



# Colonial Encounters in New World Writing, 1500-1786: Performing America

*Susan Castillo*

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Susan Castillo's pioneering study examines the extraordinary proliferation of polyphonic or 'multi-voiced' texts in the three centuries following the first contact between Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Taking a selection of plays, printed dialogues, travel narratives and lexicographic studies in English, Spanish and French, the book explores both European and indigenous writers of the early Americas. Paying particular attention to performance and performativity in the texts of the early colonial world, Susan Castillo asks:

- why vast numbers of polyphonic and performative texts emerged in the Early Americas
- how these texts enabled explorers, settlers and indigenous groups to come to terms with radical differences in language, behaviour and cultural practices
- how dialogues, plays and paratheatrical texts were used to impose or resist ideologies and cultural norms
- how performance and polyphony allowed Europeans and Americans to debate exactly what it meant to be European or American, or in some cases, both.

Tracing the dynamic enactment of (often conflictive) encounters between differing local narratives, Castillo presents polyphonic texts as not only singularly useful tools for exploring what initially seemed inexpressible or for conveying controversial ideas, but also as the site where cultural difference is negotiated. Offering unparalleled linguistic and historical range, through the analysis of texts from Spain, France, New Spain, Peru, Brazil, New England and New France, this volume is an important advance in the study of early American literature and the writings of colonial encounter.

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