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Manifest Manners: The Long Gaze of Christopher Columbus

Gerald Vizenor

Christopher Columbus was denied beatification because of his avarice, baseness, and malevolent discoveries. He landed much lower in tribal stories and remembrance than he has in foundational histories and representations of colonialism; nonetheless, several centuries later his mistaken missions were uncovered anew and commemorated as entitlements in a constitutional democracy.

Columbus has been envied in a chemical civilization that remembers him more than the old monarchs and presidents. The dubious nerve of his adventures would be heard more than the ecstasies of the shamans or even the stories of the saints; alas, he has been honored over the tribal cultures that were enslaved and terminated in his name.

The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, for instance, celebrated his discoveries as an enviable beat in the heart of the nation. Antonín Dvořák composed his occasional symphony *From the New World*. Frederick Jackson Turner presented his epoch thesis, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," that same summer to his colleagues at the

American Historical Association. At the same time, the federal government issued a memorial coin on the quadricentennial with a stamped impression of Columbus on one side and "the *Santa Maria* on the reverse." A similar commemorative coin has been struck for the quincentenary, and a "certificate of authenticity" is issued with the purchase of each coin.

President Ronald Reagan announced, when he signed a proclamation designating October 12 a federal holiday, that Christopher Columbus was a "dreamer, a man of vision and courage, a man filled with hope for the future." In other words, the adventurer must be the simulation of manifest manners, the countenance of neocolonial racialism. "Put it all together and you might say that Columbus was the inventor of the American Dream."

Columbus wrote at the very end of his first journal, "I hope to Our Lord that it will be the greatest honor for Christianity, although it has been accomplished with such ease." He has become the invariable conservative candidate in the constitutional democracy that has honored his names with such ease.

"The Spaniards were unable to exterminate the Indian race by those unparalleled atrocities which brand them with indelible shame, nor did they even succeed in wholly depriving it of its rights," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, "but the Americans of the United States have accomplished this twofold purpose with singular felicity; tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, and without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world. It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity."

Ishi and Literal Banishment

The outset of manifest manners, that felicitous vernacular of political names and sentimental neocolonial destinies, was the certain denial of tragic wisdom and transvaluation of tribal consciousness; the tribal stories that were once heard and envisioned were abused, revised, dickered for a mere sign of discoveries, and then were construed as mere catecheses.

Tribal nicknames were translated as surnames and, without their stories, were a literal banishment; the ironies and natural metaphors of bent and chance were burdened with denatured reason, romantic nominations, and incumbent names.

The metaphors turned over here are about the representations of a consumer culture and the political power of common names in histories, the images, names, and gazes that would represent historical signifi-

cance. Tribal nicknames, in this and other senses, were seldom heard in the vernacular of manifest manners. Consider the communal humor of nicknames, the clever humor that honors the contradictions and preeminent experiences heard in tribal stories, the natural and uncertain shimmer of metonymies that would overturn the “long gaze” of neocolonial assurance.

Ishi, for instance, was a new nickname, a tribal word that means “one of the people” in the language of Yana, but that was not the name he heard in his own tribal stories. Alfred Kroeber, the anthropologist, decided that would be his name at the museum. Ishi was esteemed by those who discovered him as the last of his tribe, an awesome representation of survivance in a new nickname; this natural mountain man had evaded the barbarians and then endured with humor the museums of a lonesome civilization.

“Long gaze” Columbus, on the other hand, could become one of the most common surnames discovered and discounted in this quincentenary; indeed, “long gaze” could become an ironic nickname for those who recount manifest manners and the mistaken colonial discoveries.

Christopher Columbus is an untrue concoction, the ruse of his own representation. He is the overstated adventurer, to be sure, and the lead signalment of colonial discoveries on this continent; at the same time, he is the master cause of neocolonial celebrations in a constitutional democracy. The obverse of his dubious missions is manifest manners, and the reverse is censure.

Columbus must be the slaver, the one who sailed on the inquisitions, and landed on a commemorative coin at a national exposition, and heard a new symphony in his name. The “long gaze” of his names has reached from colonial monarchies to the *Santa Maria* and on to the White House in Washington.

“Representation is miraculous because it deceives us into thinking it is realistic,” wrote David Freedberg in *The Power of Images*, “but it is only miraculous because it is something other than what it represents.”

Columbus is the “miraculous” representation of the long colonial gaze, that striven mannish stare with no salvation. Indeed, the quincentenary is a double entendre: the “long gaze” celebration of colonial civilization in his names, and the discoveries of his names in a constitutional democracy. The want of humor must cause a vague nostalgia for lost monarchies and must simulate once more the grievous tragic ironies of colonialism.

The Dominican Republic, for instance, commissioned an enormous and expensive quincentenary monument to celebrate the “long gaze” of

Columbus. The *El Faro a Colón* "is equipped with lights that can project the shape of a cross high into the clouds" over the slums of Santo Domingo, reported the *Sunday Times* of London.

"Despite criticism that such extravagance is incompatible with the country's grim economic predicament," the blind, octogenarian president, Joanquin Balaguer, said, "the people need shoes but they also need a tie." Columbus is a commemorative curse not a communal tie; his names are the same as disease and death in the memories of the tribes on the island.

The Spaniards first landed on Hispaniola, wrote Bartolomé de Las Casas in *The Devastation of the Indies*. "Here those Christians perpetrated their first ravages and oppressions against the native peoples. This was the first land in the New World to be destroyed and depopulated by the Christians, and here they began their subjection of the women and children, taking them away from the Indians to use them and ill-use them, eating the food they provided with their sweat and toil." The long colonial gaze is now a cross in the clouds, a remembrancer of cruelties and abandoned death.

The Government of the Bahamas has issued a one-dollar note that commemorates the unmeant ironies of colonial cruelties in the name of Christopher Columbus. The narrow gaze simulation of the adventurer on the souvenir note is based on a portrait by the Florentine painter Ridolfo Ghirlandaio.

"The long gaze fetishizes," continued David Freedberg, "and so too, unequivocally, does the handling of the object that signifies. All lingering over what is not the body itself, or plain understanding, is the attempt to eroticize that which is not replete with meaning."

Columbus is the national fetish of discoveries.

Ishi is the representation of survivance.

Tribal nicknames are metonymies, neither surname simulations nor a mannish western gaze; tribal nicknames bear a personal remembrance in communal stories and are not mere veneration, cultural separations, or the long gaze fetishism of discoveries in a lonesome civilization.

Professor Alfred Kroeber, for instance, an eminent academic humanist, is seldom remembered for his nicknames. Mister Ishi, on the other hand, remembered the anthropologist as his "Big Chiep," which was his common pronunciation of *chief*. Ishi used the tribal word *saltu*, or white man, a word that could be used as a nominal nickname commensurate with his own: Mister Ishi and Mister Saltu.

Now, consider my proposal to change the name Kroeber Hall at the University of California, Berkeley, to Big Chiep Hall to celebrate a nickname, rather than the reverence of a surname, and to honor the stories of his close

association with a noble tribal survivor. The anthropology department would be located in Big Chieft Hall. Ishi Hall and Big Chieft Hall, or even Saltu Hall, would be located on the same campus; the stories of two men and their nicknames would be an honorable encounter with an erotic shimmer of trickster humor.

Ishi told a tribal interpreter, "I will live like the white people from now on." The Bureau of Indian Affairs had promised him protection, but he would remain with his new friends in a public institution. "I want to stay where I am, I will grow old here, and die in this house." Tuberculosis ended his life five years later.

Kroeber wrote that "he never swerved from his declaration." Ishi lived and worked in the museum at the University of California in San Francisco. "His one great dread, which he overcame but slowly, was of crowds." Ishi said "*hansi saltu*" when he was taken to the ocean and saw the crowded beach for the first time. The words were translated as 'many white people.'

Ishi is the representation of tribal survivance; nevertheless his name and stories must be rescued from manifest manners. He told stories that were to be heard, and he told his stories with a natural humor, a sense of presence that was communal and that unnerved the want of salvation. His tribal touch has been revised and simulated, but his humor must never end in a museum.

Nicknames in the Quincentenary

Native American Studies is located in Dwinelle Hall, near Sproul Plaza, at the University of California, Berkeley. In the past two decades, this new course of undergraduate studies has grown stronger in tribal histories, literatures, and film studies, and it now includes a doctorate program in the Ethnic Studies Department.

"Gerald Vizenor, a visiting professor in the Ethnic Studies Department, has made an official proposal," reported the *Daily Californian* on 15 October 1985, "to rename the north part of Dwinelle Hall as Ishi Hall." The student senate unanimously supported the name change.

My first proposal landed in a common space committee, and there a faculty member, concerned with manifest manners, said the name could be misunderstood as a slang variation of the word *icky*. The proposed naming ceremony, to be held on 16 May 1986, seventy years after the death of Ishi, never recovered from literal banishment in a committee dominated by manifest manners and the "long gaze" of Christopher Columbus.

Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien received my second proposal six years

later "to change the north part of Dwinelle Hall to Ishi Hall in honor of the first Native American Indian who served with distinction the University of California."

Christopher Columbus and the quincentenary of his dubious missions should not overshadow the recognition and survivance of Native American Indians. The chancellor must have read that his would be an unmistakable moment for historical emendation, and the precedence of a tribal name on a campus building would be sincere and honorable.

My proposal is both moral and practical at the same time because nothing would be taken from the honor of the existing name, and a new tribal name for the north section of the building would resolve a serious problem of identification between the two wings.

Dwinelle and Ishi would name sections of the same structure; their names would reverse the racial surnames and entitlements in a state that once hounded the tribes to death and, at the same time, honored those who stole the land and resources and wrote the histories of institutions. One of the most eminent universities in the world was founded on the receipt of stolen land.

John Whipple Dwinelle was born 7 September 1816 in Cazenovia, New York. He studied the origin of words and practiced law when he moved to San Francisco in 1849. Dwinelle was elected to the state legislature and wrote the charter that established the University of California. The bill was passed on 21 March 1868, about six years after the estimated birth of Ishi in the mountains of Northern California.

Dwinelle served as a member of the first Board of Regents at the University of California. He died on 28 January 1881. The *Daily Californian* reported that "he fell into the Straits of Carquinez from a transfer ferry and was drowned." Dwinelle Hall was dedicated in his honor in September 1952.

"The process of naming, or renaming, a campus building involves review at several levels on the campus and at the Office of the President," wrote Chancellor Tien. "Your proposal must" pass through the Dwinelle Hall Space Subcommittee, "the Provost of the College of Letters and Science, the Naming of Buildings Subcommittee, and the Space Assignments and Capital Improvements Committee. Following positive review of these parties, if I concur, I would forward the proposal to the President for consideration and final approval by the Regents."

The Dwinelle Hall Space Subcommittee twice denied the proposal to honor the name of Ishi. The historians resisted the name, as if the ironies of institutional histories would sour with new communal narratives. *Dwinelle*

was circumstantiated at the university; *Ishi* and other tribal names have been renounced in the histories of the state.

Ishi lived five years in the museum; his name endures with honor, but he would never survive the denatured reason of modern governance, the bureaucratic evasions, and the incredulous responses of the university administration. Once more, my proposal has been terminated in a common space committee, as were tribal nicknames and histories in the past; the other reviews are the neocolonial sanctions of manifest manners.

The sheriff secured a "pathetic figure crouched upon the floor," the *Oroville Register* reported on 29 August 1911, thirty years after the death of Dwinelle. "The canvas from which his outer shirt was made had been roughly sewed together. His undershirt had evidently been stolen in a raid upon some cabin. His feet were almost as wide as they were long, showing plainly that he had never worn either moccasins or shoes. In his ears were rings made of buckskin thongs."

Alfred Kroeber confirmed the newspaper report and contacted the sheriff who "had 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," wrote Theodora Kroeber in *Alfred Kroeber: A Personal Configuration*. "Within a few days the Department of Indian Affairs authorized the sheriff to release the wild man to the custody of Kroeber and the museum staff." Ishi was housed in rooms furnished by Phoebe Apperson Hearst. She had created the Department and Museum of Anthropology at the University of California.

Ishi served with distinction the cultural and academic interests of the University of California. Alfred Kroeber, who has been honored by a building in his name, dedicated in March 1960, pointed out that Ishi "has perceptive powers far keener than those of highly educated white men. He reasons well, grasps an idea quickly, has a keen sense of humor, is gentle, thoughtful, and courteous and has a higher type of mentality than most Indians."

Saxton Pope, a surgeon at the medical school near the museum, said he took Ishi to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. "He always enjoyed the circus, horseback feats, clowns, and similar performances," he wrote in "The Medical History of Ishi":

[A] warrior, bedecked in all his paint and feathers, approached us. The two Indians looked at each other in absolute silence for several minutes. The Sioux then spoke in perfect English, saying: "What tribe of Indian is this?" I answered, "Yana, from Northern California."

The Sioux then gently picked up a bit of Ishi's hair, rolled it between his fingers, looked critically into his face, and said, "He is a very high grade of Indian." As we left, I asked Ishi what he thought of the Sioux. Ishi said, "Him's big chief."

Thomas Waterman, the linguist at the museum, administered various psychological tests at the time and concluded in a newspaper interview that "this wild man has a better head on him than a good many college men."

Some of these college men, however, had unearthed a tribal survivor and then invented an outsider, a wild man as the "other," the last one to hear the stories of his mountain tribe, with their considerable academic power and institutional influence over language, manners, and names. These were not cruelties or insensitivities at the time, but these scholars and museum men, to be sure, would contribute to the cold and measured simulations of savagism and civilization. That tribal survivance would become a mere simulation in a museum, and three generations later an observance in a common academic space committee, is both miraculous and absurd in the best postcolonial histories. Miraculous, because the name is neither the representation nor simulation of the real, and absurd, because the felicities of manifest manners are so common in academic discourse and governance.

Ishi is one of the most discoverable tribal names in the world; even so, he has seldom been heard as a real person. The quincentenary of colonial discoveries and manifest manners is not too late to honor this tribal man with a building in his name, a nickname bestowed with admiration by Alfred Kroeber.

Ishi "looked upon us as sophisticated children," wrote Saxton Pope. "We knew many things, and much that is false. He knew nature, which is always true. . . . His soul was that of a child, his mind that of a philosopher."

Theodora Kroeber wrote in *Alfred Kroeber: A Personal Configuration* that "Ishi was living for the summer with the Waterman family where Edward Sapir, the linguist, would be coming in a few weeks to work with him, recording Ishi's Yahi dialect of the Yana language. . . . They noticed that he was eating very little and appeared listless and tired. Interrupting the work with Sapir, they brought Ishi to the hospital where Pope found what he and Kroeber had most dreaded, a rampant tuberculosis."

Ishi died at noon on 25 March 1916. Kroeber was in New York at the time and wrote to Edward Gifford, a curator at the University Museum, "As to disposal of the body, I must ask you as my personal representative to yield nothing at all under any circumstances. If there is any talk about the

interests of science, say for me that science can go to hell. We propose to stand by our friends. . . . We have hundreds of Indian skeletons that nobody ever comes near to study. The prime interest in this case would be of a morbid romantic nature.”

Four days later, the *San Mateo Labor Index* reported that the “body of Ishi, last of the [Yahi] tribe of Indians, was cremated Monday at Mount Olivet cemetery. It was according to the custom of his tribe and there was no ceremony.” Saxton Pope created a death mask, “a very beautiful one.” The pottery jar that held the ashes of Ishi was placed in a rock cairn.

The Deranged Humors of Civilization

President Ronald Reagan told students in Moscow, “Maybe we made a mistake in trying to maintain Indian cultures. Maybe we should not have humored them in wanting to stay in that kind of primitive lifestyle.”

Reagan is a master of felicities and manifest manners, but he must have been talking about simulated Indians in the movies. Many of his friends played Indians on screen. Maybe *he* made a mistake in trying to maintain the movies as a real culture; he should not have humored so many of his friends to play Indian in western films. Reagan embodies the simulacra of the mannish western movies.

“Long gaze” Reagan might have been thinking about his many *sooner* friends at the University of Oklahoma. He honored the mannish manifest manners of the frontier more than he would even remember the beleaguered tribes that lost their land to thousands of neocolonial *sooners*.

H. L. Mencken wrote in *The American Language* that the *sooners* were those “people who insist upon crossing bridges before they come to them,” the people who “sneaked across the border before the land was thrown open to white settlement.” These were the “long gaze” *sooners* who stole tribal land in the name of manifest manners.

Richard Van Horn, president of the University of Oklahoma at Norman, was concerned about a “better learning environment” and asked students to be more friendly toward minorities, according to a letter and a report in the *Daily Oklahoman*. “Saying hello to minority students on campus . . . will help to create a better living and learning environment for all.”

Van Horn’s manner is simple enough, his statements are generous over brunch, even romantic overseas, but he does not seem to understand the nature of institutional racism. Such academic salutations, the measures of manifest manners, would burden minority students with even more blithe,

simpering, and ironic atonements; the *sooners* maintain their “long gaze” of racialism and neocolonial domination. How would students be taught to recognize the minorities on campus so that they might please the president by saying hello? Would recognition be made by color, class, manners, humor, gestures, the *sooner* “long gaze,” or by being the obvious “other,” the outsider?

“Long gaze” Columbus says “hello” to Ishi.

“Hello, hello, hello at last,” said an eager white fraternity student to a crossblood Native American Indian. That casual interjection is not an invitation to a discourse on tribal histories, miseries, or even the weather on campus; the gesture is a trivial cue to turn the other cheek to a western gaze and manifest manners. Moreover, racial salutations and other public relations snobberies serve those who dominate minority students rather than those who liberate the human spirit from institutional racism.

“Go out on the campus and say hello to our tribal neighbors,” sounds too much like the basic instructions given to missionaries. Never mind, it would seem to the president, that treaties were violated, tribal lands were stolen, and that the crimes continue to be celebrated in state histories as a beat in *sooner* civilization.

The University of Oklahoma and other state institutions were founded on stolen tribal land; such moral crimes are not revised with salutations and manifest manners. The University of California was founded on the receipt of stolen tribal land.

Native American Indian scholars hired to teach in various academic departments on the campus would create a better “learning environment” than a new order of pale sycophants saying hello to minorities. “Long gaze” Reagan and Van Horn must have learned their manifest manners with other presidents at the western movies.

Rennard Strickland, the lawyer and historian, wrote in *The Indians in Oklahoma* that the “process by which the Indian became landless is part of the dark chapter in white Oklahoma’s relations with its Indian citizens. Millions of acres and other accumulated resources were wrested from the Indians. Of the thirty million allotted acres more than twenty-seven million passed from Indians to whites” by fraudulent deeds, embezzlement, and murder. “The Oklahoma Indian was asked to sacrifice many of the best parts of his culture for most of the worst parts of the white culture.”

Chitto Harjo, the traditional tribal leader who resisted the allotment of tribal land at the turn of the last century, said that “when we had these troubles it was to take my country away from me. I had no other troubles.

I could live in peace with all else, but they wanted my country and I was in trouble defending it.”

“Long gaze” Van Horn would be better heard and remembered if he learned how to say the words “tribal reparations” more often than common interjections. Reparations are wiser invitations to an education on campus than mere racial salutations and manifest manners.

“Yet, despite all the sorrows and emotion-laden events in the Indian’s history in Oklahoma,” wrote H. Wayne and Anne Morgan in *Oklahoma*, a standard history of the state, “he gave the new state a unique heritage. Many of his attitudes persisted amid the burgeoning white civilization. His image and customs were more than quaint, as much a heritage of America’s frontier civilization as those of the whites who displaced him. . . . Oklahoma’s past remains vivid, exciting, and unique. She will not abandon it lightly, nor should she. The question is, can she learn from it?” Such rhetorical poses are misrepresentations that bear no historical burdens for the sins of the *sooner* state.

“Say Hello, OU President Urges” was the headline on the front page of the *Daily Oklahoman* in Oklahoma City. Once more, manifest manners seemed to be one of the most important stories of the day. The same conservative newspaper published an unsigned editorial the following day: “Some have chuckled at OU President Richard Van Horn’s modest suggestion for students to ‘Say hello to minority students’ on campus. That’s a gesture, but he’s on track. Respect. Diversity. Dialogue. These create an environment in which learning can occur. The words describe values which are not black, white, Hispanic, or Asian, but American.” One blithe gesture in the *sooner* “long gaze” begets another, but the unnamed editorial writer never mentioned Native American Indians.

The Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, on the other hand, has published a folded calendar map that celebrates the “Year of the Indian.” Thirty-seven tribes, forty-three galleries and gift shops, and thirty bingo halls are named on a state map. “Oklahoma is Indian country,” the calendar announces. “A place where time-honored American Indian traditions, cultural experiences and artistic expression are components of everyday life. Oklahoma currently leads the nation in total Indian population and offers a wealth of Indian-related museums, art galleries, festivals and powwows.”

President Van Horn, in the “Year of the Indian,” must create at least fifty new faculty positions in the next decade for Native American Indians. The presence of tribal scholars in various departments, and their new

courses on tribal histories, literatures, economics, legal studies, comparative cultures, and religion, would be more than manifest manners. Real reparations would overturn the mannish western gaze at the campus movies; reparations for colonial domination, institutional racism, and manifest manners are measures of how a state and a civilization would endure in popular tribal memories.

The University of Oklahoma and the University of California owe more to tribal cultures than any other universities in the nation, and they must learn how to practice reparations for the moral and civil crimes that have been perpetrated against tribal cultures. At least a hundred or more new and permanent faculty positions for Native American Indians at these universities in the next decade would be an honorable gesture of reparations for stolen land, the fetish misrepresentations of tribal cultures, and the cold mannish gaze of manifest manners.

“‘Long gaze’ Presidents Say ‘Hello’ to Ishi.”

“Now that’s a real *sooner* headline,” said Griever de Hocus, the novelist and crossblood chair of postmodern manifest manners. “Columbus and Reagan said the same thing, you know, but even so none of them could ever be more than a Little Chiep.”

The University of California and the University of Oklahoma have natural reasons and moral warrants to lead the nation in Native American Indian scholarship, and these universities must demonstrate to the world that the tribes are neither the eternal victims of racial simulations nor the fetish cultures of the long gaze of Christopher Columbus.

President Van Horn could encourage the students to say “no, no, no to hello, no more western gaze, no long gaze, overturn manifest manners, and sustain tribal reparations.” Chancellor Tien must do more than hold a pose over the remains of tribal cultures and the receipts of stolen land.

Ishi said “evelybody hoppy” in Little Chiep Hall.

Columbus, Reagan, Tien, Van Horn, and other mannish adventurers, presidents, chancellors, saints, curators, and discoverers, tried to be heard over the trickster stories on campus, but no one listened to them that year in Little Chiep Hall.

Pierre Clastres wrote in *Society Against the State* that a tribal chief must “prove his command over words. Speech is an imperative obligation for the chief.” The leader “must submit to the obligation to speak, the people he addresses, on the other hand, are obligated only to appear not to hear him.”

Tricksters are heard as traces in tribal stories: the erotic shimmer

and beat on a bear walk, the beat that liberates the mind with no separations as cruel as those in a chemical civilization. There are no last words in tribal stories, no terminal creeds, no closures. Tricksters are nicknames near an end that is never heard. Ishi heard trickster stories; he was not a chief, and he never set his new watch to western time.

Christopher Columbus and the other discoverable men of manifest manners are the "long gaze" chiefs on a tribal coin struck to commemorate the lonesome heroes in a chemical civilization; with each coin the tribe will issue a certificate of authenticity.