mapping is needed than DeVere Brody offers. There is little historical positioning of the material, and the term 'Victorian' itself becomes a definitional category with only minimal spatial and temporal meaning. I want to like this book. I want to applaud the risks taken in what is clearly an important feminist intervention. Yet the book has produced a series of transatlantic critical and cultural differences between it and me, which leaves me not quite connecting, and certainly not intimately, with the conclusions and readings that DeVere Brody provides.

Lynnette Turner

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Loving Protection?

Australian Feminists and Aboriginal Women's Rights 1919–1939

Fiona Paisley; Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, \$32.95 Pbk, ISBN: 0 522 84919 9

As the author rightly observes, this is the first full-length account of pro-indigenous women's activism between the two world wars in Australia. It highlights a significant moment in both women's and indigenous history. Significant to the former for its emphasis on feminist activism beyond the suffrage campaigns, and significant to the latter for the recovery of a pro-indigenous white reform movement in the 1920s and 1930s.

This movement was much more significant in the history of Black/White relations than has generally been assumed. Although Paisley concentrates on its feminist manifestations, they were closely associated, as she suggests, with a wider humanitarian campaign for Aboriginal rights. Although marginalized at the time, this movement gained significant momentum as the century wore on. Of course, what made white women's intervention distinctive was their emphasis on the rights of Aboriginal women. This was the first time that the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women, and its aftermath of disease and mixed race offspring, was publicly raised – some 40 years into the feminist movement itself.

One wonders what the feminist contribution would have been had it not been for Australia's Dominion status and Australian feminists' status as national and international citizens. As Paisley illustrates, their campaign on this subject was worked out within this broader imperial/international framework and, in particular,

the League of Nations. Even more important in this context was the British Commonwealth League, a branch of the International Suffrage Alliance, specifically representative of Dominion feminists. Paisley describes an impressive organization, powerful in numbers and influence and powerful in terms of setting the feminist agenda in these years. She tells us that Aboriginal rights (particularly women's) were a noticeable inclusion.

Paisley's contextualizing of the feminist campaign is detailed and carefully crafted. We get a strong sense of the importance of this issue for key reformers such as Mary Bennett and Constance Cooke. However, we don't get a strong sense of how white women's imperial positioning affected their reading of Aboriginal women's position or Aboriginal women's rights, beyond providing the setting and lending legitimacy and authority to their campaigns. Chapter 2 is titled 'International Women for Indigenous Rights'. What did 'indigenous rights' mean in this context? Paisley tells us that the extension of rights to indigenous women was, in part, the need to better utilize [white] women's civilizing force, and that recognizing responsibility towards indigenous people was good citizenship. But what does this mean in terms of indigenous rights?

As she goes on to show, a concern with Aboriginal women's bodily rights often meant anxiety over miscegenation and translated into maternalist and often patronizing interventions. But feminists also had a broader agenda for securing those rights which included federal responsibility, access to citizenship, education, paid work, and women's rights of the person, despite lack of unanimity on some of these. In the context of exploring this wider agenda and its inner contradictions Paisley identifies the key reformers as cultural relativists even though she admits that citizenship for Aboriginal women was understood, in part, as liberation from tribal culture, and motherhood was understood to transcend differences of culture, race or advancement. But how does their cultural relativism square with their imperial personas and how does it square with a reform agenda which was essentially assimilationist?

A central thesis of Paisley's book is that a distinctive feature of feminist activism was that it sought to challenge assimilationism, particularly the biological assimilationism which emerged as the preferred administrative model in these years. It was this policy which resulted in the separation of children from mothers. Paisley argues that, instead, activists promoted a missionary model where, as partners with men, Aboriginal women would negotiate their social and economic assimilation.

These stress lines in the interpretation point to the difficulty of defining white women's agendas in these years. As Paisley's interpretation ultimately shows, it was a slippery slide involving negotiations between the self and other, between the national and imperial/international, between their subjectivities as colonizer and colonized. As she attests, it was an intensely gendered campaign. The question

mark in the title of the book not only questions the meaning of these terms but stresses the ambiguity in the women's agendas.

One of the real strengths of the work is that in tracing white women's interventions we grasp a sense of the urgency of the broader humanitarian concern, as feminists joined other humanitarians in an attempt to right the wrongs of the past. Throughout the work Paisley draws interesting parallels between the discourse of past wrongs and national amendment then and now. In chapter 6 we see the culmination of this campaign in the Moseley Royal Commission in Western Australia into the condition of Aboriginal lives in that state, which had been the locus of feminist agitations. As she shows it was called largely in response to feminist pressure.

The chapter was a wonderful description of the events surrounding the inquiry. Newspaper coverage in London and Australia was crucial to the success of the campaign at the time. Paisley manages to recreate a sense of immediacy, transporting the reader to the political machinations of the day. She reminds us of the way such investigations are often cynical exercises by Governments. Indeed, it was hoped that the inquiry would shut the humanitarian fraternity up for good. In a sense, this chapter was also the climax of the book. Paisley shows how what followed was the collapse of both the feminist campaign and the broader humanitarian one as governments determinedly pursued their vision of assimilation.

Her book is therefore highly relevant to contemporary debates, and at the same time it fills an important niche in feminist historiography.

Alison Holland

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Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England

Paula Bartley; Routledge, London and New York, 2000; ISBN 0-415-21456-4 (hbk); ISBN 0-415-21457-2 (pbk)

This book gives a thorough, comprehensive picture of reform and prevention institutions that were founded in England between 1860 and 1914, aiming at eradicating prostitution from society. Bartley reveals not only how daily life was run within these institutions, but also the motives behind reformers' actions and their attitudes towards prostitution. She also evaluates the limited success of each of these reforms – success that has been heretofore largely mystified.

The first part of this work focuses on the various types of reform organizations. It makes use of a new interpretative model and aims to demonstrate that categories of gender, class and religion are crucial in the understanding of the process of