
Consuming, Incarcerating, and “Transmoting” Misery: Border Practice in Vizenor’s *Bearheart* and Jones’s *The Fast Red Road*¹

CATHY COVELL WAEGNER

Drawing on Gerald Vizenor’s complex notion of “transmotion” and concepts from carceral theory, an intertextual reading of two rich debut novels by first and second-generation postmodern Native writers, namely Gerald Vizenor’s seminal *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles* (1990; first published in 1978 as *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*) and Stephen Graham Jones’s *The Fast Red Road: A Plainsong* (2000), reveals systemic miseries and strategies for combating them. In the two novels, brutal imagery and experience of cannibalization, enclosure, and displacement menace the Native protagonists, but, paradoxically, these strong images also offer modes of resourceful and imaginative action—for my purposes here particularly at borders: territorial, historical, and ethnic—which enable totemic laughter and viable Native “survivance,” to use Vizenor’s own much-quoted term.

In *Bearheart*, the invasion by authorities of a sacred Anishinaabe venue of cedar trees at what is now the US/Canadian border jumpstarts a perilous journey by cross-ethnic Native pilgrims south and west to the states carved out of former Mexican territory. Desperate misery, sexual violation, and devouring of all types reign in the post-apocalyptic landscape as the thirteen pilgrims are eliminated one by one in a novelistic instrumentalization and challenge of the infamous “Ten Little Indians” ditty. The journey climaxes in enslavement and Inquisition in the Palace of the Governors in Santa Fe, the adobe building constructed in 1610 for the first Spanish Governor of the colonial area, which has flown a sequence of national flags as probably the oldest public building still in use in the Americas. In Vizenor’s novel, five hundred years of conquest and oppression in the New World threaten to repeat themselves.

In *The Fast Red Road*, the characters voraciously consume drugs, alcohol, diverse products of popular culture, even “beef-fed-beef” and (hallucinated?) body parts. The young man of indeterminate indigeneity appropriately named Pidgin and other characters are constantly imprisoned in trailers, bathroom stalls, bedrooms, bomb shelters, or padded cells. Pidgin invariably loses grotesque bets he is drawn into, an ironic riff in the novel being “the Indian always loses.” In his dizzying zigzag journey back and forth across the Southwest, particularly

crossing repeatedly the border between Texas and New Mexico, Pidgin heads “towards the fugitive myth of Old Mexico” (44) to find the hideout of the “strange outlaws” (319) in a sepia-toned photo, among others the mysterious “Mexican Paiute” and Pidgin’s dead but frequently re-embodied mother, named Marina Trigo, the outlaws’ “Indian princess” (90). Pidgin passes through actual and virtual sites significant for the Native history of oppression and achievement, thus having the opportunity to draw strength from his ethnic past and to break out of the constraints that hinder and haunt him.

Recent carceral theory tells us that the mapping of imprisonment must include a differentiated study of *practice* as well as of enclosed space and enforced borders. The border crossing in the two books at hand enfolds centuries of efforts to separate and eventually eliminate Indigenous people, as well as discriminatory practice based on dangerously fixed stereotypes, demarcation of ethnic boundaries, and binary “terminal creeds” that Gerald Vizenor has critiqued in his oeuvre. Pidgin’s miserable but epiphanic realization in yet another ‘win-or-lose’ trap that he “was consumed” (153) reverberates on levels of imagery, narrative strategy, historical figuration, and imaginative protest in a synergetic analysis of the two experimental and engaged novels.² The legitimacy of such an analysis is perhaps supported by Jones’s remarks in a newly published interview, in which he emphasizes that he has long venerated Vizenor as his “hero of heroes”; when attempting to publish his first novel, Jones dedicated it to Vizenor: “Then [the publisher] got back and said, ‘Hey, look, Gerald Vizenor is blurbing this!’ Because he was my hero of heroes, you know, I had to sneak in and change the dedication away from him because I thought that looked too much like I was trying to lure him in or something, when really I was just trying to impress him, I guess. I still am, I suppose” (“Observations” 46-47). Jones has, however, clearly pointed out generational differences; in his address to NALS 2016, published in *Transmotion 2* (1-2) 2016, he advises a “just-starting-out Indian writer” not to feel obliged to repeat the themes and approaches of the “Native American Renaissance” from the late 1960s - 80s: “You’re not resisting the invisibility that comes from colonial myth-making so much as you’re resisting the voicelessness that comes from commodification” (“Letter” 124). Thus *The Fast Red Road*, published more than two decades after *Bearheart*, places more explicit emphasis on the Native as commodity, ‘media-tivized’ in film, television, popular song, and advertisement or logo.

Although both authors and their wide-ranging canons resist easy classification, these two novels bear strong postmodern thrusts with their dark playfulness, narrative inventiveness, and genre mixture. Vizenor (Anishinaabe, White Earth Nation) overtly indigenizes the postmodern mode in his applications of “trickster discourse,” the “trickster” being both a version of Naanabozho, the disrupting, liberating “woodland trickster” of oral Native tale-telling (*Narrative Chance* 192) and a sophisticated narrative strategy: “The trickster is a chance, a comic holotrope in a postmodern language game that uncovers the distinctions and ironies between narrative voices” (192); combined, these two applications project a “comic tribal world view” (191).³ In the first scholarly volume devoted to Jones’s works, *The Fictions of Stephen Graham Jones: A Critical Companion* (2016), editor and chapter-author Billy J. Stratton reveals Jones’s novel to be a “loosely based counterpart” to Thomas Pynchon’s postmodern ‘classic,’ *The Crying of Lot 49* with its ironic quest and conspiracies, “intersections of chance events,” radical intertextuality, and parodic humor, which Jones (Blackfeet) “indigenizes” through his crossblood characters and Native reterritorialization (Stratton 94-95).⁴ A. Robert Lee’s contribution to the *Mediating Indianness* volume (2015) has elegantly argued in favor of calling much of Jones’s canon “Native postmodern” (e.g. 73)—as well as Vizenor’s—because of its “re-mediation of [Native] past into present” (86) and such features as “time-fold and overlap of voice,” often with “storytelling whose Native implication takes on added, not less, strength from its postmodern styling” (Lee 78, 82). In Stratton’s dialogic interview with Jones, referenced above, in the 2016 *Fictions* volume, Jones isolates a productive “uncertainty” (“Observations” 56) as the guiding feature of postmodernism: “We always know literature is a construct, so we can never trust it. I do believe in that: I think stories are constructs. What else could they be? But just like in math, if you multiply two negatives, you get a positive. I think in fiction, on the page, if you multiply two lies, you can get a truth” (56). In both novels, this productive “uncertainty” is profitably exacerbated by the narratorial preference for porous borders over fixed boundaries with regard to characters’ ethnic identities, time frames, narrating voices, genre choices, and objects of satirical treatment.⁵

After a discussion of relevant concepts of incarceration in connection with border practice, I will consider five venues of comparison between the two novels, analyzing them in the light of the thematic complex of consumption, imprisonment, and border transgression, finally relating them to Gerald Vizenor’s evolving notion of “transmotion.” The comparative

venues bear these labels: “Cedar Circus and Trailer amid Bomb Shelters: Sanctuary and Entrapment”; “Clovis: From Origin to Border”; “Governors’ Palace in Santa Fe and Horrorshow Buffet: 500 Years Revisited”; “Public Space of Interstate and Rodeo: Cannibals and Clowns”; “Wounded Knee: Does ‘the Indian always lose?’”

In Scott Christianson’s historical account of the American carceral system, tellingly titled *With Liberty for Some: 500 Years of Imprisonment in America*, he traces the way jails have served to enforce the practices of cross-ethnic or gender bondage and the authority of EuroAmerican masters or lawmakers. As an early instance, during the Massachusetts Standing Council’s 1636-37 war of dominance over the Pequots, the Puritans held a Pequot ally, Chaussop, in Boston’s prison, then removed him to Castle Island for a lifetime sentence of slavery (40). Christianson reminds us that “colonial America had more jails than public schools or hospitals” (60), a priority that supported the legalized dispossession of Native lands and the lucrative global economic system based on slavery. The development of the modern prison system, which Michel Foucault’s influential study *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) sets forth as emerging in the late 17th-century, arose from—among other developments like the reduction of corporal punishment as public spectacle—the urge to draw a strict border between transgressors and the society at large through close surveillance; in general the undesirable offenders were the hegemonically disadvantaged. Foucault’s accompanying theory of “heterotopias” draws attention to “counter-sites” that simultaneously represent, contest, and invert “other real sites” in a culture (“Of Other Spaces” 24); particularly his “heterotopias of deviation” (25) such as prisons and asylums underline the porousness of the thick walls encircling the inmates: “Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (26).

The agency, albeit severely limited, of the oft subaltern prisoners, and subtle ways they can take advantage of that porousness has moved into the focus of recent carceral theory. In her 2015 study *Carceral Geography: Spaces and Practices of Incarceration*, Dominique Moran stresses “embodied practice and perception” on the part of the prisoner to analyze “the intertwinings of self and [prison] landscape” and the “performance [of these intertwinings] via everyday practices such as walking and visualizing” (130). Such “embodied practice and perception” thrive in liminal or intermediary spaces like the prison visiting room, or “transcarceral” events such as home furloughs, or even “mobile” transcarceral events like

transportation to and from the prison and electronic monitoring (93). The carceral experience inscribes itself on the bodies of the prisoners as stigmas that extend beyond the actual period of imprisonment; one of Moran's examples is the "blank 'yard face'" (100) that might have functioned during the actual time in prison as an expression of concealed aggression, fear, or resignation. The blank expression can also cover up a confusion about 'inside' vs. 'outside'; incarcerated use the idiom 'on the inside,' although they are 'on the outside' of normative society. Moran refines the notion of the mutual interpenetration of 'inside' and 'outside' in her understanding of "the contested nature of the prison boundary" in "bordering *practices*" related to the prisoner as a legal entity, for example "legal status, disenfranchisement, and restriction of citizenship" (102, emphasis in original).⁶ Jennifer Turner suggests that the dialectical inside/outside axis has been complicated by the historical transition from visible to invisible modes of penal punishment in which the connective "interface" (for example, visiting areas or encounters with guards as spaces of exchange for legal and illegal goods, 8) plays an increasingly complex role, while simultaneously the ubiquitous appearance of penalty in film and television has provided a meta-level of high visibility (2). Furthermore, Turner pays attention to the entanglements of the temporal ramifications of incarceration with the spatial: In the prisoners' perception, "on the 'outside' the world progresses—technology develops, children age—but on the 'inside' there are connotations of time standing still, a lack of progress, or even backwardness" (12). For prisoners with life sentences or, by extension, for ethnic groups that might perceive themselves as entrapped in ghettos or reservations, the absence of temporal limitedness increases the strength of the bars and the taint enclosing the 'inside' prison environment, despite the presence of interstices with the 'outside.'

The social, political, and even economic determination of the border between ethnic transgressors and the dominant society has been well documented in *The Punitive Turn: New Approaches to Race and Incarceration* (2013), particularly with regard to the high numbers of prisoners of ethnicity, especially African American prisoners, in the United States. The volume traces the historical path from the rise of the highly profitable international slave trade to (repeated) trends in disproportional incarceration of African Americans that the book views as a contemporary form of forced bondage, legally sustained. Marlon B. Ross describes the volume as focusing on the "macro-narrative of the institutional, discursive, and historical development of the prison as an apparatus of state power or dominant ideology" (qtd in McDowell, et al.

“Introduction” 15). In his contribution to the volume Ross points out that, as the editors put it, the prison has become a “cultural commodity, the imagery of which is marketed for mass consumption” (McDowell, et al. 4). Mass media traditionally played an influential role in propagating a “carceral divide”: “The scripts of prison dramas—loaded with a history of class, gender, and racial biases—inevitably insist on alien insiders (the imprisoned abnormal) versus familiar outsiders (we the normal)” (Ross 241-42). However, a literary tradition deconstructs the ‘them’ vs. ‘us’ division; ‘Chief Bromden’ as the narrative touchstone in Ken Kesey’s 1962 novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* set in a heterotopic, imprisoning asylum is a prime example.⁷ Ross claims that the ever increasing presence of a differentiated “carceral imaginary” in literature, film, and television is currently having the effect of lending fluidity to the barrier, moving toward a recognition that the imprisoned and the ‘free’ possess “a common culture across and despite the carceral divide” (258).

A 19th-century carceral strategy particularly directed toward subduing resistance by Native American peoples to westward colonizing expansion involved the shipping of Native ‘renegades’ to military forts on the East Coast, removing them from hotspots of confrontation and imprisoning them closer to administrative power centers. Black Hawk (Sauk) and other war leaders of the “British Band” were incarcerated in “Fortress Monroe” in Hampton/Virginia after their defeat in the 1832 so-called Black Hawk War centered in what is now Illinois.⁸ Fort Marion in St. Augustine/Florida was utilized for three waves of imprisonment: in 1837 Osceola and other fighters and family members in the Second Seminole War;⁹ in 1875-78 Plains captives from the Red River wars—72 Arapaho, Caddo, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa people; 1886-87 more than 490 Apaches from the present-day state of Arizona, many belonging to Geronimo’s Chiricuhua band. Especially for the latter two groups from the West, disorientation and illness in a new and debilitating climate, after the traumatic transcarceral transport in fetters or with train windows nailed shut, claimed many of the prisoners’ lives. The Plains warriors were supervised by Richard Henry Pratt, who had engaged in crushing Native rebellion in the West in 1867-75, including fighting with African American ‘Buffalo Soldiers.’ Paradoxically, the captives’ removal to and isolation in a physical heterotopia was gradually intended to serve the purposes of educative assimilation. Pratt thus encouraged the two-way porousness of the prison walls, inviting educators to teach literacy classes in the Fort and encouraging the prisoners to take on paid-labor tasks in the vicinity of St. Augustine and tout handcrafted artifacts in the town,

including their precious “ledger drawings,” which I will refer to later when presenting Vizenor’s “transmotion” theory.¹⁰ For Pratt, the logical extension of this ‘pedagogical’ incarceration was the establishment of boarding schools for Native children, and he actively solicited boys and girls from reservations in the West to attend his now infamous Carlisle Indian Industrial School founded in Pennsylvania in 1879, yet another institutional heterotopia designed to re-form Indigenous people. Indeed, Pratt’s illogical and pernicious watchword distinctly announced a veritable capital punishment: “Kill the Indian in him and save the man.”¹¹ We can view the permeability of the walls of seaside forts and the boarding schools as being imposed programmatically by the hegemonic surveiller-practitioners, placing the Indigenous inmates in the quandary of how to negotiate this porosity in ways which could allow them worthy transcultural development in identity and community.

Drawing on Homi K. Bhabha’s potent concept of a porous and liminal “third space” at the interstices of colliding cultures, Kevin Bruyneel (*The Third Space of Sovereignty*, 2007)¹² bases his recommendation for the postcolonial politics of U.S.-Indigenous relations on an understanding of boundaries between national and Indigenous sovereignties as productively fuzzy; despite the settler state’s historical attempts to isolate and control Native American nations on sharply determined reservations, contemporary Native Americans can call for and implement practices of sovereignty that work against strict binary distinctions on both spatial and temporal axes: “In resistance, indigenous postcolonial politics seeks to resignify settler-state boundaries as the domain of *subaltern*, *anticolonial activity* rather than as sites of connection and separation between seamlessly bounded states, people, structures, and histories” (20, my emphasis). I will argue that the concept of transmotion supports just such a dynamic resistance to binary thinking and politics, thinking that promotes a battle of sovereignties and containment—including control of the practices and directions of the leaks in that containment—of groups and ideas considered threatening or undesirable by those wielding power. Patrick Wolfe’s new warning, however, in *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarianism in Colonial Studies* (2016) needs to be taken into account: a warning that deep binary distinctions are merely camouflaged by society’s “recurrent cycle of inducements” offered to Indigenous individuals and groups to break down the walls of enclosure, inducements that in fact seek “to neutralize the Native alternative” (5). Nonetheless, as I hope to show, the transmotive hoist of the two novels at hand

is foregrounded and counters the potential of defeat programmed into a head-on confrontation between binary opponents with unequal power quotients.

My first comparative venue in the two novels, Vizenor’s “cedar circus” and Jones’s “trailer amid bomb shelters,” concentrates on the slippage between protective sanctuary and consuming entrapment. *Bearheart* begins with an urgently lyrical preface, a “Letter to the Reader,” in which the narrator St. Louis Bearheart recapitulates his abusive Indian boarding school past in Minnesota. During his questionable schooling following Pratt’s model of forced assimilation through ‘educative’ isolation from Native home-culture, Bearheart seems to have spent more time locked in dark closets than in the classroom, cruelly “chained at night to a stone in the cowshed” (viii).¹³ To counter this, he heightened his Anishinaabe Clan’s totemic association with the bear, growling and laughing *as*—not “like”¹⁴—a bear. In the “Letter to the Reader,” the first-person singular “I” of the narrative voice is intermixed with a tribal “we,” fusing the otherwise stark switch to the narrative proper, which recounts Bearheart’s “heirship” from the four generations of human-bear ancestors all named “Proude Cedarfair.” The Cedarfairs and their families live in a circle of ancient cedar trees in the headlands of the Mississippi River situated in a tribal pre-US/Canadian-border territory. Vizenor telescopes past, present, and future in the struggle of the Cedarfairs to maintain and protect their ceremonial sanctuary from early missionaries, national and state governments, later from “treekillers” (7) in general, and finally unscrupulous authorities seeking basic fuel in the chaotic landscape of a dystopian North America that has exhausted all other natural resources. To escape from the authorities’ claiming the trees in the cedar refuge at all costs, including their setting fire to the Cedarfairs’ cabin with the Native family supposedly entrapped within, crossblood Fourth Proude and his wife Rosina trick these murderous consumers and begin a quest to locate the transcendent “fourth world” in which “evil spirits are outwitted in the secret languages of animals and birds” (5). Louis Owens’ perceptive understanding of Vizenor’s employment of the “metaphors” of the “mixedblood and the trickster” is still incisive. The mongrel-hybrid trickster with his “harsh laughter” is a “central and unifying figure in Vizenor’s art,” an “imaginative weapon,” that seeks “to shatter static certainties,” to “overturn all laws, governments, social conventions,” a trope that “soars to freedom in avian dreams and acrobatic outrage” (*Other Destinies* 225-227).¹⁵ Granted, a spectrum of manifestations of the “tricker” paradigm is embedded in the novel, from the Evil Gambler (to be mentioned below) to Owens’ paragon, mixedblood shaman Fourth Proude, who

is “transcendent in [his] goodness, wholeness, wisdom and courage” (“Ecstatic Strategies” 141).

Fourth Proude and Rosina liberate themselves from their now lethal homespace through trickery; the slide between refuge and entrapment is also emphasized in Jones’s *The Fast Red Road* in Pidgin’s trailer home encircled by bomb shelters rented out to random sojourners. Pidgin’s mother Marina died right before his birth and, following his father Cline’s death by suicide in the adjacent shed, Pidgin’s uncle Birdfinger, his father’s twin, moves into the trailer and appropriates both the space and Pidgin himself, along with having claimed Marina’s preference. The adolescent Pidgin temporarily escapes for seven years, but finds himself back in the wretched, foul-smelling trailer when he returns for the interment of his father’s corpse, which has been used in scientific experiments for a decade. The majestic marijuana plant that has grown through the roof of the trailer, the fast-food trash, and the countless empty beer cans attest to the consumption of drugs, unhealthy food, and alcohol that lame the inhabitants of the trailer. In the nearby field is buried an unlikely landlocked submarine, pointedly named the USS TommyHawk, in which Pidgin seeks refuge before returning to the trailer and in which he later finds himself imprisoned for days unable to open the hatch, desperately “licking wetness off relict fiberglass” (56). It is in one of the bomb shelters that a traveling salesman named Litmus Jones gives Pidgin the sepia photograph showing Pidgin’s parents with their band of 1970s postal outlaws posed in front of the adobe wall of their hideout. Pidgin hopes to locate this elusive hideout, which we could call the “cedar circus” of his heritage and which might provide a more satisfying psychological sanctuary than the trailer home of devouring and death.

As an overall pattern, the colonial exploiters and settlers, whom Wolfe rightly insists on calling invaders,¹⁶ disrespected the spatial territories, intruding upon the ‘sanctuaries’ of Native American groups, and subsequently aimed to enclose, often at a distant location, these groups, fixing them spatially, temporally, legally, and identitarily in what the settlers saw as—for themselves—safe enclaves. Through the protagonists’ peripatetic, back-and-forth experiencing of safe spaces and traps, Vizenor and Jones strikingly demonstrate the two-way, negative and positive slippage between sanctuaries and prisons. Despite the overarching historical pattern of the colonizing consumption of Native land, food sources, and environmental resources, Fourth Proude (and his narratorial inventor Bearheart) and to a certain extent Pidgin can stand for the

agency of Native individuals and groupings to instrumentalize this slippage in their favor as they seek or create their “cedar circuses.”

The town of Clovis provides a second comparative venue. During their pilgrimage to the ancient cultures of what is now the American Southwest, the pilgrims of *Bearheart* join a so-called Freedom Train in New Liberty, Oklahoma, traveling to Santa Fe, “the place where the new nation and government would be declared” (218) by dangerously right-wing “whiterulers” (220). When the train with its illegally hoarded fuel crosses the Texas-New Mexico border near Clovis, it passes by impoverished, uprooted migrant hordes wandering west, pursuing the faint shadow of the outdated paradigm of “Go West” to seek economic opportunity: “From Clovis the freedom train followed the highway where thousands of people were walking” after the failure of the US federal government (220). Vizenor’s allusion to Clovis recalls the archeological findings near that town in the 1930s documenting the “Clovis Man,” among the earliest prehistoric Indigenes, back to which 80% of North American Native peoples can trace their ancestry.¹⁷ The distinctive “Clovis points” or spearheads, chipped or “knapped” from stone or chert, and fluted, evidence the skill with which the ancient hunters obtained their subsistence from mammoth meat. The *Bearheart* train stops at nearby Fort Sumner in what was the parched Bosque Redondo reservation where, as Vizenor tells us, 8,000 tribal people were incarcerated for five years, with Kit Carson having forced “the tribes on the long walk to Bosque Redondo where thousands died” (220). The juxtaposition of post-apocalyptic, displaced, walking persons with the Southwestern Native ‘trail of tears’ against the background of the nomadic prehistoric hunters breathtakingly creates, within a few sentences, a narrative cross-section of the past and future history of mankind as one of developing oppression with crescendos of violence. This impression is reinforced when the freedom train turns out to be an unconscionable trap to import slaves into the revitalized government seat in Santa Fe: “‘We have become prisoners on a freedom train,’ Proude said while he pulled and chipped at the siding in an effort to make an escape hole” (222), the image of “chipping” linking back to the ancient Clovis hunters’ craft. The cedar pilgrims’ story moreover exposes the constructedness of the imposed geographical borders, which cut up the Indigenous homelands into straight-sided federal states and in doing so displaced Native peoples.

Jones chooses Clovis/New Mexico as the main setting of his novel. The protagonists, a number of whom are based in Clovis, constantly arrive in and leave the town; their journeys

north to Utah, east to Texas, west to the Pueblo areas, for instance, always return to the node of Clovis. The town is presented on one diegetic level as a center of stereotypical “redneck” consumption with its sleazy bars or restaurants such as “The Gorge” and a grocery store cum drug-dealing center called “Squanto’s,” the customers cruising along the main street in pick-up trucks, radios blaring western/country evergreens. Pidgin searches for the refuge of his parents’ “Goliard”¹⁸ band in his hometown of Clovis, but it seems to be an unlikely venue for the formation of a 1970s activist, post-office robbing band that writes medieval poems signed with an Indigenous logo as graffiti on public restroom walls. While looking for the clandestine Goliard hideaway, Pidgin damns stifling Clovis for being geographically and culturally *nada*, and thus the source of his own insecurities: “But there was nowhere, there was Clovis” (59).

The narrative contrasts Pidgin’s underselling of Clovis with the venue’s archeological importance. One of the law-breaking Goliards, the Native “skunkheaded” Larry (147), whose tribal identification seems to be Laguna (90), at other times Acoma (e.g. 127), is currently called Atticus Wean and owns a large construction company in Clovis. Now an economic opportunist, he attempts to sell, for the highest immediate price, the gigantic snail fossils that his bulldozers uncover. Yet this devious “skunk” Larry is also a masterful tale-teller, recounting a tribal myth that references the Clovis Man crafting arrows with “knapped” points. Larry describes how the Indigenous “Knapping Man” (249) wants to free his people from the darkness of a solar eclipse, shooting an arrow that “leaves a hole of light in the sky” (249). This strong image weaves the Indigenous strands of the novel with the Goliard outlaw band, who are associated in the narrative with such apocalyptic typology as a glowing disc of atmospheric light, and the ‘Clovis comet impact theory’ that has given rise to such science fiction novels as *Aliens in Clovis* (2004). Narrow-sighted Pidgin does not realize that Clovis, for him the “Unemerald City” (269) of childhood frustration and pain, is not a dead-end dungeon, but rather hovers in the liminal space between worlds and borders.

Light can be cast on Pidgin’s discomfort in Clovis by considering the affective component of imprisonment, including the relationship of the prisoner and the prison with its dialectic between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ addressed by Moran and Turner. Society’s valuation that those ‘on the inside’ of the prison are ‘outsiders’ seeps through the porous walls of the heterotopia to the inside—along with articles of consumption, notably drugs (“Displacing Criminal Bodies” 11)—and adds to the prisoner’s disorientation. For Native Americans, not only

the settler and military revenge of open warfare but also painful physical displacement—which Vizenor evokes with the references to Fort Sumner and Bosque Redondo—as a solution to Native resistance to land-grabbing and destruction of environmental resources such as the buffalo transitioned to less visibly punitive but confounding strategies like the land allotments and boarding schools. Unsure of his ethnic, family, and community filiations, Pidgin has internalized the inside/outside disorientation and, at one level, keeps returning to Clovis, for him a dystopian and simulated hometown, in a form of self-punishment, not cognizant of his deeper connections to the ancient site; after a nightmare ride as a hitchhiker, Pidgin leaps out and “stumbled from mile marker to mile marker to home, to Clovis (130), the “Land of Disenchantment, The Greatest Medicine Show on Earth” (269).

Pidgin is not bodily present at the Clovis “horrorshow buffet” (17) that opens *The Fast Red Road* and that I am matching with the Governors’ Palace in Santa Fe in *Bearheart*. Both venues incorporate the five hundred years marked by the controversial 1992 quincentennial. The misnamed “freedom train” brings Vizenor’s starving pilgrims to the historic Governors’ Palace in Santa Fe, where they are enslaved by the white leaders striving to replicate post-Columbus imperial history; those dangerously ambitious leaders claim: “Four hundred years after Santa Fe was founded we are going back like the first governors and captain generals to build an empire in the new world... To declare a new nation from the old ruins” (219, Vizenor’s ellipsis). To eliminate incipient transgressive behavior, these new “captain generals” interrogate the pilgrims one by one, physically and psychologically torturing them, slicing off ears, pulling out eyeballs, asserting betrayal of one pilgrim by another. A climax of ingenious transmoting—as we will see—enables their escape, ushered in by the seven “clown crows” and encouraged by the intake of a Native halogenic plant drink: In a spectacular exemplum of visualizing the intertwining of “the incarcerated self and landscape” (*Carceral Geographies* 130), the group imaginatively moves back through the many generations of the users of the Palace in a swirl of time and space to reveal a formerly used fireplace and smoke hole, through which all of the surviving cedar pilgrims but one escape.

In Jones’s novel fragments of the quincentennial constantly resurface. The grotesque opening chapter of *The Fast Red Road* portrays ravenous travelers engorging at an all-you-can-eat buffet in Clovis. Only two of them realize, however, that the cuts of meat are human, for instance a “tawny forearm” with the word “punta” tattooed on it, or, at second narrative glance,

the word “pinta,” the name of one of Columbus’s three original ships (16). This beginning chapter with its “horrorshow buffet” (17) of cannibalization as well as the final chapter in the book are narrated largely from the third-person point of view of Litmus Jones, the white vacuum-cleaner salesman who, oddly enough, of all characters most effectively engages in ethnic practices, performing a sweat lodge ceremony, drawing pictograms, winning dog-fight bets, leaving a red “coup” handprint on Pidgin’s shoulder, and winning a blues contest. In a commentary on *The Fast Red Road*, author Jones has written that the character Litmus Jones “was getting to kind of be the Puck [in the novel]” (*Faster, Redder Road* 7), a jester-trickster figure who significantly propels the narrative and initiates transformations and insights.¹⁹ The (crossblood) Natives in the novel, in contrast, avoid answering the ubiquitous question “What tribe are you?” (e.g. 138), or proffer contradictory responses in different contexts.²⁰ In the buffet scene, “five hundred years of history were slipping away” (17) for Litmus Jones, who locks eyes across the meat troughs with an old Shoshone man, Seth, while the latter has just forked the “tawny forearm” onto his plate; but it is “pasty-faced” (20) Litmus Jones who re-envisages the figurative consumption of the ‘New World’ Natives by Columbus and the following waves of European colonizers. Litmus Jones mouths “*Not again, please, not again*” (17), whereas Seth relives a wartime survival event 34 years previously in which he traumatically ate “human flesh in bite-sized portions” (17)—while trapped in that now landlocked submarine TommyHawk where “man ate man ate man, according to rank” (280). Furthermore, it is traveling salesman Jones, not Pidgin, who joins the expert car-stealer, Native Charlie Ward, wheeling out of the novel in Pidgin’s dubious inheritance, the beloved Ford Thunderbird that belonged to Pidgin’s deceased father Cline and was the location of Cline’s suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning.

The parodic surfacing of limbs of the Columbus crew is a striking element in author Jones’s project of, as Stratton puts it in the title of his 2016 book-article, “reterritorializing the American West,” to free it from the EuroAmerican conqueror/settler overlay of what Vizenor calls “manifest manners,”²¹ “the continuance of the surveillance and domination of the tribes in literature” (*Manifest Manners* 4), in discourses that prioritize European perspectives of dominance, such as, in Stratton’s argument, the binary between European civilization and Native savagery (“For He Needed No Horse” 92). Columbus’s presumption, as recorded in his writings, of cannibalism being practiced by the Native Caribe people is referenced in author Jones’s horrific smorgasbord and then dramatically reversed in Litmus Jones’s ‘hallucination’ to

imply the *colonizers*’ ‘cannibalism’ of Native cultures, part and parcel of the conquering and settling of the American continent to fulfill the supremacist political ideology of Manifest Destiny. Stratton perceptively takes his reading of the cannibalism image a step farther, seeing that “the colonial narratives of discovery and conquest [that led to] the theft of land, to the warfare and massacres that inescapably form the backdrop to American frontier history and the West [were] fed back to Native people as a hegemonic form of sustenance” (93-94). Shoshone Seth’s participation in World War II, probably as a code talker (17), and the trauma of the trapped crew could not begin to change the fixed hierarchies and internalized prejudices of the participants after the soldiers “filed [back] into this [unchanged] world through a hole,” the submarine hatch (280).

Of the many ‘horror shows’ in both novels, the abject events taking place in Vizenor’s *Bearheart* on the freeways “where millions of lost souls were walking to nowhere” (98), might remain most vivid in the mind’s eye of the reader; I pair these interstates with the public space of the rodeo in *The Fast Red Road*, both peopled with cannibals and clowns. The actions “walking and visualizing” that theorist Moran suggests as ways to transcend the boundaries of incarceration become a visceral free-for-all on the freeways in Vizenor’s novel as a plethora of deformed humans, body parts eaten away by toxic rain or congenitally missing because of chemically poisoned nutrition, wander along the interstates; a group of them attacks and gnaws one of the pilgrims to death. In other cases, victims are routinely but viciously murdered and cut swiftly into pieces, their flesh devoured or bartered. The “Witch Hunt” restaurant captures women it marks out as witches, and, after torturing them and hanging them from the rafters, sells their ground-up bodies in takeaway orders. The cannibalistic wiindigoo figure of Anishinaabe oral telling appears to have become ‘everyman.’ Christopher Schedler has developed a convincing reading of *Bearheart* as a strong critique of “wiindigoo sovereignty,” a model of Native sovereignty based on “exclusion/assimilation” that Vizenor “associates with the cannibalistic consumption of the wiindigoo” (“Wiindigoo Sovereignty” 41). Surely the self-serving and literally blood-oriented human consumption by the interstate stalkers in *Bearheart* denies any form of solidarity or affiliation that is non-binarily “community-mediated and practice-based” (41).

In contrast to the brutally exploitative freeway cannibals, the clown figures in Vizenor’s novel play a systematically more positive role: the “clown crows” guide and warn the pilgrims,

not only on the treacherous interstates; the cedar wanderers themselves, many of them with caricatured body figurations such as huge feet, are frequently called “clowns”;²² and the wise Pueblo fools, flaunting corn tassles and oversized penises, painted contrastingly for “opposite directions and seasons” (236), brazenly tease the weary pilgrims near the end of the journey and give them the unwelcome advice to travel “backward” (238) or upstream—this propitiously leads the remaining pilgrims, however, to the entry to the fourth world in the ancient Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, an area of high pre-Columbian significance. Proude appears to recognize it as “the ancient place of vision bears”; “the tribes traveled from here with bears” (241). The impertinent clowns and fools serve to subvert fixed order, using raucous laughter as a key tool. Vizenor has asserted the significance of these figures: “The idea is to balance adversity with humor; thus the important function of the clown or fool in tribal cultures” (“Gerald Vizenor: Ojibway/Chippewa Writer” 168).

The rodeo in Jones’s *The Fast Red Road* is only slightly less dangerous than Vizenor’s highways. Hungry Pidgin eats all the leftovers of “beef-fed-beef”—hawked as “double the flavor” (146)—that he finds in the stands as he watches the star attraction end in bloody death for both horse and rider. Despite his compulsive gobbling, Pidgin is as horrified by the vision of the “solipsistic food chain, self similar at every link” (146) as he is by the gruesome battle in the rodeo ring. His discomfort at having been pursued by taunting heyoka clowns and pinned down by a face-painting woman is increased when he realizes that he himself appears as an incongruous postmodern clown; Pidgin is dressed in overly large stolen clothes, his face not painted Native style but rather like the hard-rock icon Paul Stanley with Stanley’s signature white face and black star surrounding one eye (162). Pidgin has come to the rodeo in the hopes of finding the Mexican Paiute who exhumed and carried off his father’s corpse, but the ineffectiveness of Pidgin’s foolish and erratic behavior prevents him from confronting the Paiute. Rather than ‘tricking’ others through self-confident laughter, Pidgin is himself the butt of others’ scams and mocking; as such he is vulnerable to the assimilative and controlling power of wiindigoo-suction.

As jeopardous as the interstate and rodeo are in the two novels, the fifth and final venue of comparison with its double historical resonance is even more chilling: Wounded Knee. The Wounded Knee Massacre on 29 December 1890 has become the marker in the national imaginary of the closing of the American frontier, the presumed subduing of the Native people,

and the supposed justification of the federal government’s at least two major violations (1877, 1889) of the land settlement agreed upon with the Sioux in the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie; each violation drew smaller and smaller circles around the Sioux nations’ allotted living space.²³ Second Proude Cedarfair, the protagonist’s grandfather, was killed at Wounded Knee in 1890, the time of the American Indian Movement’s declaration of “a new pantribal political nation” there, for the gratuitous reason, according to the tribal government policeman who relentlessly shot him in the face, chest, and back of the head, that “he would not stop walking toward Wounded Knee” (14). Second Proude “fell forward on the stiff prairie grass and moaned his last vision of the bear into death” (14). Surely, for many readers the searing iconic pictures of the Native people murdered at the historical Wounded Knee massacre in 1890 come to mind, literally frozen in the December snow in postures of motion as they fell, mowed down by the 7th Cavalry’s rifles. I believe that Vizenor, with this strong visual image of Second Proude’s death, wants to both underscore the blatant and inhumane injustice of the federal government’s actions leading up to and during the 19th-century Wounded Knee Massacre *and* to criticize the American Indian Movement’s 20th-century strategies, including adherence to the rhetoric of “tragic victimry,” which Vizenor has always abjured.²⁴ Tribal government officials, depicted as often corrupt and opportunistic, and their police are also castigated in *Bearheart*; it is the tribal chairman himself with the telling name of Jordan Coward and his “assistants” who light the fire in the cedar circus, the chairman screaming “Burn those goddamn cowards... burn those cedar savages out of here,” his face turning “pale from the exhausting pleasure of his evil” (33). Surely it is no coincidence that Second Proude is shot by a tribal policeman, recalling the murder of Sitting Bull by Indian police on 15 December 1890, just days before the first Wounded Knee.

But trickster Fourth Proude manages to dismantle the association of Wounded Knee with the end of free-living Native Americans and to reject the cloak of “tragic victim” through his besting of authorities who seek to eliminate him. He outwits his pursuers, including Jordan Coward, when he leaves the cedar circus on his ancestral lands in Minnesota, and indeed through his connection with the tribal cosmos and a “teasing whistle on the wind” (132)²⁵ he outplays the powerful Evil Gambler in a central confrontation in the novel in Good Cheer, Iowa. After ceremonial preparation, he manages to enter the fourth world via the “vision window” during the winter solstice and to leave tracks in the snow for Rosina to follow. Fourth Proude is accompanied on his “magical flight” (242) by the fellow pilgrim Unawa Biwide, “the one who

resembles a stranger” (first mention 75), who has demonstrated Moran’s carceral practices of “walking and visualizing” in preparing for the “flight,” as Vizenor/narrator Bearheart lyrically recounts: Biwide “practiced walking in darkness and listening to escape distances and the sound and direction of the winds” (242). The other pilgrims have fallen prey to the dangers along the way, exacerbated by their own weaknesses of greed, one-sided lust, fear, and adherence to fixed stances detrimental to Native vitality, what Vizenor calls “terminal creeds,” such as the hegemony of the official written word over tribal orality, essentialist notions of Native identity, or belief in an inevitable vanishing of Native culture.

I have subtitled (with a skeptical question mark) the Wounded Knee venue with Jones’s ironic refrain of “the Indian always loses”; Jones alternates this with a bawdy version that Pidgin, as a Native porn-film actor, finds particularly relevant: “The Indian always gets it up the ass” (115, 165). The semantically passive form “gets it” is of significance, since Pidgin is remarkably passive and indecisive throughout the novel. Things happen to him; his momentum is that of inertia, not proaction. He views himself as a cinematic victim: “He could feel it all behind him, pushing him forward, and it was like he was a movie hostage, a damsel tied to the front of a train, the train collision-bound” (139). In an ominous situation Pidgin adopts the mask of Moran’s carceral “blank ‘yard face’”: “Pidgin looked straight ahead, just waiting, preparing himself for whatever miscarriage was next” (140). His most trenchant action is to pull the trigger on a threatening Custer morph, but ironically he shoots the wrong person. At the end of a long chapter in the novel stressing Pidgin’s incapacitating inner struggles with its title “Pidgin Agonistes,” he follows the Mexican Paiute, who is carrying the remnants of Larry’s corpse, to a quonset warehouse in Clovis; Pidgin discovers that the corpses of all the Goliard outlaws are half buried in an expanse of white Styrofoam, with a “mummified arm reaching up” (271), restaging one of the photos taken the day after the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890 with the frozen bodies partially covered by snow. The narrative implies that the Paiute locks Pidgin in the quonset hut with the appalling scene, in perpetual incarceration. It is difficult to imagine a more graphic narrativization of a life-denying “terminal creed”: Pidgin’s consuming obsession with his parents’ past leads him to the fatal stasis of a grotesque Wounded Knee tableau, which, if allowed to have the last word in the novel, could connote the final enclosure of the last free Natives, in which Pidgin is permanently bound. Still, the novel continues on for two more chapters and the Mexican Paiute, who escapes through a secret trapdoor, carries an enigmatic

“canvas roll” with him (272), here and at other points in the novel. The reader of the two novels at hand could speculate that this is a ceremonial medicine bundle, like the one that Fourth Proude carefully keeps by his side and draws strength from throughout his travels until his movement into the transmundane fourth world. By himself Pidgin cannot find energy in totemic ritual or in imaginative action or in bear-clown laughter, but through his connections with story-telling Atticus Wean, ethnic boundary-violating Litmus Jones, joy-riding Charlie Ward, and possibly the ritual-staging Mexican Paiute, he can be viewed as having the potential to do so in a bizarre team, along with Vizenor’s narrator Bearheart and his protagonist Fourth Proude Cedarfair.

Vizenor wrote *Bearheart* before he had verbalized his powerful and productively slippery theory of “transmotion,” which encodes border crossing and imagination on a number of levels. I venture to say that writing this novel and subsequent ones, as well as his early volumes of haiku poems, urged him to amalgamate the prongs of his concept of “transmotion.” He describes a genesis of the notion in a 2013 essay titled “Native Cosmototemic Art”: “The shadows [of movement] in native stories and painted scenes give rise to the theory of transmotion, an *inspired evolution of natural motion, survivance and memory over time, and a sense of visionary sovereignty*” (42, my emphasis). The ledger paintings by the imprisoned Plains Natives in Fort Marion on the coast of Florida serve in “Native Cosmototemic Art” and elsewhere in Vizenor’s writings as exemplary of this combination of movement, vision, and continued Native presence,²⁶ as do other cultural products—both material and oral—which encode vital “creases of motion”: “The criteria of transmotion are in the stories of trickster creation, the birch bark documents of the *midewiwin*, song pictures, beaded patterns, winter counts, painted hides, ledger art, and other creases of motion in virtual cartography” (*Fugitive Poses* 178). These material and oral products are listed in chapter 5 of *Fugitive Poses* (1989) called “Native Transmotion,” probably Vizenor’s first complete essay on the topic.

In that chapter, Vizenor assures his readers that vital “creases of motion” do not only manifest themselves in visual, material, and oral art, however; the triad of movement, vision, and continued Native presence that appear in oral narration surface in contemporary literature too: “Native stories sustain the reason of survivance and traces of transmotion endure in contemporary literature” (184). His term “performative transmotion” (183) implies that the continual practice of reiterating and remixing that triad of movement, vision, and continued presence is what lends it “shared power” (183). Authors should be wary of relying on similes

using “like,” however, which cannot have the transforming and transmotive power of the metaphor: “The literal similes [using ‘like’] are mere comparisons of generic animals and humans, not a wise or tricky perception of native transmutation or aesthetic figuration” (“Native American Literature, Introduction,” n.p.).

“Motion is a natural human right that is not bound by borders” (*Fugitive Poses* 189), Vizenor tells us, seeming to refer to all people. But his focus with regard to “motion” is on *Native* “cultural motion” (“Literary Transmotion” 27) which was curtailed in basic ways by historical removals to bounded areas or by the establishment of ever diminishing reservation spaces. As important as “motion” is in and of itself, in a recent essay titled “Literary Transmotion: Survivance and Totemic Motion in Native American Indian Art and Literature” (2015), Vizenor clearly draws the distinction between Native “motion” and “transmotion,” the latter of which incorporates an imaginative meta-level: “Walking is a natural cultural motion, and walking in a song is visionary transmotion” (27). “Aural transmotion” (“Native American Literature, Introduction” n.p.) also emerges in the telling and altered re-telling of a story, a process central to Native oral narration: “The stories of native creation and trickster scenes were seldom told in the same way” (“Unmissable” 67-68). In the transferral of cultural practices and knowledge into aesthetic, communicable forms such as songs, stories, artwork, poems, or novels, *motion* thus takes on sharable meaning. I believe we can heuristically although tentatively distinguish between (a) transmotion in literature and (b) literary transmotion: (a) meaningful motion—such as wandering becoming a pilgrimage²⁷—can appear intrinsically within a work of art; (b) transmotion is also reflected in the process of literary creation and genre ‘transgression,’ for instance in the conversion of the framed snapshot of transience in a haiku poem into the non-linear strategies of a postmodern novel.²⁸ The importance of *irony* in producing incongruous humor²⁹ is both culturally and literarily of productive significance for Vizenor’s Native transmotion. Irony is an effective tool for countering “the crave of cultural victimry,” which must be “outwitted, ridiculed, and controverted” (“Unmissable” 65). “Academic, artistic irony” is even specifically protected in the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, which Vizenor principally drafted and which was approved by the White Earth Nation through referendum in November 2013 (although not yet implemented).³⁰

Traversing mapped borders is basically motion, but the *freedom* to traverse these borders, a freedom Vizenor often terms “native liberty,”³¹ is a component of transmotion, and provides

the basis of “sovereignty” that, as Schedler apprehends it, encompasses mobility, affiliation, and community. Likewise, the liberty to cross notional lines emerges in transmotion, which Deborah Madsen epitomizes as “the freedom to move across physical and conceptual boundaries” (“The Sovereignty of Transmotion in a State of Exception” 23). Blaeser eloquently champions Vizenor for applying this transmotive freedom as a disrupter of “false frames of separation”:

Literal boundary lines such as international borders across tribal homelands or demarcations between reservations and the rest of the United States; racial barriers encountered by Native People, including Vizenor’s Anishinaabeg ancestors; and the invented breach between reality and imaginative experiences [as well as the boundaries of language] are among the several separations or confinements he investigates in his writing. (“The Language of Borders, the Borders of Language in Gerald Vizenor’s Poetry” 1)

Motion as meaning, the transcendent momentum of motion, the resistance to inertia: Vizenor does not shy away from the abstract word “transcendence”³² in his discussions of the creativity, the transformation, the imagination involved in crafting and enabling transmotion. Vizenor defines a “Native literary aesthetic” as the transmoting, even riskily “pretentious” defiance of imposed boundaries and enclosures, enabling a “mighty turn”: “Native literary aesthetic transmutes by imagination the obvious simulations of dominance and closure, and that mighty turn must be shamanic, godly, and pretentious” (Vizenor, “Native American Literature, Introduction” n.p.).

Imagination transmutes the Native visionary—both as artist and as figure in artworks—who, like Fourth Proude, can transport himself through ritual, ceremony, meditation and/or imaginative creation into another, a more free realm and location. Through the solidarity of imaginatively rescrolling centuries of prejudicial history (and ceremonially imbibing Native drink), Vizenor’s pilgrims can transmotionally escape from the misery of their captivity in the Governors’ Palace of the Spanish conquest. In Jones’s novel, the apparently aimless driving in a “joy ride” ends in Palo Duro Canyon, where the whispers of spectral horses surround Pidgin and Charley, transporting Pidgin (and the reader) into corporeal awareness of the infamous historical massacre of one thousand Native ponies there and working against Pidgin’s deracination,³³ Pidgin’s initiation to the atrocities of Palo Duro makes him a conceivable (though, as we have seen, ultimately failed) candidate for the transmotive experiences from fugitive to quester or

shaman, which Fourth Proude through his immediate Native “heirship” has readier—though never easy and automatic—access to. The wisefoolery and convention-cracking of the clowns and tricksters—as well as that of the authors Vizenor³⁴ and Jones—give them the freedom to critique fixed, dominant attitudes that have driven and sustained colonialist superiority, attitudes challenged in recent writing on the carceral, and to act in transmotional defiance of illegitimate, authoritarian border-guards and energy-sucking cannibals. In Jones’s book a stolen Pontiac Trans Am takes on a cartoonlike but transmotive life of its own, defying hundreds of police cars and helicopters, leaping over a roadblock, sliding into a secret entrance to Pueblo country, dramatizing the line in a quoted TV script, “get back on that good red road and burn some serious rubber” (258). The scriptwriter’s comment on his paradigm for “burn[ing] some serious rubber” on the “good red road” is telling: “‘They got around,’ he said, ‘the old old Indians’” (260). As Vizenor’s and Jones’s novels so abundantly and complexly demonstrate, the ‘new new Indians’ too “*get around*” in their own vibrant and meaningful ways.

Notes

¹ The original version of this paper, containing numerous visuals, was presented at the American Studies Association annual meeting in Toronto/Canada in October 2015; the theme of the conference was “The (Re)production of Misery and the Ways of Resistance.” The paper was embedded in a panel organized by Dorothea Fischer-Hornung (Heidelberg University) and chaired by Gerald Torres (Cornell University) titled “In/cisions and De/cisions: Oppression and Resistance in Native and Latino American Border Narratives.”

² The manifold images of incarceration in the two novels could support a fruitful reading of the works as postmodern forms of the “captivity narratives” of early American literature, recently critiqued by Stratton in *Buried in Shades of Night: Contested Voices, Indian Captivity, and the Legacy of King Philip’s War* (2013).

³ The scholarly discussion as to whether the “trickster” in “trickster hermeneutics” can be considered indigenous is summarized valuably in David J. Carlson, “Trickster Hermeneutics and the Postindian Reader: Gerald Vizenor’s Constitutional Praxis,” specifically 13-14 and 37 (note 1).

⁴ Stratton’s sagacious chapter titled “‘For He Needed No Horse’: Stephen Graham Jones’s Reterritorialization of the American West in *The Fast Red Road*” is, as far as I know, together with Grace L. Dillon’s erudite contribution to the *Fictions of Stephen Graham Jones* volume, “Native Slipstream: Blackfeet Physics in *The Fast Red Road*” (343-356), the first academic treatment of Jones’s initial novel.

⁵ In a conscientiously structured book article, Breinig points out the traps involved in labeling *Bearheart* a “satire.” The contradictions manifested in “the multidimensionality of myth and the concept of the grotesque” (98) productively complicate the characters’, author’s and reader’s

ability “to take a satirical stand against what is destructive on a personal or communal level” (100), although this stand is called for by Vizenor’s project.

⁶ Vizenor was intrigued by the complex case of “Ishi,” ostensibly the last of his tribe (probably Yani), who was imprisoned because of his indefinable legal status and his (to his captors) incomprehensible language: When Ishi appeared in Oroville, California, at the age of about 50, the sheriff “put the Indian in jail not knowing what else to do with him since no one around town could understand his speech or he theirs” (quoted in *Manifest Manners* 131). Ishi as a border-crosser embodied worthy survivance despite his unworthy treatment: In Vizenor’s words, “Ishi came out of the mountains and was invited to a cultural striptease at the centerfold of manifest manners and the histories of dominance; he crossed the scratch line of savagism and civilization with one name, and outlived the photographers” (*Manifest Manners* 127).

⁷ Ross does not mention Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, but Michael Greyeyes (“Inside the Machine: Indigeneity, Subversion, and the Academy”) bases his autobiographical account of seeking liberation within his professional career on a re-telling of Bromden’s perceptions and insurgent actions.

⁸ Fort Monroe sensationally illustrates a transformation from prison to sanctuary. Less than three decades after the Virginia military fort served as a prison for Black Hawk, it became a federal free-space refuge, a heterotopia of protection, for thousands of slaves fleeing from nearby plantations during the Civil War years.

⁹ During Seminole leader Oseola’s highly publicized incarceration, touted in postcards for the burgeoning Florida tourist industry, approximately 19 warriors and family members mysteriously managed to escape from the well-guarded fort.

¹⁰ I deal much more thoroughly with the phenomenon of Native imprisonment on the East Coast in my essay titled “‘Digging a hole in the water’: Re-functionalizing Seaside Forts on the Ethnic Shore” presented at the MESEA conference in Warsaw in June 2016, with possible publication in the MESEA conference volume. The presentation was part of my double panel called “Littoral Loopholes: Palimpsestic Trajectories on the Ethnic Shore.” An important component of the essay was a comparison of Pratt’s description of the Native prisoners’ attitudes and adjustments to the littoral in comparison to Diane Glancy’s moving re-imaginings of the Plains captives’ alienation and liminality in her *Fort Marion Prisoners and the Trauma of Native Education* (2014).

¹¹ This motto for complete assimilation of Native children into mainstream American society is found in an address to the “Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction” in 1892: “...all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man” (first paragraph). Available online: for example, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4929/>.

¹² Bruyneel is referencing Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) with its development of a “third space” approach to literary and cultural productions that opens up “these structures to readings that work against pressure to homogenize or unify representations and identity” (Bruyneel xviii-xix); Bruyneel states that he “similarly aims to resist the idea that boundaries stand as homogenizing or unifying impositions on identity, agency, and sovereignty” (xix).

¹³ In the 1978 publication, the introductory chapter is not framed as a “Letter to the Reader,” but rather bears the title of the book, *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*. The revised (1990) introductory chapter, in addition to taking on the double narrative function of (1) an intrinsic letter to the reader of Saint Louis Bearheart’s manuscript and (2) a letter on a meta-level to the reader of Vizenor’s novel, weaves in more “Vizenorisms” such as “interior landscapes” (ix) and

“terminal creeds” (xi); generic “birds” becomes Vizenorian-trademark “crows” (e.g. viii) and “mixedbloods” becomes “crossbloods” (e.g. ix). Elizabeth Blair’s comparison of the two works unearths other changes, and her close analysis is still very useful. The rest of the novel, the text of Saint Louis Bearheart’s *The Heirship Chronicles: Proude Cedarfair and the Cultural Word Wars*, has not been changed, although it is called *Cedarfair Circus: Grave Reports from the Cultural Word Wars* in the 1978 edition.

¹⁴ Vizenor takes the stand that a simile with ‘like,’ which tends to compare animals and humans in “a mundane similitude,” is, in contrast to metaphor, rarely transmotive (“Native American Literature, Introduction” n.p.; “ordinary comparative similes” in “Unmissable” 63). For further discussion, see my section on transmotion later in this paper.

¹⁵ Owens bases his delineation on Vizenor’s own claim that the “crossblood” is a trope of boundary-crossing strength and survivance, consonant with that of the trickster: “The crossblood, or mixedblood, is a new metaphor, a transitive contradance between communal tribal cultures and those material and urban pretensions that counter conservative traditions. The crossblood wavers in myths and autobiographies; we move between reservations and cities, the stories of the cranes with a trickster signature” (*Interior Landscapes* 262-263).

¹⁶ In *The Settler Complex* (2016), the late Patrick Wolfe reiterates his long-term insistence on “invasion”: “Behind all the indeterminacy, the frontier is a way of talking about the historical process of territorial invasion – a cumulative depredation through which outsiders recurrently advance on Natives in order to take their place” (1).

¹⁷ A recent report has been published by the Smithsonian:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-clovis-point-and-the-discovery-of-americas-first-culture-3825828/?no-ist>. I am aware of the skepticism with which material-culture finds and archeological/ethological treatments can be greeted, as summarized by Stratton: “...the meaning of Native material culture in the human sciences...has the effect of eliding Native subjectivities” (“For He Needed No Horse” 91). But in this case, Native Larry’s “tribal story” (249) of the “Knapping Man” in Clovis times as told to Pidgin might be seen as injecting a measure of this subjectivity.

¹⁸ The Goliards of medieval times were peripatetic, renegade clerics and students who wrote satirical and bawdy poems, mostly in Latin, often with political protest. The largest collection of their poetry is *Carmina Burana*; Larry “transposes” the *Carmina Burana* texts to graffiti on bathroom walls (222). It is tempting to see Jones’s novel as a grand collection of such carnivalesque, irreverent, obscene songs.

¹⁹ The 2015 volume of Jones’s short stories edited by Theodore C. Van Alst Jr., provocatively named *The Faster Redder Road: The Best UnAmerican Stories of Stephen Graham Jones*, contains an excerpt from *The Fast Red Road*, indeed, the “horrorshow buffet” scene. The excerpt is followed by a comment Jones wrote for *The Faster Redder Road* in which he reveals that Litmus Jones became more and more important to the narrative as the novel was being written. The surname Jones is apparently not coincidental, since Stephen Graham Jones also tells us in his commentary that *The Fast Red Road* can be seen indirectly as an “autobiographical novel,” even a “memoir” of sorts, and that he wrote it when he was “a lot more certain” than today that he could “change the world, man, with just words” (7).

²⁰ When the Native truck driver Tallboy asks “what tribe” he is, Pidgin says “Piegan, pronouncing it like pagan... He [later] told Tallboy he wasn’t really Piegan, and Tallboy told him he wasn’t really from Jemez, nobody was” (138-9). Similarly, Pidgin asks Charlie Ward

“what tribe he was”; Charlie responds “Peruna, then changed it to Old Crow, then shook the question off” (32). Pidgin tells the rodeo clown’s seducing wife that he is “Kutenai” (159). At age 16 Pidgin searched for his tribal roots in vain; he “followed his mother’s surname to a dead-end at Browning Montana” (132). The author Jones acknowledges his Piegan Blackfeet ancestry. The Piegan Nation was divided by the national border line between Canada and the USA.

²¹ The *locus classicus* of the term is Vizenor’s *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance*. Vizenor includes the carceral “surveillance” in his explanation, quoted above.

²² The cover of the novel as originally published features an astonishing historical photo (1906 [apparently not 1900 as indicated in the novel’s imprint]) of an elaborate Fourth of July parade in Little Fork, Minnesota. Grotesque clownlike people with painted faces wearing outlandish outfits and playing makeshift instruments in addition to what appears to be a large standing bear (person in costume?) pose for the camera. Surely Vizenor imagined his circus pilgrim-migrants in similar carnivalesque garb and posture. The photo can be viewed in the Minnesota Historical Society’s online archives.

²³ In his eminently knowledgeable contribution to *The Routledge Companion to Native American Literature* (2016), David J. Carlson has shown how the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie has played a central role in much Native activism, treaty literature, and autobiography, particularly beginning in the 1970s with the “Trail of Broken Treaties” march to Washington, D.C. organized by the American Indian Movement in 1972 (Chapter 9, “U.S.-Indian Treaty-Relations and Native American Treaty Literature,” 111-122, specifically 118-120).

²⁴ Vizenor’s chapter called “March 1973: Avengers at Wounded Knee” (229-241) in his *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors* (1990) reveals the affectations and dishonorable underside of many of the AIM members and their movement. Vizenor mercilessly satirizes the arrival of 600 AIM militants at the Leech Lake reservation ostensibly to fight for treaty rights; one “shy student with a gun” from Kansas, named Delano Western, dressed like a red-neck bandito with a bayonet, repeatedly and ridiculously uttered “his death wish”: “We came here to die” (232-233).

²⁵ Chris LaLonde begins his carefully woven article on Vizenor’s literary activism with an analysis of the trope of the teasing whistle as the signature of the trickster (Madsen and Lee, eds., *Gerald Vizenor: Texts and Contexts*).

²⁶ Vizenor’s “Native Transmotion” chapter in *Fugitive Poses* praises the ledger drawings as “the continuance of a new warrior tradition” (178): “Native transmotion races as a horse across the page, and the action is a sense of sovereignty” (179). The recent essay “Literary Transmotion” shows unabated interest, with the long note 1 supplying historical depth. In 2005 Vizenor published a poem called “Prison Riders” based on several drawings of colorful mounted horses by one of the Fort Marion captives, Matches (Chis-i-se-duh), Cheyenne, in which the first-person persona achieves a transmotive escape from incarceration and anthropological fixity through imagination and art: “I ride out of prison / on a painted horse... / My visionary mount / always captured / in prisons and museums...” (Williams, et al. 59). In *Blue Ravens* the artist-protagonist Aloysius is introduced to ledger drawings: “The blue horses were totems of native visionary artists. ... Making Medicine [O-kuh-ha-tuh, Cheyenne prisoner in Fort Marion]. ... had created an art book of seven paintings with many horses, red and blue, in a magical gallop above the earth” (77).

²⁷ Vizenor describes N. Scott Momaday’s journey to see his grandmother’s remembered landscapes as “a story of native transmotion, a pilgrimage” (*Fugitive Poses* 184).

²⁸ See my book-article “Gerald Vizenor’s Shimmering Birds in Dialog: (De-)Framing, Memory, and the Totemic in *Favor of Crows* and *Blue Ravens*” in Däwes and Hauke, eds., for a discussion of this conversion.

²⁹ A spectrum of culturally-anchored Native humor is put forth perceptively in Gruber, *Humor in Contemporary North American Native Humor* (2008). The incongruous and often grotesque Native humor involving the trickster is documented impressively with regard to visual art in Ryan, *The Trickster Shift* (1999), and to oral tale-telling in Ballinger, *Living Sideways* (2004). Louis Owens’s astute Afterword to the 1990 edition of Vizenor’s novel (247-254) furnishes a valuable summary of “the compassionate trickster – outrageous, disturbing, challenging” (253).

³⁰ “The freedom of thought and conscience, academic, artistic irony, and literary expression, shall not be denied, violated or controverted by the government” (Chapter 3, Article 5: “The Constitution of the White Earth Nation.” Gaa-waabaabiganikaag / Constitution of the White Earth Nation). <http://www.thecwen.com/cwen>. Accessed December 5, 2016.

³¹ One of Vizenor’s books published in 2009 is titled *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (University of Nebraska Press).

³² In “Literary Transmotion,” for example, Vizenor writes that “Native American creation stories, totemic visions, sacred objects, dreams and nicknames are heard daily and forever remembered as transcendent traces of cultural survivance and continental liberty” (2); “[s]acred objects are perceived in transmotion, spiritual transcendence, and inspired by heart and spirit, not by the mundane cultural notice of provenance and the fixity of museum property. Sacred medicine bundles, for instance, are singular sources of shamanic power” (15).

³³ Stratton reads the haunting Palo Duro event as one of Jones’s many “reminders of colonial history and traumatic events that are embedded and inscribed on the land,” woven into a multi-leveled novelistic tapestry (“For He Needed No Horse” 102).

³⁴ In an early piece (1980), Vizenor’s relays his response to being called a trickster: “The idea of tribal trickeries suggests corruption to non-Indians, but in tribal societies, the ‘trickster’ is a culture hero. . . . It has been said that I play the role of trickster in my writing, but I do not impose my vision of the world on anyone. I feel a compulsion to write, to imagine the world around me, and I am often surprised by what I write” (“Gerald Vizenor: Ojibway/Chippewa Writer” in Katz, ed. 168).

Works Cited

Ballinger, Franchot. *Living Sideways: Tricksters in American Indian Oral Traditions*. U of Oklahoma P, 2004.

Blaeser, Kimberly M. “The Language of Borders, the Borders of Language in Gerald Vizenor’s Poetry.” *The Poetry and Poetics of Gerald Vizenor*, edited by Deborah L. Madsen, U of New Mexico P, 2012, pp. 1-22.

Blair, Elizabeth. “Text as Trickster: Postmodern Language Games in Gerald Vizenor’s *Bearheart*.” *MELUS*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1995, pp. 75-90.

- Breinig, Helmbrecht. “Satirical Ambivalence and Vizenor’s *Bearheart*.” *Gerald Vizenor: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Deborah L. Madsen and A. Robert Lee, U of New Mexico P, 2010, pp. 86-105.
- Bruyneel, Kevin. *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations*. U of Minnesota P, 2007.
- Carlson, David J. “Trickster Hermeneutics and the Postindian Reader: Gerald Vizenor’s Constitutional Praxis.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2011, pp. 13-47.
- . “U.S.-Indian Treaty-Relations and Native American Treaty Literature.” *The Routledge Companion to Native American Literature*, edited by Deborah L. Madsen, Routledge, 2016, pp. 111-122.
- Foucault, Michel. “Of Other Spaces.” *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp.22-27; translation from the French by Jay Miskowiec of Foucault’s 1967 lecture.
- Glancy, Diane. *Fort Marion Prisoners and the Trauma of Native Education*. U of Nebraska P, 2014.
- Greyeyes, Michael. “Inside the Machine: Indigeneity, Subversion, and the Academy.” *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2014, pp. 1-18.
- Gruber, Eva. *Humor in Contemporary Native North American Literature: Reimagining Nativeness*. Camden House, 2008.
- Jones, Stephen Graham. “Letter to a Just-Starting-Out Indian Writer—and Maybe to Myself.” *Transmotion*, vol. 2, nos 1&2, 2016, pp. 124-130.
journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/article/view/266.
Accessed December 5, 2016.
- . *The Fast Red Road: A Plainsong*. Florida State UP, 2000.
- . *The Faster Redder Road: The Best UnAmerican Stories of Stephen Graham Jones*, edited by Theodore C. Van Alst Jr., U of New Mexico P, 2015.
- LaLonde, Chris. “‘He Made a Teasing Whistle on the Wind’: Situating the Literary Activism of Gerald Vizenor.” *Gerald Vizenor: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Deborah L. Madsen and A. Robert Lee, U of New Mexico P, 2010, pp. 152-165.

- Lee, A. Robert. "Native Postmodern? Remediating History in the Fiction of Stephen Graham Jones and D. L. Birchfield." *Mediating Indianness*, edited by Cathy Covell Waegner, Michigan State UP, 2015, pp. 73-89.
- Madsen, Deborah L. "The Sovereignty of Transmotion in a State of Exception: Lessons from the Internment of 'Praying Indians' on Deer Island, Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1675-1676." *Transmotion*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2015, pp. 23-47.
<https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/article/view/113>. Accessed December 5, 2016.
- McDowell, Deborah E., Claudrena N. Harold, and Juan Battle, eds. "Introduction." *The Punitive Turn: New Approaches to Race and Incarceration*. U of Virginia P, 2013, pp. 1-25.
- Moran, Dominique. *Carceral Geography: Spaces and Practices of Incarceration*. Ashgate, 2015.
- Owens, Louis. "'Ecstatic Strategies': Gerald Vizenor's *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart*." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, edited by Gerald Vizenor, U of Oklahoma P, 1989, pp. 141-153.
- . *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. U of Oklahoma P, 1992.
- Ross, Marlon B. "Law and Dis/Order: The Banefully Alluring Arts of the Carceral Imaginary." *The Punitive Turn: New Approaches to Race and Incarceration*, edited by Deborah E. McDowell, et al., U of Virginia P, 2013, pp. 1-25.
- Ryan, Allan J. *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*. U of British Columbia P, 1999.
- Sarkowsky, Katja. *AlterNative Spaces: Constructions of Space in Native American and First Nations' Literatures*. Universitätsverlag Winter, 2007.
- Schedler, Christopher. "Wiindigoo Sovereignty and Native Transmotion in Gerald Vizenor's *Bearheart*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2011, pp. 34-68.
- Stratton, Billy J. "*Buried in Shades of Night*": *Contested Voices, Indian Captivity, and the Legacy of King Philip's War*. U of Arizona P, 2013.
- . "'For He Needed No Horse': Stephen Graham Jones's Reterritorialization of the American West in *The Fast Red Road*." *The Fictions of Stephen Graham Jones: A Critical Companion*, edited by Billy J. Stratton, U of New Mexico P, 2016, pp. 82-110.

-
- and Stephen Graham Jones. “Observations on the Shadow Self: Dialogues with Stephen Graham Jones.” *The Fictions of Stephen Graham Jones: A Critical Companion*, edited by Billy J. Stratton, U of New Mexico P, 2016, pp. 14-59.
- Turner, Jennifer. “Displacing Criminal Bodies: Spectacle, Crime and Punishment in the TV Sitcom *The Visit*.” *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography*, vol. 7, 2013, pp. 1-17. <http://ojs.lib.ucl.ac.uk/index.php/Aether/>. Accessed December 5, 2016.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Bearheart: The Heirship Chronicles*. U of Minneapolis P, 1990 (originally published as *Darkness in Saint Louis Bearheart* by Truck Press, 1978); afterword by Louis Owens: pp. 247-254.
- . *Blue Ravens: Historical Novel*. Wesleyan UP, 2014.
- . *Fugitive Poses: Native American Indian Scenes of Absence and Presence*. U of Nebraska P, 1998.
- . “Gerald Vizenor: Ojibway/Chippewa Writer.” *This Song Remembers: Self-Portraits of Native Americans in the Arts*, edited by Jane B. Katz, Houghton Mifflin, 1980, pp. 163-168.
- . *Interior Landscapes: Autobiographical Myths and Metaphors*. Minnesota UP, 1990.
- . “Literary Transmotion: Survivance and Totemic Motion in Native American Indian Art and Literature.” *Twenty-First Century Perspectives on Indigenous Studies: Native North America in (Trans)Motion*, edited by Birgit Däwes, Karsten Fitz, and Sabine Meyer, Routledge, 2015, pp. 17-30.
- . *Manifest Manners: Narratives of Postindian Survivance*. U of Nebraska P, 1994; preface by Gerald Vizenor 1999.
- . “Native American Literature, Introduction.” Ken Lopez Bookseller, 2006. <http://www.lopezbooks.com/catalog/na6/static/?refp=2>. Accessed December 5, 2016.
- . “Native Cosmototemic Art.” *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art*, edited by Greg A. Hill, Candice Hopkins, and Christine Lalonde, National Gallery of Canada, 2013, pp. 42-52.
- . “Prison Riders.” *Native American Voices on Identity, Art, and Culture: Objects of Everlasting Esteem*, edited by Lucy Fowler Williams, William Wierzbowski, and Robert W. Preucel, U of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, 2005, p. 59.

-
- . "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*. U of Oklahoma P, 1989, pp. 187-211.
- . "The Unmissable: Transmotion in Native Stories and Literature." *Transmotion*, vol. 1, no.1, 2015, pp. 63-75. <https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/article/view/143>. Accessed December 5, 2016.
- Waegner, Cathy Covell. "Gerald Vizenor's Shimmering Birds in Dialog: (De-)Framing, Memory, and the Totemic in *Favor of Crows* and *Blue Ravens*." *Native American Survivance, Memory, and Futurity: The Gerald Vizenor Continuum*, edited by Birgit Däwes and Alexandra Hauke, Routledge, 2017, pp. 102-116.
- , ed. *Mediating Indianness*. Michigan State UP, 2015.
- . "Red Demons and Lumpy Indian Burial Grounds: (Native) Gothic-Postmodernism in Stephen Graham Jones's *All the Beautiful Sinners* and *Growing Up Dead in Texas*." *The Fictions of Stephen Graham Jones: A Critical Companion*, edited by Billy J. Stratton, U of New Mexico P, 2016, pp. 194-217.
- Wolfe, Patrick, ed. "Introduction." *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies*. U of California at Los Angeles American Indian Studies Center P, 2016, pp. 1-24.