Ecocritic Patrick Murphy, examining the bases for environmental destruction in *Literature, Nature, and Other*, observes that the reification of nature and culture as commodities for consumption by individuals who conceive themselves to be “radically independent” from both rests on a culturally specific “conceptualiz[ation] [of] reality by means of models utilizing discrete components”. This worldview insists on the opposition of culture to nature and requires the suppression of not only other worldviews that understand all aspects of reality to be interdependent, but also the implications of contemporary scientific research that suggests a co-evolutionary model in which nature and culture have a dialogic relationship. This new model suggests, in Murphy’s words, that “culture ... arise[s] from nature even as nature is shaped by culture”.¹ Anishinaabe² writer Gerald Vizenor, in his 1991 novel *The Heirs of Columbus*, blends indigenous oral traditions and worldviews with contemporary science (including field theory, genetics, and holographics) to develop such a dynamic, co-evolutionary model of wholeness. Like other Native American novels that James Ruppert examines in *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*, *The Heirs of Columbus* is a “mediational” text that “uses the epistemological frameworks of Native American and Western cultural tradition to illuminate and enrich each other”.³ *The Heirs of Columbus* works, in the words of the novel itself, to heal the “wounds of colonialism” inflicted on the

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² Anishinaabe (plural: Anishinaabeg) is the original name of the people also known as Ojibways or Chippewas.
indigenous peoples of the Americas, as well as EuroAmerica’s own “culture of death”, by “mak[ing] the world tribal, a universal identity, and return[ing] to other values as measures of human worth, such as the dedication to heal rather than steal tribal cultures”.

Critical studies of Native American literatures tend to be limited to the fields of Native American or ethnic studies, nor does critical work within those fields attend in much depth to the use of science by Native writers. More often than not, critics position Native Americans and their texts against science, reading their work in dichotomous terms that oppose indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies of interconnection and wholeness to a Western linear, dualistic, and reductionist episteme of destruction and domination. Indeed, much of the fiction and poetry written by Native Americans has engaged in the important work of exposing, critiquing, and subverting the dominant culture’s deployment of scientific and technological violence against Native Americans and the natural world. However, as David L. Moore demonstrates in his essay “Decolonializing Criticism”, such binary oppositions can also work to re-inscribe narratives of victimization that understand cultural contact only in terms of either assimilation or resistance.

Gerald Vizenor is one among several contemporary Native American writers (including notably Leslie Marmon Silko, Linda Hogan, and Carter Revard) whose work engages complementarities between the worldviews of indigenous oral traditions and the vision of reality emerging from the postmodern sciences of relativity theory, quantum mechanics, and particle physics to suggest new ways of knowing the world that are informed by both Native and Western perspectives. These new epistemologies offer the potential to heal rifts between cultures, as well as between nature and culture, science and literature.

Like Emily Hicks’ critical text Border Writing (also published in 1991), Vizenor’s novel suggests a holographic model for reading what Hicks calls “border texts” as multidimensional, dynamic

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4 Gerald Vizenor, The Heirs of Columbus, Hanover: NH, 1991, 84, 3, 162 (further page references will be given in the text).