition, Irwin admits that the number of dreams available for study is small: "[F]ew situated narratives have been recorded" (p. 197).

Irwin recognizes these inherent limitations but offers no meaningful explanation or justification. He never systematically addresses the barriers presented by three levels of inherent intermediation. Instead of defending his sample size with the same level of ethnographic scholarship he employs throughout the text, he offers a doctrinal excuse:

> Qualitatively, however, the ethnographic record is excellent, and it records the outstanding visionary experiences of many of the most remarkable visionaries and religious specialists. . . . The sharing of dreams in the ethnographic context was not only unprecedented but also largely the consequence of an oppressive cultural domination. The suppression of Plains Indian life and religious practice resulted in the sharing of cultural experiences that were themselves seriously threatened (p. 168).

Justification based on cultural hegemony is weak, at best. Irwin has clearly demonstrated the secret and mysterious nature of dreams and the prohibitions against any outright disclosure of dreams, especially to outsiders. Now he expects the reader to accept an unsupported declaration that cultural oppression led the Indians to revoke such prohibitions and reveal their most private sources of power. Not only is this claim unsupported, it is counterintuitive: If dreams are as powerful and transformative as Irwin states, it would seem the Plains Indians would be even more secretive and less willing to give up one of their few sources of personal and collective power at a time when they need such power the most.

By the end of the book, my initial enthusiasm had waned. Although I had gained a better understanding of the Plains Indians'

dream experience and the possible centrality and formative powers of such experience, I came away dissatisfied that, in spite of his scholarship, Irwin did not deliver all that he had promised. Irwin is to be praised for his choice of descriptive phenomenology as his method. He certainly recognizes that phenomenology can offer a greater understanding of the fundamental nature of Plains Indians' dream experience than traditional psychoanalysis and other "scientific" methods. But, because he fails to apply his phenomenological method consistently and he does not robustly justify his access to the subject matter, he offers no such primordial understanding. While Irwin takes the discussion of the dreams of the Plains Indians beyond that of other scholars, he never reveals the Plains Indian as being-as-dreamer. And, if he is to prove his thesis, all of his ethnographic scholarship must rest on this revelation.

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Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art. By Joyce M. Szabo. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994. 270 pages. $50.00 cloth.

Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art is a thorough analysis of the work of the late nineteenth-century Southern Cheyenne artist, Howling Wolf, in the context of the history of ledger art as an artistic style. Although it primarily addresses Howling Wolf, the book includes an introduction to Plains Indian painting, the development of ledger art, and the history of the Fort Marion period. It presents a useful summary of the artistic changes that occurred in Plains Indian painting as the artists responded to the drastic cultural upheavals caused by non-Indian contact. However, the most intriguing aspect of *Howling Wolf and the History of Ledger Art* is the meticulous study of Howling Wolf's style and the author's attempt to place the artist's work in a correct chronological sequence. Joyce M. Szabo discusses the stylistic attributions of the complete known works of Howling Wolf in relation to the artist's biography. The result is a greater sense of the individual artist behind the work and the overall development of his unique style.

Howling Wolf was a prolific artist whose work spans three stylistic phases of ledger art: the prereservation period, the im-