

**Why Indigenous Literatures Matter.** By Daniel Heath Justice. Waterloo, CN: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2018. 284 pages. \$19.99 paper \$9.99 electronic.

*Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* is at once a sweeping survey of Indigenous literatures and theory across the United States and Canada; a theoretical and philosophical discussion on the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of relationship in a context of ongoing settler colonial occupation; a critique and refusal of narratives of vanishing, absence, deficit, and deficiency that often frame popular understandings of Indigenous life; an interrogation of the literary conventions and expectations that underwrite those narratives; and a celebration of Indigenous survivance, resistance, and contemporary resurgence despite it all.

The book is structured thematically around four interrelated questions which Justice pursues across the first four chapters: How do we learn to be human? How do we behave as good relatives? How do we become good ancestors? And how do we learn to live together? (28). The collective pronoun in each of these questions addresses two primary audiences: Indigenous nations, peoples, and communities attempting to maintain, or in some cases recover and revitalize, our connections to and relationships with each other and our other-than-human kin; and settler, arrivant, and other communities who have, for one reason or another, come to occupy Indigenous lands. Composed in a moment defined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's attempts to address the reverberating effects of residential school history in Canada; Indigenous-led movements like Idle No More and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women; direct-action resistance efforts at places like Standing Rock, Mauna Kea, and Unist'ot'en; and ongoing assaults on Indigenous lands, lives, and families by federal courts, state police, and corporate interests, the book is "avowedly political" (xix), "one volley" among many in the "long rebellion" of Indigenous resistance and resurgence (xx).

Though making impassioned arguments for relationships, responsibilities, and love across difference, the book demands an honest and rigorous accountability to ongoing settler colonial violence, dispossession, and elimination that continues to impact Indigenous lives and that forms the contextual foundation for much of Indigenous writing. Put differently, settler colonialism is the shared context in and through which Indigenous writers imagine and write their way out of the restrictions and limitations of the ruins of settler representation from our own individual and tribal-specific experiences. It is also the shared context with which non-Indigenous readers must fully account, as Justice continually draws attention to the contemporary stakes—intergenerational trauma, gender violence, dispossession, theft of cultural patrimony, environmental devastation, language loss/revitalization—embedded in each of the book's central questions. Indeed, one of the reasons Indigenous literatures "matter" is that they force readers of all kinds to reckon with their relationships to these histories and ongoing experiences while also inviting them to "imagine otherwise," to envision other possibilities, other ways of relating, knowing, and being in the world.

These are not easy questions and the book refuses to provide tidy answers. Rather, Justice draws upon a wide range of authors, texts, genres, and forms across an expansive historical and geographic context—from Cherokee and Salish oral traditions,

Kanaka Maoli autobiography and song, and First Nations women's drama to Queer/Two-Spirit poetry, Indigenous speculative fiction and fantasy, allotment maps, and Indigenous critical theory, with a particular emphasis on understudied writers and texts—to illustrate the breadth, depth, and diversity of Indigenous responses to such questions. Uniting each question and running as a thread throughout the book is the principle of relationship.

Chapter 1, for example, outlines relations between human and other-than-human persons as reflected in Louise Erdrich's *Books & Islands in Ojibwe Country*, Ella Deloria's *Waterlily*, Geary Hobson's *The Last of the Ofos*, and Pauline Johnson's and Gregory Scofield's poetic meditations. Relationships of love, labor, and accountability between families, nations, and extended kinship networks in chapter 2 are modeled in LeAnne Howe's transhistorical, intergenerational novel *Shell Shaker* and in Drew Hayden Taylor's *Motorcycles and Sweetgrass*, which delves into interspecies relations, the Cherokee origin story of disease and medicine, and the radical decolonial politics of Indigenous Queer/Two-Spirit poetry. Chapter 3 examines a variety of ties between ancestors and descendants, seen in Beth Brant's writing, activism, and advocacy; Queen Lili'uokalani's political autobiography of Kanaka Maoli dispossession and resistance; Wendy Rose's scholarly and poetic work on material and cultural dislocations and returns; and the embodied experience of settler apocalypse and alternative histories/possibilities in the "wonderworks" of Cherie Dimaline, Sherman Alexie, and William Saunders (152–53).

Lee Maracle's *Celia's Song* touches on relations among community, culture, history, and place, and Richard Wagamese's *A Quality of Light*, on intercultural and intra-familial relations. Chapter 4 also discusses hemispheric solidarity and intersectional critique in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and transhistoric, intergenerational, intertribal relations as staged in Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble's *The Only Good Indian*. Chapter 5, "Reading the Ruptures," puts the previous four chapters into practice: Justice works through relational dynamics of loss, removal, recovery, and return in his own family and their relationships to Cherokee history, places, peoples, and contemporary experience—our own personal relationships to our families, histories, places, and nations.

Though each chapter focuses on a specific theme or a specific question, they're inextricably interwoven with one another like a Cherokee basket; how one defines and values personhood will necessarily effect how we conceptualize the reach of our relatives, to whom and to what extent we're responsible as descendants and future ancestors, and the possibilities we're able to imagine about what it means to live together as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in more productive, sustainable, and affirmative ways. To quote Justice:

Here, at last, is where we come to it . . . The problem has never been a lack of available options, alternatives for finding meaning and purpose in relationships with one another. What's too often missing is love in all its forms. Finding common ground that honours justice, embraces the truths of our shared history, and works for better futures takes courage and imagination—but most of all it takes love . . .

This, I think, is how we learn to live together. We love: courageously, insistently, defiantly. We love the world enough to fight for it—and for each other. (179, 180)

Anchored to these dynamics and the ethos of compassion, generosity, empathy, and accountability with which Justice goes about his work, the book is also an extended love letter for Indigenous writers, peoples, places, communities, and families, as well as an invitation to love for non-Indigenous peoples, one based upon fully embracing—and owning—our shared histories, expanding our networks of kinship ever outward across difference, and holding each other accountable for the futures we imagine and call into being every single day with everything we do. As Justice writes in the conclusion entitled “Keeping a Fire,” “Indigenous literatures matter because *Indigenous peoples matter*. And that, to me, is a pretty good cause for celebration” (211). This reader couldn’t agree more.

Kirby Brown  
University of Oregon

**The World, the Text, and the Indian: Global Dimensions of Native American Literature.** Edited by Scott Richard Lyons. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017. 346 pages. \$90 cloth; \$27.95 paper.

*The World, the Text, and the Indian*, edited by Scott Richard Lyons, author of *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (2010), joins an expanding body of critical work in the general field of Native American literary studies, such as Velie and Lee’s *The Native American Renaissance* (2013), Cox and Heath Justice’s *The Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature* (2014), King’s, Gubele’s, and Anderson’s *Survivance, Sovereignty, and Story* (2015), as well as Daniel Heath Justice’s subsequently published *Why Indigenous Literature Matters* (2018). The title, of course, gives a nod to Edward Said’s influential work of postcolonial criticism, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, in which he seeks to address with the effects of “filiation and affiliation” in the dominant literary paradigm that “excludes the nonliterary, the non-European, and above all the political dimension in which all literature, all texts, can be found” (24). The eleven contributors take up the effects of this exclusion and its impacts on Native peoples culturally, socially, historically, and politically, teasing at the limits and possibilities of transnational, trans-Indigenous literary discourse.

An irony that is hinted at in the title and made evident in Arnold Krupat’s chapter on the global context of Native literary criticism is that such a work positions itself alongside, or perhaps even in contrast with, a well-established body of anti- and postcolonial critical discourse, Said included, in which Native American/Indigenous voices and concerns have been persistently overlooked and inexplicably absent from. Generated out of the “Globalizing the World Symposium” Lyons organized in 2013, and framed between a “Foreword” and “Afterword” by critics Jace Weaver and Shari M. Huhndorf, the primary contributors offer fresh insights and astute readings of