

Lying with Truth: A Fictionalized Confrontation with History

Sundas Tahreem¹

Farheen Ahmed Hashmi²

Khadeeja Mushtaq³

Abstract

Euro Americans have produced biased account of history of suppressed Native Americans in their officially documented version of history in which Native Americans are often misrepresented. Contrary to general perception, Native Americans struggled to survive dominant Euro Americans by reshaping true identity of their own in their official as well as fictive versions of history. The study is, therefore, designed to bring the suppressed Native Americans and their silenced truth to the center. The study is qualitative in nature and the selected text is analyzed through qualitative content analysis technique. Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction has been used to make a comparison between Euro American's officially documented history and historical characters with fictive history and characters presented by Gerald Vizenor. The study is based on the analysis of fiction from American Indian's marginalized perspective. It has been proved with evidence from the selected fictional work that Native American narration of fictive history is more authentic than the official history recorded by powerful Euro Americans. The study finally winds up with recommendations to conduct a comprehensive research based on a comparison between the officially documented histories of Columbus' discovery of America by different Euro American historians with Native American perspective in Gerald Vizenor's fictive history of voyage of Columbus in *The Heirs of Columbus*. Another potent recommendation for future research is to conduct a thorough study on rejection of stereotyping of Native Americans by Euro Americans in *The Heirs of Columbus*.

Keywords: *postmodernism, historiographic metafiction, Euro Americans*

Introduction

History is believed to convey true account about past lives and events. However, it is important to add that it is not a divine record but is written by human beings who may paint accounts according to their ideological leanings. Since, a historian is the only judge of what may be superfluous and hence to be omitted from the history, s/he can no longer be an objective or neutral observer. Historical truth is any historical record, or in more specific terms, any historical perspective, which is supported with

evidence provided by historians. It is also a fact that many historical records about the same event are contradictory to each other because every historian claims to have access to authentic information. Historians also distort facts to construct a national narrative which overwrites the claims of other groups. The motives of historians may vary from personal to political.

Authenticity of history is considered a myth in the postmodern world. Postmodernists believe that historians have the power to marginalize certain facts and highlight some others to manipulate history. Winners and powerful nations can easily manipulate history to promote their desired information and to marginalize the truth that does not suit them. This common practice invites a disbelief in objectivity and authenticity of history. So, history should also be taken as a story as the truth is created in history that makes it of a subjective nature. Porter and Roemer in *The Cambridge Companion to Native American Literature*, quote George Santanya who discusses distortion of history as, "history is always written wrong, and so always needs to be rewritten" (p. 153).

The Native American perspective of history about the origin and ancestry of Columbus through fiction of Gerald Vizenor is explored in the present research. Vizenor presents the Native American perspective of historical truth which has been marginalized by the powerful Euro Americans, in their officially documented history. The study shows that Vizenor's fiction dehistoricizes Euro American historical accounts by rejecting high claims of discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. He presents in his novel that according to Native Americans, Columbus did not discover America but he came back after a long voyage to his native place. The analysis of Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus* is carried out through the literary technique of historiographic metafiction to fictionalize officially documented history by the Euro Americans.

Native Americans' Departure from Euro American's Historical Version

Jace Weaver (2001) has written that Native Americans take discovery of America as a myth of Euro Americans (p. 19). Native Americans claim that they have been living there for thousands of years and are the natives of America. The officially documented histories of Euro Americans are loaded with high claims of discovery by them. However, Native Americans do not agree with the term, discovery. They have a very different truth about the so called grand discovery of America by the great explorer Christopher Columbus. Native Americans take this discovery as invasion. The motive behind his invasion was a lust for power and wealth. American Indian historical accounts revolve around the invasion of Columbus in America rather than discovery of Columbus. They claim that America was a sovereign state at the time of Columbus' invasion.

Native American historians pen down harsh realities about greed and cruelty of Euro Americans. They claim that the hospitality and polite nature of Native Americans made Euro Americans invade their places. They warmly welcomed Euro Americans and this kind and gentle nature of Native Americans gave Euro Americans the reason to invade their territories. De Brown, in *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1971) started his narration of the event of Christopher Columbus' invasion with the letter that Christopher wrote to the King and Queen of Spain. Columbus told them in the letter that the Native Americans were very generous people and they had the custom to receive the strangers in a very good manner. They treated him and his men with honor and presented them the gifts that showed their hospitality. He gave them the name; *Indios* which was spoken differently in different dialects of the white men. The term *Indios* was pronounced differently in different dialects like, *Indien*, *Indianer* or *Indian*. He wrote in his letter the qualities of the people of the New World and their difference from the white ways of life:

So traceable and peaceable are these people . . . that I swear to your Majesties there is not in the world a better nation. They love their neighbors as themselves, and their discourse is ever sweet and gentle . . . it is true that they are naked, yet their manners are decorous and praiseworthy. (p. 1)

De Brown states that Euro Americans took good qualities of Native Americans as their weakness. Euro Americans were convinced that Native Americans should be "made to work" and they should be taught to "adopt Euro American ways of life." Several million Euro Americans tried hard for the next four centuries from 1492-1890 to impose their ways of life on Native Americans. "Columbus kidnapped ten of his friendly Taino hosts and carried them off to Spain, where they could be introduced to the white man's ways" (p. 2).

The Spaniards looted and burned villages, they kidnapped hundreds of men, women and children and shipped them to Europe to be sold as slaves . . . whole tribes were destroyed, hundreds of thousands of people in less than a decade after Columbus set foot on the beach of San Salvador, October 12, 1492. (p. 2)

Jace Weaver, an American Indian writer, writes in his book *Other Words: American Indian Literature, Law and Culture* (2001) that Euro Americans have created many myths about Native Americans and the discovery of America. Some of the myths include Christopher Columbus has discovered America and Native Americans are nomadic savages and the lost tribes of Israel (pp. 17-18). In March 1493, Christopher Columbus reached back to

Spain with the captives who were likely to be human beings but not among Euro Americans. Bible clearly states that there are three continents: Europe, Africa, Asia and all these continents are populated with three sons of Noah after flood so it was difficult to believe that these people belong to Americas. Initially, they believed that these dark skinned people “are the lost tribes of Israel” but later, in 1512, Pope Julius II declared that they are “descendants from Adam and Eve” (p. 18). Weaver further writes that the myth of the discovery and conquest by Euro Americans evidently shows their psyche to rule the world. The reality for Native Americans is contrary to what Euro Americans have presented to the world. Native Americans claim that America was a populated place as a lot of tribes had already been residing there. The use of language is important when he says that America was considered a “virgin place” by the Euro Americans that “was discovered by Columbus” where there were few savages roaming around as they were lost and could not find their way. The reality is totally different because America was more like “a widow” place because the representation of this place by the Euro Americans is not true. They did not “find a wilderness” here but they “created wilderness” by slaughtering a great number of inhabitants and rest of the people died due to the disease, the new comers carried with them. So, in real it was not a “settlement,” but a “resettlement” of the new comers as this place was occupied by the Native Americans previously. He further says conveniently that the myth of discovery by the Euro Americans never conveyed the real story behind this discovery because they have “omitted the facts of slaughtering the Native Americans” (p. 19).

James Adair in *The History of the American Indians* (2005), states that there is a great deal of uncertainty in the origin of tribes and history of Native Americans. He is of the opinion that the history cannot show the real past and historians are responsible for it. Some historians were ignorant of real past events and others were too biased to record the truth. He states that some American Indian tribes had no written language or even engraved record at that time so the rest of the world could only rely on their oral tradition. All the tribes of Indians are the descent of Yanasa (pp. 72-73). Jace Weaver in *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American* (1997) compares Vizenor’s starting point in *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991) with Frantz Fanon’s argument where he states that Europe is invention of the Third World. Weaver states that “it is history turned inside out and then dumped on its head, exposing the fragility and subjectivity of a ‘historical truth’ for all to see” (p. 142). He writes that Vizenor narrates the story of a group of cross-bloods who are descendants of the great explorer Christopher Columbus who came back to the land of his ancestors (p. 143).

Devon A. Mihesuah, in a research article, "Voices, Interpretations, and the 'New Indian History': Comment on the 'American Indian Quarterly's' Special Issue on Writing about American Indians" argues that the issue of historical fact is not just addressed about Native Americans but it is also a point of debate among anthropologists and historians. The representation of "Others" is a very sensitive issue and historians also debate about the definition of "new Indian history." The writer challenges all the historical events narrated by the people in power to question their authenticity by calling it fantasy with the use of exaggeration and calls the historical statistics as illusion (p. 93).

The term, historiographic metafiction is coined by Linda Hutcheon. She has written in her book, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (2001) that narrative representation – fictive and historical – comes under similar subversive scrutiny in the paradoxical postmodern form I would like to call "historiographic metafiction" (p. 15). She is of the opinion that the function of historiographic metafiction is to provide the reader with an opportunity to take a new perspective of past events. To her, it is the process of rewriting history in which the writer feels free to highlight previously marginalized events. "Storytellers can certainly silence, exclude, and absent certain past events—and people—but it also suggests that historians have done the same: where are the women in the traditional histories of the eighteenth century?" (p. 107). She states that creating a blur boundary between history and fiction is also the function of historiographic metafiction. It confronts with the view that truth can be claimed only by history. Hutcheon believes that history and fiction both are discourses which are based on human constructs and the focus of both the discourses remains on the representation of identity. She states that historiographic metafiction aims to tamper with everything and raises questions about the representation of identity (p. 55).

Linda Hutcheon takes postmodernism as "Ahistorical." She has stated in her book, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988) that there is a general agreement of the critics of postmodernism that "the postmodernism is ahistorical" (p. 87). The term "ahistorical" firmly confronts with the notion of authenticity of history. She is of the opinion that history has become a problematic issue in the present era. She believes that for postmodernists, history and fiction both are discourses. Both discourses should be given equal importance because both make sense about the past events. Postmodernists do not take history as a dishonest refuge from truth but they believe in acknowledging human construct that is involved in meaning making (p. 87).

She has asserted in *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989) that postmodernist view suggests that the issue of representation of the past

and fiction raises a question about the source from which we know the past. The importance of the past cannot be denied and one cannot escape or avoid it. Whenever we talk about the past, we must acknowledge the fact of limitation of human knowledge and power relationship. We can know about the past events only through the traces of documents and witnesses. If we acknowledge the limitation of human knowledge and the documents created by human beings and then the witnesses, who are again human beings, then we shall believe in the fact that all past representations are one way or the other, human constructions of narratives and explanations. It shows a desire to understand the present culture in the light of previous representations. In a very real sense, then, the representation of history, ironically, becomes the history of representation (p. 58).

Historiographic Metafiction as a Dawn of New History

Gerald Vizenor's novel, *The Heirs of Columbus* (1991) is evidently "ahistorical" as it confronts with the authenticity of Euro American's version of history in which they have made high claims of discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Vizenor has deconstructed Euro American version of history that traces significant events of the life of Christopher Columbus and his voyage that ended in discovery of America. Vizenor reconstructs it, giving marginalized Native American perspective to the history of the origin of Native Americans and Voyages of Columbus. Vizenor follows the tradition of Euro Americans in his fiction to marginalize all other voices to highlight his own perspective. These claims are based on a purely Native American Perspective about history. Voyages of Columbus are of political nature but Vizenor's fiction presents parody of Euro American version of history by emphasizing on his personal life which has always been left untold by the Euro Americans. Vizenor's deconstructed account of Voyages of Columbus and his life gives central importance to the Native Americans who have always been marginalized by the Euro Americans. Vizenor makes loud claims to subvert officially documented histories about Christopher Columbus and his discovery of America. He strongly disagrees with the Euro-American's claim of discovery of America by Christopher Columbus because they have another version of story about him and his voyages that is based on the return of Columbus to his homeland rather than discovery.

Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction is evident throughout *The Heirs of Columbus* as Vizenor has merged the boundary of fiction and history in his revised fictive history. He starts his story, giving a vivid clue to his readers that the story has links to the officially documented history of Columbus but Vizenor's fictive history shakes the reader's existing knowledge about Columbus' lineage. Vizenor conveys the story of Christopher Columbus through two sources in his novel. The first account of the story is through the journals of Columbus that he used to write to the

King and Queen. This carries the Euro-American version of history. The second account of history is based on the narration of stories by the omniscient narrator of Vizenor's novel. He narrates stories about Columbus and his ancestry to the rest of the characters and the readers get to know about the Native American perspective of history.

Native American fictive account of history by Vizenor establishes that he did not discover America because he came back to his native place. Vizenor's novel revolves around the theme of ancestry of Christopher Columbus. The title of the novel, *The Heirs of Columbus*, also advocates that the novel centers on ancestry and personal life of Columbus. Vizenor promotes the Native American side of the story that counters the Euro-American officially documented history. The omniscient narrator of the novel gives a new historical perspective by telling the readers that Columbus forgot the route while he was on voyage and after some years, he came back to his native place that is misconceived by the Euro-Americans as the discovery of America. In fact, it was coming back to his native place. He landed there because he saw a blue light that was released from the hands of a silent hand talker on the island. He followed the direction of light and arrived there. At first, he thought that he had discovered a new place but later on he realized that it was his native place and he had come back to his own people. Vizenor's postmodern return to history is nostalgic and revivalist because the narrator of Vizenor's novel tells the readers that Columbus is from Anishinaaba tribe which is considered the oldest tribe in the New World of the Native Americans. He writes, ". . . he was an obscure cross blood who bore the tribal signature of survivance" (p. 3). On reaching the island, Columbus unfurled the royal banner and wrote *Guanahani* that was the name he gave to tribal people on the island. At first he started to misrepresent the people he encountered on the island but later on he realized that he belonged to these tribal people. Vizenor establishes this claim in the following line. "He misconstrued tribal pose and later traced his soul to the stories in blood" (p. 4).

Vizenor blurs the boundary of history and fiction when he presents the second version of the same incident with the help of the journal of Christopher Columbus that he used to write for the crown. He wrote in his journal that he landed on the island because of the blue light that was coming from the island. He wrote that he landed there with no missionaries. The island was full of people who had been living like a tribe and he gave a name to that tribe as *Guanahani*. "They all go naked as their mothers bore them" (p. 4). Vizenor's fiction highlights Euro-American prejudice against the Native Americans. He calls them servants in his journal. In fact, they were never his servants; they were living there in their sovereign state. "He was blinded by white sand" (p. 3). He showed his sword to one of those

tribal men and he grabbed the sword from the blade and cut himself that created hostile feelings about him among the tribal people. Christopher Columbus admits in his record of journal that the people on island were peaceful and they did not believe in enforcement of commands. "In order to win their friendship, since I knew they were people to be converted . . . I gave some of them red caps and glass beads which they hung around their necks" (p. 4). Columbus admits that his intention behind his friendship with the Native Americans was not good. He wanted to impose Christianity on them and for that reason he had to win their hearts. He also admits that "they ought to make good and skilled servants, for they repeat very quickly whatever we say to them" (p. 4).

Vizenor makes loud claims in his novel about the lineage of Christopher Columbus to prove him a Native American. The title of the novel also gives a vivid hint to the readers that the novel is dedicated to the ancestry and true lineage of Columbus. Vizenor strengthens his claim by providing his readers the number of heirs of Columbus in the novel. Postmodern historiographic metafiction plays an important role to blur the boundary between history and fiction in the presentation of the number of heirs of Columbus in the novel. It also symbolizes that history and fiction both are discourses and both should be treated equally by giving them equal importance. Vizenor also creates postmodern ambiguity among his readers by telling that the number of heirs of Columbus is a tribal secret but he gives number of tribal heirs of Columbus that he announces as nine but he writes eleven names to reject the ultimate truth and reality:

The number of heirs is a tribal secret, but there were nine who told stories that autumn evening at the stone tavern. Truman Columbus, the shouter, and her spouse with the same names; Bin Columbus and her son Stone; Memphis, the black panther; Gracioso Browne, the panic hole historian; Felipa Flowers, the gorgeous trickster poacher; Caliban, the great white mongrel; Samana, the shaman bear from the Big Island in Lake of the Woods. Miigis, the luminous child, and Admire, the healer who whistled with a blue tongue, were there with Stone and Felipa. (p. 14)

In the revised version of Columbus' historical lineage, Vizenor creates uncertainty in his own narration as well that conveys to the readers that there is always a room for manipulation of history and there cannot be a single reality about the past events. He makes a statement and then he nullifies his own statement by giving a contradictory number of heirs of Columbus in the same paragraph. The above paragraph can be interpreted as the number nine has no fixed meaning for Vizenor because his announcement about nine heirs and writing eleven names conveys the

same message. The readers have no other option except to believe in whatever he has said about the ancestry of Columbus. He also conveys to his readers that the number of the tribal heirs is secret that leaves the readers to assume the number of heirs the way want. It also confirms that history is also subjective and it can be easily manipulated by historians. The narration of heirs of Columbus by Vizenor also highlights Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction that raises questions about the guarantee of meanings. Vizenor's provision of heirs of Columbus also does not have a fixed meaning and Hutcheon sees it as human construction of narration.

Vizenor fictionalizes officially recorded historical background of Christopher Columbus, Mayan civilization and American Indians by making different claims that apparently seem unbelievable. He relates all three of them to each other. He has challenged the historically documented history written by the Euro Americans in the deconstructed fictive history. Vizenor claims in *The Heirs of Columbus* that Native Americans and Mayan share the same genetic signature in blood. He has linked this genetic signature of the great explorer, Christopher Columbus, and by doing this; he owns Jesus Christ and Christopher Columbus. He insists on the claim that Native Americans are the true heirs of Christopher Columbus because both share the same genetic signature in the blood. He not only claims to own Christopher Columbus but he also owns Mayan by establishing that they also share the same signature in blood as of Christopher Columbus being Native American. "The Maya were on our time and we got the same genetic signature from the hand talkers" (p. 26). He does not stop challenging Euro American's official history but he also challenges their religious beliefs by rewriting basics about Christianity and Jesus Christ. He claims that Jesus Christ is also Mayan and asserts that he also belongs to the American Indians. "Jesus Christ and Columbus are Maya" (p. 26). These challenging claims by Vizenor make the Native Americans socially and religiously superior and civilized to Euro Americans. It is believed that civilization started with Mayan and if Mayan belongs to the American Indians, it conveys that civilization started with the Native Americans. Euro Americans in their officially documented history have misrepresented the Native Americans as uncivilized and uneducated. Vizenor's claim rejects both the negative connotations attached to Native Americans as the civilization starts with them and Jesus Christ, who is considered the greatest preacher in Christianity. Hutcheon's statement about the historiographic metafiction becomes authentic and justified in the case of the Native Americans as she believes that representation of history, ironically is the history of representation. Hutcheon's theory gives the researcher enough space to believe that there is also a possibility that Vizenor's claims in his fictive account of history is based on truth because he has provided his readers

logical links to convey his point of view. History and fiction both are written by human beings and if the readers can believe in one perspective based on the history written by the Euro Americans, they also can believe in another perspective based on fiction written by the Native Americans. Native Americans believe in stories and their authenticity of the knowledge is also based on remembering tribal stories rather than fragmented data arranged with some rational speculations. They are very particular in remembering the stories for their next generations and they take it as their responsibility to remember them to convey the original, unchanged stories to their people. Vine Deloria, Jr., a historian and anthropologist, in his book, *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* also establishes the importance of the Native Americans' oral tradition. He states: "Non-Western, tribal equivalence of science is the oral tradition, the tradition that has been passed down from generation to the next over uncounted centuries" (p. 36). He further states that in larger American Indian communities, the function of narration of stories is performed by the tribal elders. "There is no one person who could remember all the information about the trivial past, the religious revelations and the complex knowledge of physical world" (p. 33).

Vizenor then matures the claim that Jesus Christ belongs to the Native Americans with the narration of the past which is conveyed to the readers by the heirs of Christopher Columbus, who have been presented as major characters of his novel. They are used as a mouthpiece of Vizenor for conveying the same claim that Jesus Christ belongs to this nation. He makes the same claim about Jesus Christ using Felipa Flower: a hand talker shaman who heals with blue radiance and blue wooden puppets. She is also among one of the heirs of Columbus hand talker. She tells the readers that "Jesus returned in a burst of blue radiance" (p. 26). Stone Columbus is also among the heirs of Columbus and he continues with the same claim by saying that "his shroud bears our stories" (p. 26). Stone Columbus has also been presented as the heir of Christopher Columbus in the novel. Stone's statement about Jesus Christ's shroud has been logically linked to stories on two levels. Firstly, stories have been used as a metaphor to create an association of the Native Americans with Jesus Christ. Stories in blood have also been presented as signature in blood for the Native Americans. If Christ's shroud bears the stories then there is no doubt that he belongs to the Native Americans as stories have religious significance for the Native Americans. Secondly, the claim of Stone regarding shroud of Christ has also been logically connected to stories as shroud is the eternal piece of cloth for the dead ones. It remains with the body everlastingly. Native Americans are obsessed with remembering the stories with their original details to make them eternal for their coming generations. They keep on repeating their stories to keep them original. The stories are also remembered by the

American Indians for good, the way shroud remains with the body endlessly. Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction is evident in claims of Vizenor where he presents a discourse that counters the Euro American history about Christopher Columbus and Jesus Christ. The discourse raises a question about the authenticity of the source from which we know the past. His fiction has silenced a historical truth, highlighting the importance of oral tradition of Native Americans as narration of stories has religious significance for them. Thus, his fictive history enjoys an important place as he relates all the details to support his argument by giving them Native American taste of beliefs and religion. Vine Deloria, in his book, *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* also gives the same message about the source from which people know about past. He draws a comparison of Old Testament with the oral tradition saying that "the Old Testament was once an oral tradition until it was written down" (p. 36).

Vizenor's version of deconstructed history of the great explorer conveys a different perspective about Christopher Columbus' personal life as well. His narration of Columbus' story parodies the officially documented history recorded by the Euro Americans. Binn Columbus: another heir of Columbus, who has been presented as the mother of Stone Columbus in fictive history of Vizenor, highlights some facts about Columbus' life which have never been addressed by the Euro Americans in their officially documented histories. Binn states that "Columbus was a bad shadow, tired and broken because he lost most of his body parts on the way, so the old shamans heated some stones and put them back together again"(p. 19). Vizenor's story is interesting as it conveys as if the Native Americans are blessed with some mystic powers. He claims that Columbus was broken when he reached the island and his body parts were put together and healed by the Native American shamans. The way Vizenor narrates the event of Columbus' recreation and the process of healing of his body parts by shamans seems to be a magical phenomenon and it gives the feeling as if Columbus was not a human being but was an object made of plastic body that was mended by the Native Americans on the island. The way of claiming the explorer to belong to them by telling the readers that he was actually created by the Native Americans reinforces the theme of genetic signature and survivance of Columbus that challenges traditionally accepted knowledge about the voyage of Columbus:

. . . a new belly for the explorer, and shin, the bone shaman, called in a new leg from the underworld, and he got an eye from the sparrow woman, so you might say that we created this great explorer from our own stones at the tavern. (p. 19)

Vizenor has visibly dealt with historical account of broken treaties by the Euro Americans and their cheating on the lands of the Native Americans in *The Heirs of Columbus*. He makes an obvious reference from history of broken treaties when he narrates the story of Luster Browne. Vizenor deconstructs the history of the broken treaties and deception by giving a positive outcome of cheating on the ancestral lands of the Native Americans. In actual history, the Native Americans suffered heavily in results of the deceit. Treaties were violated because the Native Americans did not know the English language so it was easy for the Euro Americans to manipulate treaties. The interpreters were also Euro Americans and Native Americans did not have any system of recording. Native Americans suffered deeply due to these handicaps. They were removed forcefully from their ancestral lands and then they were forced to move onto reservations like nomads. They did not have even the basic necessities of life. Vizenor does not take this fraud as destructive but it is constructive for the Native Americans. He presents Luster Browne as a representative of the Native Americans, who is shown as one of the victims of that fraud by the Euro Americans. Luster Browne is an old man in the fictive history of Vizenor and the fraud has been given a positive facet as it leads to the spiritual growth of the old man. He was helpless in the hands of the Euro American's lust for riches and he could not do anything but shout on this unfortunate incident. He was among those Native Americans who were cheated on land allotments. In the beginning, he shouted at the federal agents, priests and everybody whom he could get an access to but it did not benefit him. Gradually, he realized that there was no use of shouting at them, so, he started to shout in deserted places and into the holes in meadows. In the state of utter despair and frustration, he started to shout in meadows and concrete holes to release his pain. "The old men cheated out of their land, became tricksters, and some shouted into **panic holes**" (p. 23). The people on the reservation were witness to his anxiety and desperate shouts and they started to name the holes in which he shouted as panic holes. The time kept on passing and there was a time that the tribal people and Luster Browne noticed that plants and meadows grew in result of his shouts. He became a noble old man as ultimately, he became the healer of plants and flowers. Vizenor narrates this magical event in the following lines:

The Baron of Patronia, a distant great uncle who became a noble man in a land allotment hoax, was the original shouter on his reservation. Luster Browne, as he was known to the tribe, mediated with shouts over panic holes, and he became a gardener by chance because flowers bloomed on the beds and meadows that heard his shouts. (p. 23)

His fame for healing vegetation and plants spread all around and the Euro Americans also knew the worth of this old man for his exceptional power. They offered him a handsome amount of money in return of tape recording for his shouts. There are two important points to be noted here. First, he not only earned money from the same Euro Americans who cheated him on his land. Second, apart from money, he also earned respect and honor by the Euro Americans for his extraordinary healing powers. Previously, these were the people who were responsible for his pain and agony, now they are the people who need him for their benefit, accepting his superiority over their advanced agricultural techniques. As a token of their acknowledgement for his extraordinary powers, they made him the first “Baron on the reservation.” As Gerald Vizenor states in another book of his, *Hotline Healers: An Almost Browne Novel* (1997) that “he became the noble man and the first baron in reservation histories and by the order of the president of the United States” (p. 12). He was made baron of Patronia. Vizenor does not take illegal and unlawful act of deprivation of the rightful lands of the Native Americans by the Euro Americans as the reason of constant despair for the Native Americans but he takes it to be constructive. It helped Luster Browne for his spiritual growth by mediating on shouts to get unusual healing powers for foliage. This healing was not limited to vegetation, plants and flowers but Vizenor also mentions that human beings were also healed with his shouts. The noble act of healing continued even after his death as “the Minnesota Headwaters Commission and Golden Gate Park in San Francisco erected two bronze statues of the tribal shouter, one in each state” (p. 24). To the readers’ surprise, Vizenor reveals that the statues continued to heal human beings and foliage after his death. I can just marvel on the powers of man who is no more but even after his death, his spirit wanders around his statues to heal the foliage and the human beings.

The events of the officially documented histories of Christopher Columbus’ voyages have been rewritten by Vizenor in his *The Heirs of Columbus* in many ways. Three ships **Santa Maria**, **Nina** and **Pinta** were given to Christopher Columbus by the king and queen for his voyages to discover wealth and find out the shortest route to Indies. These three ships serve a different purpose in the revised history of voyages of Columbus in Vizenor’s fiction, i.e., to mingle the boundary between fiction and history. Vizenor entitles his first chapter of the novel as Santa Maria Casino. Santa Maria was the largest of three ships which were given to Columbus by the crown on his first voyage. That historical ship converted into a flagship “casino” for games on the international borders and is run by the Native Americans for their entertainment and their financial growth. Vizenor challenges the historical account of the Euro-Americans with this conversion of an object which has a great significance in history. He has deconstructed

the concept of the ship used during the voyage. In historical account, the Native Americans relate to Santa Maria with a negative feeling as it was used against them to invade and enslave them. Thus, Santa Maria was a symbol of destruction and pain for the Native Americans because it was used by Columbus to invade their land. Vizenor, in his novel, reconstructs symbolic ties related to ship and converts it into a casino that works in favor of the Native Americans. Stone Columbus is used as a mouthpiece by Vizenor to tell the readers that Santa Maria Casino earns in millions which is used for the betterment of American Indians. "The casino was an enormous barge that has been decked for games" (p. 6). There were two other ships as well which were given to Christopher Columbus by the king and queen for his voyages. They were named as Nina and Pinta. Vizenor also challenges the officially documented history of the Euro Americans in his fiction by converting these two ships into a "restaurant" and "tax free market" respectively. All the three ships were considered as symbols of plight and inconvenience for the Native Americans but Vizenor has rewritten the historical context of these ships. Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction becomes obvious in Vizenor's construction of meanings of the historical ships of the Euro Americans, which work for social and economic benefits and advancement of the Native Americans to improve their image worldwide. His conversion conveys a significant message that history is not objective and there is no concept of ultimate truth in the universe. Different people have their different interpretations about the same historical account as past is conveyed through some source, which can be countered also. Fictive history of Vizenor affirms that if the Euro America's account of Christopher Columbus can be authentic, the Native American fictive account of the same historical account can also be authentic.

Conclusive Discussion

This research was carried out to examine Gerald Vizenor's novel, *The Heirs of Columbus* with the perspective of post modern historiographic metafiction. The study was conducted to make a point that history and fiction both are written by human beings and both are not divine. Human beings are prone to errors and they can also manipulate history and fiction, both. The analysis shows that if both have a tendency to bear subjectivity then both should be given equal importance. Fiction is generally considered imaginative so it is not thought to be authentic.

The present research has proved with evidence from the text and by reviewing the literature that the history of discovery of America by Columbus and the historical background of the Native Americans that is written by the Euro Americans is subjective. The study asserts after careful analysis of fictive history written by Vizenor and official history of the Native American historians that there can be many versions of the same historical

event. The researchers have analyzed in detail the ancestry of Christopher Columbus, his historical event of discovery of America and history of the Native Americans in general with fictive history of Vizenor to highlight the Native American stance about history. The focal point of research was to bring into limelight the Native American perspective of history by highlighting a marginalized truth from the American Indian viewpoint. This research paper demonstrates that Vizenor has addressed history to highlight a silenced truth in his fictive history. He has used his fiction as a tool to present the marginalized perspective of history. The research also points out that there is no obvious boundary between history and fiction and both contain subjective knowledge because both are written by human beings. The study, therefore, discards historical truth to bring fictive truth into focus in the selected novel of Gerald Vizenor. This research has been exclusively designed to highlight the Native American side of the truth which was previously marginalized. It has been traced out in the course of the study that Vizenor has rewritten the history of Columbus' first voyage in *The Heirs of Columbus* and he has filled the gaps of history by addressing marginalized truth. The analysis of the selected text for study brought into limelight the American Indian truth about the great discovery by Columbus which is altogether different from the Euro American officially documented historical account. Gerald Vizenor has denied "the great discovery" of Christopher Columbus by claiming that it was not a discovery but a "coming back to the homeland." The researcher has made a point that Native American fictive history is more authentic because there are many evidences of the Native American side of the truth in the novel which are supported with historical accounts of different Native American historians as well. It is also proved with evidence from the text that the Euro Americans have misrepresented the Native Americans in their historical accounts. The study presents a comparison based on the evidence from the text to give a real picture of the Native Americans that is positive in nature to discard the dark picture of the Native Americans presented by the Euro Americans.

Prospects for Future Research

In the limited time frame and study of this research, the researchers identified many areas in the selected novel that need further exploration because they have been presented in detail by the writer. These areas need a detailed study in the backdrop of postmodernism because in the present research it was not possible to incorporate every aspect of these areas. So, following are recommended for the future research:

1. A comprehensive study based on a comparison between the officially documented histories of Columbus' discovery of America by different Euro American historians with the Native American

perspective in Gerald Vizenor's fictive history of Voyage of Columbus in *The Heirs of Columbus*.

2. A thorough study for rejection of stereotyping of the Native Americans by the Euro Americans in *The Heirs of Columbus*.

Notes

¹ Postmodernism: Subversion of the belief of ultimate reality. It asserts that there is no definite truth and this belief of uncertainty invites subjectivity (*Postmodernism: A very short introduction, 2002*).

² Historiographic Metafiction: Deconstruction of history by bringing multiple voices in fiction from history through parody, irony, and humor (*A poetics of postmodernism: History, theory, fiction, 2005*).

³ Euro Americans: All those Europeans who came to the North American continent and settled there. Euro American and white have been used interchangeably in the study.

⁴ Stories in Blood: Ancestral memories of American Indians (*The heirs of Columbus, 1991*).

⁵ Panic holes: Luster Browne used to shout at the holes, into meadows or even concrete. He shouted and shouted to heal himself for the loss of and fraud on the land that was done by the Euro Americans. He shouted at priests, renounced the mission, sneered at federal agents and despite their censure of his intractable nature; he became a noble man, the first baron of the reservation and by the order of the president of the United States (*Hotline healers: An almost browne novel, 1997*).

References

- Adair, J. (2005). *The history of the American Indians*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Brown, D. (1971). *Bury my heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian history of the American West*. New York, NY: Sterling Innovation.
- Deloria, V. (1995). *Red earth, white lies: Native Americans and the myth of scientific fact*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing.
- Fischer, D. H. (1970). *Historians' fallacies: Toward a logic of historical thought*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Hutcheon, L. (1986). The politics of postmodernism: Parody and history. *Cultural Critique*, (5), 179-207.
- Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A poetics of postmodernism: History, theory, fiction*. London: Routledge.
- Hutcheon, L. (1989). *The politics of postmodernism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hutcheon, L. (1992). The complex functions of irony. *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 16, 219-234.
- Mihesuah, A. D. (1996). Voices, interpretations, and the 'new Indian history': Comment on the 'American Indian quarterly's special issue on writing about American Indians. *American Indian Quarterly*, 20(1), 91-108.
- Porter, J., & Roemer, M. K. (2005). *The Cambridge companion to Native American literature*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Vizenor, G. (1991). *The heirs of Columbus*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Weaver, J. (2001). *Other words: American Indian literature, law and culture*. Oklahoma, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Vizenor, G. (1991). *The heirs of Columbus*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Vizenor, G. (1997). *Hotline healers: An almost brown novel*. Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press.
- Weaver, J. (1997). *That the people might live: Native American literatures and Native American community*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.