

Review: Writing the World: On Globalization
By David Rothenberg and Wandee J. Pryor (Eds.)

Reviewed by [Byron Anderson](#)
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David Rothenberg and Wandee J. Pryor (Eds.). *Writing the World: On Globalization*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. xxii, 250 pp. ISBN: 0-262-18245-9 (cloth). US\$34.95.

This is a book of stories, twenty-six in all, made up of personal essays, memoirs and poems that are complemented with fifteen black and white photographs and works of art. These stories relate how interconnected we are globally and how we learn from each other, focusing on individual experiences rather than broad economic and political policies. The contributors are geographically and occupationally diverse, coming from North America, Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, and including writers, artists, poets, journalists, photographers, and activists, as well as a doctor and a librarian. The contributors succeed in telling "how newness enters the world," to borrow a quote from Salman Rushdie.

Though published by an academic press, the book has broad general appeal. There are few references and no bibliography or index, nor are these necessary. The pieces are not pro-globalization and clearly acknowledge the suffering America has caused. Contributors, such as Indian author Arundhati Roy and Baghdad artist Nuha al-Radi, are outspoken opponents of America's global domination. Yet, within these pieces lie remarkable ideas and stories of hope. For example, theatrical producer Roberta Levitow writes, "I have no doubt that millions of Americans want to help make this world safer and better through means other than guns, soldiers and tanks.... Let us become a people who are unafraid to learn from others how to view a world that is different from our own" (p. 100).

The editors are David Rothenberg, professor of philosophy at the New Jersey Institute of Technology and founder of the Terra Nova book series (MIT Press) and Wandee J. Pryor, former managing editor of Terra Nova projects. Terra Nova books "aim to show how environmental and cultural issues have artistic components" and to "reveal the complex and paradoxical ways the natural and the human continually refine each other" (note on verso of the title page). The editors' emphasis is that cultural contact can be powerful. They do not want to retell globalization's "familiar, important and frightening story," but rather show how the "global culture enriches us by linking individuals to individuals, forcing us to set aside differences in ideology, to ignore our fears and our sense of competition" (p. xiv). They define

globalization not as the new imperialism (though some of the contributors do), but rather the "spreading of economy and culture all across the planet, so that there is no single power" (p. xii). Some readers may find the editors' views of globalization misguided; however, contributed pieces ground the editors' optimism and this generates some thought-provoking reading. Though the quality of writing varies, overall the book is readable and informative. Recommended for personal and general library collections.

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