



Jace Weaver. *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014. 360 pp. \$24.99, e-book, ISBN 978-1-4696-1439-7.

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For decades now, many historians, social scientists, and literary scholars have adopted an Atlantic world-approach to the study of the early modern and nineteenth-century past. Such scholars hold that the Atlantic world was both a place and a theoretical tool that allows modern observers to analyze most accurately the lives of people who inhabited much of the four continents that surround the Atlantic. Despite the relative mainstreaming of Atlantic history, the field has numerous critics. One of the most persistent criticisms of the field has been leveled by scholars of Native Americans. Such critics argue that Atlanticists frequently undervalue the contribution made by Native Americans to the societies that constituted the Atlantic world. A related charge holds that Atlantic history is little more than a glorified version of Western civilization that overly prizes the role of Europe and its empires in the making of the modern world. Jace Weaver, an eminent scholar of Native American literature, seeks to answer these criticisms in *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* by illustrating the Native American presence in the Atlantic world.

The Red Atlantic is an ambitious and lively book that covers nearly a millennium of Atlantic history. Based largely on secondary literature and an array of contemporary texts, Weaver begins

his story with Viking-Native contact and concludes with the closing of the “Red Atlantic” in 1927. At the heart of the book is the aforementioned “Red Atlantic”—Weaver’s nod to Paul Gilroy’s influential *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Weaver’s “Red Atlantic,” however, is somewhat different than Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic.” In particular, Weaver’s concept is a label that is used to describe examples of Native American activity that occurred in proximity to the Atlantic Ocean; it is not a theoretical concept that draws on a growing body of Atlantic world theory and/or methodology. Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic,” on the other hand, is a deeply sophisticated and carefully defined theoretical construct that is rooted in a century of black Atlantic thought, cultural studies, and social science methodology. As a result of this distinction, Weaver’s primary argument is that Native Americans were important players in many Atlantic societies, frequently in a manner or location that might come as a surprise to general or undergraduate readers. Weaver supports this argument through a lively catalogue of people, places, and events. This is certainly an important argument, but, given the thriving state of Atlantic studies and Native American studies, new approaches to empire, and current directions in international and global history, one that even the most Euro-

centric of modern scholars would take for granted nowadays. Accordingly, *The Red Atlantic*, in its attempt to address persistent criticisms of Atlantic history, opens itself to an equally recurrent criticism of the field: the book spends much of its time describing rather than explaining or analyzing. Put another way, seldom is the reader ever shown *why* any given subject's proximity to the Atlantic mattered in shaping their lives or experiences.

The Red Atlantic is divided into six thematic chapters (chapter 6 doubles as a conclusion) that follow both internal chronologies and then a rough overall chronology with the first three chapters covering the earliest years (as well as later periods) and the final three chapters focusing largely on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In turn, the six chapters are divided into two sections. The first three chapters are largely historical in nature while the final three chapters focus more extensively on literary and cultural studies. Because of the mixed chronological and thematic organization, many of the chapters overlap substantially and the reader frequently encounters similar examples throughout the text. The first three chapters and introduction in particular would have benefited from streamlining.

Chapter 1, "For He Looks upon You as Foolish Children: Captives, Slaves, and Prisoners of the Red Atlantic," examines the earliest encounters between Europeans and Native Americans before turning to a discussion of depopulation, enslavement, and captivity through the nineteenth century. The chapter—which could have been divided into two if not three separate chapters—ranges back and forth from examples as diverse as Beothuks, Columbus, Squanto, Charles Darwin, and Comanches in the 1870s. Chapter 1 is loosely held together by the themes of contact and captivity. This chapter very much sets the tone for the rest of the book. In chapter 2, "In the Service of Others: Soldiers and Sailors of the Red Atlantic," Weaver presents an eclectic array of well-known examples to establish that Native Americans criss-

crossed the Atlantic as sailors and participated in a myriad of armed conflicts. With little internal organization and examples from the American Southwest and Egypt among other regions that existed largely outside of the Atlantic world, the chapter is rich in description. The third chapter, "Diplomats: Statecraft and Cosmopolitanism across the Red Atlantic," continues in a similar vein to chapter 2. Weaver is on more familiar ground in chapters 4 and 5 (especially the latter) as he puts his considerable skills as a literary and cultural studies scholar to use. Chapter 4, "A Gazing Stocke, Yea Even a Laughing Stocke: Celebrity Indians and Display across the Red Atlantic," examines Native Americans as both the subject of transatlantic culture, curiosity, presentation, and study and observers of the cultures around themselves. "Fireside Travelers, Armchair Adventurers, and Apocryphal Voyages: The Literature of the Red Atlantic" is the fifth and strongest chapter in the book. Here Weaver deeply analyzes an array of texts by and about Native Americans that were produced over the course of five hundred years. Chapter 6, "The Closing of the Red Atlantic: A Conclusion," ends as *The Red Atlantic* began, with an array of examples of Native American activity in the proximity of the Atlantic Ocean.

While *The Red Atlantic* would have benefited from a more rigid organizational structure and primary historical research, it is a good introduction to a very important field. *The Red Atlantic* should interest general readers and will be useful for undergraduate courses. Hopefully, Weaver's work—with its ambitious geographic and chronological scope—will spur the work of other scholars.

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