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Author

Blair, Elizabeth

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cal writings on gender roles and relations in small band societies have advanced our understanding of the complementarity of women's and men's activities and of the autonomous functioning of both genders (e. g., "Women's Status in Egalitarian Society," 1978).

In sum, Devens's book is a most welcome and valuable contribution to the analysis of gender, of the impact of European colonization on traditional Native American cultures, and of the specific responses of people to the complex social, economic, and political contexts in which they live.

Nancy Bonvillain

New School for Social Research

Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World. By Gerald Vizenor. University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. 152 pages. \$17.95 cloth.

In *Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World*, Ojibwa writer Gerald Vizenor continues his tradition of authoring the unexpected. In fact, the real surprise of a new Vizenor release would be to discover no surprises at all.

Vizenor's usual themes resonate in *Dead Voices*. Contradiction, opposition, and transformation are at the heart of this new novel of survival on the urban reservation. Vizenor pits Native American against Euro-American, nature against culture, trickster against anthropologist, cross-blood against chicken-feather traditionalist, flea against exterminator, city against reservation, tribal trash against cultural trash, the inventive Indian against the invented Indian, the oral tradition against the written word, transformation against translation and separation, the garden of Eden against the garden of iron, and cultural survival against cultural death.

The surprise is that Vizenor accomplishes all this not through polemic or critique (techniques he has employed in past novels) but through a series of "traditional" stories about the shapeshifting adventures of an unlikely pair of protagonists: a cross-blood professor who plays the role of student and a urine-soaked bag lady who serves as his mentor and teacher.

The book is not only a lively and entertaining set of transformation stories; it also constitutes an in-depth exploration of the provocative question, Must written words be the burial ground of myth? As the novel opens, we learn that the narrator, Laundry

Boy, has been seduced by the wild tales of an urban eccentric named Bagese Bear. Bagese is the repository of an unwashed tribal tradition that she insists must not be recorded or it will be tamed, sanitized, and watered down—in short, turned into “dead voices.” She tells her protégé, Laundry, that stories must “be heard through the ear not the eye,” that they “must be told not recorded.” Despite this stricture, Laundry is compelled to write them down. *Dead Voices* is his attempt to resurrect Bagese’s tales after she becomes a bear. His challenge is to render not her words but the shadows behind them—to re-imagine rather than to repeat her stories. Only in this way can he prevent her tribal tales from becoming dead voices.

More trickster than traditionalist, Bagese transforms sham, New Age medicine cards into mythic acts, using them to become stone, bear, flea, squirrel, praying mantis, crow, beaver, and trickster. Calling her survival game “a *wanaki* chance,” she and Laundry play out wild scenarios in the war between the “wordies,” who kill voices, and the tribal tellers, who create them.

Since Bagese has taught our narrator that laundered stories constitute dead voices, Laundry Boy feels free to unleash his unbridled, unwashed imagination in his beaver transformation narrative, a chapter characterized by scatology and scathing satire. While readers with delicate noses might well sum up the chapter as “so much shit” (or too much shit), the point underlying it is well taken. Like many of its oral predecessors, this trickster tale positions its characters in “deep shit,” both literally and figuratively, thereby cuing readers that Laundry is finally learning—that he no longer speaks in dead voices, lacks “scent” in his stories, or smells like “television laundry soap.”

Although Vizenor aims this engaging satire at many of his traditional targets (anthropologists, Euro-American historians, scientists, ethnographers, academic apologists, feminists, and bone-choker traditionalists), a new target guaranteed to delight readers is the author himself. His alter-ego, Laundry Boy, is, like Vizenor, a professor of tribal studies in Oakland. Laundry’s relationship to native tradition is an uneasy one. As a mixed-blood academic, he gives “dead lectures” and feels the need to capture the living word on the page, while his mentor and muse, Bagese, tells oral stories “that never lied about nature.” In Bagese’s estimation, Laundry must transform into nonsense his professorial tendency to make sense. Echoing some of Vizenor’s less adventurous readers, Bagese criticizes Laundry for mixing up lecture and story and informs him that the animals in his stories are dead voices. Although she

brands him an unimaginative student, who requires frequent head-poundings in order to disrupt and upset his civilized habit of linear thought, Bagese detects potential in him. And he does learn—enough, in fact, to decide with confidence that he must disobey her injunction not to record her stories. In this contemporary tribal *bildungsroman*, protagonist and author conclude that to write is to survive.

While most of the characters in *Dead Voices* are new, figures from Vizenor's previous work do reappear: Shicer, the cultural anthropologist and aerobics instructor of *Trickster of Liberty*; Martin Bear Charme, founder of the Landfill Meditation Reservation in *Landfill Meditation*; Erdupps MacChurbbs, the diminutive trickster from the autobiography, *Interior Landscapes*; and the Ojibwa culture hero/heroine Naanabozho, along with his brother Stone, both of whom figure in many if not most of Vizenor's works. Hilarious reincarnations of Vizenor's tribal entrepreneur also people the novel. These include Chivaree, creator of Touch the Earth biodegradable birch cups, and Split Thumbs, founder of the Harmless Abusement and Appliance Bondage Center.

Dead Voices continues the commentary begun in Vizenor's 1991 novel *Heirs of Columbus* on Columbus's "discovery" of America. Employing the trope of the garden, Vizenor depicts a "new" world that has been purloined, penned (with its double meaning of fenced and fashioned into words), and poisoned by its old world "discoverers." The so-called civilized garden that results is fenced off from and antithetical to nature, with the exception of a few plants with "discovered" names and a sad-sack pack of domesticated mongrels and house cats. Urban animals such as squirrels, crows, and fleas are unwelcome there, to say nothing of wilder creatures like beavers and bears. The new world garden is populated by pets, botanical imports, houses with "blue" hearts, and scarecrows that are designed to keep nature out. The garden's original inhabitants are also locked out—either penned up on reservations or confined to small parks and caged in zoos. Redolent with laundry exhaust, the urban garden is a hard and hostile place where even the blue garden hose is coiled to strike. While Vizenor's latest novel acknowledges the "silence and loneliness of civilization," it wastes no time on tribal nostalgia.

Despite the harsh contours of the modern city, *Dead Voices* argues that "there are more bears at the tables in town than there are on the reservation." In Vizenor's view, the urban "wilderness" has become the new sanctuary of the tribes and the written word

the new transmitter of tribal myth. Laundry (and Vizenor) conclude that "the published stories over those we hear are not more trouble than the earth over our bodies, cold water over a hot red stone, a cage to hold the wounded crows. . . . We must go on." *Dead Voices* assures us that Vizenor can be counted on to keep us laughing as we go.

Elizabeth Blair

University of Illinois at Chicago

Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West. By Jules David Prown, Nancy K. Anderson, William Cronon, Brian W. Dippie, Martha A. Sandweiss, Susan P. Schoelwer, and Howard R. Lamar. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992. 217 pages. \$35.00 cloth.

Central to this handsome volume is an interdisciplinary analysis, by art historians, historians, and curators, of Western American art from the late eighteenth until the late twentieth century. They consider both what is depicted in the images of the American frontier and the western lands and what is omitted—which often allows deeper insights into the perceptions and opinions of the particular period of time. Scrutinizing the omitted elements in paintings helps to redefine the value of Western American art, which has always been evaluated as an inferior art form. Nancy Anderson, one of the authors, describes it as the "unwanted stepchild" of American art history.

The early painters of western landscapes, such as Albert Bierstadt, Benjamin West, and George Catlin, accompanied teams of explorers to the frontier in the middle and late nineteenth century. It was their task to depict the geography of the unknown land and its indigenous people. Documentation and accuracy were their top priority, foregoing any artistic values. Catlin, for example, had the authenticity of his Indian portraits certified by some local government agents. The paintings were shown widely upon the painters' return to the East and were accepted at face value. But even the widely admired, European-trained Albert Bierstadt modeled his Rocky Mountain scenes after the Swiss Alps. Mark Twain ironically remarked that Bierstadt's panoramic landscapes of the West were "altogether too gorgeous" (p. 13).

In the 1870s, painters such as Thomas Moran and George de