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- 1 That American Indian nations have survived into the 21st century should be an occasion for celebration, given how truly close Native America came to a total obliteration. A combination of disease, vicious colonial warfare and the use of education as a weapon to “kill the Indian, save the man” had by the beginning of the 19th century reduced the number of people in the United States willing to claim Native ancestry in the census to

just 250,000. (There were, of course, many more, but Indian blood and cultural affiliation was seen as something to be denied by many). The power of what had been recognized as sovereign entities shrank through judicial decisions which reduced the status of Indians in the management of their own affairs and declared tribal peoples to be “dependent nations,” a phrase that in manifest destiny ideology justified the continued breaking of treaties. Bad-faith negotiations brought the Indian land base down from much of the interior to limited and (mostly) poor quality reservation lands under governmental supervision. Tribal economies were pushed to adapt to an agrarian ideal under measures such as the Dawes Act which allocated pockets of land to individual Indians, breaking up communally occupied agricultural and hunting grounds. All five measures of the 1948 “United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” were fulfilled by this treatment.

- 2 In the twentieth century, US government decisions on Indian affairs were generally paternalistic in nature. The period up to the 1960s saw a hardening determination that tribal structures were incompatible with modernity, and a concomitant pressure on indigenous peoples to assimilate to whitestream society symbolized by the granting/imposition of American citizenship on all Indians in 1924. Termination, the general name for a group of policies designed to accomplish this goal, aimed to reduce Indian groupings from the status of sovereign nations with independent rights guaranteed under treaty to the status of voluntary ethnicity-based associations such as the Ancient Order of Hibernians. The failure of this set of policies and their resentment on the part of Indigenous Americans became clear by the end of the 1950’s. At the same time, the appalling poverty in which the majority of Native people were living, both on reservations and in urban ghettos, made a compelling moral case for a renewal of the relationship between tribal governments, state legislatures and federal bodies, one that would take into account the debt legally and morally owed by the United States to the indigenous peoples of the continent.
- 3 At the same time, a new generation of Indian intellectuals, lawyers, and culture producers was coming to the fore: often university educated, cognizant of the discourse of civil rights that was attending other liberation struggles, and well equipped to fight for the best deal for their peoples. The literature that this generation produced is known under the banner of the Native American Renaissance, describing the great wave of creative writers that followed N. Scott Momaday’s rise to national attention. More widely, the rethinkers, negotiators and direct action protesters are now recognised as making up a Red Power movement. The political maneuvers of these groups were often bold and inventive, ranging from “fish-ins” to regain the rights of tribes to exploit their natural resources without state interference, through the legal battles that eventually gained Indian tribes that measure of financial self-regulation which resulted in reservations gaining a much-needed income stream from untaxed gambling and tobacco, to the passing of the Indian Arts and Crafts Act which made it illegal for anyone not a member of a recognized tribal entity to market their art as “Indian.”
- 4 The results of these changes in status and future prospects have not been altogether positive. Reservation governments, whether in the minority of rich casino nations or the majority of poverty stricken tracts of unwanted land, often have problems with systemic corruption and abuse of power. A badly constructed patchwork of tribal, state and federal law enforcement has created areas that are poorly policed or not policed at all, with the result that violent crime and domestic abuse are both endemic and often unpunished.

Rows over the definition of “Native American,” often poisoned by blood quantum policies that require a certain level of Indian blood for citizenship and thus qualification for health and tax benefits, have brought about actions such as the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma’s 2007 expulsion of the Freedmen (African Americans descended from slaves who had been owned by Cherokees) on racial grounds. Most of these problems, it will be noted, result from attempts to redefine the uneasy paracolonial relationship with the United States. At the same time, welfare dependency, widespread unemployment and endemic alcohol and drug abuse suggest the tremendous, maybe insurmountable, difficulties along the road to decolonization.

- 5 In the books under review, four major Native American intellectuals set out to survey these changes and to suggest ways of rethinking Indian history and futurity with what Gerald Vizenor calls native “survivance,” a survival that includes creative adaptation to modern circumstances. Though the authors have different tribal and disciplinary affiliations, not to mention differing or even opposed political viewpoints, nonetheless all four share a strong understanding of Indian communities as above all entities that have retained power over their own destinies and avoided becoming museum cultures. They each tackle the challenges and historical ironies mentioned above, suggesting ways for Native people to rethink the meaning and duties of citizenship. Naturally, this means that all are situated in the boundary between law, history and cultural theory, since Indian nations are made up of a combination of their history, their structure and their sense of shared identity. Notably, despite the genocidal histories and postcolonial ironies mentioned above, all end with a sense of hope for a future redefined through indigenous agency.
- 6 Scott Richard Lyons orients his discussion around the titular “x-marks”: the X’s made by tribal representatives illiterate in English on treaties and other legal documents. Formally, these are “unreadable” – tribal discussions largely went unrecorded, and the absence of writing makes it difficult to reconstruct the intentions of those signing the documents. Lyons’ reading of the x-mark suggests that it has perhaps been too easy and too convenient for both colonist and colonized to project this sign as a marker of ignorance and naiveté. Rather, he argues, we should recognize that there was a positive choice involved, a choice to enter into a new relationship with the United States, and “an assent to the new” (33). This refocusing allows him to sidestep two of the more common traps into which theorists of Native identity fall, neither positing Indian adoption of Euroamerican discourses as a tainted hybrid nor espousing a kitschy nostalgia for a precolonial utopia.
- 7 Lyons uses the idea of Native assent to take a hard look at four of the most bitterly contested arenas in Native America today, namely identity, culture, nationalism and citizenship. He begins with a survivance anecdote, telling of how his 12-year-old daughter, mocked on a powwow night for looking white, silenced her attackers in fluent *Ojibwemowin*. From here, Lyons proceeds to survey the difficulties of overlapping and often mismatching definitions of Indian identity, from traditional kinship through biological race to modern citizenship. In sharp logical prose he dismembers not only the essentialists on all sides, but also those who feel that simply proclaiming race and identity to be “constructions” is enough. Social constructions, he reminds the reader, have great force in human affairs: nonetheless, he ultimately repudiates tradition as a definitional tool, instead arguing for radically inclusive ideas of identity. In both this and the following chapter he raises a banner against the idea of banishment (steadily increasing

in popularity as a means of punishing tribal members) and attempts by tribal governments and self-appointed cultural leaders to control and shut down cultural diversity within Indian nations. The research here is wide-ranging and the arguments extremely sharp.

- 8 It is the chapters on nationalism and citizenship that may cause more arguments. Literary nationalism, the movement begun by Jace Weaver, Robert Warrior and Craig Womack and now forming a substantial body of critical work within Native American Studies, takes the idea of the nation as central (as opposed to an older body of theory that read Native societies as marginal or as another “hyphenated American” identity). This has been a controversial notion, not least in its promotion of ethnic national identity in the context of decolonization. Lyons’ review of this discourse is sensitive and his summary of the key insights of literary nationalism is superbly insightful. However, the chapter ultimately takes a difficult sitting-on-the-fence position, noting the positive uses of nationhood in the context of Negri’s idea of *Empire*, while admitting unease in the way that cultural nationalists too frequently seem to justify the actions of culture cops. In the final chapter, however, his discussion of the relationship between citizenship, race and markers of cultural belonging such as language acquisition and traditional knowledge seems to me to go seriously awry. Lyons discusses the relationship between *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*, which is absolutely essential to any prescription for Native nations, yet ends by endorsing the Israeli model of “levels of citizenship.” This is the splitting of the rights of citizens into several layers according to their race and cultural literacy that has resulted in a quasi-apartheid “Jewish state” in Israel, and it is simply not enough for him to append a nod to Palestinian dispossession in a bracketed aside. If Lyons is truly endorsing the division of the *ethnie* and the nation according to (among other things) entrance exams, he may be putting forward a recipe for more, not less, of the evils that the rest of his book does so much to reveal.
- 9 These interrelated concepts come in for a further interrogation in Steve Russell’s *Sequoyah Rising*, a specialist discussion of the difficulty of governance and sovereignty in the post-colonial Cherokee nation that by virtue of Russell’s breezy conversational style remains extremely readable and even enjoyable throughout. Russell, a judge by training, has a sure grasp of the democracy deficit that currently exists on many reservation nations, where corruption and nepotism abound. Although clear that much of the blame for this must lie with a combination of federal government attempts to destroy Native control over Native affairs and a colonial culture of welfare dependency, nonetheless Russell argues that the power to self-organize means that many of the solutions lie in Indian hands. A rights-based culture needs to be inscribed more firmly into tribal constitutions and enforced sharply through tribal courts, possibly through the creation of an Indian Rights Bill agreed among the nations.
- 10 Russell considers the discourses that control Indian citizenship. He dismisses traditionalism as overly controlling, and argues that race-based criteria, whether the exclusive measure of blood quantum or the inclusive Cherokee criterion of direct descent, both ultimately rest on flawed assumptions and will result in cultural extinction. Avoiding the trap of advocating a particular model to fit all 800+ peoples, he nonetheless calls strongly for each Indian nation to assume the power to grant citizenship and to move away from race-based ideologies. Although he doesn’t directly discuss the Cherokee Freedmen, it is not difficult to see the shadow of that particular tribal disgrace in this portion of the book.

- 11 Although Russell's book is primarily a discussion of political and legal theory, his use of his own poetry in the discussion of "History as Prelude" shows the deep connections between cultural performance and historical resistance in American Indian cultures. This is brought to the fore in Sean Kicummah Teuton's *Red Land, Red Power*, a "literary nationalist" text which proposes to read the literature of the Native American Renaissance through the lens of the Red Power movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's. He argues that the essentialism of critics such as Paula Gunn Allen and the deconstructions of critics such as Gerald Vizenor both make it more difficult for scholars to describe Native cultures, the one through a challengeable assumption of broad pan-Indian stereotype, the other through a postmodern despair at the possibility of knowledge. Instead, Teuton proposes a "tribal realism," a form of epistemology that avoids easy assumptions in favour of determining a communally-produced knowledge of the "American Indian self." His theoretical moves here are deft and situated in a broader movement in postcolonial studies: more importantly, his readings of three central texts by Momaday, Welch and Silko succeeds in re-placing the political vision at the heart of each work. Teuton's insistence on paying attention to the moral implications of critical work, shown most clearly when in the chapter "Hearing the Callout" he situates his teaching of Native prisoners in a broader colonial context, is inspiring and leads to some of the most nuanced advocacy of American Indian nationalism yet produced. Inevitably, this means that there are occasional moments of ethnic boosterism (I would have liked a harder analysis of the reason that Native prisoners *must* be seen as victims of colonialism, for example), but these are exceptions in what is generally a hard-fought argument.
- 12 Lyons calls Gerald Vizenor "perhaps the most ill-represented writer in nationalist discourse," and this certainly seems to be borne out by Teuton's lengthy and ill-advised attack on what seems to me to be a caricature of Vizenorean theory, which he describes as fundamentally unable to articulate political possibilities or support claims for justice (he ends the discussion with the phrase "Returning to American Indian political realities"). Teuton here ignores Vizenor's journalistic chronicling of half a century of Indian activism and his opposition to Native poseurs in favour of an account seemingly based on one Vizenor novel (*Bearheart*) and some of the earlier "trickster theory" texts. Certainly nobody who had read *Trickster of Liberty* attentively could dismiss Vizenor's fictions as "ahistorical" in the sense that Teuton means the term. Luckily, even a cursory examination of Vizenor's latest theoretical work, *Native Liberty*, puts to rest any idea of this complex writer as woolly, ungrounded, or lacking in praxis.
- 13 Vizenor begins by situating the "chance" of his conception and upbringing, a "hybrid document, unnamable on delivery," at a moment when the Anishinaabe were still in danger of disappearing as a people, and retells the story of how his father was the victim of an unsolved homicide. He pays homage to the grandmother who, while living in the most difficult of circumstances, raised him with an appreciation of laughter and traditional culture. That resistance to giving in becomes his signature, but he cautions against a "Lo, the poor Indian" caricature, contrasting his own story with that of Holocaust survivors and pointing out that he and other modern Indians have basic freedoms and fundamental human rights denied billions of others around the world. He declares that giveaways, a central tradition in many tribes, need to be the model for a Native ethics – that generosity of spirit, rather than bewailing victimhood, should be the aim of sovereignty debates. This speaks to one of his many counterintuitive suggestions (made earlier but repeated here), that casino monies should be put to establishing Indian

embassies to the United States, or to offering a space on tribal lands for the refugees and exiled peoples of the world.

- 14 Such a suggestion shows the real difficulty for many of Vizenor's vision. His delicate, postmodern prose style, which liberates words into poetic phrases that require much re-reading, disguises a deeply tough-minded vision that requires as much of the descendants of the colonized as those of the colonizer. In the chapter on "Mercenary Sovereignty" he discusses two of the most finely-balanced issues in modern Native American affairs, namely the spread of gaming and the fight over the remains of Kennewick Man (a 9,000 year old skeleton that scientists were initially forbidden to study after a claim by the Umatilla Nation). In both cases, he shows how these cases arise from an undoubted good, namely tribal control over tribal affairs, and an undoubted evil, namely the history of US government attempts to control Native governments and bodies, and he even allows that the exercise of power in each case might serve the ideal of survivance. Yet he invokes Foucault's idea of truth games to show how in both cases the actions of Native governments serve the cause of colonial ideals – casinos are unable to challenge the brand identity (stereotyping) of Native nations, and the Umatilla lose their own history for dubious notions of spirituality.
- 15 In the same mode, the central chapter of *Native Liberty* is aimed squarely at Euro-America's self-understanding. Vizenor's modest proposal is to establish genocide tribunals in American universities to place historical American figures on mock trial, in the manner of a student moot court, for the genocides of native peoples. Such an undertaking might educate Americans on the scale of the crimes committed in the course of building their nation, and Vizenor provides much support for allowing absent witnesses and dead defendants on the stand. The openly agonistic nature of trials would require higher standards of proof than hitherto for both sides, and would lead to a truth and justice reckoning with American history. Vizenor's proposal exposes the cowardice of America's repeated refusal to sign up for the International Criminal Court: however, he does not deal with the inevitable possibility that such a reckoning might be resisted on the grounds that perpetrators of genocidal actions in residential boarding schools are still alive. What makes this such a compelling idea is its simplicity and cost-effectiveness – it seems likely that a law school will rise to the challenge in the near future. Again, historically situated ethical accountability becomes Vizenor's rallying cry.
- 16 Much of the rest of the volume is concerned with the relationship between aesthetics and ethics. Vizenor devotes entire chapters to Edward Curtis and (Anishinaabe artist) George Morrison, as well as explicating his theory of haiku and his reading of modern photographs as continuing in a tradition of "pictomyths." Vizenor claims culture as a central conduit for survival narrative, a re-fashioning of the world through art that must needs always bear history in mind ("Original, communal responsibility, greater than the individual, greater than original sin, but not accountability, animates the practice and consciousness of survivance").
- 17 It will be observed that these four volumes make many of the same points about the moral and political challenges facing Native Americans today, and maintain the same faith in Native-authored solutions. It is unfortunate that Vizenor's book was composed too early to include his work on the proposed White Earth Constitution, which might be said to constitute his own (noticeably more inclusive) notion of Native citizenship. Nonetheless, it is noticeable that all four include an appeal for scholars and activists to link the current situation of American Indians with those of suffering peoples around the

world, whether indigenous victims of empire, inheritors of genocide or those excluded by global capitalism. This perhaps points the way to future directions in scholarship. In the meantime, the strength of all four titles shows the ongoing success of Native intellectual survivance.

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