IMAGINED EMPIRES

Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771–1876

*Imagined Empires* demonstrates that early American culture took great interest in South American civilizations, especially the Incas and Aztecs, and in so doing made a statement about the role of the United States as an empire in the emerging political order of New World colonies and states. In this examination of works by Philip Freneau, Joel Barlow, William Prescott, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman, the long-contested concept of “indigenous origins” is given expanded meaning beyond traditional critiques of American culture. Eric Wertheimer recovers the Incas and Aztecs in Anglo-American literature, and thus sheds new light on national sovereignty, identity, and the development of an American history narrative.

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ERIC WERTHEIMER
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