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**White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940.** By Margaret D. Jacobs. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 592 pages. \$60.00 cloth; \$30.00 paper.

If the work of comparison as a critical method, as Shu-Mei Shih has written, can be to bring “submerged or displaced relationalities” into view, then the comparison of American and Australian practices of indigenous child removal might serve as one way of unearthing the violence of a settler colonial history that has been more deeply buried in the United States (“Comparative Racializations,” *PMLA*, 2008, 1350). The visibility of the issue of aboriginal child removal in the Australian context during the last decade—including its official condemnation as a genocidal practice in *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (1997), spontaneous civic gestures of atonement, and a state apology by former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd—has had no corresponding presence in American public culture. Although the relative invisibility of the history of widespread child removal in the American West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries might be explained by some of the differences in the American context that Margaret D. Jacobs discusses in this book—an earlier curtailing of harsher methods of child removal, a schooling process that did not require the permanent dispersal of families, and the greater leverage some Indian people gained in dealings with federal authorities—it is more likely that exceptionalist discourses of American nationalism have protected the US public sphere from a comparable process of historical reckoning with colonial violence, as potentially problematic as these rituals of national reckoning and reconciliation can be.

What Jacobs’s comprehensive archive, careful interpretation, and lucid argumentation show is that in spite of the geographical distance of Australian- and American-settler colonial projects, and the absence of direct connections in policy making between the two spaces, they shared a strategy for dealing with the persistence of indigenous peoples as distinctive groups, perceived to be standing in the way of the development of modern, white nations. In both contexts, the removal of indigenous children to institutions distant from their families became a means of “completing” colonization through the deliberate severing of intergenerational bonds and the transmission of knowledge crucial to survival on ancestral lands (26). American Indian boarding schools and Australian institutions for aboriginal children were remarkably similar in their schemes for the subjection of indigenous children, their deplorable conditions, and the maternalistic rhetoric of rescue, care, and uplift used to justify their existence and enlist white women reformers as their operators. They

were similar even in the paradoxes and contradictions that a practice of child removal supported by “maternal” values produced on either side of the Pacific.

The value of Jacobs’s transnational comparison goes well beyond the provision of a corrective to American exceptionalism, for her analysis of indigenous child removal in two contexts extends a growing body of postcolonial historiography focusing on domesticity, or “the quotidian and the intimate,” as a pivotal terrain of empire. Elaborating a common thread in this historiography, Jacobs argues that interventions in the domestic sphere should not be seen as secondary to “more dramatic political and military events” but rather as extensions of more spectacularly violent forms of settler colonial aggression (230). Her significant contribution consists in, first, opening the study of colonial domesticity to consideration of the “intimate invasions” of indigenous family life by white “protectors” and reformers, usually women at the ground level of invasion (277). Second, it demonstrates that the state’s policy of forcibly removing children to distant educational institutions was integral to the long-term-settler colonial project of undermining indigenous claims to land. “Breaking the affective bonds that tied indigenous children to their kin, community, culture, and homelands” was a continuation of land seizure in more subtle and insidious forms (xxx). Jacobs’s understanding of the school programs as designed to induct indigenous children into a “new sensory regime” expands the limits of critiques (historical and current) of compulsory residential schooling for indigenous children (229). Although one vein of critique focuses on the schools as punitive, carceral spaces, picking up on historical comparisons of the schools to prisons and their removed children to inmates, another vein of critique reads the project of indigenous child removal through a late-twentieth-century psychological frame of abuse and its traumatic effects on the individual. Both have shortcomings: although the critique of incarceration underplays the pedagogical objectives of the schools and thus cannot make the link between an educational regimen and the colonial project of land dispossession, the language of traumatization carries the significant risk of revalidating the form of sentimental concern that was often used to justify the state’s “protection” of indigenous children through their removal. Although Jacobs does not explicitly situate her concept of a “new sensory regime” designed to obliterate affective bonds and place-based knowledge as an alternative to these other approaches, the development of the “sensory regime” concept in her chapter, “Groomed to Be Useful,” begins to find another critical and theoretical language for describing the violence of the colonial institutionalization of indigenous children (229). (Another text that contributes to this project is Bonita Lawrence’s *“Real” Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* [2004], especially its chapter “Killing the Indian to Save the Child.”) Such a language, which politicizes the profound

losses that attend family dispersal but avoids individualizing this sense of harm, pathologizing its effects, and legitimizing narrowly therapeutic models of recovery, is urgently needed.

The scholarship on colonial domesticity to which Jacobs's book contributes concerns the making and remaking of subjectivities, conducts, body disciplines, and norms of gender and sexuality. It takes its cues from a Foucauldian emphasis on micropractices of power and from the field of gender history, which, rather than seeking to recover and validate women's history, traces the past work of ideologies of gender articulated with race and class. Jacobs acknowledges the inspiration of the work of anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler, especially her *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (2003). The historian Sarah Carter, in *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (2008), has done comparable work in Canada. Jacobs's comparison of Australian and American contexts allows her to draw on the well-developed scholarship about genocidal colonial practices in Australia, collected in texts like *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History* (A. Dirk Moses, ed., 2004). Equally important to Jacobs's approach is the critique of sentimental political discourse, specifically that of maternalist feminism, which has been fulsomely elaborated by American cultural historians beginning with *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality* (Shirley Samuels, ed., 1992). A central insight of Jacobs's book is that white women's sentimental constructions of indigenous women and children as victims of indigenous male barbarity and the rapaciousness of white male settlers were used in order to justify child removal.

It was not just that demeaning representations of indigenous people gave support to the different policies of cultural assimilation and racial "absorption" in the United States and Australia, respectively. Jacobs makes a sharper point about maternalist feminist discourse and its productivity for states intent on accessing and transforming the most intimate spaces and relationships of indigenous peoples. Maternalism's prioritization of women's role as mothers and its use of this role as a springboard to launch white middle-class women into supervisory positions in relation to others—especially girls and women represented as "unclean" and potentially dangerous—helped to explain why it was necessary to remove American Indian children from pernicious home influences to boarding schools and why it was necessary, in the Australian context, to separate "half-caste" children from their aboriginal mothers permanently. Even the maternalist strand that actually criticized the state's brutal removal of indigenous children to cold institutions where they were deprived of a right to "mother love" could be harnessed and turned into an argument for creating more home-like institutions through the involvement of female

matrons or “mother-teachers” (294, 289). This deployability of white women’s themes, images, and aspirations in the state’s “subcontracting” of responsibility to arm’s-length agents, notably white women serving as missionaries, teachers, matrons, and independent, self-appointed surrogate mothers to groups of indigenous children, is another key lesson of this book (281).

Jacobs draws on a vast web of correspondence, memoirs, speeches, administrative records, conference proceedings, journalism, petitions, school statistics, and archived interviews, tracing the thematic currents, nodal points, and lines of circulation through which ideas about indigenous parents, children, and their homes, as well as white women’s capacities, were popularized and incorporated into policy making or sometimes resisted. Jacobs’s interpretation is attentive to nuance, variation, paradox, and unforeseeable consequence. American women reformers tended to find a receptive audience for their maternalist concerns in the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Australian women, however, faced a context shaped less by traditions of Protestant evangelization than by a preoccupation with what officials called “breeding out the color,” and thus were more often dismissed by the male authorities in the different states (69). In both contexts, maternalists paradoxically sought to impose a model of the patriarchal nuclear family that they had rejected for themselves. They also cultivated “tactical” intimacies with indigenous children that resulted in further pain and loss for the children when they turned off the tap of professional “mother love” to move on to other commitments (194). In some cases, the state’s deployment of women’s supposed capacity for “intimate invasions” backfired, as acquaintance with the brutal consequences of policy and the outrageously poor conditions of the institutions politicized women reformers and led them to reject maternalist arguments. Although written records of organized indigenous resistance to child removal are harder to find than records of white advocacy, many American Indian and aboriginal groups organized petitions, often demanding day schools (as many did not oppose European education as such but rather the removal of children). Individuals wrote letters of protest against the removal of their children. Aboriginal and American Indian women contested portrayals of themselves as unfit mothers and asserted “desires for and rights to the custody of their own children” (282). Children often resorted to daily acts of disobedience and formed new families of peers in the institutions, families that could become new sources of cruelty but could also sometimes provide support and the basis for identifications with other Indian and aboriginal groups.

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