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# The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism (First Peoples: New Directions Indigenous)

*Jodi A. Byrd*

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In 1761 and again in 1768, European scientists raced around the world to observe the transit of Venus, a rare astronomical event in which the planet Venus passes in front of the sun. In *The Transit of Empire*, Jodi A. Byrd explores how indigeneity functions as transit, a trajectory of movement that serves as precedent within U.S. imperial history. Byrd argues that contemporary U.S. empire expands itself through a transferable "Indianness" that facilitates acquisitions of lands, territories, and resources.

Examining an array of literary texts, historical moments, and pending legislations—from the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma's vote in 2007 to expel Cherokee Freedmen to the Native Hawaiian Government Reorganization bill—Byrd demonstrates that inclusion into the multicultural cosmopole does not end colonialism as it is purported to do. Rather, that inclusion is the very site of the colonization that feeds U.S. empire.

Byrd contends that the colonization of American Indian and indigenous nations is the necessary ground from which to reimagine a future where the losses of indigenous peoples are not only visible and, in turn, grieveable, but where indigenous peoples have agency to transform life on their own lands and on their own terms.

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