

SCOTT RICHARD LYONS, ed., *The World, the Text, and the Indian: Global Dimensions of Native American Literature* (Albany: State U of New York P, 2017), 330 pp.

The collection of critical essays *The World, the Text, and the Indian* edited by Scott Richard Lyons is a noteworthy contribution to the fields of Native Studies, transnationalist American studies and postcolonialism. The title evokes Edward Said's 1983 essay "The World, the Text, and the Critic," and suggests that Said's "call [...] to historicism" (Lyons 15) in literary criticism is programmatic for the collection and serves as a point of departure toward new critical horizons: the replacement of 'critic' with 'Indian' in the title indicates a shift in the center toward Indigenous perspectives. The main goal of the collection is to present, as three-dimensionally as possible, an Indigenous-centered critical gaze at the world as well as an Indigenous awareness of the world's different nations looking back, from the immediate beginnings of contemporary globalization in the middle of the nineteenth century to the present moment. As all contributors show in their own way, this Indigenous transnational perspective is reflected in artistic output, from early travel writing to photography, contemporary novels and poetry, and even legal documents. Lyons states in his introduction "Globalizing the Word" that "Native American literature has always been [...] a global enterprise. It deals with the world, not simply the tribe or nation" (13). What makes Lyons's collection so interesting is that it not only broadens the scope of transnationalist studies and re-defines its center(s), but that it also offers an academically sophisticated retrospective on the past three decades of Native American literary criticism in light of the challenges of a global scene of American and postcolonial studies. *The World, the Text, and the Indian* will undoubtedly become an important resource for both students and scholars in the fields.

The chapters of the collection came out of the symposium *Globalizing the Word: Transnationalism and the Making of Native American Literature* at the University of Michigan in May 2013 and can be understood as critical explorations of what transnationalism means and has meant for Native American studies. As Lyons already clarifies in his introduction, globalization creates difference and transnationalism is a movement to overcome it, which

requires constant shifts between perceived centers and margins. This movement is mirrored in the over-arching methodological framework outlined in the introduction: underlying *The World, the Text, and the Indian* is an awareness of "the dialectics of global indigeneity in the twenty-first century" (7). With contributions from such illustrious scholars and artists as Gerald Vizenor, Arnold Krupat, and Chadwick Allen, Lyons's book performs a synthesis—as a starting point for new discussion—of critical positions within Native studies that have been considered antithetical and mutually exclusive, namely nationalism and cosmopolitanism. Despite series editor Jace Weaver's curious offhand remark in his foreword that nationalism has clearly "won" (xiii) the decades-long struggle in Native American studies, the sum of academically sophisticated contributions in Lyons's book demonstrates that looking for a victor or loser of the debate warps the real issue, namely that the challenge of the discipline has always been to overcome colonialism, not each other.

The editor's attempt to produce a critically balanced volume featuring contributions from specialists in a variety of sub-disciplines of Native studies can only be called a success. The collection includes two chapters on critical theory and contemporary Native literature (Arnold Krupat, Chadwick Allen), one on Natives and early colonial literary production (Matt Cohen), two on modernist Natives and their literary representation/representation in literature (Gerald Vizenor, Lyons), one on Natives in early modernist photography (Kate Flint), two on transnationalism in contemporary Native American literature (Philip H. Round, Eric Cheyfitz), and one on the global dimensions of anti-colonial law (Elvira Pulitano). Lyons's introduction and Shari Huhndorf's afterword round off the discussions: Lyons does so by clearly and concisely stating the objectives and outlining the critical framework for the collection, and Huhndorf by adding a discussion of the role of gender and highlighting that "the subject of sexual violence" (292) will constitute a particular challenge to Native studies in the future, and that scholars in the field will benefit from a transnational perspective. The volume opens with "Empire Treasons: White Earth and the Great War," a long chapter by scholar and novelist Gerald Vizenor who, true to his dictum to put Natives back in history, walks readers through the first decades of the twentieth century by

presenting historic moments through the Native historical perspective he develops in his novel *Blue Ravens*. To have Vizenor's piece spearhead the essay collection can be understood as what Krupat, in his own chapter, calls a "strategic" (66) decision comparable to Weaver, Womack and Warrior opening their *American Indian Literary Nationalism* with a reprint of Simon Ortiz' famous 1981 essay on "National Indian Literature" (Krupat 66). It is a statement on both Vizenor's influential oeuvre and on the direction of Native American literary criticism as the editor understands it. Vizenor's work has always highlighted the impact of global events on Native people, and vice versa. Lyons's suggestion to read Vizenor's chapter as a "companion text" (14) to his historical fiction indicates that Vizenor's recent work, particularly his trilogy of historical novels on Natives in the First and Second World War—*Blue Ravens* (2014), *Native Tributes* (2018), and a third sequel forthcoming in 2019—set the tone for the transnational perspective in Native studies that Lyons envisions in his collection.

Vizenor's opening chapter also constitutes an interesting contrast to Weaver's foreword and illustrates the book's program of exploring the "dialectics" (Lyons 7) at the heart of Native American studies: Vizenor has been considered the most notable proponent of a position Krupat has termed 'Native cosmopolitanism' and his perspective is juxtaposed with—indeed, *supported by*—Weaver, a self-declared nationalist, when the latter states in his foreword that "transnationalism is a capacious enough umbrella to shade both nationalists and cosmopolitans alike" (xii). Highlighting the difference and celebrating the conversation between these mutually complementing critical positions is the object of Arnold Krupat's chapter "Native American Literary Criticism in Global Context," in which he outlines the critical discourse surrounding his own terminology in Native American literary criticism throughout the past decades. Krupat's piece is an insightful retrospective in which he also evaluates statements and interpretations made by other scholars, and he offers his opinions playfully, which only enhances the critical sophistication of his essay. Certainly, while Vizenor puts Native people back in historical accounts, Krupat puts Native people back in global American studies by outlining how they helped shape the field.

Krupat's chapter is followed by three chapters on Native literary archives in the context of globalism. In "'Between Friends and Enemies': Moving Books and Locating Native Critique in Early Colonial America," Matt Cohen gives insight into early Indigenous book history, questioning the idea of books being considered unequivocally 'good' and centers of liberation and border-crossing. His article is an interesting read especially for literary critics who tend to ignore—or at least, be ignorant of—publication histories and the fact that books are a "performance" rather than a "technology" (111): as Cohen argues, they "take on their meanings through events and acts" (111). In the subsequent chapter entitled "'The Search Engine': Traversing the Local and the Global in the Native Archive," Phillip H. Round also considers Native American literature as a "praxis" (he derives the term from Robert Warrior). He explores historical examples for the characters' identity quest in Sherman Alexie's 2004 short story "The Search Engine," and thus demonstrates that Native American literature not only expresses awareness of transnational movements, but that Natives have always participated in the latter. Lyons, in his own article entitled "Migrations to Modernity: The Many Voices of George Copway's *Running Sketches of Men and Places, in England, France, Germany, Belgium, and Scotland*," represents modern Natives as "global [travelers]" (147) who "thrive in a modern world" (147). Lyons is suspicious of contemporary academic stereotypes of Native environmentalism and tribal purity. His article positions controversial Ojibwe author George Copway as a Native progressive and historical example of the fact that Native identities and lives have always included transnational dimensions. The 1860 (ca.) photograph of Copway in a headdress and clutching a book that is reprinted in Lyons's article is also on the cover of *The World, the Text, and the Indian*. As Lyons describes in the caption, the photograph is "[a] visual example of a nineteenth-century Ojibwe cosmopolitanism" (149). As cover artwork, the photograph can be understood as a visualization of the book's program to capture the global and transnational condition of Natives and their—to borrow Lyons' concluding statement on Copway—"audacious ability to [...] refashion his native identity without fear of impurity, and to open himself to new voices in a dialogical spirit" (175).

In “Emerging from the Background: Photographic Conventions, Stereotypes, and the Ordinarity of the Indian,” Kate Flint traces the transnational gaze at photographic representations of Natives in the nineteenth and early twentieth century with particular focus on the objects’ “surround,” a term she borrows from James Elkins. Eric Cheyfitz argues that a working-class solidarity and anti-colonial resistance are not antithetical in his chapter “Reading Global Indigenous Resistance in Simon Ortiz’s *Fight Back*.” Using the example of Ortiz’s poetry Cheyfitz shows how “a working-class historical consciousness” can be “generated through the Indigenous experience of kinship” (234), but often becomes disrupted by colonial racism, which, Cheyfitz hints, makes an uprising against the dominant colonial order less likely. In “Productive Tensions: Transnational, Trans-/Indigenous,” Chadwick Allen juxtaposes the transnational with his term *trans-Indigenous* and does an exemplary reading of LeAnne Howe’s autobiographical story “I Fuck Up in Japan” (2013). To Allen, the categories are not antithetical or mutually exclusive, but an awareness of both makes a more informed, critical perspective possible. In the final article of the collection, Elvira Pulitano turns to the 2006 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and evaluates legal discourses on human rights in light of cosmopolitanism. Pulitano applauds the declaration, but she also warns readers from maintaining too simplistic a view of human rights. In her insightful article, she demonstrates the importance of inquiring into the underlying concepts of the human in Western legal discourses noting that even cosmopolitanism must be decolonized to include Indigenous people and other ethnicities.

As this short overview over the nine high-quality chapters shows, *The World, the Text, and the Indian* is a valuable contribution to transnationalism precisely because it complicates the term and offers a balanced selection of different positions within the field of Native American studies, some positively inclined or embracing the concept, others wary of potentially assimilationist undertones. However, all authors seem to agree on certain positions: first of all, that academic conversation is necessary and must be attempted, regardless of differing, or even antithetical political positions. Second, that Indigenous people have always been active agents of globalism. Third, that they have always been cosmopolitan in that they have

been aware of living in a world full of other people, nations, and tribes. And lastly, that transnationalism as both a term and a movement, while important, does not quite suffice as a conceptual framework for Native American studies—indeed, that the very idea of an overarching concept defeats the purpose of diversifying Native studies to represent, as Elvira Pulitano puts it in her article, “a world in which many worlds would coexist” (she is quoting Walter Mignolo here, 262). In her afterword, Shari Huhndorf—after offering her own insightful analysis of transnationalism—captures the different positions best when she concludes that “[t]ransnationalism thus constitutes a necessary, though inherently contradictory, critical framework in Native studies” (287).

However, the most striking aspect of Lyons’s collection consists, in my opinion, in its attempt to understand colonialism not as a historically unique occurrence, but as a “structure” (as Patrick Wolfe famously put it in “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”) that is inseparably linked with the history of globalization. To ignore this link is to dismiss an important angle at decolonization as Lyons suggests in his introduction: “there is no real possibility of a separate textual or critical sphere divorced from global forces (cultural, economic, political), no possibility of a practice purely disassociated from global networks of production, circulation, and consumption” (1). Considering the multifaceted view of Native literary production(s) that Lyons’s collection presents, it is surprising, however, to note the absence of contemporary Native literatures explicitly dedicated to Indigenous futures. While *Indigenous Futurism* is, admittedly, a new term—too new probably to make it into the 2013 conference that furnished the material for Lyons’s book—it would certainly have been interesting to have seen speculative Indigenous literatures made sense of in the critical framework of globalism and transnationalism, especially since several authors, particularly Pulitano, Huhndorf and Lyons himself express explicit hopes for the futures of Native people and a firm belief in the future-potential of Native stories. Noting the absence of discussions of such young Native-Futurists as Stephen Graham Jones, Elizabeth LaPensée, Blake Hausman, Daniel Heath Justice (his critical writing is mentioned), Rebecca Roanhorse, Wendy Red Star, Andy Everson, and Joseph Erb is not so much a point of criticism as a call for more

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publications in the tracks of Lyons's book that should aspire to its academic rigor and balanced selection of themes, while looking further ahead into the future of Native American literature(s), visual arts, and new media. Nevertheless, while an academic has notoriously

little time to read new publications in their entirety, Lyons's collection of critical essays is one of those few that are worthwhile reading from the first page to the last.

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