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Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice and Christopher B. Teuton (eds.), *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008, \$24.95). Pp. vi + 451. ISBN 978 0 8061 3887 9.

This collection places twelve Native American literary critics in conversation. Each contributor was challenged to “describe an ethical Native literary criticism” (95): once they had done so, they received not only a critique of their own essay, but also all other contributors’ essays. A conversation thus built up within the collection, most critics directly engaging with one another’s work.

The results mostly succeed in creating new frameworks. In particular, Christopher B. Teuton’s recategorization of preexisting criticism is masterly, proposing three modes: firstly, anthropological critiques centred on authenticity; secondly, cultural studies debates focussed on representation; thirdly, nationalist or tribal-centric approaches which draw on indigenous tradition for interpretive methodology. Daniel Heath Justice avoids racial essentialism in carving a critical space for cultural revitalization without ossification, proposing a “kinship criticism” that I hope will be developed further in his work. Robert Warrior’s reading of Joy Harjo’s erotic poetry convincingly argues for Native erotica as a major site of decolonization practise. Tol Foster’s argument for a new regionalism in Native literary critique has the great quality of being both revolutionary (as one can see in Janice Acoose’s hostile response) and self-evidently correct.

Unfortunately, the elephant in the room is Craig S. Womack’s introductory essay, “Book-Length Literary Criticism.” Womack appears still not to have recovered from the hostile description of his work by Elvira Pulitano, to which he has already responded at some length. Here he appears to be attempting to rewrite Pulitano’s book, which also surveyed Native-authored literary criticism, but in doing so he simply ends up repeating (in reverse) all of Pulitano’s errors. Where Pulitano constructed an overly simplified hierarchy to place Gerald Vizenor’s work at the apex and omitted Jace Weaver’s work for fairly spurious reasons, Womack simply inverts the pyramid, semi-excluding Vizenor. Womack explains that he will look not at Vizenor’s well-known theoretical work *Manifest Manners*, as it is “not exclusively a work of literary criticism” (63) – this despite including works by Elizabeth Cook-Lynn and Greg Sarris which are equally hybrid. Instead, in a section headlined “Gerald Vizenor,” he purports to analyse Kimberley Blaeser’s monograph on Vizenor’s work instead: the results are muddled and do justice to neither Blaeser nor Vizenor.

More broadly, Womack’s attempts to engage with the wider field of critical theory are ill-thought-through, setting up a reductive straw-man version of postmodernism to attack without engaging with any primary critical texts. Quotes on “theory” in his essays mostly come from the introduction to the *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, while the final essay purports to engage with post-positive realism but ends up once again mostly quoting Pulitano as a convenient representative of Euro-Western thought.

Womack has given one-third of this collection over to his own work. Unfortunately, it is by far the weakest element. While the anthology as a whole

remains essential reading and will be widely consulted for years to come, it is a shame that the same editors who let through an unacceptable number of typos also failed to ensure other contributors the balance of length and quality their efforts deserved.

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