Review

Reviewed Work(s): The Warrior, the Voyager, and the Artist: Three Lives in an Age of Empire by Kate Fullagar

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Source: *The William and Mary Quarterly* , October 2020, Vol. 77, No. 4 (October 2020), pp. 686-689

Published by: Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5309/willmaryquar.77.4.0686

The Warrior, the Voyager, and the Artist: Three Lives in an Age of Empire. By Kate Fullagar. The Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2020. 318 pages. Cloth.

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In *The Warrior, the Voyager, and the Artist*, Kate Fullagar offers a kind of comparative biography of three eighteenth-century figures: Ostenaco, a Cherokee chief, warrior, and diplomat; Mai (often mistakenly called Omai), a Polynesian islander who sailed to Britain with Captain James Cook on his second voyage; and Joshua Reynolds, a renowned painter and president of the Royal Academy of Arts. The connector of these three seemingly disparate individuals is Reynolds himself, who painted portraits of the other two. More specifically, the connection is the portraits of the two indigenes themselves, with the painter's interest in universality over his subjects' particularity representing, in Fullagar's narrative, the illusory universalizing gaze of imperialism.

Beyond its biographical contribution, the book works as a study in comparative imperialism akin to James O. Gump's *The Dust Rose Like Smoke*. However, whereas Gump looked at the impact of Anglo colonialism on two Indigenous populations (the Zulus and the Sioux), Fullagar is interested in the effect of British empire on her three individuals. In this, the book is more similar to Coll Thrush's *Indigenous London*.[1] The magnification of her focus represents the author's distinctive contribution to a larger literature about the uneven impact of empire, for while most studies of imperialism operate at the macro level—focusing on its effects upon entire peoples, regions, or nations—she accomplishes her task by examining the granular, making her primary points through its impact, or lack thereof, on two individual indigenes.

Reynolds lived in metropolitan London, at the very center of empire. As a well-connected artist and then president of the Royal Academy (a position he held for about two decades until his death), he was afforded access to the British elite and to any visiting celebrities for his portraiture. The two indigenes came to the city for very different reasons. Ostenaco traveled as part of a 1762 delegation to treat with King George III. Mai, by contrast, seems to have been motivated primarily by curiosity, hitching a ride with Cook's expedition in 1773 almost as a tourist. In the end, however, were the two voyages so very different? The embassy of Henry Timberlake, in which

[1] James O. Gump, *The Dust Rose Like Smoke: The Subjugation of the Zulu and the Sioux* (Lincoln, Neb., 1994); Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven, Conn., 2016).

William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 77, no. 4, October 2020
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.77.4.0686

Ostenaco participated, had not been presanctioned by British authorities; rather, it was prompted by the Cherokee's musing, upon seeing a portrait of George III at the College of William and Mary, that he wished to meet the king. Fullagar questions just how impromptu his seemingly casual remark was. He knew, from the example of his Cherokee rival Attakullakulla, how a journey to the metropole—especially one that included an audience with the monarch—could boost his status in his home community.

Ostenaco enjoyed a long life and a career at the center of Cherokee military and political affairs. Mai did not have such good fortune. Though he was feted during the two years he was in London, as many Indigenous visitors were, he then returned to the South Pacific, where he died within three years, still a young man. Little is known about his life other than what he told his hosts. This disparity is reflected in Fullagar's account and the attention paid to the two men. Though both receive equal space, the account of Ostenaco is richer in biographical detail. Fullagar nonetheless skillfully pieces together the lives of these two indigenes from fragmentary evidence. She also vividly depicts their wider communities and the world in which they operated.

Fullagar advances two central points. First, she demonstrates that indigenes who traveled to the center of empire were often less impressed with Britain than the British were with them. The key here—worthy of more exploration than Fullagar provides—is the different effects of imperialism on societies or peoples as opposed to individuals. Around the globe, the British had a devastating impact on Indigenous populations. One need only examine a world map from the early twentieth century and see pink splashed across it, from Singapore to Cape Town and to Commonwealth countries from New Zealand to Canada, to grasp the truth of the adage that the sun never set on the British Empire. But though such a map represents the empire as uniform, the lived experience of Indigenous peoples under it was not. In many ways, the Cherokees and Polynesians fared better than other Indigenous societies that came in contact with the British Empire. Though the Cherokees experienced both conflicts and imbrications with the empire, they nevertheless remained self-determined, and the British had little lasting impact on Polynesia, which in the nineteenth century became a French possession.

Fullagar's scope, however, is not macro but micro, focusing closely on her two Indigenous subjects. Official deputations to the metropole, even unexpected ones such as the Timberlake delegation in which Ostenaco participated, were treated exceedingly well as Britain sought to secure or maintain alliances. They were feted, wined and dined, taken to the theater—often Shakespeare—shown displays of imperial military might, and introduced to the luminaries of British society and culture. Ostenaco met Oliver Goldsmith. Delegates were rewarded with royal audiences, often multiple ones. Ostenaco's Cherokees, after considerable delay, met George

III twice. The point of all the pomp was to emphasize for supposedly impressionable indigenes the strength and generosity of the empire. The British expected those witnessing such spectacles or receiving such introductions to be awed. Yet, as Fullagar makes clear, they were often less impressed than their hosts hoped.

Indeed, the English themselves appear at least as impressed as the Indigenous visitors by their interactions. Even a casual hitchhiker such as Mai became a celebrity. Whereas Ostenaco had to wait weeks for a royal audience, Mai, squired around by noted naturalist Joseph Banks, was introduced to George III almost immediately. He was taken to horse races and had a Handel oratorio performed in his honor. Banks often took him to dine at the Royal Society. He met Dr. Samuel Johnson, among many other famous personages. The fact that Reynolds painted Mai's portrait (depicting him in stylized Orientalist garb) itself bespeaks the importance attached to this traveler. Delegations were often taken to the theater, but Mai seems to have achieved a singular distinction: though he did not remain in London long enough to see it, in 1785 dramatist John O'Keeffe mounted a theatrical production entitled *Omai, or, A Trip round the World*, a fact curiously omitted by Fullagar.

As to the impression the empire had on the visitors, Fullagar's sample of two, tenuously stitched together by their connections to Reynolds, is too small to prove her central thesis, though her analysis remains both interesting and instructive. Certainly, the endless tours of Saint Paul's Cathedral and other sights that were meant to instill awe instead wearied Ostenaco as he cooled his heels waiting to meet the king. According to Timberlake's journal and other accounts, Ostenaco and his Cherokee companions, despite having London's "wealth and power" (84) displayed before them, registered something more than mild interest only on two occasions. One was seeing a statue of the Greek demigod Hercules with an upraised arm wielding a club, which reminded the indigenes of a war club. The other was watching British soldiers demonstrating their fixed bayonets. However, once Ostenaco achieved his goal of a royal audience, he wanted nothing more than to return home posthaste. Mai, treated relatively more ostentatiously, may have been more impressed (though the Western-style house the British built for him upon his return home was an unsolicited and unwanted gift). We have no idea from Fullagar's narrative, however, what other Indigenous visitors took away from their encounters with the metropole.

Fullagar's second major takeaway from her study is that in the eighteenth century the British often harbored far more conflicted views of empire than later historians make clear. Both the Cherokees' and Mai's visits provoked "edgier discussions" in the local press, some outlets using them "to celebrate British imperialism" while others deployed them "to voice their concerns about it" (192). The author's point, however, is perhaps best seen through Reynolds, who sought to produce universalism in his

portraits by idealizing the imperfect, akin to the universalizing tendencies of empire itself. He seems to have seen his portrait of Mai as a success in this regard, but he considered his portrait of Ostenaco a failure because his subject's particularity showed through too strongly. One final issue relates to a point already alluded to. There is simply less known about Mai's life than Ostenaco's. Reynolds's life, of course, is well documented. This makes the book seem somewhat unbalanced. Much about Mai's life before his voyage to the Western world is the subject of conjecture.

Even so, the monograph is pushing back against a moment when nostalgia for empire seems on the rise, fueling, in part, Brexit. Fullagar does not deny the brutality of empire or its pernicious and pervasive effects. She makes clear that it deserves no one's nostalgia. Hers is a tale—three actually—well told.