

Introduction to Native American & Indigenous Studies

OLLI, SPRING 2022

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Agenda

Introduction to Native American & Indigenous Studies

Week 1 – Keywords: Indigeneity/Indigenous, Native

Week 2 – Keyword: Land

Week 3 – Keyword: Sovereignty

Week 4 – Keywords: Nation, nationhood

Week 5 – Keywords: blood, tradition

Week 6 – Keywords: colonialism, decolonization

Week 7 – Keyword: Survivance

Week 8 – Keyword: Knowledge

Week 9 – Keywords: Literature, Art

Week 10 – Keywords: Queer, 2-Spirit or, previously (derogatory), berdache

Week 11 – Keyword: Resistance

Week 12 – Keyword: Race

Duane Slick
(b. 1961)
Meskwaki &
Hoocąk

Right:
Turning Around
on Purpose (For
Jimmie Durham)
(2014)

Acrylic on Panel,
14" x 11"



Above:

***Chatter Marks* (2014) *Soldier Blue* (2014)**

Slick said he was inspired by the "laughter of the coyote, the eternal trickster and ultimate survivor, saturated and filled our daily lives."

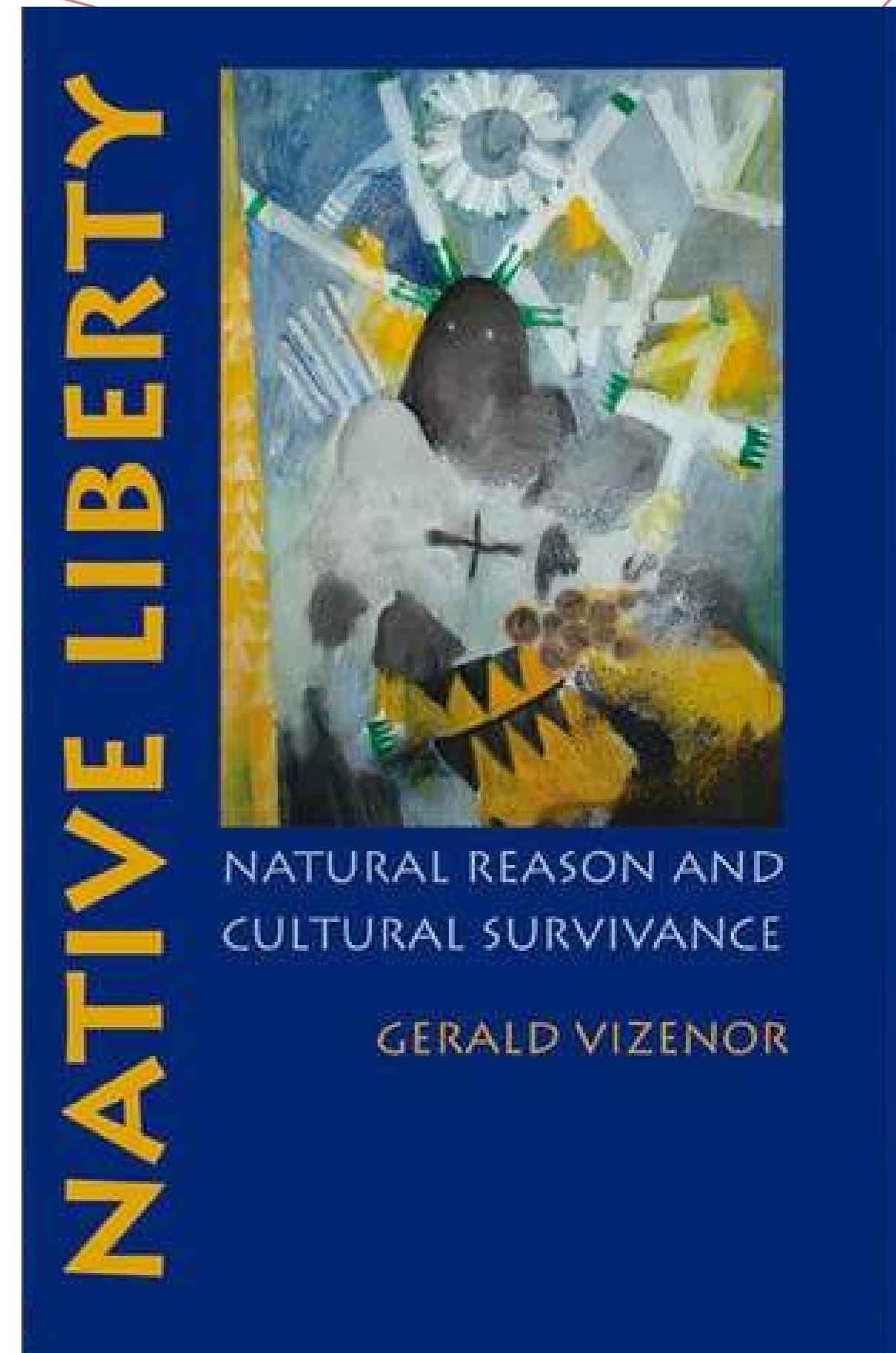
"His laughter is irreverent, and doesn't acknowledge the scale of the master narrative," Slick said. "It echoed through the lecture halls of histories and it was so powerful and it was so distracting that I forgot my place in linear time, and now I work from an untraceable present."

What is 'survivance'?

- **Gerald Vizenor** (white/Anishinaabe) coins **survivance** as a portmanteau of *survival* and *endurance* to undermine the notion that Natives do not merely survive but resist the colonial contexts and mechanisms that create the representation of the 'Indian.'
- Additionally, he writes that 'Indian' is a non-concept used in social science jargon to disappear actual Natives; instead, he argues we ought to be tribally specific when referring to someone who is indigenous the same way we would for Euro-American nationalities ('Polish' 'Brazilian' 'French' 'Honduran').
- He develops his theory of the '**manifest manner**' and the '**Postindian**' world from using poststructuralist theoretical methods around **semiotics**, the study of signing.
 - The "Indian" is an empty signifier, for it references only an accumulation of '**fugitive poses**' or absence.
 - **Manifest manner** is "the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomer in archives and lexicons as 'authentic' representations of indian cultures." In other words, it represents the storytelling and rhetorical work that manifest destiny continues to fashion.
- He also uses the postmodern concept of **simulacra** (Baudrillard) to argue that the "Indian" is a simulation, as it "transposes the real and the simulation of the real [with] no referent, memories, or native stories." He offers instead the 'postindian,' which "must waver over the aesthetic ruins" of these simulations.
- As John D. Miles notes, the terms above "emerge from Vizenor's studies of language and literature and explain his attempt to make sense of the complex reactions to colonial oppression of Native people. They are also important because they represent at least one language created by a Native scholar for the very purpose of reading Native discourse."

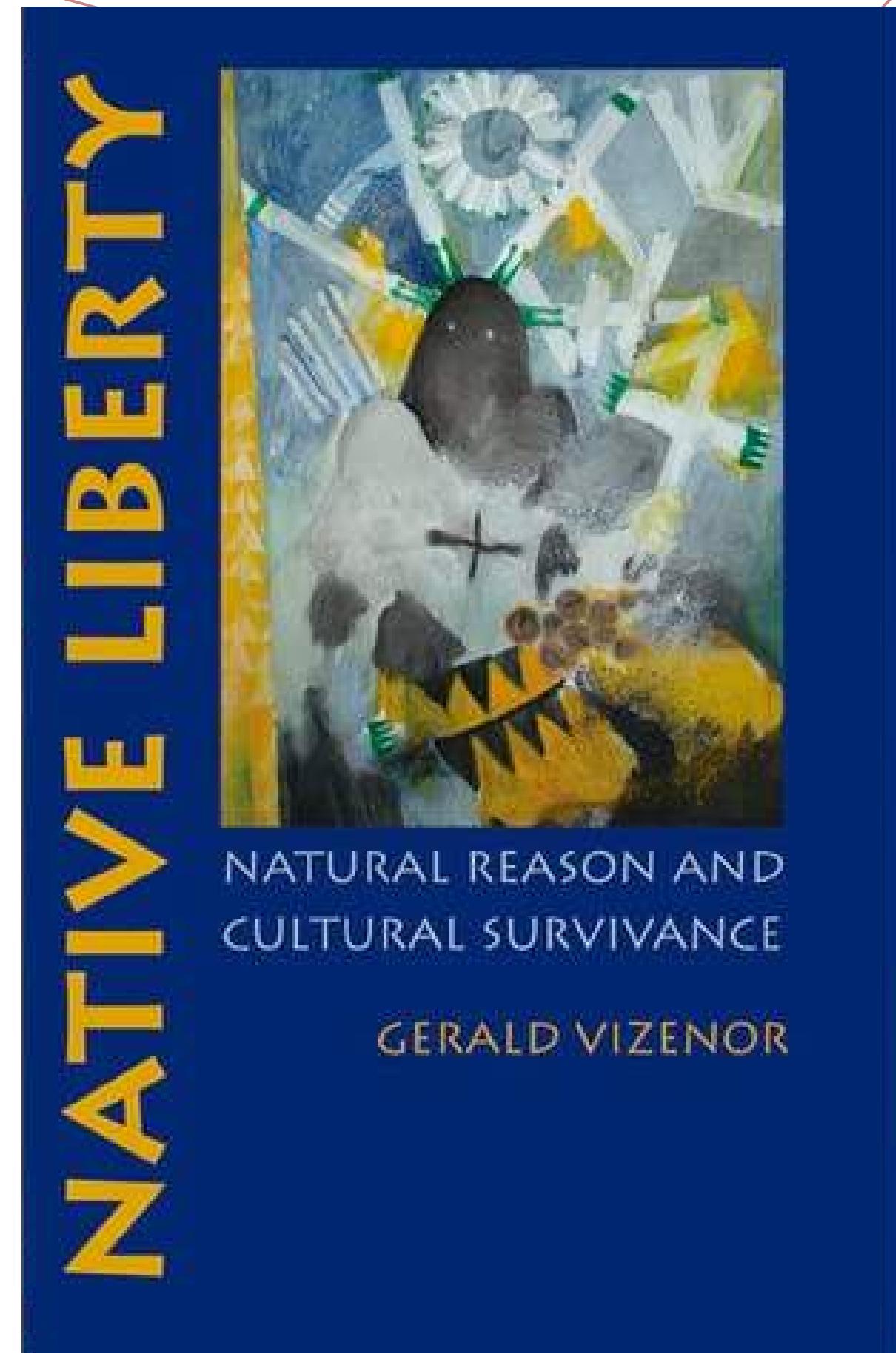
What is 'survivance'?

- "Native storiers create, at their best, a singular sense of presence by natural reason, customary words, perceptive tropes, observant irony, and imagic scenes. That aural sense of presence is the premise of a distinctive aesthetics of survivance."
- "Theories of survivance are elusive and imprecise by definition and in translation. The practices of survivance, however, are obvious and unmistakable in native stories. The nature of survivance creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimry. **Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence, the dominance of cultural simulations, and manifest manners.** Native survivance is a continuance of stories."
- He writes that "modern literary artists ... provoke governments and controvert simulations of native cultures." Thus, survivance is his conceptualization of the continuance of Postindian rhetorical work in literary and cultural production.
 - While ethnographers may 'inscribe' culture, "natives by communal stories, memory, and potentiality *create* a sense of presence not an inscribed absence." Geertz may call culture innately 'semiotic' (signified/signifiable) and thus inscription is possible. But this leaves out gestures such as the *tease, parody, irony, mockery*.
- Why use method of survivance in imagism of cultural production? Because it combats the simulation of the "Indian," which foregrounds victimry, fugitivity, and/or absence.



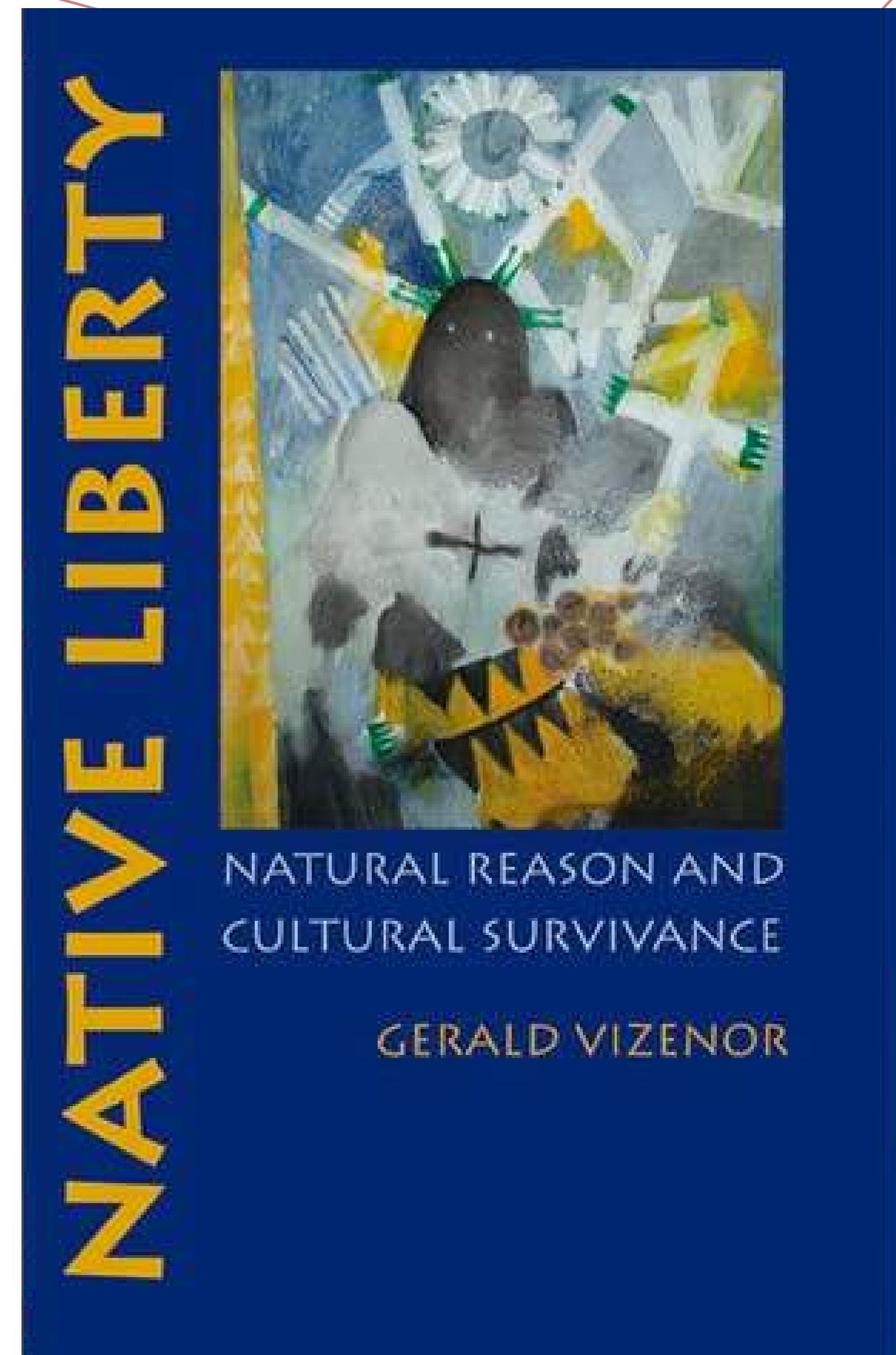
Where is 'survivance'?

- Like a good scholarly monograph, he tells us in the Introduction of *Native Liberty* that survivance is a necessary addition to Native American critical theory because "[it creates] a distinctive literary aesthetics of natural reason and survivance inspired by native stories, oral, in translation, and original." While ancestors used various "senses of aesthetics," the Postindian creates natural reason and survivance by returning to these methods (as opposed to disappearing them).
 - "by sound, motion, the traces of seasons, a summer in the spring;
 - by imagic, totemic associations with birds and animals;
 - by customary transmutations, and evasive, unrehearsed trickster stories"
- "Many contemporary native novelists present the imagic consciousness of animals in dialogue and descriptive narratives, and overturn the monotheistic separation of humans and animals." Examples he lists: N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Silko, Gordon Henry, Louis Owens. He describes them as "ghost dancers" (referencing a protest culture that called up the dead ancestor to protect against the white man).



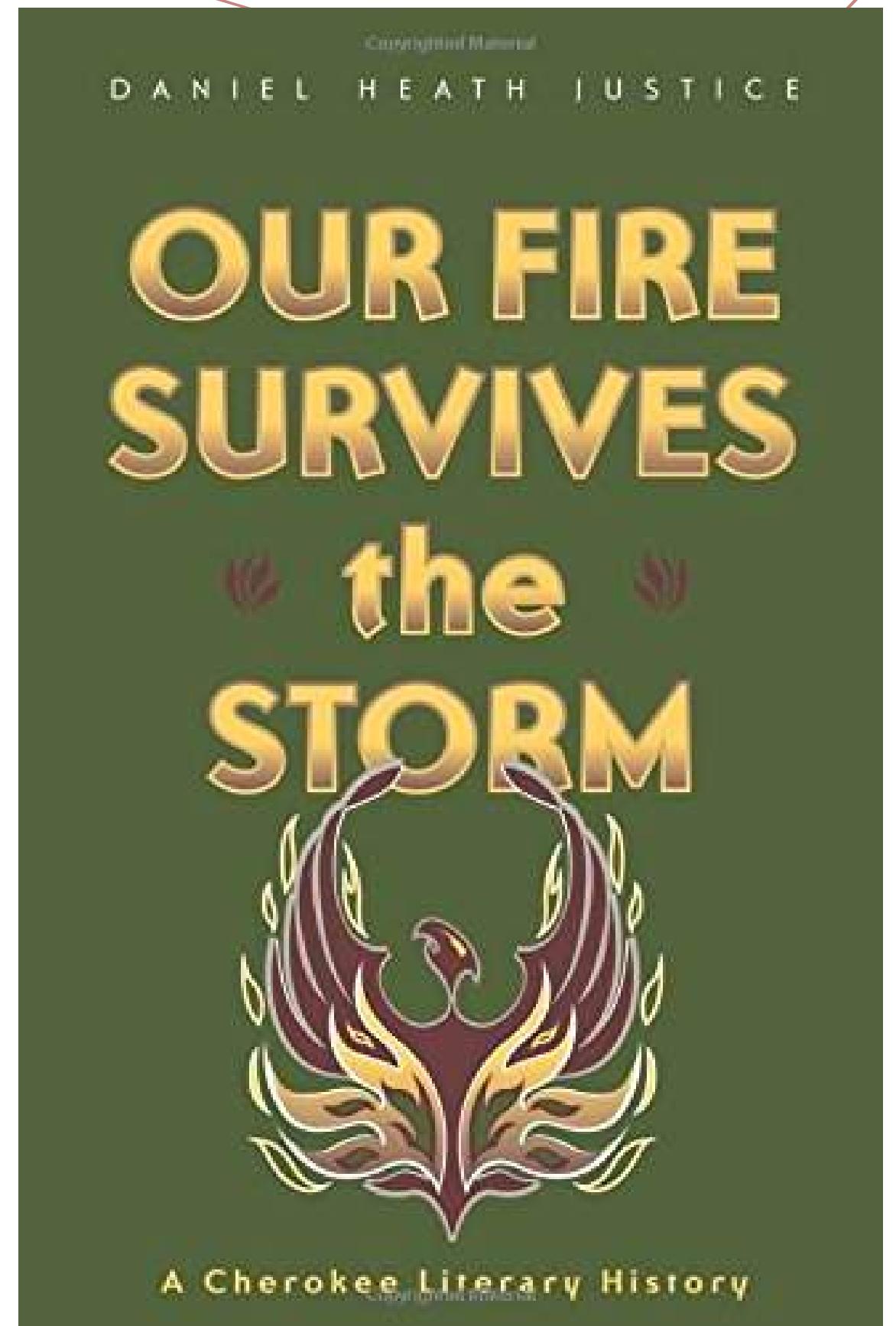
Who/where is 'survivance'?

- **How does one read for survivance?** One must negate the monotheistic tendency to separate humans and animals. Otherwise, we have only the notion of (at best) separate-but-equal and (at worst) man's dominance over nature, the very practice of which has led to the destruction of the earth altogether since if man is the master over nature, he may do with it what he pleases—even to his own detriment—in pursuit of profit or other material satisfactions.
- Instead, he writes, "**my idea of a native literary aesthetics is a tricky, totemic union of animals, birds, humans and others.**" None taking supreme perspective over the other, this anti-anthropocentrism allows for a *Postindian aesthetics* to counterpose the simulations of dominance: "The native literary aesthetics of survivance transmutes by imagination the obvious simulations of dominance and closure, and that mighty turn must be shamanic, godly, and pretentious. The creation of native scenes by oral stories and written words forever changes by sound, silence, and scripture. The actual moment of an aesthetic conversion in stories is figurative, an imagic tease of literary mortality."



Introducing Diane Glancy

- Glancy focuses most of her narrative energies examining the insecurities of being a Christian mixedblood woman in the United States, struggling between the varied legacies of her cultures, faiths, and histories.
- Glancy's work is both female-centered and first-person, more personality driven than action-oriented novels. Genres, forms, and voices constantly merge and diver throughout her texts, often in the same narrative, as in her autobiographical collection of vignettes, photos, poems, essays, and lectures, *The West Pole* (1997), as well as her novels *The Mask Maker* (2002) and *Stoneheart: A novel of Sacajawea* (2003).
- There's vulnerability to her work, an insecurity of self that reflects the scattered experiences of many contemporary Cherokees who live far from the lands and cultural centers of their respective communities.
- Glancy is distrustful of firm pronouncements [like a determined vision of Cherokee nationhood and self-determination].
- In *Pushing the Bear*, as thousands walked and experienced the death march of the Removal, so too do many voices speak in this text—a powerful and often discordant din carried through the ages. It's much more a broad range of voices speaking to the experience [of the Trail of Tears]...at least fifty characters are chronicled in the text, both Cherokee and non-Cherokee. Some are collective or of the community...while others are anonymous.

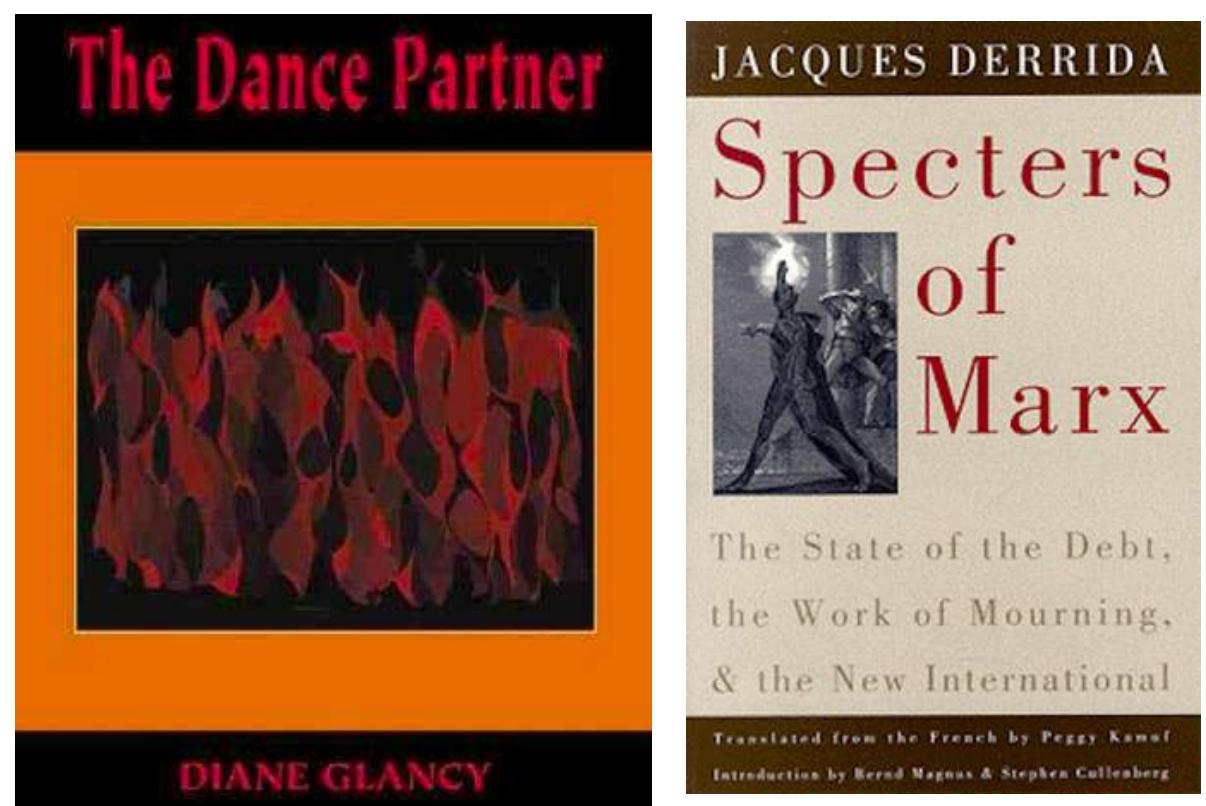
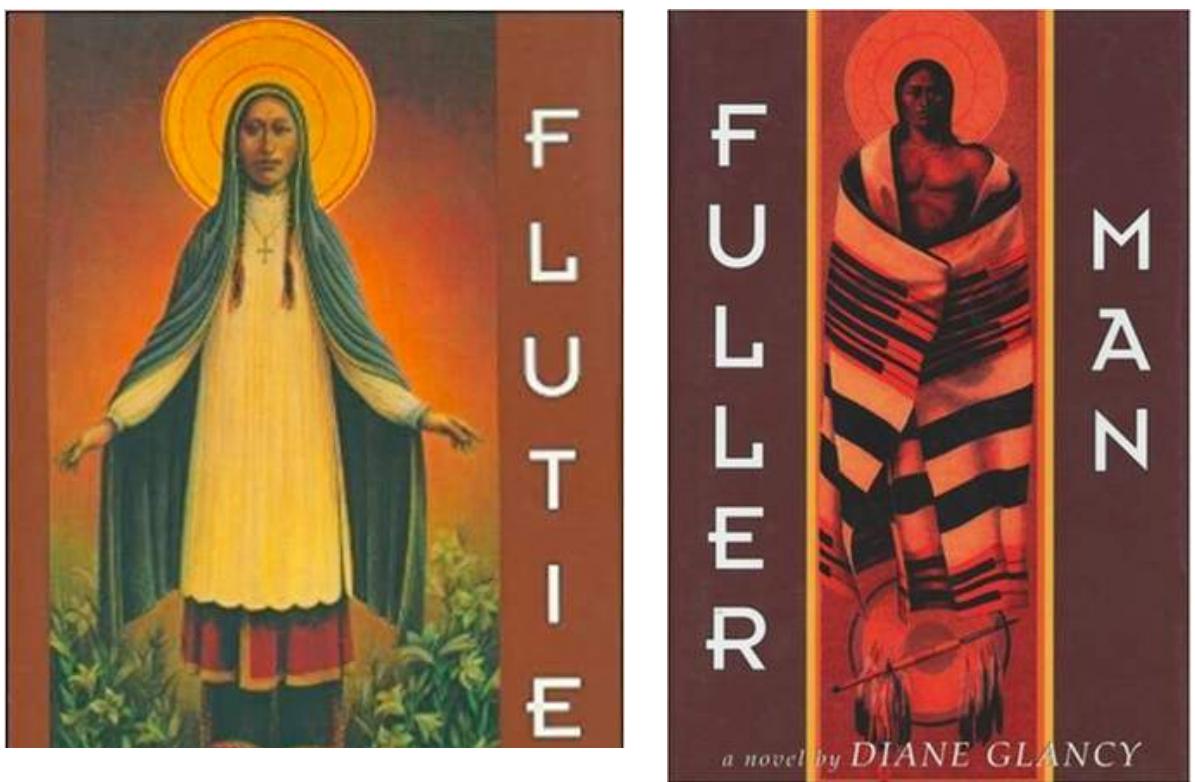


"Ghosts in the Gaps: Diane Glancy's Paradoxes of Survivance," James Mackay

- Mackay writes that Glancy's work can be understood as emblematic of survivance: "both survival and 'more than survival, more than endurance or mere response.'"
- However, he notes the contradictory and troublesome nature of her remarks: "the evangelical and fundamentalist religion that her Christian texts espouse seems alien, closed in thought, and more associated with the medieval Crusades against the 'heretics' of Islam...than with the qualities of imagination and linguistic play so often celebrated in critiques of Native American fiction."
- Mackay accounts for many tropes of **fragmentation** in Glancy's work, including
 - divorce or separation
 - mixed-genre pieces
 - bilingualism/polyvocalism
 - visual experimentation
- Similarly, she yokes together both "the myth of ethnicity" and "the myths of religion," her **paradoxical indeterminate position** never quite settling into a fixity.
- Mackay finds it necessary when reading Glancy's work "to examine a **philosophy of ghosts**" as the novels (*Flutie*, *Fuller Man*, and *The Dancer Partner* among them) often interpolate both Christianity triumphant and a continuous heritage of ghosts' presence. Glancy says of this interpolation: "The old world is gone. But the ghost of it is still here."

"Ghosts in the Gaps: Diane Glancy's Paradoxes of Survivance," James Mackay

- Vizenor is brought in by Mackay to make the case that in Glancy's work exists "a gesture of survivance that, just as in Vizenor's theory, gives an ethical impulse to her work." Mackay does so by writing how Glancy's use of the historical novel allows her confrontation with the history of violence more often occluded by native novelists whose work often centers contemporary native survivance narratives. Thus, Glancy represents "the 'Death *and Return* of the Native."
- As survivance is "an active presence" it functions as **spectral**: "Survivance is a haunting of the text that alters survival, the passive process, turning it into an imaginative act wherein the reader must imagine the fluid, the unimaginable, Native ghost."



"Seven Woodland Crows," Gerald Vizenor

(Anishinaabe-White Earth Nation)

seven woodland crows
stayed all winter
this year
among the white earth trees

down around us on the edge of roads
passing in the eyes of strangers
tribal land wire marked
fox runs under rusting plows

stumps for eagles

white winter savages
with brackish blue eyes
snaring their limbs on barbed wire

brackish winter blood

seven woodland crows
stayed all winter
this year
marking the dead
landmen who ran the woodland
out of breath



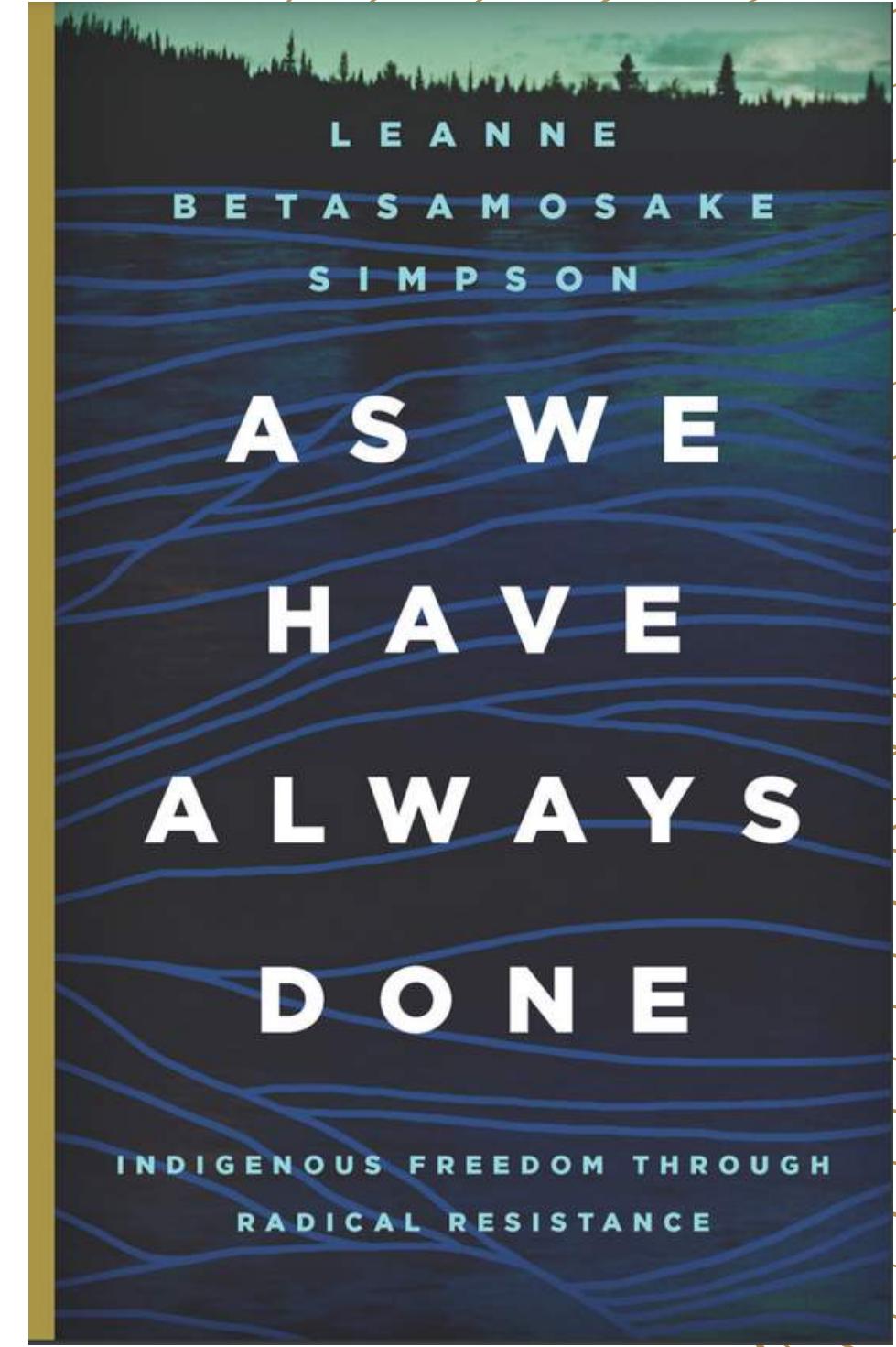
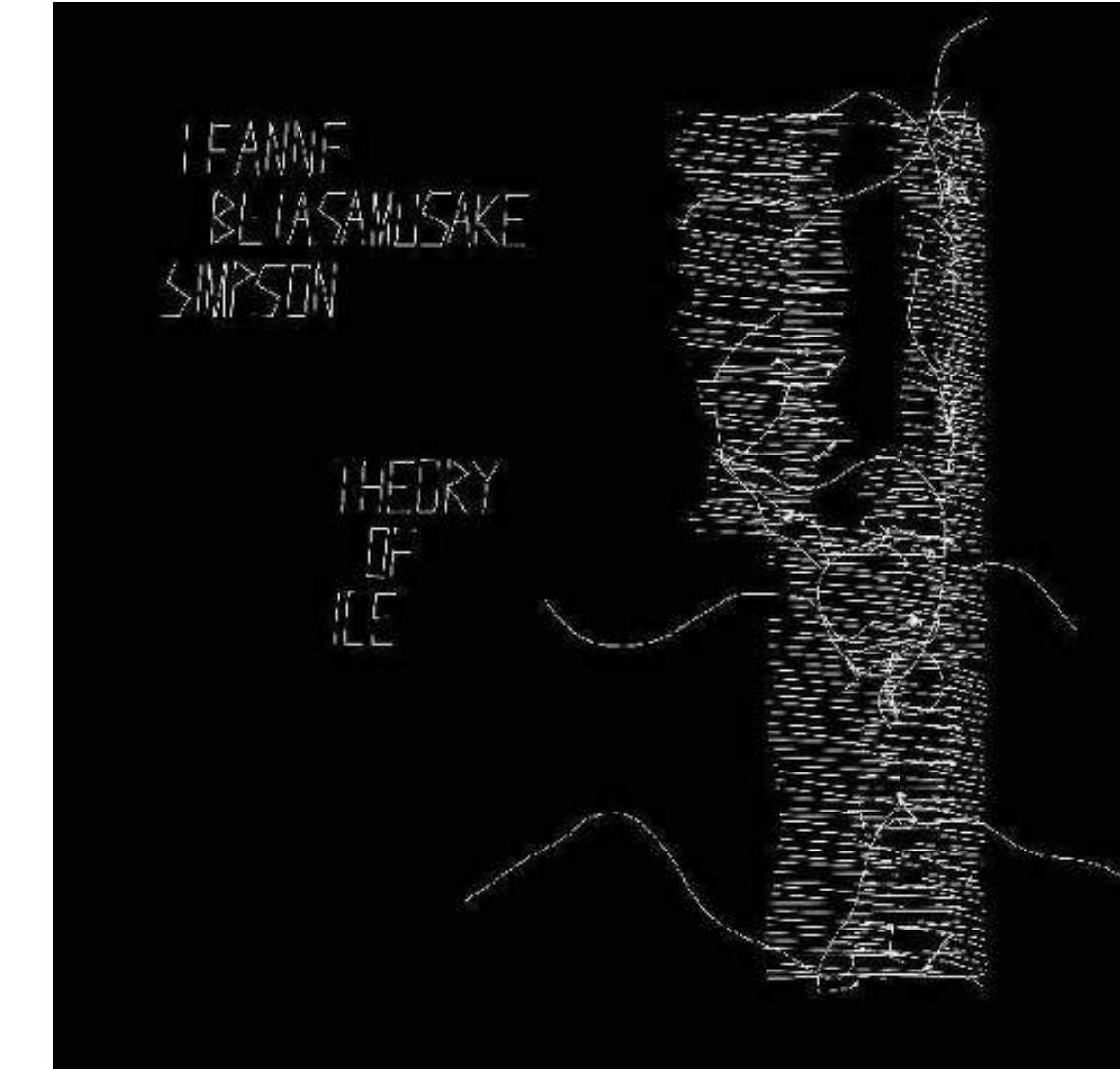
"The Naked Spot: A Journey toward Survivance," Diane Glancy (mixed-race Cherokee)

- "Gerald Vizenor and his idea of survivance ...the history of Vizenor's direction for [native poetry]" matters a lot to Glancy. She writes "writing is how I came to understand the layers of self and its placement between the margins of the worlds. Writing is an act of survivance. It scrapes the edges of a mixed-blood, broken heritage, leaving some of it silent and wrapped in mystery."
- Her chapter seeks to answer "What is this part-Indian heritage? What is this spirit moving in poetry, the breath of the people? What are the roots of native writing? What are its possibilities? What is there in the eternal springs of language that can be used to present the essence that has been covered over with something like naugahide?"
- "Vizenor pokes holes in the identity that others have given to the Indian."
- "It seems to me," she argues, "that Vizenor hopes that native writing will be
 - caught in the very act of refuting the identity it has been given,
 - confounding it with myths and old stories,
 - liberating a manifold meaning,
 - presenting oral tradition in written form,
 - using the English language with more elasticity than anyone thought it had,
 - using language to show what it didn't mean to show,
 - and taking the vacuousness of given meaning to bend existing meaning to fit its means."



Next week...

Keyword: Knowledge



- *Native Studies Keywords* pp. 309-346 (section titled 'Indigenous Epistemologies/Knowledges')
- "Land as Pedagogy" (chapter 9) from *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson