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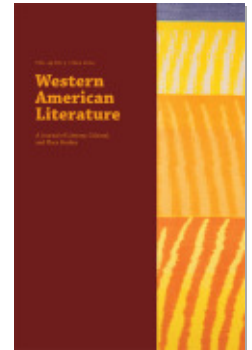
*Sunland* by Don Waters (review)

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ticipation lies in what he makes of the seal meat. Lopez visits and writes about other places and peoples in order to evoke memories of the times when “loving behavior” was possible: “a person hears the story and they remember who they are, or who they want to become” (35). His fiction and nonfiction join the struggle for environmental and social justice by recalling the all-too-often forgotten capacity in people to do good work with humility and compassion.

Jason Hertz

*University of Nebraska–Lincoln*

Don Waters, *Sunland*. U of Nevada P, 2013. 208 pp. \$25.95.

*Sunland*, Don Waters’s debut novel, takes us through an American Southwest that, though fictional, couldn’t feel more real. It begins with thirty-three-year-old Sidney Dulaney’s recent move from Massachusetts to Arizona to start over after a failed relationship and an abandoned career as a high school English teacher, in order to help Nana, the grandmother who raised him. When the book begins, Sidney is already in charge of Nana’s financial situation and has determined a need for change. As a result he has begun driving to Mexico to procure the prescription drugs on which she and everyone in her assisted living facility depends. While this seems a frugal and well-intentioned idea, there are rules to running drugs—even legal ones—between Arizona and Mexico, and soon Sydney’s trips catch the attention of Diego, who works for one of the cartels and whose boss demands a cut.

Before we are dragged into the wild world of the cartels, however, we get to know the residents of Paseo del Sol, the assisted living facility where Nana resides. Through the characters who depend on him we also get to know Sidney, his limitations (he tends to take an opiate himself here and there), but also his capacity for warmth and humanity—whether he is watching games with Epstein or taking Ms. Wetherbee to a meeting for drug addicts, even if it does mean a slight drop in profits. Sidney’s close relationship with his grandmother and his situation as an only grandchild put him in a position of authority and vulnerability; he can predict the eventual end of everyone at Paseo del Sol. It is Nana who tells Sydney to get

on with his life, that helping her is a convenient excuse not to have a real life. Nevertheless, it is not Nana's advice but the combination of a tenuous relationship with a new girlfriend, an enduring friendship with a roommate, his concern for animal welfare, and a desire to do the right thing that ultimately makes Sydney grow up.

*Sunland* stands out as a book that takes clichés of the American Southwest—drug and human smugglers, fancy retirement homes, and the promise of escape—and brings them fully into literary fiction in a believable way. Sidney himself is particularly well realized, from his occasional moments of weakness to his next-door-neighbor ordinariness.

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Gerald Vizenor, *Chair of Tears*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2012.  
138 pp. \$16.95.

The tricky, rapid vignettes that comprise *Chair of Tears*, Gerald Vizenor's novel of "native survivance," create an unsettling narrative, rich in irony, inversion, and, veiled behind the twisted mantras of academic discourse, invective. The stories and character sketches are told by an unnamed cousin of the novel's central figure, Captain Shammer, grandson of the legendary and mercurial Captain Eighty (nicknamed, indeed, for the atomic number of mercury), and Quiver, a "native maven of poker scenes" (1), who raised their family on a houseboat on Lake Itasca, the headwaters of the Mississippi River in northern Minnesota. Much of the novel's activity, though, takes place in the almost farcical Department of Native American Indian Studies at a semifictionalized version of the University of Minnesota. Captain Shammer, having "never applied, auditioned, or petitioned for the position," much less attended a university at all, is nevertheless appointed as the seventh department chair after six failed appointments in as many years (23). This endowed chair is the eponymous "Chair of Tears."

The novel proceeds to relate stories of Captain Shammer's ironic—often hilarious—reforms of the department, ranging from