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Review of Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs

Sharon M. Harris

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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ican Indians from constructions of nineteenth-century culture. That some of these authors viewed themselves as sympathetic to the "Indian question" merely demonstrates (as Maddox extends Roland Barthes' argument) how the myth of apoliticized discourse can result in the transformation of "history into nature."

In the opening chapters of *Removals*, Maddox summarizes the highly politicized nature of the legal and social actions that forced the removal of American Indians from the eastern United States and the discursive models that made that process seem "natural": most notably, the binary argument of "civilization or extinction." Maddox extends our understanding of the significance of this process by carefully detailing how that discourse emerged in the writings of authors as diverse as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Catharine Sedgwick, and Lydia Maria Child or Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, and Francis Parkman.

Maddox argues convincingly and in detail that Sedgwick and Child, advocates of organized social reform, and Hawthorne, an opponent of what he viewed as a naive and dangerous reform movement, all ultimately cast American Indians as childlike and thus incapable or undeserving of inclusion in the "American family" of the future. In turning from fiction to travel writing, Maddox demonstrates the similarity of conclusions that emerged both from writers who supported and those who opposed the removal of Indians from eastern states and from the concept of American culture in general. For Fuller, Thoreau, and Parkman, it is only "the fully reconstructed and mythologized Indian—one who lives nowhere in nineteenth-century America—who can be assimilated into the civilized American text" (139). Thus artistic conventions themselves have become politicized vehicles that abet the process of extinction of American Indians—on the page as in the country.

This would be enough to argue for the importance of *Removals* to American literary studies; however, Maddox's contributions are extended in a twofold manner. First, her chapter on Melville is one of the most enlightening

Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs. By Lucy Maddox. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Notes, index. 202 pp. \$29.95.

In *Removals* Maddox exposes the complicity of many of our most treasured nineteenth-century American authors in the figurative—and consequently, quite literal—removal of Amer-

contributions to Melville studies to appear in recent years. Melville, like the other authors studied in the text, used the myth of the family; however, whereas his contemporaries did so to reconceive and elide differences within the culture, Maddox argues that Melville's use of that model was rife with irony precisely in order to expose the political nature of the discourse. To demonstrate how American Indians had been culturally silenced, Melville "addresses the lie of emptiness both by acknowledging the silence and by attempting to incorporate it—as *silence*—into his revised version of the American story" (52-53). Second, Maddox's concluding chapter points to continuing silences in late twentieth-century critical studies about the place of the Indian in past and present American society, silences that only perpetuate the "removal" of the American Indian from our culture and our literature. In that context, Maddox's sophisticated intellectual examination of this issue stands as a model for future studies—in the classroom as in critical discourse.

SHARON M. HARRIS
 Department of English
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln