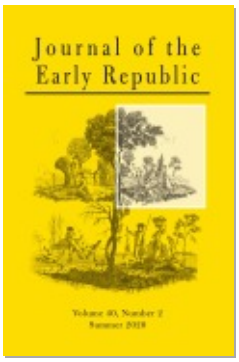
Facing Empire: Indigenous Experiences in a Revolutionary Age
ed. by Kate Fullagar and Michael A. McDonnell (review)



Katie Lantz

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researching the experimental alphabets created by nineteenth-century mental patients.

Facing Empire: Indigenous Experiences in a Revolutionary Age. Edited by Kate Fullagar and Michael A. McDonnell. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018. Pp. 356. Paper, $39.95.)

Reviewed by Katie Lantz

In *Facing Empire: Indigenous Experiences in a Revolutionary Age*, editors Kate Fullagar and Michael McDonnell place indigenous peoples at the center of histories of the British Empire during the Age of Revolution (1760–1840). Even indigeneity, the editors observe, is a category born of empire: a shorthand through which colonial officials could distinguish between imperial subjects imported by empire, and those whose residence pre-dated imperial imposition. These essays range from Australia, the West African coast, Pacific Islands, the Great Lakes, the Persian Gulf, the Ohio country, to the Scottish Highlands. The editors facilitate comparisons between diverse indigenous experiences and strategies, and seek to demonstrate that Native peoples collectively influenced European policies and practices during the Age of Revolutions.

Most of these essays offer stories of indigenous peoples deploying strategies to advance their own goals in new imperial contexts. Set on the shores of Lake Huron, Michael McDonnell's essay demonstrates the power of the Anishinaabe Odawa to teach British newcomers to trade and engage in diplomacy on Native terms during the 1760s and 1770s and in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, when the French ceded their northern North American claims to the British Empire. Rebecca Shumway explores the Fante, a community on the coast of modern-day Ghana, between 1807 and the mid-nineteenth century. Taking advantage of confused British policy toward West Africa, the Fante drew British military commanders to their defense against the encroaching Asante kingdom. Sujit Sivasudaram examines the Persian Gulf, a space of many peoples and diverse communities contesting power. Colin Calloway tells a complex borderlands story of Iroquois, Shawnee, British, French, and eventually American powers competing for advantage in the Ohio country, from the 1750s to the 1770s. Nicole Ulrich examines class formation in the Cape of Good Hope from the 1790s through the 1810s, as the

region passed from Dutch East India Company to British colonial rule. Tony Ballantyne considers late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century New Zealand, where multiple Māori leaders competed for trade advantages, and interacted with Samuel Marsden, a missionary skilled at interpolating his cosmology into new cultural contexts. Kate Fullagar shows how Ostecano, a Cherokee leader, and Mai, the son of a prominent family from Ra'iatea, tried to maneuver the British into serving the interests of their communities and homelands during the late eighteenth century. Justin Brooks compares the experiences of Scottish Highlanders, North American Indians, and Bengalis in South Asia, 1745–1775. In each region, Brooks finds that British imperial policy evolved from diplomacy to increased use of military force to secure colonial aims. Finally, Elspeth Martini explores the efforts of an Ojibwe Methodist missionary, Shawundais, alias John Sunday, to convert his people and protect their lands around the upper Great Lakes during the mid-nineteenth century.

The other primary pattern examines how indigenous peoples adapted to environmental change caused by imported plants and animals—and the commercial exploitation of resources for external markets. Bill Gammage shows how Aboriginal peoples before the colonization of Australia used fire to cultivate a mix of grassland and forests, ecosystems that supported the plants and animals and their lifeways. Robert Kenny reveals how Australian settlers' livestock transformed the landscape cultivated by the Taungurung—and how the Taungurung drew on their cosmological knowledge to resist invaders who unbalanced their lands. Examining two Pacific archipelagos, Tahiti and Samoa, from the 1760s to 1840s, Jennifer Newell depicts how Tahitians and Samoans incorporated British plants, animals, and cosmology into their environments and cultures. Joshua Reid carries the interaction between settler colonialism and indigenous lifeways into maritime space, and compares the Māori of the South Pacific and the Makah of northwestern North America, during the mid-nineteenth century.

By framing essays around indigenous peoples "facing empire," this collection locates specific Native groups in binary relationships with the British Empire. Editors Fullagar and McDonnell highlight stories of indigenous power to sway British imperialists—and their chronological frame facilitates this emphasis. Most of these essays focus on the eighteenth and early nineteenth century: decades when many indigenous peoples could still play empires off one another, and exploit the imperial presence for their own ends. These explorations tend to stop short by

the mid-nineteenth century, before the growing power of the empire constricted Indigenous peoples' ability to resist. In one exception, Martini's insightful essay, Shawundais, the Anishinaabe missionary, ultimately failed to secure land protections from British officials in London in 1837, despite his celebrity and thorough mastery of Christian culture. This was the same year that the United States granted statehood to Michigan, land in which Anishinaabe power had predominated just two decades before. As western empires enforced harder borders, indigenous peoples lost their power to play one empire off against another, which thereby enhanced the power of colonizers.

With good reason, historians emphasize indigenous power and agency. But we still end up defining power and historical significance in terms of western history: For Native peoples to be powerful and significant, they must shape western empires. And many did, and still do. Yet we can do even more to validate the resilience of indigenous peoples by attending to native alliances and enmities within their own domains.

Native peoples faced one another as well as intruding empires. They lived in a 360-degree world, in which the geopolitics of Native neighbors often meant far more to them than any single relationship with an outside empire. Writing borderlands histories, Colin Calloway and Rebecca Shumway demonstrate the value of situating Native peoples in their own context of complicated relations with multiple peoples, mostly indigenous. They show how the Iroquois, Shawnee, and Fante sought particular imperial alliances to facilitate their own goals and protect their interests, often against other indigenous peoples. Empires mattered to these peoples, but only insofar as these empires shaped the geopolitical context in which they advanced their own power. If they shaped an outside empire to achieve those goals, so be it. By understanding indigenous peoples in their own contexts, we can better understand their relationships with empires, too.

In this valuable and provocative collection, the editors consider who is indigenous, and why they matter. Their volume contributes to an ongoing conversation about cross-cultural interactions around the globe in the Age of Revolutions.

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