

*Intimacies of Violence in the Settler Colony: Economies of Dispossession around the Pacific Rim.*

By Penelope Edmonds and Amanda Nettelbeck, eds. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

This is a first-class essay collection written by a team of exciting settler colonial historians. Indeed, I wish to make a confession: the book proved so captivating and intriguing that I could hardly put it down once I got started. While the essays mainly deal with Australia and New Zealand, with a brief excursion to Singapore and North America, they address themes and advance methodologies that resonate globally across settler colonial spaces. The book's principal achievement is in mapping the intersections between diverse sites of everyday intimacies and forms of collective, individual, and structural settler colonial violence. In the process it covers an expansive setting, including labor operations of agricultural companies and pastoral stations, the social circles of arctic voyages, the production of linguistic knowledge, and the histories behind captivity narratives. Several essays also look inside settler homes and scrutinize domestic arrangements.

The four chapters in Part I emphasize labor relations. First, Lyndall Ryan inspects how the differing attitudes and understandings by the Australian Agricultural Company and Van Diemen's Land Company towards Aboriginals and the equally diverse Indigenous motives and responses in turn produced dissimilar labor regimes and impacted the levels of violence. Then Angela Woollacott scans the moral ambiguities and the entanglements between exploitation and close coexistence that characterized the relationships between whites and Aboriginals working in pastoral industries in mid-1800s southern Australia. She notes how settlers both ignored the widespread violence around them and yet wanted Aboriginal labor to be close by and readily available, thus demonstrating a crucial aspect in the ethical complexity that often characterized settler understandings. Amanda Nettelbeck in turn takes us to Western Australia half a century later. She studies the ways Aboriginal women proved vulnerable to exploitation as they worked in settler industries and how they could expect very limited legal protection at best. Ben Silverstein

investigates notions of settler whiteness and the utility of violence toward Indigenous bodies in the Northern Territory of the early 1900s. Divulging in sensational case studies of flogging, he skillfully shows how violence served a pedagogical function; marking the proper white settler and disciplining unruly Aboriginal inferiors, whom the whites portrayed both as children in need of discipline and as “others” to whom violence represented a normative response.

Part II turns the discussion toward emotions and cultural entanglements. Investigating the Batman family of Australia, Penelope Edmonds and Michelle Berry propose that the settler home worked as colonial economy in miniature, as a site where the unstable calibrations of coerced labor, forced intimacies, domination and resistance played out. Home was where aggression was recast as kindness and the breaking up of Aboriginal families stood for civilizing and improvement. Victoria Haskins in turn reframes two Queensland “captivity narratives,” those of Eliza Fraser and Barbara Thompson. She turns away from the male gaze and instead stresses women’s relationships with other women across ethnic lines. By adopting this fresh viewpoint, she shows how Indigenous women held a key role in determining how white captive women entered the Indigenous community and what kind of experiences and status they had. Then Kristyn Harman wraps the tense intimacies in 1840s Auckland into a murder mystery that saw a prominent settler family (of Lieutenant Robert Snow and his wife and child) slain and involved suspicions of Maori culpability. Harman nicely teases out the physical proximities, intercultural activities, economic interdependencies, and suspicions molding this community. For their part Angela Walhalla and Lachy Paterson zoom into a life of a New Zealand middle-level colonial administrator and land purchaser, George Thomas Wilkinson. They come up with an absolutely fascinating essay that shows ordinary people loving, living, and surviving in the midst of Indigenous dispossession, structural violence, and interracial affections.

The third and final part of the book takes a closer look at the production and dissemination of colonial knowledge. In her essay Annaliese Jacobs describes colonial information flows and

networks in the light of Arctic exploration. She assesses the intertwined knowledge-making and -diffusion mechanisms of family correspondence, the social worlds of the metropole, and the often perilous voyage experiences of British explorers to North America. Anna Johnston considers how in the 1830s Australia settlers made the Indigenous peoples similarly the targets of violence and the objects of serious study. Exposing this duality in settler cultures, she focuses on the poetry and linguistic work of Eliza Dunlop, the daughter and wife of colonial administrators. Johnston contends that we ought to read narratives such as Dunlop's to map the settler imagination, exposing voices critical to the impacts violent expansion had on Indigenous cultures. Concluding this anthology is Claire Lowrie's analysis of white patriarchy, Asian and Aboriginal domestic servants, and violence in Darwin and Singapore. She notes the distinct efforts in both colonies to retain privilege and boundaries. While in Darwin the effort was to secure white privilege and justify white violence against servants despite reports of abuse, in Singapore the mechanisms of violence operated in a similar mode yet the membership in honorable patriarchy extended to Chinese elites as well.

In all, this collection offers captivating case studies of the entangled histories of colonial intimacies and violence. It blurs the lines of the public and the private and complicates the narratives of expansion and dispossession while digging deep into the shapes of colonial violence, its everyday forms, meanings, and ramifications. This book is highly recommended.

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