



## American Indian Identity in *The Heirs of Columbus*

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### Abstract

*The present study aims to explore the identity construction in The Heirs of Columbus. The Heirs of Columbus exhibits the chronic representations of primitive inferior Indian constructed by the Euro Americans through the exercise of colonialism. These representations have been spread on both conscious and unconscious levels to maintain power and colonial hegemony. Gerald Vizenor deconstructs the stereotype Indian through his writings hence refute the eurocentric notion of stereotype native. He unveils the Eurocentric ideology by rewriting history in a subversive ironical way, records the construction of Indian thus reconstructs him in his narration.*

**Key Words:** American Indian, Identity, Eurocentric, Discourse of Power

## Introduction

Native American literature is a tool of resistance to the colossal history of colonization. The Euro-centric discourse works in the “otherness-mechanics” and writes the history of Native Americans in the context of them, and us thus creates discrimination. The main attempt of the colonizers was to “civilize” the native other, thus to fix him in a continuous state of “otherness”. According to the Native American writer's, science, literature, and media constructed “the Indian that never was” (Bataille 4-5). Vizenor argues in the same vein and says, “the Indian is a romantic colonial invention, an absence of true natives and their tradition, a simulation that has become the main disguise of colonial surveillance” (*Trickster Discourse* 279). According to Vizenor, the surveillance is still continued, and the indigenous culture can get rid of it only if it detaches itself from the dominant discourses of “Indianess”. Staurt Hall argues:

The identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture . . . not "who we are" or "where we came from," so much as . . . how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation (4).

Aware of this dilemma, Vizenor challenges the grand colonial narratives, exposes the colonial strategies and redefines the Indian stereotypes, representation of native culture, identity and distorted images. He shows the superiority of the Indian culture in contrast to the so-called civilized invasion, which brought death to the native's pattern of life and belief systems. The false representation of stereotype Indian is exercised through the discourse of power. The native American writers fight against the colonial tricks which subjugated the native through different cheating strategies. The colonizers, with their “civilizing mission”, displaced the native from their land, defined and represented their image in a distorted way which they never were, forced the kids to boarding schools instead of studying native culture. All these strategies resulted in a stereotype image of Indian, which was a construction of word games by the discourse of power. An in-depth study of American Indian literature sheds light on the bestowed image of the native from the dominant culture. The construction of the native stereotype

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image is an act of power as both social and individual identities get constructed in the social setup through the practices of power by the dominant culture. Gilles and Middleton assert:

Discourses of gender or race –the ways in which sexual and ‘racial’ differences are defined, talked about, represented visually-create the conditions in which men and women experience their lives. If we see culture as ‘the production and circulation of meaning’, then culture is a significant site for the formation of discourses by which one social group or community (a sex, race, nation or society) legitimates its power over another group or community (25).

Identity is the border between the personal sense of self that includes values, beliefs, irrational and rational motivations, conscious and unconscious emotions and feelings that arise from the different desires and experiences, and the factors and aspects that create the social context in which these motivations and feelings (sex, age, and ethnicity) are experienced. ([Giles and Middleton 32-35](#)). American Indian identity is stereotyped through the misrepresentation of different modes by the dominant colonial discourse, which is opposed in many contemporary Native American writers as they raise voice against the one dimensional and superficial representation of the stereotype Indian. Paula Gunn Allen asserts:

Images of Indians in media and educational materials profoundly influence how we act, how we relate to the world and to each other, and how we value ourselves. They also determine to a large extent how our men act toward us, toward our children, and toward each other, The popular American image of Indian people as savages with no conscience, no compassion, and no sense of the value of human life and human dignity was hardly true of tribes . . . but as Adolf Hitler noted a little over fifty years ago if you tell a lie big enough and often enough, it will be believed. Evidently, while Americans and people all over the world have been led into a deep and unquestioned belief that Americans and Indians are cruel savages, a number of American Indian men have been equally deluded into internalizing that image and acting on it. Media images, literary images, and artistic images, particularly those embedded in popular culture, must be changed (192-193).

### American Indian Identity

The Native American Postmodern writers deconstruct the constructed knowledge of the Euro American discourse by bringing margins in the centre. Native American writers dismantle the grand narratives of history and stereotyped identity, thus resist and write back to the discourses of power. Vizenor deconstructs the discourses of “otherness” and constructs a space for cultural survivance (survival and resistance) and social dialogue. He confronts the colonial myths and false representation of native identity and distorted attitudes in his works. *The Heirs of Columbus* raises the issues of American Indian “otherness” and its historical construction through the discourse of power by the colonizers. Vizenor raises his voice against the misrepresentations of American Indian image as he asserts: “we’re all invented as Indians . . . and we are stuck in coins and words like artefacts” ([qtd. in. Owens 15](#)). He uses counter-representation to decenter white dominating positions, thus relocates the American Indians from marginal positions to the center. He traces the colonial history of Columbus’s invasion from many perspectives and highlights the colonial strategies of native subaltern identity construction, thus resists and writes back to the dominant culture through the counter-representations. Columbus’s first encounter with the native is elaborated ironically In *the Heirs of Columbus*:

Columbus unfurled the royal banner, and the green cross of the crown shivered on the wind over the island the tribe had named Guanahani. He was blinded by the white sand, the broken sun on the water. He showed his sword to a painted servant on the beach, “and through ignorance, he grabbed it by the blade and cut himself” . . . “in order to win their friendship since I knew they were a people to be converted and won to our holy faith by love and friendship rather than by force, I gave some of the red caps and glass beads which they hung around their necks” he wrote about his first encounter with the tribal people in the New World (3-4).

The above-quoted passage represents an ideologically specific scheme for the classifying behavior of the colonizers toward Native Americans. Columbus’s first encounter with the native is recorded in an ironic tone by Vizenor. The words *painted servant on the beach* shows the classification scheme that constitutes the aspect of reality which is based on the ideology of the dominant (colonizer). The moment Columbus landed on American soil, he considered the native’s servants, thus constructed the ideology of them and us. The word *painted* is also used in a derogatory way which again classifies the native as *primitive*. The structure of the vocabulary used by

the Admiral of Ocean Sea is based ideologically that stigmatized the native as an alien and inferior beast. Vizenor criticizes the ways in *The Heirs of Columbus* through which the native was subjugated and governed by the power structures.

The whites define the native as an inferior alien beast, thus define themselves as a superior and civilized nation. The way Christopher Columbus narrates about his first encounter with the *painted servant* illuminates the euphemistic expressions of the quoted text. According to him, the native was next to the beast as he cut his hand because of ignorance and lack of common sense. As Columbus says, “through ignorance, he grabbed it by the blade cut and himself”. Through this description, Columbus indirectly defines the native as an *ignorant* being who doesn’t have the basic common sense to differentiate between the good and bad, thus injures himself. The word *ignorance* euphemistically expresses the need of native to be groomed and civilized. The colonizers used such words to define the native, thus constructed them as the “uncivilized savage” through their discourse.

Christopher Columbus’s persuasive language highlights the expressive values of the words in the above-quoted text. *In order to win their friendship* are the logical connectors between the words which show the persuasive schemes of Columbus. He uses different strategies to win the favors of native, thus persuaded them to trust him, which brought critical consequences to the native land and inhabitants. Vizenor rewrites the story of the conquest in *The Heirs of Columbus* to illuminate the tricks through which Indian social and personal identity was constructed as inferior to others. Columbus’s comments *I gave some of the red caps and glass beads which they hung around their necks* represent the native negatively and Columbus (colonizer) positively as he describes the native reaction of receiving a gift in a derogatory tone that they hung the glass beads around their neck. Through all these persuasive strategies, Columbus won the trust of native, thus subjugated them and represented them as inferior savage to the world.

The quoted text highlights the larger structures which are present in the text. Columbus’s suppressing strategies in this social event construct the social and personal identity of the American Indian tribes as inferior subjects who need the “civilized” to teach them thus control them. Columbus’s comments, “since I knew they were a people to be converted and won to our holy faith by love and friendship rather than by force,” show the dominating role of Columbus in the overall interactional conversation. Columbus’s words *I knew* relate to Foucault’s theory of knowledge and power mechanism as, according to Foucault, knowledge of the subject gives space to have power over it. Edward Said argues in the same vein about the construction of orientalism and another native identity through the discourse of power in his *orientalism* and asserts, “The Orient was almost a European invention and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (Said 1). Columbus’s words “to be converted and won to our holy faith by love and friendship rather than by force” shed light on the logical connectors he uses to overpower the native subjects hegemonically. This relates to Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, a construct through which power is exercised by “force, consent, or a combination of the two” (qtd. in. Croteau & Hoynes 165). Vizenor’s urge for converting the natives to Christianity illuminates the colonial slogan “save the savage through Christianity”. Columbus’s first encounter with the native makes him view the native through European gaze and highlights the “European lacking traits” as negative attributes of native. The native thus was subjugated hegemonically by different strategies, which resulted in a stereotyped representation of the native subjects to the world.

The colonizers used different tricks to subjugate the native subject, thus ruled them for centuries. Vizenor uses a new approach to address Native American identity in which he subverts the metanarratives and values continuation over dominance. He mocks the American Indian, reinforcing of “Indian” stereotype and the so-called historical facts about it, which overloaded the realm of historical texts. He uses parody and trickster discourse to highlight the strategies of the colonizers through which the Indian is constructed as the inferior subject. Columbus’s first encounter with the native is ironically described in *The Heirs of Columbus* as his gaze over the native and landscape is based on misperception, but this misperception provided the basis of Euro-American discourse of dominance. Robert Berkhofer, in his *White Man’s Indian*, asserts, “the initial image of the Indian, like the word itself, came from the pen of Columbus” (5). Columbus viewed the Indians through Europeans gaze and identified what the Indians *lack* in Europe, thus created the binary of them and us. Vizenor records Columbus’s remarks about the Native Americans in *The Heirs of Columbus*:

“They ought to make good and skilled servants, for they repeat very quickly whatever we say to them,” but he misconstrued a tribal pose and later traced his soul to the stories in blood. “They all go naked as their mothers bore them, including the women, although I saw only one very young girl” . . . Columbus and the sailors were haunted by the wild puppets and roused by a golden shimmer on the night water. Samana was an island in the ocean sea that would be imagined but never possessed in the culture of death. Five centuries later the crossblood descendants of the explorer and the hand talker declared a new tribal nation (4).

This excerpt of Columbus’s journal shows the experiential values of discourse which constructed the binary identities of power and subservient. Columbus’s authoritative tone and use of language determines his position as superior. The choice of words highlights the colonial classifying schemes as he says, “They ought to make good and skilled servants, for they repeat very quickly whatever we say to them”. The words *good and skilled servants* constitute a particular way of dividing the native and Invader into a category of master and slave. The master and slave relationship is structured through the ideologically based vocabulary. Columbus’s classifying scheme is further highlighted in his choice of vocabulary when he says *for; they repeat very quickly whatever we sat to them*. Through this instrumental scheme of language, he does three main jobs that is first to determine his position as superior, secondly to suppress the native for not possessing the “European traits”, thirdly to represent a distorted image of the Indian to the world. The whole classifying scheme of Columbus is ideologically contested by Vizenor as he writes back to the dominant discourse of Columbus thus deconstructs it. Vizenor’s comments, *but he misconstrued a tribal pose*, are ideologically contested. He dismantles the constructed image of an inferior Indian and raises his voice in a blatant way, thus subverts the dominant ideologies.

The quoted excerpt illuminates the relational values of the colonial strategies exercised on the Native Americans during their first encounter with the Admiral of the Ocean Sea. Columbus’s words *ought to* highlight the choice of words that construct the social relationship of superior and inferior between the participant that is the colonizer and colonized. Columbus’s vocabulary in the quoted text illuminates the euphemistic expressions of the dominant (colonizer). It provides the basis of native subjugation, which continued for centuries tagging the native as inferior, primitive subjects. It shows the strategies of negotiating a relationship with the native on an unequal basis. Columbus’s comments “they all go naked as their mothers bore them, including the women, although I saw only one very young girl” euphemistically negates the positive attributes of the Native and focuses on those attributes which he termed as negative thus requires to be amended through control of the colonizer.

Vizenor deconstructs the centre by his trickster discourse of parody in the above-quoted text. He on the one hand, records the colonial history through excerpts from Columbus’s journals and then reverts it with his own comments. The narration of history from two different perspectives in the quoted text highlight the ideologically contrastive schemes representing different values of the dominant and dominated. Columbus’s words “They ought to make good and skilled servants, for they repeat very quickly whatever we say to them” highlight the colonizer classifying scheme while Vizenor’s comments “but he misconstrued a tribal pose and later traced his soul to the stories in blood” illuminate the native classifying scheme of subversion. Vizenor portrays Columbus ironically as he “he traced his soul to the stories in blood” thus belong to the Native Americans. By showing Columbus the ancestor of all the stereotype Indians Vizenor dismantles the whole ideology of the colonizers.

In this communicative event of the participants (colonizer and colonized) colonizer is the one who takes the overall control over the other participant (colonized). Columbus’s choice of vocabulary in the text makes him the powerful in this interactional conversation. The dominant choice of words such as *They ought to, Skilled and good servants, repeat very quickly whatever we say to them, they all go naked as their mothers bore them* illustrate the whole scenario of the first communicative event between the native and colonizer in which the native was represented as inferior on the very first step through the word choices thus subjugated and controlled. The larger structures exist in the above-quoted text are the colonial strategies of power and, on the other hand, native’s strategies of survivance (resistance and survival). Vizenor deconstructs the Columbian (colonizer) ideology of Indian stereotype identity when he narrates that “Columbus and the sailors were haunted by the wild puppets and roused by a golden shimmer on the night water. Samana was an island in the ocean sea that would be imagined but never possessed in the culture of death” (4). He shows Columbus’s urge for Samana on the one hand and on the other hand highlights the disastrous colonial “culture of death”. According to Vizenor, Samana healed the deformed

Columbus through intercourse, but he turned out as a thankless creature of the culture of death who imposed the culture of death on the natives by snatching their harmonious way of life from them. The Survivance illuminates the larger-scale structure of native's subversive resistance as Vizenor says, "Five centuries later the cross blood descendants of the explorer and the hand talker declared a new tribal nation" (4). The new nation by the cross-blood decedents of Columbus and the hand talker Samana show the superiority of native on the one hand and mocks Columbus's ideology through which the native was constructed as a stereotype Indian by showing Columbus the father of all Indians.

Vizenor changes Columbus's nationality in *The Heirs of Columbus*, thus breaks down the binary of self and other. James Cox asserts in his *Muting White Noise* it is "not [meant] to condemn or vilify Columbus but to insert Indigenous people into colonial histories, to mock Euro-western doctrines of racial purity or pure racial (particularly Anglo-Saxon) ancestry" (130). The blood quantum theories which constructed the stereotype of Indianess are challenged in the narration as Vizenor creates a cross blood identity of the descendants of Columbus. Arnold Krupat in his "Stories in the Blood': Ratio- and Natio- in Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus*" postulates that the dismissal of blood identity and blood quantum theory values a ratio identity which is based on the cultural value rather than blood/birth identity (116). Vizenor dismantles European discourse by recording passages from Columbus's Journal which constructed the Indian as inferior:

Columbus lowered the sails, anchored on the Lee, and touched the white coral beach of the New World. "At dawn, we saw naked people," he entered in his journal on Friday, October 12, 1492. "I went ashore in the ship's boat . . . to this island I gave the name *San Salvador* in honor of our Blessed Lord." He unfurled the royal banner with the great green cross and declared possession of the island in the name of the crown. *Guanahani*, the tribal name of the island, ended that ruinous morning with the return of civilization (36).

The passage sheds light on the experiential values of the discourse as it illustrates the classifying schemes of the colonizers. Columbus's comments about the native, which he records in his journal, are derogatory. The choice of words shows he looks down on the native subject as ignorant and uncivilized. *At dawn, we saw naked people* show Columbus's strategy through which he highlighted the negative them. The term *naked* symbolizes the native subjects as primitive and ignorant. The classifying scheme of the colonizer in this description of the native represents a "primitive" picture of the native self-definition; by defining the naked native as primitive, Columbus defines himself as civilized thus superior.

This passage is significant in the relational values as it highlights the social relationship between the participants. Columbus's authoritative tone determined the status of the native in the social hierarchy of power relations. He places us at the top and them at the lower level because of their "primitive" behaviors. By placing us on the top in the hierarchy of power relations, he acts in an authoritative way and renames the island as he says, "to this island I gave the name *San Salvador* in honor of our Blessed Lord. He unfurled the royal banner with the great green cross and declared possession of the island in the name of the crown" (36). This self-assumed superiority and authority further results in the construction of native identity in dark negative colours. Vizenor unveils the colonial strategies which resulted in the alienation of native's identity. Names of individuals and places provide a strong sense of belongingness which is an integral part of identity. By changing the name of the native island into *San Salvador* Columbus made it his own, thus deprived the native from a sense of belonging which effected native identity badly. The formal choice of words like *San Salvador* and *possession of island in the name of crown* by Christopher Columbus have twofold meanings as on one hand by renaming the island he subjugated the native identity and constructed him as inferior subject through his word games and on the other hand he strategically makes the crown happy by naming the island and taking possession of it in his name.

The passage is relevant in the expressive values of the colonial discourse as well as the native counter discourse of resistance. The change of names of the native places brought destruction for the native subjects. "Guanahani, the tribal name of the island, ended that ruinous morning with the return of civilization" is a metaphor which serves both the colonial discourse and the native counter discourse of resistance. For Columbus renaming the island metaphorically brought civilization to the new world thus *ended the ruinous morning*. The same act serves as a metaphor of destruction for the native identity and culture as the "civilization" brought by the colonizer was in fact destruction in disguise.

In this interactional conversation Columbus (colonizer) controls the turns of others hence is the controlling dominant participant. The control is maintained through the power of discourse as he uses derogatory terms for native description. All the colonial strategies used in the quoted text construct the native identity as inferior them thus subjugate the role of native participant. Renaming the places further heightens the subjugation as he controls the place on one hand and deprives the native of their land and sense of possession on the other hand. The larger scale structure exist in the quoted text are the colonial ideologies which are infused strategically by the Admiral of ocean sea to maintain power and dominance hegemonically through the power of discourse.

Vizenor redefines the native identity through stories in blood (Stories of Survivance) that helps the American Indians to heal the wounds caused by the colonial dominant culture. The deformed children at Point Assinika are shown cured by the stories in blood thus metaphorically highlights the healing power of survivance (not dominance). In the epilogue Vizenor restates the link between stereotype and Columbus and illuminate the ways the trickster discourse rerecords about the colonial gaze. In the epilogue he asserts “Christopher Columbus landed in the New World with a striven western gaze that would be overturned in five centuries by the tribal people he saw as naked servants with no religion” (184). In these lines Vizenor asserts that Columbian gaze through which he viewed the native as servant is overturned by the policy of survivance. According to him, Columbus is the father of stereotyping the Indian image and quotes Mary Campbell who postulates that Columbus is the “originator of New World ‘descriptions and narration” (185). He quotes many writers and texts which use Columbian discourse to describe Native Americans as stereotypes thus brings into notice that stereotyping of Indian is in fact Columbian legacy. Vizenor illustrates the colonial strategy of Columbus through which he describes the native in the excerpts from Columbus’s journal:

“No sooner had we concluded the formalities of taking possession of the island than people began to come to the beach, all naked as their mothers bore them, and the women. “The tribal people, he wrote in his journal, had “handsome bodies and very fine faces, though their appearance is marred somewhat by very broad heads and foreheads more so than I have ever seen in any other race . . . Many of the natives paint their faces; others paint their whole bodies; some, only the eyes or nose. Some are painted black, some white, some red; others are of different colors” (37).

The quoted excerpt of Columbus’s journal is significant in the experiential values of the discourse as it sheds light on the classifying schemes of colonial behavior in the social setup. *Taking possession of the island* illuminates the colonial authoritative strategy through which the colonial ideologies were infused for power maintenance. Columbus’s repetitive comments, i.e., *all naked as their mothers bore them, and the women* repetitively portray the native in dark light as primitive thus ignorant. *As their mother bore them* postulates Columbus’s gaze as the us participant according to whom the native is in a state of ignorance and needs to be educated and civilized through European ways. The use of dominant vocabulary *their mother bore them* shows the extent of native ignorance as according to Columbus the natives were not groomed and were at the state of an infant who is completely blind to the civilized pattern of life.

The quoted passage highlights euphemistic expressions of the colonial discourse. Columbus apparently describes the physical appearance of the native in a good way but euphemistically means otherwise. His description “The tribal people, he wrote in his journal, had ‘handsome bodies and very fine faces, though their appearance is marred somewhat by very broad heads and foreheads more so than I have ever seen in any other race” (37). Columbus portrays the natives in a disfigured way to the world as he appreciates the *handsome bodies* and *very fine faces* but then ridicules the *broad heads and foreheads* by saying he has never seen such marred creatures in *any other race*. The Indian race to him is the unique race in a derogative sense of the word. The discourse choice of Columbus for native’s physical description creates an unbalanced relationship between Columbus (us) and native (them).

The physical description of the marred native serves as the metaphor of distorted stereotype image of Indian. In a persuasive language Columbus exhibits a negative image of native them. Columbus’s description highlights the native traditional traits negatively by saying “Many of the natives paint their faces; others paint their whole bodies; some, only the eyes or nose. Some are painted black, some white, some red; others are of different colors” (37). He associates the different colors of painting the faces to ignorance, informal thus

primitive/uncivilized. By associating the negative terms to the traditional attributes of the native Columbus ideologically draw a line between the superior and inferior thus construct a subjugated native identity.

The subjugation of native on the basis of their physical appearance exhibit larger scale structure exists in this communicative event between the colonizers and colonized. Columbus repetitively associates negative representation to the natives thus dominate the native tactfully. He dominates the overall interactional conversation by taking the turns of the native participants thus silences them as subjugated subalterns.

Vizenor suggest in *The Heirs of Columbus* that imagination is important to overturn the Euro-centric discourse and Native American Stereotype Indian. The novel links the stereotype Indian to the utopic American models thus reverses the colonial dominant. The term Indian is an invention which is created by the Euro-Americans. it contains a simulation which represents the real or unreal. The stereotype Indian is constructed through the simulation of the real hence divorces the real image of the native. Vizenor asserts because the Indian doesn't have any referent therefore it never existed ([Blaeser 56](#)). Vizenor places the Indian in the absence which is created through simulation and postulates:

The word Indian . . . is a colonial enactment, not a loan word, and the dominance is sustained by the simulation that has superseded the real tribal names. The Indian was an occidental invention that became a bankable simulation; the word has no referent in tribal languages or cultures. The postindian is the absence of the invention, and the end of representation in literature (*Manifest Manners* 11).

The stereotype image of Indian and the term Indian are constructed through misrepresentation by the dominant discourse. By defining the native as Indian the Euro-Americans define themselves as superior than the primitive Indian. Vizenor deconstructs this image of simulated Indian by recording the strategic policies of colonizers and asserts:

Columbus inherited the signature of survivance, discovered a new route to colonial wealth, and was responsible for one of the most notable shipwrecks in history. He concluded that the disaster was predestined . . . Ferdinand Columbus, In *The life of the Admiral*, wrote that his father forgot his grief over the loss of his ship when he was given gold. "God had allowed it to be wrecked in order that he should make a settlement and leave some Christians behind to trade and gather information about the country and its inhabitants, learning their language and entering in relations with people" . . . Columbus had more trouble two weeks later; the first dangerous encounter with tribal people in the new world. The sailors attacked the tribe when they landed on the beach to gather supplies for the voyage. "The sailors were ready, since I always advised my men to be on guard, "he wrote in his journal. "They gave one Indian a great cut on the buttocks and wounded another in the breast with an arrow" (42-43).

Vizenor parodies history of Columbian voyages to the New World in a subversive way. *Columbus inherited the signature of survivance* shows the classifying scheme of native which dismantles the dominant discourse. *The signature of survivance* helps the native to break the shackles of stereotype Indian thus resists and writes back to the colonial discourse. By showing Columbus with *the signature of survivance*. Vizenor highlight the ideological representation of native reality. This reality is the presence of the real native who strives for continuation and resists dominance. Vizenor's commentary on Columbus's voyages is ideologically contested and subverts the colonial ideology by representing the real face of the colonizer and raises the voice of the subjugated subject (the native). Vizenor's comments about Columbus that he "discovered a new route to colonial wealth, and was responsible for one of the most notable shipwrecks in history" shed light on the colonial interests which had serious consequences. Many people lost their lives in the process of colonialism. Vizenor blames him and considers him responsible for "the most notable shipwrecks in history". This shipwreck of *Santa Maria* was forgotten when he was given gold. Ferdinand Columbus, In *the Life of the Admiral*, wrote that his father forgot his grief over the loss of his ship when he was given gold (42). Vizenor contests the colonial ideology thus rewrites the history so to highlight the greedy nature of the Admiral of Ocean Sea. Vizenor's remarks highlight the main aim of the explorer that was gold and the materialistic benefits which took many lives of his fellows and the native people.

The quoted text shows the relations between the participants (us and them) in this social event. Ferdinand Columbus's impressions about his father's voyages draw attention to the religious ideology of the colonizers as he says, "God had allowed it to be wrecked in order that he should make a settlement and leave some Christians behind to trade and gather information about the country and its inhabitants, learning their language and entering

in to relations with people”. Religious discourse is used to legitimize the invasion on the native lands which further resulted in us and their identity construction of the native subjects. The Santa Maria shipwreck according to Ferdinand Columbus was sacred sign from God as *God had allowed it to be wrecked*. The formal use of religious discourse (vocabulary) signifies the relational value of the text as it formally legitimizes the action of one participant (the colonizer) and tends to make social relations on the basis of religion. According to Ferdinand Columbus the Christians were left behind to trade and gather information about the country and its inhabitants, learning their language and entering in to relations with people (42) but in fact instead of learning the native language the colonizer language was imposed on natives thus subjugated their identities and cultural values.

The quoted passage is significant in expressive values of the discourse as it sheds light on the colonial actions which provided the basis for native subjugation. The identity of native was taken as out group them from the very first encounter as recorded by Vizenor “Columbus had more trouble two weeks later . . . The first dangerous encounter with tribal people in the new world. The sailors attacked the tribe when they landed on the beach to gather supplies for the voyage” (43). The fellow sailors of the Admiral of Ocean Sea treated the native badly, attacked and injured them for the *supplies for the voyage*. Columbus’s treatment with the native was based on the us and the relation, which resulted in the stereotyped identity of Indian.

In the quoted communicative event, Columbus and his fellows were the controlling participants as they subjugated the native discursively. Columbus’s remarks about his encounter determine his position as superior in this communicative event as he says, “The sailors were ready since I always advised my men to be on guard, “he wrote in his journal. “They gave one Indian a great cut on the buttocks and wounded another in the breast with an arrow”. Columbus misuses power over native subjects to subjugate them as the native were wounded by Columbus’s fellows for *supplies for the voyage*. The larger structure exists in the quoted text are the colonial ideology of them and us, which work discursively, placing the native in the margin by the discourse of power.

## Conclusion

Vizenor redefines the native identity through stories in the blood (Stories of Survivance) that helps the American Indians to heal the wounds caused by the dominant colonial culture. *The Heirs of Columbus* exhibits the chronic representations of primitive inferior Indian constructed by the Euro Americans through the exercise of colonialism. These representations have been spread on both conscious and unconscious levels to maintain power and colonial hegemony. American Indian writers deconstruct the stereotype Indian through their writings hence refute the eurocentric notion of stereotype native.



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