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Facing Empire: Indigenous Experiences in a Revolutionary Age

Edited by Kate Fullagar and Michael A. McDonnell.

Foreword by Daniel K. Richter.

Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2018.

viii + 356 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, index.

\$ 39.95 paper.

Few scholars have tried to write a history that gives authorship and agency to Indigenous peoples within and across imperial borders. Expanding and drawing on recent scholarship, *Facing Empire* bridges multiple histories of British imperialism in Australia, North America, West Africa, the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, the Persian Gulf, and the Cape of Good Hope, to unravel the intricacies of Indigenous peoples' contacts, interactions, and negotiations with neighbors and newcomers throughout the Age of Revolution, 1760–1840. At the book's core, editors Kate Fullagar and Michael A. McDonnell recenter Indigenous agency as a vital analytic framework for understanding how and why the legacy of this global past continues to resonate in modern politics and settler societies today. In doing so, they want to measure the overall impact Indigenous peoples had on European theories, policies, and modern practices (p. 7).

Having withstood many of the overtures and intrusions on their lands and seaports, Indigenous peoples were at the heart of this revolutionary age. They helped create instabilities on the new geographic and intellectual frontiers that defined nineteenth-century imperialism. Overlapping and variable practices molded early encounters, defined the nature and degree of intertwinement among themselves as well as with newcomers, and laid the foundation for future interactions. Drawing together the major themes articulated across this

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impressive anthology of thirteen chapters, the editors have divided their collection into three sections: “pathways, entanglements, and connections” (p. 13).

In “Pathways,” Bill Gammage, Michael A. McDonnell, Rebecca Shumway, Jennifer Newell, and Sujit Sivasundaram draw on the distinctly Indigenous practices and techniques that forced imperial powers into their environmental, diplomatic, and commercial orbits. In Section II, Colin G. Calloway, Nicole Ulrich, Tony Ballantyne, and Robert Kenny use *entanglements* as a powerful analytical prism to tease out the complexities of the world in which both Indigenous peoples and Britons found themselves ensnared. In “Connections,” Kate Fullagar, Joshua L. Reid, Justin Brooks, and Elspeth Martini argue that contest over Indigenous lands, marine spaces, and resources connected disparate regions and peoples and shaped long-running patterns between Native peoples and settlercolonial governments.

By rethinking the intertwined experiences of the Eora, Anishinaabeg, Māori, Polynesians, Xhosas, Fante, and Macleods, *Facing Empire* challenges a chameleon-like British empire and shows that there was no single face of imperialism nor straight line of Indigeneity. In comparing, contrasting, and interlinking the rich contributions of Indigenous peoples across the globe, the editors have brilliantly offered readers new historiographical grounds for original thinking about the age of industrialization, Indigenous agency, and global revolutionary conquest.

Some readers may question the manageability of all chapters within every section, as a few passages read as a reiteration of British imperial history rather than Indigenous peoples talking back to empire. Others will find it difficult to determine the motivations and expectations of the many different Indigenous groups during this critical epoch, as at times contributors impose their contemporary assumptions and thinking. That caveat aside, *Facing Empire* is a brilliantly written transnational work and a landmark impact on critical Indigenous and ethnic studies, postcolonial theory, settler colonialism, borderlands history, decolonization studies, history of the British Empire, and the Age of Revolution.

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