

Review of Angela Calcaterra, *Literary Indians: Aesthetics & Encounter in American Literature to 1920*, University of North Carolina Press, 2019

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In the past fifteen years, a group of Native and non-Native scholars in Early American Literature has sought to transform the field's treatment of Indigenous expression and agency. They have traced the vibrant role of writing in the political and cultural survival of Native Americans from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. They have expanded the definition of literature (or taken up the term media) to include wampum, winter counts, basketry, trails, and other indigenous forms. And, given that "the literary" has traditionally been associated with aesthetics, they have sought to take into account Indigenous practices of representation.

With *Literary Indians*, Angela Calcaterra demonstrates how to move forward on this path. She centers neither Euro-Americans' portrayal of Native Americans nor Native authors' adoption of Euro-American forms. "Literary Indians," Calcaterra writes, are "actual Indigenous people whose preexisting and evolving aesthetic practices contributed to American literary production and influenced Euro-American writing in precise ways" (2-3). She seeks to "reframe[] American literary history not as inclusive of Indigenous people but as impossible to understand without them" (14). The book's five chapters range across centuries yet home in on specific moments of conflict and creation. Each treats literature produced by Native and non-Native authors but purposefully centers specific tribal aesthetics. And each documents the literary record of Euro-Americans' unwillingness/inability to engage Native forms.

Chapter one considers the mapping and ceremonial practices by southeastern Native Americans, especially Catawba, Weyanoke, and Cherokee, as shaping *History of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* by William Byrd II. Next, the book takes up two figures vital to the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy—the fire and the chain—as they function in the letters of Samson Occom and explicates the failure of Eleazar Wheelock's missionary movement to implement Haudenosaunee oratorical aesthetics. Chapter three moves between Mohegan basketry, the poetry of Lydia Howard Sigourney, and letters she received from Cherokee and Choctaw students, considering how Indigenous aesthetics prompted unwieldy discursiveness and anti-epic qualities in Sigourney's verse. In chapter four, we read how Washington Irving's fundamentally disorienting *A Tour of the Prairies*, as well as works by Edwin James and James Fenimore Cooper, bears the marks of Osage and Pawnee trail making and strategic dissemblance. Finally, concerned with Indigenous "representational innovation" (148-49) in the era of allotment and assimilation, chapter five considers Amos Bad Heart Bull's ledger book of Oglala history before focusing on the Dakota observational practices in Charles Eastman's historical narratives.

Calcaterra brings together tribal and ethnohistorical sources, scholarship in Native American and Indigenous Studies and American Literary Studies, and astute close readings of a broad array of works. Such synthesis can be seen directly in the brief afterword, which traverses critical writings by Russ Castronovo and Robert Warrior (Osage), the account of Powhatan ceremony in John Smith's *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), and an 1854 poem by Cherokee poet "Corrine," before emphasizing "the ways contemporary Indigenous authors, artists, scholars, and community members continue and reanimate" aesthetic forms (177). *Literary Indians* powerfully

exemplifies a new disciplinary paradigm. Scholars of American literature can no longer gesture toward what was “removed”; we must learn how to responsibly and humbly read what is present.

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