

University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for


Spring 2010

Review of *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*
edited by Gerald Vizenor

Lisa Cole

University of Northern British Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>

 Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Cole, Lisa, "Review of *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* edited by Gerald Vizenor" (2010). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2598.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2598>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence. Edited by Gerald Vizenor. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008. 385 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paper.

Gerald Vizenor's concept of *survivance*, first introduced in *Manifest Manners* (1994), articulates a means of conceiving new expressions of Native life, free from the simulated "Indian," thereby highlighting the cultural value of precontact history. In this anthology, eighteen scholars variously acknowledge Vizenor's contribution of *survivance* to literary analysis and the wide-ranging applications of his insights to contexts such as language, race, and culture.

Vizenor functions as both a contributor to and editor for this volume. His organization of the chapters is particularly noteworthy in the intricate ways each one relates to those in close proximity. Thus, he enters into dialogue with other contributors who interpret his critical and creative writings, as well as original writings by William Apess, Eric Gansworth, Simon Ortiz, Louis Owens, and Velma Wallis, to name a few. In addition, there are sections of interviews with both Diane Glancy and Joseph

Boyden. As a whole, the contributors provide diverse approaches to Vizenor's concept of *survivance*, offering both theoretical foundations and examples of literary analysis for a variety of academic readers.

Great Plains Quarterly readers in particular may be interested in Jace Weaver's chapter, which acknowledges the land's role in *survivance* through a discussion of the dark history of Oklahoma. Weaver's analysis of plays by Lynn Riggs throws Native presence into relief by relating Native absence on stolen land to violence in white homesteading families. In this way, Weaver highlights a relationship between the violent theft of Native land in Oklahoma and the intimate violence in the families of those participating in the enterprise of colonialism.

Weaver's tricky turn of absence into presence reflects the consistent interest through the chapters in reconceptualizing paradoxes, confrontations, and binary constructs. Perhaps it is Vizenor's own comfort with flux and contradictions that makes his ideas so powerful in the study of Native literature. Beyond that, though, his work shows broader-ranging implications, as evidenced by Takayuki Tatsumi's examination of the relationships between *survivance* and the nuclear imagination in his discussion of terrorism and revenge in *Moby-Dick* and nuclear literature—which Tatsumi advances to encompass current terrorist concerns. Likely the most unique example in the anthology of the application of Vizenor's ideas, this sophisticated and articulate chapter makes connections that clearly show Vizenor's location outside of convention and expectation.

This skillfully edited work is invaluable to academic discussions of Vizenor's ideas; it presents insights into his original concept of *survivance* and examinations of the variety of contexts to which the concept may be applied.

LISA CLOSE
 Department of English
 University of Northern British
 Columbia, Prince George