

**‘A Mad Proceeding’: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Female
Emigration to Australia**

Brooke Weber

Royal Holloway, University of London

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Brooke Weber, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented within is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Brooke Weber

Date: 12 March 2018

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This thesis explores the experiences of female emigrants from Britain to Australia in the mid-nineteenth century, a transitional era in which penal transportation faded, gold rushes boomed, and settler colonialism fostered a new society. This society flourished in six varied, yet wholly British, settler colonies; the presence of Indigenous populations was largely ignored by emigration advocates and emigrants alike. Despite the lack of an explicit discussion about race, a study of these women is rich in themes from gender and sexuality to class and social mobility, presented within a transnational context of migration. This thesis situates female emigration in a new imperial history framework, reading against the archival grain of traditional sources such as emigration society and Colonial Office records to illustrate the emigration process while also acknowledging women’s individuality and agency as they left behind homes and families, navigated the moral concerns of ships and immigration depots, and built new lives and societies in the Australian settler colonies. The thesis also turns to non-archival sources such as women’s fictional writings to address women’s personal experiences and find their voices in an era and situation largely dominated and directed by men.

Starting with emigration society and Colonial Office archives, this thesis challenges the generalisation of emigrants as young potential brides; on the contrary, women of varying ages and backgrounds emigrated. This study also exposes the idealism and naivety prevalent among emigration advocates. Officials presented a logical system of emigration and settlement, but immigrants faced financial and physical challenges which threatened success yet were generally attributed to poor personal character. With these disparities between emigration promoters’ ideals and women’s realities in mind, the thesis turns to other sources to explore the immigrant experience. Newspapers expose colonial debates, and an analysis of fictional works by immigrant women writers clarifies the challenges women faced in settler colonies. Although female emigration has been examined in the past, this thesis demonstrates that it is still possible to enrich our understanding of imperial migration and the role of women in the empire.

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Introduction

A woman stands on the deck of a ship, watching her homeland disappear over the horizon. She leaves behind family – an elderly middle-class relative unable to continue supporting her; an abandoned mother struggling to feed the woman’s younger siblings; silent gravestones in the family plot of the local churchyard. She may have had a cosmopolitan upbringing and previously spent time abroad in Europe or other parts of the British Empire, or she may have been raised in a rural area and never gone farther than the nearest market town only a few miles down the road. Perhaps she is lucky enough to be making the journey with companions such as grown daughters, a sister, or newfound acquaintances among fellow passengers. She may be travelling to a specific city to meet friends or relatives already in the colonies, or she may simply be hoping to procure employment soon after arriving in port. The woman is surrounded by other female emigrants who are leaving behind everything they know for a strange land on the other side of the world. They dream of many things, such as earning a good wage by teaching children or running a shop; maintaining a charming and respectable home with a small garden; or perhaps, for the unmarried, finding a kind and wealthy husband. Some will find success, others will face ruin. For many the act of emigration will be, as quipped by one woman, a ‘mad proceeding’.¹

This thesis examines female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies in the mid-nineteenth century,² a transitional period in Australia in

¹ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council of South Australia, Appointed to Inquire into the Excessive Female Immigration; Together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendix* (Adelaide: W. C. Cox, 1856), TNA, CO 13/93, p. 32.

² A note on terminology: ‘emigration’ refers to the act of leaving a place, while ‘immigration’ refers to arrival. As this thesis covers situations in both the British metropole and the Australian colonies, I have used the appropriate ‘emigrant’ or ‘immigrant’ where clearly

which penal transportation and gold rushes eventually gave way to federation at the start of the twentieth century. ‘Australia’ as we know it today was formed by the federation of six colonies, established at different points in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Following James Cook’s claim to the eastern half of the land (‘New South Wales’) for Britain in 1770, the First Fleet (largely consisting of convicts, soldiers, and sailors) arrived at Botany Bay in early 1788 and British colonization began. Van Dieman’s Land (known as Tasmania from 1856, after the end of penal transportation to the colony) was first settled in 1803 and declared a separate colony in 1825. A British settlement was established in Western Australia in 1827, followed by the proclamation of the Swan River Colony in 1829 (which would later be renamed Western Australia). Although Western Australia was not originally a penal colony, it received convicts between 1850 and 1868. South Australia was established as a ‘free’ settler colony via the South Australian Company in 1836. In 1851 Victoria was separated from New South Wales as a distinct colony, and within months multiple discoveries of gold made the colony a locus of the Australian gold rushes. The colony of Queensland, also formerly part of New South Wales, emerged in 1859. In 1863 the area that would later become the Northern Territory was transferred from New South Wales to

called for. I have avoided the term ‘migrant’ as it carries connotations of more frequent and less settled movement (despite modern usage of the term to refer to permanent moves by, for instance, refugees), while the sort of movement discussed in this thesis focuses on an intentional, long-term relocation. In places where I refer more generally to the process as a whole and those who travelled, I have chosen to use ‘emigration’ and ‘emigrant’ to acknowledge the starting point of the journey and to indicate the importance of considering the entire experience rather than simply picking up the story upon arrival in the colonies. I have also thought about the possible use, in the context of the sort of emigration promoted by women’s rights advocates and emigration reformers (the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, for instance), of new terms such as ‘femigration’ and ‘femigrant’ to denote the feminist notions that partially inspired such movements; for clarity and consistency in this thesis, however, I have used either ‘emigrant’ or ‘immigrant’ throughout.

South Australia, further shifting the colonial borders of the continent.³ These transfers of land demonstrate the fluidity of ‘Australia’ in the nineteenth century. The timelines of the individual colonies, penal and free, were woven together over time, eventually leading to Federation in 1901. Recognition of these individual histories is now commonplace among historians, but particular colonies – New South Wales with its convict legacy, or Victoria during the gold rushes – attract more attention than others, making it seem at times as though these colonies stand for ‘Australia’.

The nineteenth century was an era of mass movement throughout the British Empire and across the globe, and technological developments increased the speed with which goods, news, and ideas crossed continents and oceans. It was also a time of global migration during which millions of people (with varying amounts of agency) left their homes. The beginning of the nineteenth century was rife with forced migrations including the transatlantic slave trade, which was first decreed illegal by Denmark in 1792 (with the ban fully enforced starting in 1803), then abolished by Britain in 1807 and the United States in 1808, followed by other European countries – of course, slavery itself was not abolished until later, leaving its legacy to trickle down into modern memory. Convict transportation was also responsible for the forced relocation of people throughout the first half of the century. The system of indentured labour, while technically ‘free’ but dependent on fixed-term contracts that could easily generate a cycle of debt, also contributed to

³ The Northern Territory would not become its own geopolitical entity until 1911, when it was separated from South Australia. The development of Canberra and the establishment of the Australian Capital Territory also took place around this time. Australian Government, ‘European Discovery and the Colonization of Australia,’ 31 March 2015, <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/european-discovery-and-colonization>.

the great number of people moving around the world. As the century progressed these practices were complemented and later surpassed by what Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson deem ‘one of the great global movements of population – the largely voluntary emigration of men, women and children from Europe to the New World’.⁴ Industrial advances encouraged people to leave their villages and farms for the factories and mills of local or foreign metropolitan areas; the availability of cheap land led others to homesteads and ranches in places like Australia, Canada, and the United States; and famines and political upheavals left some with little choice but to pack a small bag and take their chances elsewhere. The improvement of conditions during the emigration voyage itself in the nineteenth century also encouraged people to book passage on a ship heading to the colonies. As Fred Hitchens, a historian of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, explained,

More and more iron steamships were coming into use; ships were larger and safer; voyages were shorter; the passengers’ health and comfort on the voyage were more carefully guarded; step by step the Passengers Act had been perfected. In short, emigration, once irregular and unsupervised, was now an orderly and systematic branch of the shipping trade.⁵

With plenty of reasons to leave, these safer and faster journeys and the organised efforts by governments and philanthropic societies to promote and administer emigration motivated emigrants to leave behind their homes for new lives overseas.

In the context of the British Empire in the mid-nineteenth century, single women especially were encouraged to emigrate in order both to balance the sexes in the colonies (long skewed towards males) and solve the issue of

⁴ Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), xi.

⁵ Fred H. Hitchens, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 157.

‘surplus’ women in Britain. After the 1851 British census revealed a population of ‘redundant’ unmarried women due to the loss of men to military service and the exploration and settlement of the empire, questions were raised about whether sending single women out to the colonies would resolve the perceived gender imbalance. A London journalist writing in 1863 clearly understood the desperate situation faced by unmarried women in Britain: ‘Women are always waiting for situations that never come – waiting to be permitted to earn what? Not fame, rank, fortune. No; but the simple means of livelihood. That is what they want – what hundreds at this moment are asking for in England daily, and asking in vain.’⁶ Since these women could not manage in the metropole, talk turned to whether they would be more successful in the colonies. These discussions gave rise to a structured process of female emigration, with both colonial governments and philanthropic societies assisting emigrants along the way. Despite its colonial origins as a penal settlement, by the mid-nineteenth century, Australia’s settler colonies attracted tens of thousands of emigrants from Britain each year even though it was not as accessible as the more popular destination of the United States (for example, nearly five times the number of British emigrants chose to head to the US rather than the Australian colonies and New Zealand in 1865).⁷ Yet the financial and logistical assistance provided by charitable societies and colonial governments ensured a steady stream of emigrants to the Australian colonies. This thesis focuses on female emigrants from Britain to Australia in the mid-nineteenth century and, with the aid of previously undervalued or

⁶ John D. Cartwright, ‘Emigration, Emigrants, and Miss Rye,’ *Sharpe’s London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading*, July 1863, 40.

⁷ Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, *Twenty-Seventh General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 1867* (London: George G. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1867), 57.

poorly accessible records, challenges generalisations of emigrants as a largely homogenous (young and single) group with little agency. In addition, my work encourages us to move beyond dichotomous themes of settlement (pious free settler versus immoral convict; middle-class governess versus destitute depot resident; or the strict class structure of traditional metropolitan society versus the social mobility of a budding colonial culture) and acknowledge the diversity of female emigrants and their experiences.

Female Emigration and Women in Australian History

Although emigration is naturally considered in histories of settler societies, the experiences of women are often overlooked. James Belich's *Replenishing the Earth*, a history of the expansive settler movements in the British Empire and the USA, barely addresses the female experience.⁸ The disconnect between female emigration and general emigration histories is not unique to imperial history: since the 1990s, Donna R. Gabaccia has been concerned with the study of American female immigrants and its 'limited recognition and impact on both immigration and women's history'.⁹ Australian history has faced the same issue, such as Catriona Elder's chapter on immigration history in Martyn Lyon and Penny Russell's 2005 *Australia's History: Themes and Debates* in which she distills her mention of women to the gender imbalance in the colonies.¹⁰ However, recent works such as Katherine Foxhall's 2012 study of voyages and Angela Woollacott's 2015

⁸ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁹ Donna R. Gabaccia and Vicki L. Ruiz, 'Migrations and Destinations: Reflections on the Histories of U.S. Immigrant Women,' *Journal of American Ethnic History* 26, no. 1 (2006), 4.

¹⁰ Catriona Elder, 'Immigration History,' in *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*, ed. Martyn Lyons and Penny Russell (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 102.

examination of settler society place female emigrants in a larger imperial context.¹¹

Scholarship on specifically female emigration emerged in the 1970s alongside feminist history. Early works focused on the class element, such as convicts or ‘emigrant gentlewomen’.¹² Through the 1990s, historians like Joy Damousi and Deborah Oxley continued to emphasise the convict experience, but the recognition of a distinct ‘free’ settler narrative began to emerge, such as Eric Richards’ edited collections on working-class and female emigrants.¹³ The 2000s saw a renewed interest in the role of emigration societies from Jan Gothard, Adele Perry, and Lisa Chilton, and this theme continues in the work of Marie Ruiz.¹⁴ In this thesis, I focus on free female emigrants, almost all of whom were assisted by emigration societies or the government. Due to the prevalence of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES) in works from the 2000s, I acknowledge this past scholarship but look for new ways to interpret its records and connect the small organisation to the larger movements of women taking place. I also recognise the emigration process

¹¹ Katherine Foxhall, *Health, Medicine, and the Sea: Australian Voyages, c. 1815-1860* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹² A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

¹³ Deborah Oxley, *Convict Maids: The Forced Migration of Women to Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Joy Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia* (Oakleigh, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Deborah Oxley and Eric Richards, ‘Convict Women and Assisted Female Immigrants Compared 1841 – A Turning Point?’ in *Visible Women: Female Emigrants in Colonial Australia*, ed. Eric Richards (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995); Eric Richards, ed., *Poor Australian Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century* (Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1991); Eric Richards ed., *Visible Women: Female Emigrants in Colonial Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995).

¹⁴ Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 2007; Marie Ruiz, *British Female Emigration Societies and the New World, 1860-1914* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

rather than simply the metropole or the colony as points of departure and arrival. Finally, drawing from the earliest feminist works on emigration, I search for the voices and experiences of women.

When it comes to the history of women in Australia, Anne Summers provided an early characterisation of the moral and social stereotypes women faced in her 1975 book *Damned Whores and God's Police*.¹⁵ In the introduction to the revised edition (published nearly twenty years after its first appearance in 1975), Summers explained the circumstances of those in the 1970s who were writing about Australian women:

The sheer simplicity of the notion that feminism is merely 'advocacy of equal rights and opportunities for women, especially the extension of their activities in social and political life'... was just not available then.... We were tentative, pleading for legitimacy, wanting to be taken seriously and our language was less certain than it is today.... We had yet to grasp the distinction between sex, or gender, as an organizing principle of social relations, usually to the disadvantage.... We had yet to start using the term gender.¹⁶

Summers also noted that Australian women's history tended to take one of three approaches: 1) a 'feminist' approach only concerned with politically conscious/active women; 2) narrative biographies or accounts of individual women (usually social reformers or relatives of famous men); or 3) a fragmentary approach, such as a general account of a particular social phenomenon or historical event with only a brief glance at the role of women.¹⁷ The presence of female convicts complicated views of morality and sexuality in the Australian colonies, since, as Joy Damousi claimed in *Depraved and Disorderly*, convict women could not be as easily dismissed as alien as Aboriginal women.¹⁸ The wild and seemingly exotic elements of

¹⁵ Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975; reprint, Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1994).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

¹⁸ Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*, 4.

Australia's colonial story had long lent themselves to a rhetoric of independence and masculinity, leaving little room for women to compete for attention; as Gillian Whitlock and David Carter explained, 'Women have been systematically excluded from myths of national identity in Australia. Where do women figure in the parade of bushmen, Anzacs, lifesavers, "ordinary blokes," even poets and painters?'¹⁹ Even in the history of emigration, men are portrayed as leading the way. Deborah Oxley and Eric Richards noted:

The story, then, is of men taking the lead, initiating emigration, and women only later entering the migrant ranks – often lagging behind, being reluctant. This sometimes seems to relate to the domestic roles of men and women.... Women, therefore, seem secondary and dependent in the process by which emigration was initiated and carried through. Single women were also culture-bound, restrained from unaccompanied travel about the globe by social conventions which were stiffened in the mid nineteenth century. Hence, early emigration was dominated first by single male migration, followed by family migration (by which women emigrated in the family capsule), and only later did the single female emigrant emerge as a large category. Female emigration was secondary and dependent on the flows for most of the colonial phase of international migration. This is the received version of the story of women in emigration.²⁰

Men did feature prominently in the flow of Australian immigration at times (during the gold rushes of the 1850s, for example), but government and philanthropic assistance ensured that women were able to arrive independently, albeit often under the watchful eye of a ship matron. The historiographical understanding of female emigrants – and their contribution to Australian 'character' – has evolved to acknowledge the place of women in Australian history. Despite the unbalanced waves of male and female immigration as set out by Oxley and Richards, women were always a part of the emerging Australian colonies, even if merely in contrast to their male

¹⁹ Gillian Whitlock and David Carter, ed., *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Studies* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 143.

²⁰ Oxley and Richards, 'Convict Women and Assisted Female Immigrants Compared,' 5.

counterparts. For instance, Kay Schaffer admitted that Australian national identity was a masculine construction, but the feminine was still present: 'The myth of the typical Australian exudes a style of masculinity which excludes but also defines the Australian woman who stands in relation to him'.²¹ The role of women in Australian history and legend has been shaken up by recent work such as Clare Wright's research on the women at the 1854 Eureka stockade uprising,²² but in many areas of Australian history women's experiences remain shadowy. Just like men, female emigrants left behind family and friends, endured physical and financial hardships, and worked hard to improve the colonial condition from one of fragile survival to permanent (and even prosperous) settlement; on top of it all, they also gave birth to and raised future generations of Australians.

The main theme in previous studies of emigrant women to Australia in the nineteenth century is one of protection and control, perhaps most obvious in the role of ship matrons who chaperoned single female passengers during the journey to Australia, as well as the emergence of emigration societies created to recruit and assist emigrants. The emigration societies run by and for middle-class women were instrumental in upholding this system of selection, an arrangement which Lisa Chilton deems a 'mixed blessing' because the societies 'simultaneously sought to empower and disempower emigrant women'.²³ Societies such as the Female Middle Class Emigration Society offered women the opportunity to move abroad and earn their own livelihood, but at the same time employed specific criteria in selecting emigrants.

²¹ Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4

²² Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2013).

²³ Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, 11.

However, the small numbers of women who received assistance from these organisations calls into question whether the societies were as influential and prevalent in the history of female emigration to Australia as might be assumed from the amount of attention they have received. The controlling and protective aspects of the emigration have been noted by Jan Gothard, but more as an example of emigrants' lack of autonomy than an effort to discover what agency they did have.²⁴

Although the topic of female emigration has been subjected to in-depth scholarly probes, these previous works have tended to focus on the most distinct facets of the subject (such as female emigration societies and female factories) while paying less attention to the emigration process as a whole and the highly individual nature of the ensuing immigrant experience. For example, the attention given to the Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES) belies the proportion of emigrants who were aided by the society – a closer examination of its records is needed to more accurately place the society (and its emigrants and founders) in the context of general emigration. According to Robin Haines (who reminds us that overall there were far fewer imperial-minded emigrants than home-bound Britons²⁵), from 1855 to 1869 the total numbers of immigrants arriving in the Australian colonies were 60,239 in New South Wales, 51,264 in Victoria, and 37,056 in South Australia.²⁶ In contrast, the FMCES archives reveal that a total of 302 emigrants were aided from 1861 to 1885, with only 144 of the emigrants from the periods of 1861-1872 and 1880-1885 heading to the Australian colonies.²⁷

²⁴ Jan Gothard, *Blue China*, viii.

²⁵ Robin Haines, *Life and Death in the Age of Sail: The Passage to Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), 45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁷ Details on emigrants from 1873-1879 are missing from the records, as the FMCES reports from these years are not in the archive and likely no longer survive. FMCES Annual Report

Likewise, little thought has been given to individual emigrants; they have tended to be seen en masse, a group shepherded around by governments and organisations who possessed little autonomy. This generalisation is partly due to the depersonalisation of emigrants in society and government records, but it must be challenged. An individual approach allows us to learn more about the lives and experiences of these women who for various reasons chose to travel halfway around the world to start a new life in a largely unknown land. We must also look beyond the 'emigrant' label and recognise not only women's roles in the emigration process, but also how the process itself affected women as they settled in the colonies and created new societies.

Previous studies of female emigration, to reiterate, have tended to approach the female emigrants as a collective possessing limited individual autonomy, a single entity directed by outside forces (such as emigration societies, colonial agents, and ship matrons). While such generalisation provides us with an understanding of overall movements, demographics, and statistics, it ignores the stories of the individual emigrants. This method is still being used in current research of the topic, as evidenced in a presentation by Marie Ruiz in which she described female emigrants to Australia as 'merchandise' and noted that the emigrants assisted by emigration societies were largely fulfilling a symbolic role in a process of social reproduction.²⁸ Ruiz's rhetoric of representation echoes Robert Johnson's notion that British women throughout the empire became 'icons of idealized notions of the

1861-1872, FMCES Annual Report 1880-1882, and FMCES Annual Report 1883-1886, The Women's Library, LSE (TWL LSE), 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1.

²⁸ Marie Ruiz, 'What could they do with their unsealable goods? Organising the transaction of English women to the Australian colonies (1860-1914),' paper presented at the IHR Imperial and World History Seminar: Colonial/Postcolonial New Researchers' Workshop, London, UK, 27 October 2014.

state'.²⁹ Studies of FMCES emigrant letters by Lucy Frost and Patricia Clarke have illuminated the lives of some of the middle-class FMCES women,³⁰ but the stories of government-assisted emigrants – many working-class – largely remain hidden in official records. Little has been said about individual cases that could offer a more personal view of the immigrants' experiences, particularly after the first large wave of immigration in the 1830s.³¹

Likewise, some of the women behind the female emigration movement have been given only a cursory biography when it comes to the topic of female emigrants. Early emigration reformer Caroline Chisholm – most active in the 1840s – is covered thoroughly by Lisa Chilton,³² Anne Summers,³³ and Angela Woollacott;³⁴ Female Middle Class Emigration Society founder Maria Rye is also mentioned frequently, but less attention (if any) is given to her colleague, Jane Lewin, whom Rye biographer Marion Diamond describes as a 'long-standing, and long-suffering, secretary'.³⁵ Chisholm, Rye, Lewin, and others were active in the advocacy of female emigration and Rye and Lewin were responsible for the administration and groundwork of the FMCES. The society also employed colonial agents to meet and advise emigrants upon arrival. Outside of emigration society work, government-employed women

²⁹ Robert Johnson, *British Imperialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 128.

³⁰ Lucy Frost, ed., *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1984); Patricia Clarke, *The Governesses: Letters from the Colonies, 1862-1882* (Hawthorn, Victoria: Hutchinson Publishing Group, 1985).

³¹ Select passenger lists from this era have been used extensively by Elizabeth Rushen and Perry McIntyre in the last fifteen years to trace individual female emigrants. See Elizabeth Rushen, *Single & Free: Female Migration to Australia, 1833-1837* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Pub., 2003); Elizabeth Rushen and Perry McIntyre, *The Merchant's Women* (Spit Junction, NSW: Anchor Books, 2008); Elizabeth Rushen and Perry McIntyre, *Fair Game: Australia's First Immigrant Women* (Spit Junction, NSW: Anchor Books, 2010); and Elizabeth Rushen, *Colonial Duchesses: The Migration of Irish Women to New South Wales Before the Great Famine* (Collins Street East, Vic.: Anchor Books Australia, 2014).

³² Chilton, *Agents of Empire*.

³³ Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*.

³⁴ Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*.

³⁵ Marion Diamond, *Emigration and Empire: The Life of Maria S. Rye* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1999), 167.

played the important role of ship's matron, chaperoning single women during their long journey to Australia. However, some of these matrons were selected from among the female emigrants, distorting their position of detached authority.³⁶ A clearer understanding of the connections and actions of women involved in female emigration is needed in order to determine the amount of female agency involved in the process, as well as to better understand how the female emigration movement fitted within society at large.

Although women's involvement in the organisation and process of female emigration might suggest a sense of sisterhood, other hierarchies, such as age or class, were also present. The emigration society women bring questions of class and gender to the study of female emigration, issues touched upon in Janet Myers' article on the role of class in emigration and Nan Dreher's work on female 'redundancy' in nineteenth-century Britain.³⁷ These ideas tie in with the development of broader social movements in both metropole and empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially women's rights and suffrage (with enfranchisement progressing more quickly in the Australian colonies than in the United Kingdom). Was society-assisted female emigration an act of women liberating other women or was it one of continued (if less overt) supervision? Historian Margrette Kleinig argued that there was a beneficial partnership between emigrators and emigrants,³⁸ but Chilton claims that emigration societies' criteria and rules

³⁶ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Charles Alexander Wood to the Emigration Office, 12 March 1857, TNA, CO 384/98, f. 107r-107v.

³⁷ Janet C. Myers, 'Performing the Voyage out: Victorian Female Emigration and the Class Dynamics of Displacement,' *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2001), pp. 129-146; Nan H. Dreher, 'Redundancy and Emigration: The 'Woman Question' in Mid-Victorian Britain,' *Victorian Periodicals Review* 26, no. 1 (1993), 3-7.

³⁸ Margrette Kleinig, 'Independent Women – South Australia's Assisted Immigrants 1872-1939,' in *Visible Women: Female Emigrants in Colonial Australia*, ed. Eric Richards (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995), 112-144.

disempowered women as much as they provided agency.³⁹ Historians have also failed to place the story of society-assisted emigrants in the larger contexts of emigration from Britain and Australian and imperial history, particularly the turn from penal colony to settler colony. Both Jan Gothard's book *Blue China* and A. James Hammerton's earlier *Emigrant Gentlewomen* point out that middle-class governesses and 'emigrant gentlewomen' are over-represented in emigration literature,⁴⁰ much as works on the earlier wave of female emigrants in the form of penal transportation have long painted convicts as uneducated, lower-class prostitutes, a notion which Deborah Oxley has tried to dispel.⁴¹

Just as the 'old' metropolitan lives of female emigrants have largely been ignored, little is said about their construction of new lives and identities in Australia, although this theme is prevalent throughout general Australian history.⁴² Both Johnson and Chilton acknowledged areas of the topic that need further examination. Johnson saw 'an imbalance in portraying women in terms of "culture" rather than examining the practical roles they played', and he called for future studies to look at female emigrants as supporters of the empire rather than as victims.⁴³ Chilton, on the other hand, notes that most historians writing about imperial female emigration have left out any sort of comparative or transnational analysis.⁴⁴ Studies of female emigration tend to

³⁹ Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, 11.

⁴⁰ Gothard, *Blue China*; Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*.

⁴¹ Oxley, *Convict Maids*.

⁴² See Woollacott, *Settler Society*; Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Patricia Grimshaw, *Creating a Nation* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1994); Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1981); K.S. Inglis, *The Australian Colonists: An Exploration of Social History 1788-1870* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1974); George Nadal, *Australia's Colonial Culture: Ideas, Men and Institutions in Mid-Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1957).

⁴³ Johnson, *British Imperialism*, 130.

⁴⁴ Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, 6.

focus on either the metropolitan or the colonial end of the process, and it seems that once women left the Australian arrival port, they also left the story of female emigration and moved into a separate sphere of narratives of national history. Ann Curthoys summarises the separation of migration and settlement:

The history of migration and the history of colonization tend to be two separate fields of historical endeavour. A transnational approach helps us to see that migration of all kinds, however desperate the circumstances of particular groups of immigrants, has in settler societies been part of the processes of colonization and conversely that the continuing processes of colonization have influenced the experiences of immigrants.⁴⁵

Despite the necessary relationship between immigration and settler colonialism, the two are often approached as belonging to separate scholarly areas. However, this approach ignores the fluidity of emigration and instead makes the subject merely one of Point A to Point B while ignoring the shifting nature of the empire and its settlement. Lorenzo Veracini highlights this overlap between metropole and empire as one of the defining aspects of settler colonialism: 'Settlers do not discover; they carry their sovereignty and lifestyles with them.'⁴⁶ Perry McIntyre, though focused on convicts, addresses this thought in the vein of relationships and family connections, noting the tendency of historians to 'concentrate on associations between convicts once they reached the colonies, including the choice of marriage partners in the colony' instead of previous relationships;⁴⁷ similarly, Western Australian settlers' applications for passage on behalf of relatives encourage us to address

⁴⁵ Ann Curthoys, 'We've Just Started Making National Histories, and You Want Us to Stop Already?' in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 86.

⁴⁶ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 98.

⁴⁷ Perry McIntyre, *Free Passage: The Reunion of Irish Convicts and their Families in Australia, 1788-1852* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011), xix.

the connections spanning the emigration process. As Woollacott argues in her 2015 book on settler society, emigrants were not immobile after arrival; indeed, the FMCES records confirm that female emigrants rarely settled into a job or married immediately, while an 1856 report on the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot shows that some emigrants frequently moved between employment and depot, with some women planning to join relatives elsewhere in South Australia or even travel to another Australian colony. Emigrants disembarking at Australian ports did not simply step into a replicate British life; Raymond Evans states that the greatest challenge newly arrived emigrants faced was ‘accommodating their preconceptions of colonial life to its realities’.⁴⁸ Likewise, George Nadal distilled the possible success of an emigrant’s contributions to settler society down to four elements: ‘his expectations of the country, his circumstances there, the ideas he brings from home and the experiences he has undergone since leaving it’.⁴⁹ Although Nadal’s work spoke explicitly of men, the same rhetoric of individualism and independence can be applied to women and should be considered in the study of female emigration. In this thesis I aim to develop this colonial end of the story and connect it to the broader trajectory of female emigration through a study of the perceptions of female immigration in historical published material such as newspapers and literature, especially novels and short stories by women. Therefore this thesis begins with a focus on Britain and moves over to the Australian colonies, reflecting the shift female emigrants experienced as they moved from one land, culture, and society to another.

⁴⁸ Evans, *A History of Queensland*, 84.

⁴⁹ Nadal, *Australia’s Colonial Culture*, 29.

Questioning and Connecting Female Emigration History

As seen in this review of previous scholarship, female emigration has been approached in a highly specific manner ever since A. James Hammerton's groundbreaking 1979 *Emigrant Gentlewomen*,⁵⁰ with little work done to connect it to parallel developments in new imperial history despite a revival of interest in the topic in the 1990s and the early 2000s. For example, deploying notions advanced by new imperial history to the female emigration movement reveals the interconnectedness of the metropole and colonies and the extensiveness of imperial networks, from the layers of bureaucracy implementing mass mobility to the dozens of small newspapers encouraging public debate. It is not enough to simply acknowledge that emigration happened; indeed, we need to move beyond the early feminist histories – which focused on the feat of female emigration and women's accomplishments – and instead recognise female emigration in the context of the waves of movement throughout the empire. While there is no doubt that some women achieved success in the colonies, it is just as important to acknowledge the challenges of emigration and the difficulties of colonial life that thousands of women faced – happy endings were far from guaranteed. Moving beyond the dichotomy of depraved convicts and emigrant gentlewomen toward a more nuanced view of female emigrants and settlers is essential to better understanding the role of women in Australia and throughout the empire. Kate Law touches on this notion in her 2016 book on twentieth-century Rhodesia:

White women cut an ambivalent figure in the transnational history of the British Empire. They tend to be remembered as malicious harridans, personifying the worst excesses of colonialism, as vacuous fusspots, whose lives were punctuated by a series of frivolous

⁵⁰ Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*.

pastimes, or as casualties of patriarchy, constrained by male actions and gendered ideologies.... [T]he reality of the situation is, of course, much more intricate and complex.⁵¹

Thus the aim of this thesis is to enrich our understanding of female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies and to contribute to the broader gender and transnational themes of Australian and British imperial history.

But what can female emigration reveal about the broader themes of new imperial history such as new approaches to archives and the place of marginalised groups in historical records; imperial networks and connections; British attitudes toward gender, class, and empire; and the role of women in the shift from penal to settler colonies and the creation of ‘Australia’? My research methodology has been inspired by Ann Laura Stoler’s *Along the Archival Grain*, particularly in examining imperial governance and officials’ attempts to control female emigration. The nature of this project also follows the new imperial history trend of examining connections and networks across the empire as set forth by Alan Lester, David Lambert, Zoë Laidlaw, and Simon Potter.⁵² In addition, the socio-cultural identities of emigrants and settlers in relation to the empire are considered, echoing Catherine Hall’s approach to culture and empire and Penny Russell’s studies of colonial social mores, as well as the broader works of Linda Colley and James Belich on Britishness and Anglo-settlerism.⁵³ It is important to recognise the

⁵¹ Kate Law, *Gendering the Settler State: White Women, Race, Liberalism and Empire in Rhodesia, 1950-1980* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1.

⁵² Alan Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire,’ *History Workshop Journal*, no. 54 (Autumn 2002): 24-48; David Lambert and Alan Lester, ed., *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815-1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Simon J. Potter, ‘Webs, Networks, and Systems: Globalization and the Mass Media in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Empire,’ *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 3 (July 2007): 621-646.

⁵³ Catherine Hall, *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (ACLS Humanities E-Book edition,

relationship between metropole and colony: while David Cannadine's 2001 claim that 'the history of the British Empire is still all too often written as if it were completely separate and distinct from the history of the British nation' now seems dated,⁵⁴ work remains to be done to better, and more thoughtfully, connect the two. Imperial and colonial themes have also diverted Australian history from British history, with emigrants' metropolitan lives largely isolated from their later lives in the colonies, particularly when it comes to women's emigration experiences. It is clear from my research that female emigration cannot be starkly divided midway between metropole and colony; instead, the two blend together, reinforcing our understanding of empire as an interconnected web of people, places, and ideas.

When it comes to gender, Australia's history of penal transportation continues to fascinate and inspire historians, and it is in studies of convict women that many of the most notable feminist explorations of Australian women's history have taken place. Works by Anne Summers, Deborah Oxley, and Joy Damousi paved the way for convict history, particularly studies that viewed the convict experience through the lens of gender and sexuality.⁵⁵ The

Carlton, Vic.: University of Melbourne Press, 1994); Penny Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 2003); Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

⁵⁴ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2001), xvii.

⁵⁵ Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police*. For Oxley, see Deborah Oxley, 'Who Were the Female Convicts?' *Journal of the Australian Population Association* 4, no. 1 (1987): 56-71; Oxley and Richards, 'Convict Women and Assisted Female Immigrants Compared'; Deborah Oxley, *Convict Maids: The Forced Migration of Women to Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For Damousi, see Joy Damousi, "'Depravity and Disorder": The Sexuality of Convict Women,' *Labour History* 68 (1995): 30-45, and Damousi, *Depraved and Disorderly*. Other related works include David Kent, Norma Townsend, and Deborah Oxley, 'Deborah Oxley's "Female Convicts": an Accurate View of Working-Class Women? [with Reply],' *Labour History* 65 (1993): 179-199; Ian Brand and Mark Staniforth, 'Care and Control: Female Convict Transportation Voyages to Van Diemen's Land, 1818-1853,' *The Great Circle* 16, no. 1 (1994): 23-42; Sian Rees, *The Floating Brothel: The Extraordinary True Story of an Eighteenth-Century Ship and Its Cargo of Female Convicts* (London: Headline, 2001); Kirsty Reid, *Gender, Crime and Empire: Convicts, Settlers and the State in Early Colonial Australia* (Manchester: Manchester

same nineteenth-century concerns about morality seen in this subject are also visible in female emigration discussions, particularly regarding ship matrons and immigration depots.

Aside from convicts, race and class are the primary themes in current work focusing on Australia. Themes of class are visible across female emigration in topics such as the FMCES (formed to aid middle-class women), anti-Irish sentiment (tied to the prejudice against lower-class or workhouse emigrants, but usually not explicitly attributed to religious differences), and female employment in the colonies (with the common occupation of ‘domestic servant’ never precisely defined). Race, however, particularly in reference to the Indigenous populations of Australia, is conspicuously absent from nineteenth-century discussions of female emigration. In recent decades, historians have rightly turned their attention to the impact of immigration and settler colonialism on Australia’s Indigenous populations, yet it is clear that very little thought was given to Indigenous Australians by female emigration advocates or the emigrants themselves; indeed, in this thesis it is only in fictional works by women that the most obvious references to racial (or perhaps more accurately given the tone, racist) notions appear in relation to female immigrants in Australia. Regarding domestic service, many young Aboriginal women worked as domestic servants. They were the cheapest labour available (some were not paid for their work), lived in areas where there were few potential European employees, gave employers the sense of ‘civilising’ the Indigenous population, and were easy to control – and abuse – without repercussion.⁵⁶

University Press, 2007); Deborah J. Swiss, *The Tin Ticket: The Heroic Journey of Australia’s Convict Women* (New York: Berkley Books, 2010).

⁵⁶ Shirleene Robinson, *Something Like Slavery?: Queensland’s Aboriginal Child Workers, 1842-1945* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), 3, 29, 60, 145.

Penny Russell's description of the use of the term 'savage' further compounds the erasure of Indigenous existence:

Sometimes the 'savage' was understood in racial terms, identified with the dispossessed Aboriginal Australians. But its spectre was also glimpsed in the foul-mouthed convict, thrown a portion of meat without benefit of plate or cutlery; in the haggard, uncouth gold-digger locked in the soulless toil for wealth; in a 'half-naked race of children' growing up 'in semi-savagery' on drought-stricken farms with neither education nor domestic comfort; in the brutish drunkard of the harsh frontier or inner-city slum, who beat and abused his wretched wife; or in that 'outer-barbarian', the rising politician who thoughtlessly picked his teeth with his pen-knife or snatched a potato from a passing dish at a state banquet.⁵⁷

Even the negative view of Aboriginal Australians was appropriated for expressing disdain about unsophisticated settler society. Lack of etiquette, destitution, alcoholism, and domestic violence are all themes in the three pieces of women's literature discussed in this thesis, yet only one of the books depicts an Indigenous character (albeit in a brief and racist paragraph).

Race and class may be the current focus of scholarship on colonial Australia, but as historians such as Angela Woollacott and Ann Curthoys argue, and as I demonstrate in this thesis, gender remains relevant to enriching our understanding of settler society and the experiences of those who left behind their homeland to create new nations. Indeed, Cannadine points out that the 'constant (and largely unquestioned) privileging of colour over class, of race over rank, of collectives over individualities, in the scholarly literature has opened up many important new lines of inquiry'.⁵⁸ Finally, this thesis reflects on the question of what 'Australia' means to different people at different times, particularly when it comes to thinking about the colonies as individual entities (federation did not occur until 1901). Although

⁵⁷ Russell, *Savage or Civilised?*, 5.

⁵⁸ Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 9.

metropolitan observers frequently understood Australia as a single destination, Colonial Office records were arranged by colony, and those in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia were as likely to emphasise their distinct circumstances as to stress any shared ‘Australian’ connection. Thus the framework of female emigration not only draws connections between metropole and colony, but at the same time highlights the differences in ideas about the empire and the relationship between its parts.

Much of my work is based in archives (physical and digital) that have not been considered essential sources for the study of female emigration. Digitisation especially has both improved access to the historical record and widened the scope of research we are able to undertake; Catherine Bishop recalls how, during research for her book on Sydney businesswomen, the women ‘kept leaping inconveniently out of the records. Their ability to reveal themselves – or at least our ability to discover them – has been greatly enhanced by the development of research technologies in the twenty-first century.’⁵⁹ This accessibility allows us discover new sources and re-examine others. Inspired by a new imperial history framework, I have read against the archival grain of traditional sources such as emigration society and Colonial Office records to illuminate the emigration process while at the same time recognising women’s individuality and agency as they left behind homes and families, navigated the moral concerns of ships and immigrant depots, and built new lives and societies in the Australian settler colonies. Several chapters are largely based on archival material that might have been previously yet sparingly used in relation to the discourse of female emigration,

⁵⁹ Catherine Bishop, *Minding Her Own Business: Colonial Businesswomen in Sydney* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015), introduction [n.p.].

such as the Colonial Office records, while the opportunities presented by digitised newspapers – rich sources of colonial opinions of and reactions to female immigration – have only recently emerged. Other archival sources, including emigration society records, have been frequently cited but seldom subjected to statistical analysis. I also turn to non-archival sources, including women’s fiction to address immigrants’ personal experiences and find their voices in what remains a male-dominated historical record. This thesis is thus created from a synthesis of archival and published material that might not have been conventionally combined in the past. To some extent earlier generalisations about female emigrants were caused by a narrow archival scope, however, growing transnational and interdisciplinary trends in history, alongside more easily accessed and searchable archives, allow historians to gain a deeper and more nuanced sense of the topic.

From Metropole to Colony

This thesis focuses on female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies in the mid-nineteenth century, covering the period from 1845 (publication of Mary Theresa Vidal’s *Tales for the Bush*) to 1885, the last year of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society’s independent activity. The overlapping date ranges of the sources in this study – 1861-1885 for the Female Middle Class Emigration Society; Colonial Office records from the 1850s and 1860s; novels from 1845, 1854, and 1864; and newspapers from the 1840s to 1880s – capture the Australian colonies between the first substantial waves of free settlement in the 1830s and the emergence of Australian nationalism and the Federation movement in the 1890s. It was a period in which famine and political and industrial revolutions produced mass

emigration from Britain and Europe, while dwindling convict transportation and booming gold rushes changed the social landscape within Australia.

The first chapter of this thesis begins where the discourse of female emigration has been rooted for decades: the Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES). While analysis of the society's work is prevalent in past scholarly work, as noted its emigrants represent only a small, concentrated sampling of the much larger set of women who left Britain. It is easy to think of emigrants as middle-class brides-to-be if one focuses only on the few hundred women aided the FMCES reports, even though a closer examination of the records reveals that the women came from various backgrounds and had many different outcomes. However, despite being unrepresentative the FMCES cannot be ignored because of its ties to the growing women's rights movement and its ability to inform us about the metropolitan situation encouraging middle-class women to seek employment abroad and support themselves. The FMCES also had an impact on nineteenth-century discussions of female emigration: Elizabeth Murray's novel *Ella Norman; or, A Woman's Perils*, for example, was explicit about such societies' naivety about emigration to the colonies, while many newspapers also debated the benefits of the society's emigration scheme.

The FMCES records provide tantalising glimpses of the individual circumstances of the emigrants and how they fared (or failed) in the colonies. Although the society aided only a small number of female emigrants, its archives reveal much about the individual emigrants whom it did assist and their experiences before and after emigration. The FMCES records include stories of not only women who were young and unmarried, but also those who were highly experienced as governesses or teachers, or married with children;

some met with success, others found failure or death in the colonies. In an effort to gain further understanding of the society emigrants' experiences in the Australian colonies, I also briefly examine some of the private letters sent back to the FMCES by immigrants it had helped. Through these studies it is possible to scratch beneath the surface of the society, which is easily summed up as an organisation dedicated solely to sending single, typically young, middle-class women to governess positions in the colonies. As an analysis of the society's data on its emigrants reveals, this was certainly not the case.

In Chapter Two I shift to the governmental sphere and examine not only the opinions of administrative officials, but also the logistics involved in the process of emigration (from emigration agents, to ship's matrons, to clerks' memos tracking down the lost travel trunks of individual emigrants). Hundreds of volumes of Colonial Office original correspondence deal with emigration.⁶⁰ These records include data tables on emigration, reports on emigration to the colonies, and memos and letters to and from governors and emigration officers. They clearly reveal that the Australian colonies were not united in their opinions of female emigration from Britain. For example, South Australia formed a special committee to investigate 'excess' female emigration in 1856, but the governor of Western Australia suggested in 1861 that one hundred single women should be brought to the colony every four months. The dense records reveal the sheer scale of the bureaucracy surrounding female emigration, despite its long association in scholarship with independent philanthropic female societies.

⁶⁰ The specific subseries cited in this thesis are listed in the bibliography, but I consulted a range of Colonial Office series at The National Archives (TNA), including entry books and original correspondence (CO 13, CO 18, CO 331, CO 332, CO 384), emigration entry books and original correspondence (CO 384, CO 385), and Colonial Land and Emigration Commission records (CO 386).

Another important role in the emigration process, especially in the context of female agency, is that of colonial sponsor. The Colonial Office records from Western Australia contain settlers' applications for assisted passage of family and friends. These papers challenge the traditional understanding of the progression of settlement in which men went out first and then sent for women.⁶¹ On the contrary, there are several cases of female settlers applying on behalf of their brothers, nephews, and male cousins. Of course, women also appear as immigrants travelling to relatives or acquaintances of both sexes, but the gender dynamic of the sponsors and nominees raises questions of the importance of women in the creation of settler colonies, and emphasises the agency women had in the largely male-dominated emigration system and society at large; after all, some women chose to remain single, making the choice to marry – like the choice to emigrate – an example of the power some individual women had over their own lives.⁶²

In Chapter Three, a case study of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, I look at a report commissioned by the Legislative Council of South Australia. In this 1856 report, a Select Committee investigated perceived 'excessive' female immigration and the situation at the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, where single female immigrants resided while they looked for employment. The report presented testimony from not only men (including the Depot superintendent, the Depot yard overseer, an emigration agent, and a surgeon), but also Depot matrons and the female immigrants themselves. Although the Committee directed the questioning, the testimony

⁶¹ Oxley and Richards, 'Convict Women and Assisted Female Immigrants Compared,' 5.

⁶² Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 174.

from the women provides a rare opportunity to hear female voices in an institutional setting. Deirdre Beddoe noted in her 1979 book on Welsh convicts and female factories that secondary evidence of women's reactions in such environments, from submission to rebellion, does survive.⁶³ But in many institutions – whether depots, workhouses, asylums, or female factories – women are mostly silent in the historical record, often only mentioned in a more detailed manner when acting against the institution's rules. In David R. Green's study of resistance in London workhouses, for example, he was able to uncover the agency of female paupers within the workhouse system via their 'various types of misbehaviour', but he noted that their complaints were largely filtered through male authority figures such as workhouse masters or magistrates.⁶⁴

It is clear that the immigrants in Adelaide faced a cruel cycle of reliance on the Depot, one which was difficult to escape. Several of the women told of how they did not intend to move to Adelaide but, due to ignorance of geography or the actions of apathetic agents, became trapped far away from any friends and family in the Australian colonies and without any income to support themselves. The interviews with the immigrants also reveal the psychological effects of immigration, an aspect which has proved difficult to capture in past scholarship but has been explored in Catharine Coleborne's recent book on immigrants and institutions. As Coleborne explains, one of the biggest challenges in studying mental illness among emigrants is working with official records in which 'mental illness [is] either muted in descriptions or too

⁶³ Deirdre Beddoe, *Welsh Convict Women: A Study of Women Transported from Wales to Australia, 1787-1852* (Barry, UK: Stewart Williams Publishers, 1979), 139.

⁶⁴ David R. Green, 'Pauper Protests: Power and Resistance in Early Nineteenth-Century London Workhouses,' *Social History* 31, no. 2 (2006), 156-8.

rarely noted to be of significance'.⁶⁵ Despite the rarity of official commentary on mental illness, the topic must be acknowledged in relation to female emigration. Teasing out the psychological and emotional elements of emigration where possible allows us to perceive female emigrants as individuals who possessed varying degrees of vulnerability and demonstrated a range of resilience both during the emigration process and as they settled in the colonies.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, I shift my focus from archival records to the depiction of female emigration in published material. In the mid-nineteenth century there was a boom in both British and Australian publications; the era saw not only a growth of newspaper production and readership, but also the emergence of a distinct Australian literature, particularly from women writers. As Tamara Wagner notes, these authors addressed both colonial and metropolitan readers.⁶⁶ Marion Amies' extensive survey of Australian 'governess novels' by women demonstrates just how much historians can learn about women's daily lives in settler colonies from a medium traditionally dominated by men.⁶⁷ Through studies of novels and newspapers, one can gain an understanding of how female emigration, particularly that organised by societies, was received by the general public; for example, a study of metropolitan and colonial sources reveals that colonial sources viewed female emigration as a noble but misguided cause. Previous studies of female emigration have largely focused on the reactions of the

⁶⁵ Catharine Coleborne, *Insanity, Identity and Empire: Immigrants and Institutional Confinement in Australia and New Zealand, 1873-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 39-40.

⁶⁶ Tamara S. Wagner, ed., *Victorian Settler Narratives: Emigrants, Cosmopolitans and Returnees in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011).

⁶⁷ Marion Amies, 'The Victorian Governess and Colonial Ideas of Womanhood,' *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 537-565.

government rather than the general public, but the story of female emigration as told by those who witnessed or experienced it is a missing piece of scholarship. Literature – moreso than largely impersonal official archival records – enables us to get a better sense of immigrants' emotions and everyday lives. By bringing personal encounters and experiences to the forefront it is easier to understand women's roles in metropolitan and, particularly, settler societies.

In Chapter Four, I look at newspaper coverage of female emigration. The rise of digitisation, especially in Australia, has recently made a wealth of published materials far more accessible (via searchable databases) to researchers. Multiple British newspaper archives offer good coverage of the era, and the National Library of Australia's Trove database provides a diverse geographical selection of Australian newspapers. Newspaper articles and letters to the editor provided readers with the opinions of those not directly involved in migration (those not connected to the government or, for example, the FMCES – although non-stop Maria Rye was an exception) and give us an idea of how the public was exposed to and intervened in discussions about female emigration. It becomes clear that metropolitan and colonial sources differed in their support of female emigration schemes.

Finally, works of Australian literature by women writers have been analysed in relation to domesticity, but not studied in relation to the female immigrant experience. In Chapter Five I look at three mid-nineteenth-century fictional works by women writers, all of whom were themselves Australian immigrants. Their works contain invaluable descriptions of women's lives in the Australian colonies. In Mary Theresa Vidal's 1845 collection of New South Wales short stories, *Tales for the Bush*, Vidal stresses the need to

uphold morality in the lax colonial society as well as the importance of Christian values in persevering and prospering in the rough Australian landscape.⁶⁸ Two novels, Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison* (1854) and Elizabeth Murray's *Ella Norman* (1864), relate the experiences of female immigrants in South Australia and Victoria respectively, and detail women's experiences of immigration and life in the Australian colonies, while exposing the realities and difficulties of colonial life.⁶⁹ All three of these authors spent time in Australia themselves (though only Spence remained there for the rest of her life), and their focus on female characters offers us an insight into the experience of immigration in the voice of women. The literary nature of these sources lessens their objectivity, but the women's fictions reflect the facts of their own experiences and hint at the perception of female immigration in the period, giving us a clearer picture of women's concerns during emigration and the challenges they faced in the colonies, from the quirks of settler etiquette to the unpleasant effects of hot weather and manual labour.

This thesis will examine the various forces shaping female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies in the mid-nineteenth-century. Along the way we will explore how emigrants travelled to the other side of the world, sought employment in the colonies, and struggled to adapt to a new climate and culture. We will also experience the emotional human side of emigration in all its elements, from humorous to heartbreaking. Our journey through the story of female emigration from Britain to Australia starts where it all began for emigrants and historians alike: emigration societies, emigrant selection,

⁶⁸ Mary Vidal, *Tales for the Bush* (Sydney: D.L. Welch, 1845; reprint, Sydney: University of Sydney Library, 1997).

⁶⁹ Catherine Helen Spence, *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia During the Gold Fever* (2 vols. London: John W. Parker and Son West Strand, 1854); Elizabeth A. Murray, *Ella Norman; or, A Woman's Perils* (1864; reprint, Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1985).

and the choice to emigrate, a simple decision that would change the courses of individual lives and national histories forever.

Chapter One – The Ideal Emigrant: An Analysis of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society Records

In the mid-nineteenth century, efforts were made to increase female emigration to the settler colonies of the British Empire. It has long been assumed that, due to a perceived ‘surplus’ of unmarried women in the metropole, this push for female emigration was intended to redress the ‘problem’ of especially middle-class women failing to fulfill their social duties of marriage and family. Many working-class emigrants had practical motivations such as fleeing destitution and famine or taking advantage of land and employment opportunities in the colonies, as well as government-assisted passage. Middle-class women instead faced the ideological pressures of maintaining their social status and morals. As explained by Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair,

Bourgeois respectability required that women live in a state of social and economic dependence on men: those who could not achieve this by acquiring a husband needed the protection of another male relative so that they could be contained within the safe haven of a family unit. Those women who did not live under the protection of a man and who were not attached to a family were regarded as a social problem, prey to the twin dangers of poverty and sexual impropriety.¹

Single women were encouraged to follow the line of men who had already emigrated and lay the foundations of settler colonialism, and to influence settler surges with their ‘feminine’ domesticity. Aside from fulfilling the roles of wife and mother that were needed to expand and maintain the British settler population, it was also hoped that the presence of women would positively influence the men’s behaviour and work ethics.² Unfortunately, the arrival of women could also prove a distraction, but it was expected that the women

¹ Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 167.

² Robert Johnson, *British Imperialism* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan: 2003), 130.

would eventually marry and raise robust settler families with strong British values.

Although the emigration of women to the colonies has been examined by several scholars over the past few decades, gaps continue to exist in discussions of female emigration. Historian Lisa Chilton notes,

With few exceptions, historians who have written about imperial female migration have chosen to focus upon the migration of British women to specific colonial destinations. Where more than one destination has been examined, little has been made of this fact. Comparative analysis has been, at best, a side comment in most of the recent literature in this field.³

One channel historians can use as a means to open the field to more comparative or transnational study is the emigration society. An analysis of the records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, for example, reveals far more than the organisation's goals and functions; the annual report tables documenting emigrants tell us not only about an emigrant's destination and year of travel, but also her education and skills, and how she fared in the colonies. The records also show the imperial scale of the society, which employed multiple colonial correspondents in ports across the empire to advise new emigrants about employment opportunities and lodging; a few women aided by the society were also sent beyond the imperial borders to non-British destinations.

In this analysis of the records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES), I look at the society's archives, focusing in particular on emigrant data included in the three surviving collections of published 'annual reports' for 1862-1872, 1880-1882, and 1883-1886. The collections cover multiple years yet were printed in single pamphlets by the society and are

³ Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007): 6.

titled 'annual' in the Women's Library catalogue; a single annual report for 1861 also survives but contains no information on emigrants – this data was instead included in the 1862-1872 pamphlet. My analysis of these reports is supplemented by the private letters sent back to the FMCES by the women it had helped get to the colonies. Through these studies, it is possible to look beneath the surface of the society, one which initially appeared to be an organisation dedicated solely to sending single, typically young, middle-class women to governess positions in the colonies, and uncover the true demographics and colonial situations of the assisted emigrants. As an analysis of the society's data on its emigrants reveals, the society's dedication to middle-class, educated women was not entirely reflected in its lists of aided women.

However, the few hundred women who decided to emigrate with the aid of the FMCES provide a fascinating look at a small sample of nineteenth-century female emigrants. The FMCES has garnered a lot of attention in previous scholarship of female emigration due to society co-founder Maria Rye's association with women's rights and the society's reflections of Victorian values of class and morality. Yet the small number of emigrants sent out means we cannot generalise about female emigrants on the basis of those assisted by the FMCES. In addition, focusing on these emigrants only in the context of the specialised mission of the FMCES (middle-class, educated women) is itself flawed – the women who became FMCES emigrants were individuals, with different skills, experiences, and personalities. Society-aided women can easily be glossed over as a bland, homogenous group of young, unmarried middle-class English ladies: Marie Ruiz's 2017 book on female emigration societies (including the FMCES as well as those active in the late-

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries), for example, shows more interest in the societies themselves than the emigrants as individuals.⁴ While this approach enabled groundbreaking shifts in thinking about emigration in regards to feminist theory – women-led societies providing opportunities for women and improving the conditions faced by female emigrants – it has since stifled further investigations by giving the impression that there is not much more to say about the FMCES emigrants themselves. Nicole McLennan claimed in 1995 that English women were marginalised in emigration studies.⁵ I disagree that English women were completely sidelined in emigration research, but it is true that scholarship on female emigrants has neither advanced nor made connections (interdisciplinary or within the field) on a large scale since McLennan’s writing in the 1990s, nor since the emergence of female emigration studies in the 1970s – A. James Hammerton’s book *Emigrant Gentlewomen* continues to wield influence over the approach to middle-class female emigrants as ‘distressed gentlewomen’.⁶ Studies from the ensuing decades have continued by and large to approach FMCES emigrants as ladies whose motivations to emigrate revolved around the procurement of only respectable employment and the possibility of marriage. Even Marie Ruiz’s recently published book about female emigration societies retains a strong middle-class lens, explicitly repeating Hammerton’s notion of ‘gentlewomen’ from 40 years earlier and stripping the women of any agency

⁴ Marie Ruiz, *British Female Emigration Societies and the New World, 1860-1914* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

⁵ Although McLennan’s work focuses on unassisted emigrants, she claimed that both the ‘English’ and ‘women’ are generally ‘classes who exist on the fringe of immigration research.’ Nicole McLennan, ‘Glimpses of Unassisted English Women Arriving in Victoria, 1860-1900,’ in *Visible Women: Female Emigrants in Colonial Australia*, ed. Eric Richards (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995), 62.

⁶ A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

(and humanity) by referring to them as ‘exported’.⁷ However, an analysis of emigrant data tables created by the FMCES contradicts this notion of a narrow demographic focus. Instead, it is clear that a range of women – single, married, or widowed; with or without children; highly educated or with only the most basic domestic training – took advantage of the society’s emigration scheme and headed out into the empire under its feminist banner.

The Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES)

Female emigration societies were organisations that both promoted and assisted female emigration from Britain to the colonies, with the most popular destinations being settler colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa. Societies and organisations that helped female emigrants and developed in the mid-nineteenth century include Caroline Chisholm’s Family Colonization Loan Society (1848), the British Female Emigrant Society/British Ladies Female Emigrant Society (1849), the Young Women’s Christian Association (1854), the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (1859), the Female Middle Class Emigration Society (1861), the Girls’ Friendly Society (1875), the Women’s Emigration Society (1880), and the United Englishwoman’s Emigration Association (1884).⁸ These societies were increasingly run by women, though men often featured on the boards and as donors. In the first report of the FMCES in 1861, for example, ten of the eleven committee members were male,⁹ yet by the 1882 report only two of the nine committee members were men.¹⁰ Although men were in charge of the

⁷ Ruiz, *British Female Emigration Societies*, 246.

⁸ *Ibid.*, xxi-xxiv.

⁹ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1861, The Women’s Library, LSE (TWL LSE), 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/1.

¹⁰ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3 (labeled 6B/106/1/FME/1/5 in catalogue).

financial and legal facets of the society, it was women who did a majority of the fieldwork – quite literally when it came to FMCES co-founder Maria Rye’s voyages overseas and the number of female colonial correspondents keeping the society updated. While certainly not all emigration societies were ‘by women, for women,’ the FMCES and similar organisations were instrumental in opening doors for women. Chilton, however, argues:

For emigrant women, the female emigration societies’ successes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were more of a mixed blessing. Emigrators purposely infantilized young single women, stripping them of the right to look after themselves during the processes of migration and settlement. At the same time, the emigrators’ various programs were designed to make female emigrants more competent and confident. Regardless of whether or not the emigrants had imperialistic ambitions, they were directed to consider themselves part of a serious social mission. They were encouraged to believe that it fell to them to elevate whole societies. The emigrators simultaneously sought to empower and disempower emigrant women.¹¹

Whether or not this claim that societies purposefully and grossly manipulated emigrants for the purpose of a higher ‘social mission’ is true, there is no doubt that the FMCES created opportunities for women to experience and sometimes influence colonial life.

The FMCES was founded by Maria Rye and Jane Lewin in 1862, though the society’s emigration scheme had been functioning in an informal manner since 1861. Their stated mission was to encourage emigration as a solution to unemployment. Little is known about Jane Lewin’s life, although Sarah Richardson notes that Lewin was the niece of historian and radical George Grote and his biographer wife, Hannah Lewin.¹² According to a book of Lewin family letters, Jane was born in 1828 to Lieutenant William C. J.

¹¹ Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, 11.

¹² Sarah Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women: Gender and Politics in 19th-Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge: 2013), 154.

Lewin and Jane E. Laprimaudaye. Lewin and Laprimaudaye had married on 15 June 1827 in Bengal,¹³ where Lewin was serving in an artillery regiment.¹⁴ The following year, the ‘lady of Lt. Lewin’ was recorded as having given birth to daughter Jane on 29 April 1828.¹⁵ William Lewin died when Jane was eighteen years old,¹⁶ although it is unclear whether Jane was raised and educated in India, England, or travelled between the two. Her imperial background probably made her well aware of some of the challenges of colonial life and global travel that awaited FMCES emigrants in the 1860s.

More is known about the life and work of Maria Rye, who was born in London in 1829. Her interest in women’s rights probably stemmed from her role as a member of the Langham Place group, a middle-class feminist circle active from 1857 to 1866 but born from friendships dating back to the late 1840s.¹⁷ Rye was the daughter of a solicitor and educated at home, but she showed remarkable entrepreneurial skills; aside from the FMCES, she was also responsible for founding a law-copying office, a printing press, and a telegraph school. Rye was not only involved in multiple metropolitan projects, but also made an effort to take her work beyond Britain. Rye accompanied emigrant parties to Australia and Canada on several occasions, exposing herself to the same risks her female emigrants confronted. Rye’s

¹³ A.W. Mason, Geo. Owen, and G.H. Brown, *The East-India Register and Directory, for 1828* (London: J.L. Cox, 1828), 526.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁵ G.H. Brown and F. Clark, *The East-India Register and Directory, for 1829* (London: J.L. Cox, 1829), 512.

¹⁶ According to the Lewin family tree, William Lewin was buried in what is now Cherrapunji, India. Thomas J. Lewin, ed., *The Lewin Letters: A Selection from the Correspondence & Diaries of an English Family, 1756-1885*, vol. 2 (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1909), 360.

¹⁷ Other members of the group included Barbara Bodichon, Jessie Boucherett, Emily Davies, Emily Faithfull, Matilda Hays, Isabella Knox, Theodosia Monson, Bessie Rayner Parkes, and Adelaide Proctor. Jane Rendall, ‘Langham Place group (act. 1857–1866),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/93708>.

experience on one of these voyages was related to the general public in 1863 in a magazine article by journalist John D. Cartwright:

The [ship] matron was incompetent. There was, as usual, a large cargo of intoxicating liquors. There were single young men and women in large numbers constantly thrown together. Irregularities and troubles of a serious character occurred.... The men were a very rough sort of people, and at one time were on the verge of open mutiny because some wild girls had been shut up. Fire-arms were brought out, and threats used. Happily it ended in threats. Miss Rye, after this, conducted religious services on Sunday evenings; went down on deck among the men and women, gave out hymns.... 'We're a funny lot, Miss Rye, but we won't hurt you,' one of the men said.¹⁸

This dramatic tale was related to Cartwright through correspondence with Rye and may have been exaggerated, but it helped to explain Rye's strong opinions about the need for emigration reform (particularly the voyage) and the importance of morality. Rye did not restrict her imperial philanthropy to female emigration; in the late 1860s, for example, she focused on facilitating the emigration of orphan children to Canada.¹⁹ At this time, Jane Lewin assumed day-to-day responsibility for the FMCES and narrowed its focus to finding positions for governesses,²⁰ but the society remained committed to Rye's original vision of enriching colonial society with educated, middle-class female emigrants.

The FMCES was supported by patrons and public contributions, and the inclusion of female emigrant details in the society's reports likely emerged as a method of accountability. The reports' lists of donors indicate a range of support. The list from 1862, the year in which the society was established, is particularly lengthy, recording 160 donations and subscriptions from April to

¹⁸ John D. Cartwright, 'Emigration, Emigrants, and Miss Rye,' *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading*, July 1863, 39.

¹⁹ Judy Collingwood, 'Rye, Maria Susan (1829–1903),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35896>.

²⁰ Helen Rappaport, *Encyclopedia of Women Social Reformers*, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 603.

October, from the £140 gift of E.H. Smith, Esq. to the two shillings given by ‘M.D. (a poor servant)’.²¹ The 1862 donations break down to the following amounts:

Table 1.1: 1862 Donations to the FMCES²²

£1	59
£1 to £5	82
>£5, <£10	0
£10 to £25	15
>£25	4

It is clear from this table that the FMCES mostly relied on small donations but did receive some larger amounts to enable its consistent operation.

The donors to the FMCES were a mix of men and women, married and single. From the extant archival material it is difficult to discern just how involved with the society these donors were – some may have been supporters since its foundation, others may have merely been looking for a convenient charitable outlet. Most donors were recorded only by surname, which makes them nearly impossible to trace. However, the largest donation in 1864 (of thirty-five pounds) came from FMCES committee member ‘Madame Bodichon’ (Barbara Bodichon), a women’s rights and education activist, and one of Rye’s acquaintances from the Langham Place group.²³ The FMCES gained the equivalent of a modern corporate sponsor in 1881, when the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers donated £105 to the society; put into context when donations for 1880 – only one, of five shillings – are considered, this sum certainly stands out.²⁴ Indeed, the reports show an increasingly dismal income of donations and subscriptions over the years (though perhaps

²¹ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1861, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/1, 12-13.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3, 14.

only certain donors were listed in later years). The donations from 1880 to 1882 totaled £116 5s. and £44 15s. 6d. was collected between 1883 and 1884, with ‘no appeal made’ in 1885,²⁵ after which the FMCES was absorbed into other emigration societies. The collected money was distributed as loans to female emigrants to assist with their passage and any costs upon arrival.

It was Rye who asked in an 1861 pamphlet, ‘Are women to perish simply because they are women?’²⁶ Rye’s pamphlet laid out the reasons why an emigration organisation to aid unemployed educated women was necessary. She wrote that the solution for female unemployment was often summed up as: ‘Teach your protégées to emigrate; send them where the men want wives, the mothers want governesses, where the shopkeepers, the schools, and the sick will thoroughly appreciate your exertions, and heartily welcome your women.’²⁷ It is worth noting that the first scenario outlined was marriage, followed by finding a position as a governess, an occupation closely tied to the family and domesticity. Thus, while there was certainly independent work available for women, Rye emphasised the importance of the family to society.

In an 1863 feature story on Rye and her female emigration scheme, Cartwright summarised the benefits emigration offered to both metropolitan women and colonial men:

There were reasons enough why England should be willing to spare some of her daughters: they would, for the most part, be going among Englishmen of spirit and ambition, who had gone out to make their fortune, had in part succeeded, but had found that their bachelor way of living was but a sorry effort, and that their position and domestic lives would be greatly improved if they could obtain helpmeets, such as they would have little difficulty in selecting at home from the sisters of their friends. That there were a great many young women in England who

²⁵ Ibid., 14; FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

²⁶ Maria S. Rye, ‘Emigration of Educated Women,’ 1861, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL002, 6B/06/1/FME/3/1, 1.

²⁷ Ibid.

must of necessity remain all their lives unmarried was proved by every census, and afforded an additional argument in favour of female emigration.²⁸

Sending the unmarried women out into the empire to domesticate the strapping settlers seemed like an obvious solution to the imbalance of the sexes in both the metropole and the colonies. Yet Rye also identified a wealth of employment opportunities available to women in the colonies and wrote, ‘My sympathies and my judgment lean every day more and more towards the establishment of some scheme, by which educated women may with safety be introduced into the colonies, and inclines, less and less, to their commencing new trades at home’.²⁹ Rye also thought that the colonies could greatly benefit from the emigration of educated women. She acknowledged the success of earlier waves of emigration (of both men and women) to the Australian colonies, but referred to these emigrants as ‘persons of a class not always the most tractable in the world’,³⁰ reflecting several colonies’ convict legacy and her perception of the colonies as lacking sophistication. Rye believed that the introduction of England’s educated women to the empire would bring about ‘an elevation of morals’ as the ‘inevitable result of the mere presence... of a number of high class women’.³¹ Saturating the colonies with refined British women would improve the morals and manners of colonial society in line with those of Britain. Thus Rye formulated the FMCES scheme to assist middle-class women, a system of assistance that would deploy both loans and colonial connections to aid female emigrants.

²⁸ Cartwright, ‘Emigration, Emigrants, and Miss Rye,’ 38.

²⁹ Rye, ‘Emigration of Educated Women,’ 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

The first task of the FMCES was to find suitable applicants.

Government-sponsored emigrants were judged by their age, occupational skills, health, and moral standing.³² While the FMCES did take into account these criteria (and particularly emphasised employability and morality), the society focused on a mark of developed civilisation: education. Co-founder Jane Lewin wrote of the society's ideal emigrant:

First, then, the object of the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society is to send out to the colonies educated women, including under that head the large class lying between a finishing governess on the one hand and a woman who can do little beyond teaching English correctly on the other. In all cases, however, the society requires education of the hands, as well as of the head; and the most highly-accomplished applicant would be rejected were she to profess total ignorance of household work, cooking, and the like, or to refuse to assist in domestic matters in the event of her being called upon to do so.³³

In this passage Lewin called for applicants who not only met certain standards of education (Lewin neglected to clarify what these standards were), but were also capable of homemaking. This seems to be a contradictory requirement, for the duties of a governess differ from those of a domestic servant. Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair point out that governess was a 'socially anomalous position', one that was at times recorded in the 1891 Glasgow census as 'servant', 'visitor', or "'domestic governess"... nicely echoing "domestic servant"'.³⁴ Did the necessity for household training come from the rough nature of life in the colonies? Or did it carry a more subliminal meaning, perhaps reflecting the need for women to domesticate and civilise the empire

³² Deborah Oxley and Eric Richards, 'Convict Women and Assisted Female Immigrants Compared 1841 – A Turning Point?' in *Visible Women: Female Emigrants in Colonial Australia*, ed. Eric Richards (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995), 10.

³³ J.E. Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration... a paper read at the social science congress, in October, 1863,' TWL LSE, 304.8171241041 LEW, 2.

³⁴ Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 182.

via marriage? Lewin only briefly commented on marriage in her paper, stating,

Our duty is to get the best we can for our money; to get young women selected who have lived under good housekeepers at home and acquired all the information belonging to their calling; and this is equally necessary whether we are providing servants for employers or wives for laboring men; for the best educated servants make the best wives.³⁵

While Lewin clearly believed that some female emigrants would indeed go on to fulfill the duties of wife and housekeeper, it cannot be said with certainty that marriage was an explicit aim of the FMCES. In its early years, the society's priority was simply to aid women in colonial ventures.

The FMCES kept a narrow focus as it grew. The first rule listed in the society's reports explicitly stated that 'the Society confines its assistance entirely to educated women – no applicants being accepted who are not sufficiently educated to undertake the duties of a nursery governess'.³⁶ The second rule noted that each applicant's knowledge of housework would be examined and she should be willing to help 'should it be necessary', but the emphasis was on education.³⁷ The first rule established the demographic niche to which the FMCES catered as it became more established: women with sufficient education to remain above service work. Maria Rye acknowledged in her 1861 pamphlet the existence of a great demand for domestic workers in the colonies and admitted that there could be space for a scheme involving the emigration of a superior class of servants,³⁸ but ultimately the FMCES focused on providing governesses, schoolteachers, and nurses. Melissa Walker

³⁵ Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration', TWL LSE, 304.8171241041 LEW, 2.

³⁶ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3, 5.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rye, 'Emigration of Educated Women,' 10.

explains that the heroine of the FMCES narrative, a ‘self-made maid’ who was able to support herself despite being unmarried, was ‘a single female who exercised self-reliance and spotless morality in the colonies while employed as a governess, or as a superior form of servant known as “a help” if she could not find a governess position’.³⁹ Ideally, the education of most of the FMCES emigrants would make them desirable governesses and teachers. Women who wished to emigrate were expected to be well-educated, though the breadth and depth of attainment considered essential were never explicitly clarified. This requirement served the purpose of ensuring that potential emigrants would be successful in educational posts, which included positions from ‘live-in governess to those women running boarding schools who were effectively businesswomen’.⁴⁰ It also weeded out applicants from the less-educated lower classes who would be considered less likely to contribute to the gentrification of sorts that the colonies so desperately needed according to Rye. The society’s separation of these education and service roles, unlike Lewin’s call for governess and maid rolled into one, also gave prospective emigrants confidence that they would be placed in a respectable, middle-class position rather than face manual labour. Yet some emigrants did have to provide (or at least help with) domestic service, as stated by a woman who wrote to the FMCES in 1884 that ‘if teachers want work they must go “up country”, must accept the life of the family without other society, and must share the household work with the mother and family’.⁴¹ Life outside of the major cities along Australia’s coast was difficult and isolated – chores ignored

³⁹ Melissa Walker, ‘Self-Made Maids: British Emigration to the Pacific Rim and Self-Help Narratives,’ *Victorian Literature and Culture* 43, no. 2 (2015), 282.

⁴⁰ Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives*, 181.

⁴¹ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

or not properly carried out could put a settler family's finances, health, or even lives at risk. It was therefore essential that women possess useful domestic skills if they wished to have more job opportunities and adapt well to a potentially rough lifestyle. In 1898, the journal *The Lady* still echoed this sentiment, when it advised emigrants that:

Girls who thoroughly understand domestic duties, and can put their hands to anything, are much sought after as wives by the better class of Colonists, so that they really have the opportunity of settling comfortably in life, if they wish to do so, whereas in England, even after marriage in their own class, they could only expect to go on working hard.⁴²

Colonial life certainly held opportunities for social mobility among female emigrants, but it could also be challenging. Even women who did not mind adding some domestic work to their lives would be faced with navigating a new social system. It is interesting that in 1882 the FMCES noted that 'the number of persons who actually emigrate is small out of all proportion to those who apply',⁴³ but whether this was due to the implied selectiveness of the society, the cold feet of prospective emigrants, or simple logistics is unclear. As no application records survive, we cannot know how many potential female emigrants approached the FMCES.

FMCES Report Tables⁴⁴

The surviving 'annual reports' of the FMCES include tables recording the destination, salary, and general details of the female emigrants aided by the society. The emigrants were referred to only by number and no corresponding

⁴² 'The Emigration of Women,' *The Lady*, Press Cutting Books, Records of the British Women's Emigration Association, 1898, TWL LSE, 1/BWE, Box FL002, GB106/1/BWE/3/3, 8.

⁴³ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3, 3.

⁴⁴ I have replicated the data from the annual report tables in Appendix 1 at the end of the thesis.

list of names is included in the archives; in many cases, more identifying information was recorded (or has survived) about female convicts than the FMCES emigrants, including personal details such as appearance, occupation, birthplace, character, and criminal charges.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the FMCES tables are a rich source of information, recording the details of 260 society-assisted emigrants in the periods of 1861-1872 and 1880-1885. As noted earlier, it is important to note that the FMCES assisted emigrants to both British imperial and non-British destinations. Of the 127 emigrants recorded as going to 'Australia', only some of the women who emigrated 1883-1885 have a specific colony noted in the destination column: nine to Sydney (New South Wales), four to Brisbane (Queensland), two to Melbourne (Victoria), two to Tasmania, and one to Perth (Western Australia); seven women from the same period were recorded as sailing to a generic 'Australia'.⁴⁶ The notes about emigrants' backgrounds, skills, and experiences are especially detailed in the pamphlet dated 1880-1886, but even the sparser earlier records reveal what elements were thought to constitute a successful emigrant and what skills were considered desirable by the emigration society. A study of the tables gives us an idea of the scope of FMCES-assisted emigration and reveals information about the women who were successful in their new colonial lives. Although this thesis is focused on the Australian colonies, it may be possible to consider the less popular FMCES destinations in a comparative manner. The efforts of the FMCES in British Columbia in 1862 are mentioned by Adele Perry, who notes that Maria Rye had to disregard the FMCES's mission and recruit

⁴⁵ Deirdre Beddoe, *Welsh Convict Women: A Study of Women Transported from Wales to Australia, 1787-1852* (Barry, UK: Stewart Williams Publishers, 1979), 21.

⁴⁶ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

working-class women due to the labour market in British Columbia.⁴⁷ Rye was also known to accompany female emigrants to Otago, New Zealand – an undertaking that would generate debate in newspapers and will be discussed in Chapter Four – and some of the FMCES women noted as sailing to New Zealand in 1862 may have sailed with Rye. For other destinations, such as the vaguely labeled ‘Africa’, it may be difficult to assess the extent of the FMCES’s role in female emigration, or to comparatively use the FMCES data in elucidating women’s roles and experiences in settler colonies in Africa.

As noted earlier, it is likely that the recording of this data was done to account for the society’s use of donations, especially since the tables record financial information such as emigrants’ colonial salaries and (in later years) outstanding loans. The FMCES’s system of loans was first suggested by Maria Rye, who explained that there were two reasons for the society to treat emigration aid as a business transaction rather than charity:

Firstly, we shall, by lending instead of giving, be able to assist a class of persons who, however poor they may be, (and I believe not one person in a thousand has the very faintest idea how absolutely poor the *women* in this class are,) would object, and very properly object, to being treated as paupers; secondly, this money, although always changing hands, would, with proper management, scarcely diminish, or, at any rate, the losses would be so small that an insignificant subscription would amply cover them.⁴⁸

The lending system would not only save the pride of applicants, but also make hesitant donors see the society’s work as an investment rather than as a throwaway donation to a charity scheme. Loans were distributed to pay for the part of the passage intending emigrants could not afford, and most loans were due to be paid back to the society in two years and four months. There is

⁴⁷ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 152.

⁴⁸ Rye, ‘Emigration of Educated Women,’ 13.

no justification given for this odd repayment length; perhaps the society felt that emigrants would need a grace period of four months for travelling, finding a position, and settling in before paying back the loan over two years. The FMCES report tables covering the period 1880 to 1885 record the loan amount and due date for about half of the emigrants, while the earlier tables only include a column listing the emigrants' salaries in the colonies. The FMCES archives do not contain any detailed records about loan disbursements and payments; it is possible that the financial records were lost or discarded when the FMCES was absorbed by the Colonial Emigration Society in 1886.⁴⁹ The provision of financial support by the FMCES allowed applicants to be judged on the basis of their education and skills rather than capital resource, something which had hitherto been essential for many middle-class emigrants hoping to start a new life abroad.

As noted earlier, the FMCES aimed to assist educated women suitable for work as governesses. As such, the report tables often refer to the quality of employment procured by qualified emigrants. A variety of occupations were held by FMCES emigrants in the colonies, including governesses, schoolmistresses, teachers, nurses, ladies' companions, milliners, bookkeepers, and one woman who 'took engagement to sing in public'.⁵⁰ Women who were not successful in the colonies were often deemed by the society unskilled (after they had initially been considered worthy of support)

⁴⁹ The Colonial Emigration Society (CES) was responsible for administering the funds of the FMCES from 1884 to 1886, but there are no known CES archives. From 1892 the loan fund was administered by the United British Women's Emigration Association (UBWEA), the archives of which do exist (but no financial records of the FMCES are included). The UBWEA was itself merged into the Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women in 1919. 'Women's Library: Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' Aim25, 1 March 2008, <http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cats/65/10438.htm>'; 'The Women's Library: Records of the British Women's Emigration Association,' Archives Hub, 1 March 2008, <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/features/0806bwea.html>.

⁵⁰ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-1872, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/2.

and perceived as suitable only for low salary jobs or less desirable positions than those of schoolteacher or nursery governess. Emigrants' salaries in the colonies were not always recorded, but forty pounds to sixty pounds per annum seems to have been the norm. A few of the more accomplished and experienced emigrants earned over one hundred pounds per year, with two women earning £150: Emigrant 127, who went to Australia in 1868 and obtained an unspecified position in a school;⁵¹ and Emigrant 221 who became a music mistress in a South African girls' school after emigrating in 1880.⁵² Many of the higher-earning emigrants were employed in schools, while governesses were on the lower end of the pay scale, receiving from twenty pounds to seventy pounds per annum. It is unclear whether board and lodging were included as part of the salary in the society's calculations of annual salaries, but it was likely included for women in typical 'live-in' positions such as domestic servants or single-family governesses.

The FMCES tables reveal, surprisingly, that good health was not an essential prerequisite for society-assisted emigrants. Several women were referred to as being in poor health but hoping to improve their condition by emigrating to a warmer climate. Five of the forty-four FMCES emigrants in the period between 1880 and 1882 were listed with poor health as a motivation to emigrate.⁵³ Yet the colonies could also cause female emigrants' health to deteriorate and force them to return to England. For example, five FMCES emigrants to Australia between 1862 and 1867 failed to adapt to colonial life due to ill health, with two recorded as returning to England (the fate of the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3.

⁵³ Ibid.

other three is unclear);⁵⁴ one of these women had even emigrated specifically to improve her health. The strange seasons and intense heat sometimes affected even those women without pre-existing conditions. An emigrant to Brisbane in 1884, for example, was offered two well-paid jobs within weeks of her arrival in Queensland but ‘declined on account of unhealthiness of place’.⁵⁵ Those emigrants who were able to handle the journey and their new environment were still susceptible to disease and premature mortality: three FMCES emigrants of the mid-1860s died within a few years of their arrival in the colonies, one from consumption and the other two ‘suddenly’.⁵⁶ The physical health of the FMCES-assisted emigrants has been overlooked by historians, but it was an important factor in determining their success in the colonies.

Good mental health, although not commented on explicitly in the FMCES papers, also appears to have been essential for emigrants’ success. Colonial life could be rough and unsettling, perhaps especially for the middle-aged women aided by the FMCES’s scheme. Emigrant 23 sailed for Australia in 1862 but was unsuccessful and deemed ‘too old for adaptation to a new scene’, as was Emigrant 24, her sister.⁵⁷ The FMCES did not record the ages of emigrants in these reports, but it is clear that the society felt that the younger the emigrant, the more chance of success she had with her new life (and, perhaps, marriage). Likewise, the remarks for Emigrant 72 (who left for Australia in 1863) read: ‘Middle-aged woman with broken constitution,

⁵⁴ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-1872, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/2.

⁵⁵ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

unsuccessful'.⁵⁸ While older women were likely to have more work experience, it also seemed to be more difficult for them to adapt to a new life in a strange land.

Of course, in some cases life in the colonies was simply boring or unimpressive, a view that was held by Emigrant 146 who went to Australia in 1870 but 'found colonial life dull, after Versailles'.⁵⁹ Other women, however, were unable to cope with the stresses of moving abroad and adapting to life in the Australian colonies. The FMCES did not hold a positive view of overwhelmed emigrants, as seen in the remarks regarding Emigrant 40: 'Left situation rashly, and afterwards found difficulty in obtaining employment'; there is a hint that the society found the woman's impatience to blame for her failure.⁶⁰ Emigrant 65 was also declared unsuccessful due to being 'unfitted for colonial life'.⁶¹ These blunt comments indicate the frustration felt by FMCES members toward assisted female emigrants who were unsuccessful. Since the emigrant data tables published in the society's reports were likely included to disclose the society's financial actions to donors, unsuccessful emigrants reflected poorly on the FMCES. Of course, some of the failures were not the fault of the society. It was crucial for emigrants to be psychologically strong enough to handle the stressful situations and decisions they faced. But in the eyes of the FMCES, mentality was equaled, if not overshadowed, by morality.

While education was a preferred quality in an emigrant, proper conduct was absolutely essential. As Jane Lewin stated in her pamphlet on female emigration, 'It is hardly necessary to add that all possible precautions are

⁵⁸ Ibid.

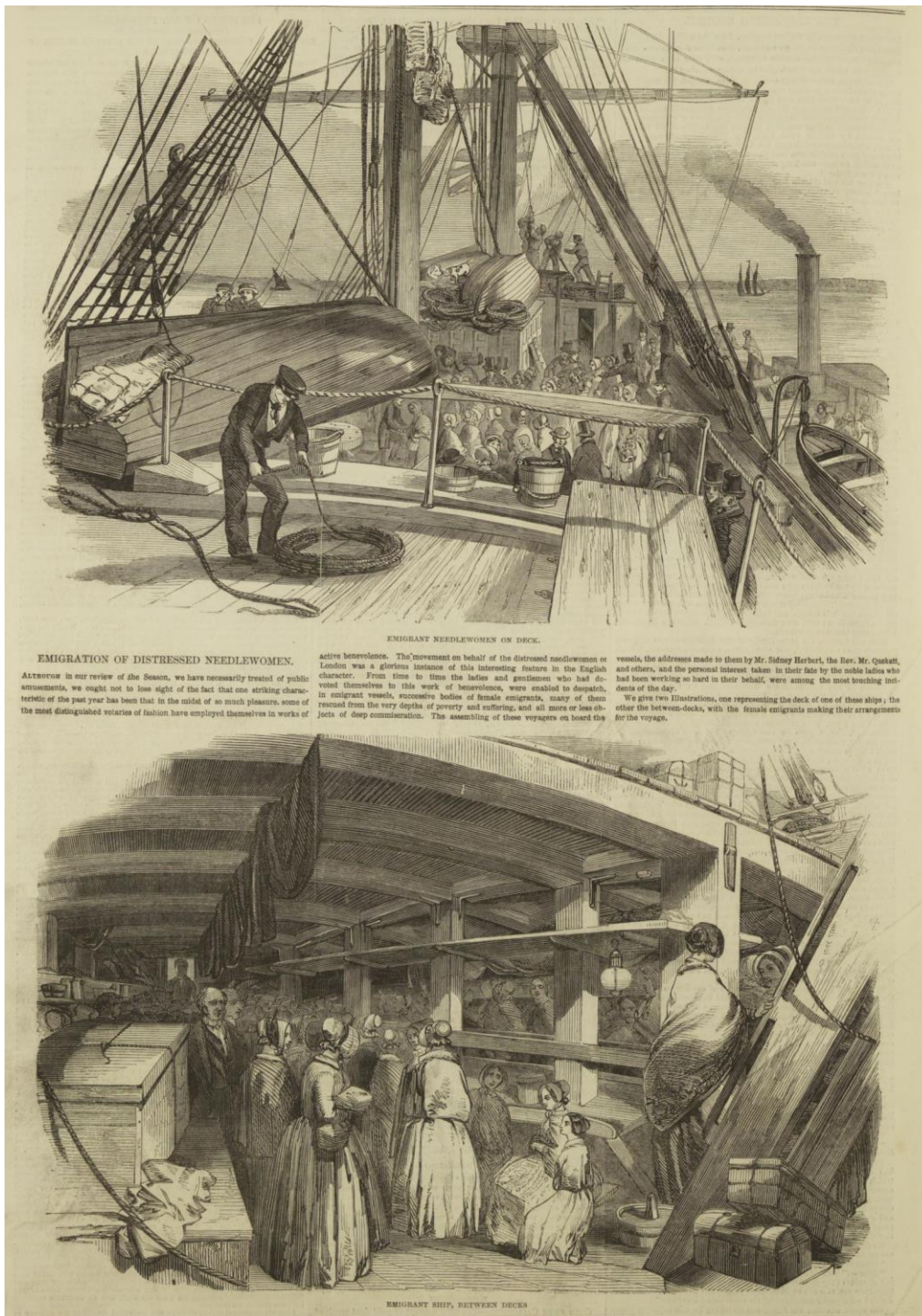
⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

taken to ensure good moral character in those who are sent out'.⁶² Yet even the most proper lady would be challenged during her emigration. The first moral dangers female emigrants faced appeared during the voyage, the very nature of which exposed the women to an environment rife with immoral possibilities. Throughout the lengthy journeys women experienced both isolation and overcrowding: they were far from land and society, yet shared the space of a ship with fellow passengers and the (male) crew (see Figure 1.1).

⁶² Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration,' 2.



EMIGRATION OF DISTRESSED NEEDLEWOMEN.

ARTICLER in our review of the Season, we have necessarily treated of public amusements, we ought not to lose sight of the fact that one striking characteristic of the past year has been that in the midst of so much pleasure, some of the most distinguished votaries of fashion have employed themselves in works of

active benevolence. The movement on behalf of the distressed needlewoman of London was a glorious instance of this interesting feature in the English character. From time to time the ladies and gentlemen who had devoted themselves to this work of benevolence, were enabled to despatch, in emigrant vessels, successive bodies of female emigrants, many of them rescued from the very depths of poverty and suffering; and all more or less objects of deep commiseration. The assembling of those voyagers on board the

vessels, the addresses made to them by Mr. Sidney Herbert, the Rev. Mr. Quaker, and others, and the personal interest taken in their fate by the noble ladies who had been working so hard in their behalf, were among the most touching incidents of the day. We give two illustrations, one representing the deck of one of these ships; the other the between-decks, with the female emigrants making their arrangements for the voyage.

Figure 1.1: Depictions of the emigration ship conditions facing ‘distressed needlewomen’, 1850.⁶³

These illustrations suggest the confined conditions of emigrant ships.

Emigrants on the deck were exposed to the elements and the crew; those below deck were cramped in a dim space with almost no privacy. As seen in

⁶³ ‘Emigration of Distressed Needlewomen,’ *Illustrated London News* (London: Illustrated London News, 17 August 1850).

these sketches, there was little distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ space on the ship, leaving men and women to mingle in unusually intimate settings. As historian Janet C. Myers notes in her article ‘Performing the Voyage Out’, many of the society-assisted emigrants were forced to travel in second class or steerage aboard ships, and this also led to an uncomfortable mixing of the middle-class governesses and the poor or working-class government-sponsored emigrants.⁶⁴ The FMCES acknowledged the difficulty and discomfort of the voyage, as well as the importance of behaving properly, in its 1886 report:

When loans are granted the Society’s secretary saves the applicants all the difficulties of securing the passage and paying for it, and endeavours to ensure all necessary care for her, but much must always depend on her own behaviour towards both the passengers and the officers of the ship.⁶⁵

Emigrants were expected to be responsible and respectable enough to behave properly during the voyage; as the warning from the society demonstrates, an emigrant’s success depended on the strength and quality of her personal character. Concern over proper behaviour during the voyage led to the introduction of ship matrons. This use of chaperones reflected Victorian assumptions about women needing protection and being largely incapable of independent travel. Perhaps it can also be said that the presence of matrons ensured that colonies did not receive ‘damaged goods’. It would be difficult for women to defend their reputations or disprove rumours about their conduct on the ship due to the attitude that there were deterrents to moral misbehaviour in place (such as ship matrons and attempts at the physical division of the

⁶⁴ Janet C. Myers, ‘Performing the Voyage Out: Victorian Female Emigration and the Class Dynamics of Displacement,’ *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 1 (2001), 132.

⁶⁵ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4, 4.

women's berth from the rest of the ship). It would take a woman acting of her own accord to circumvent the system of protection in place. Thus, if some sort of liaison did occur – either with or without the woman's consent – and was discovered, a female emigrant had little hope of escaping harsh judgment.

Yet surviving the voyage both physically and morally intact was only the first hurdle for society-assisted women. Once in the colonies, female emigrants were expected to uphold their moral character. Chilton notes that emigrants represented both emigration societies and British culture:

Because of their unique status as valuable yet vulnerable cultural signifiers, single British women were subject to more care and protection than were any other class of adult immigrants during this period. The respectability of female immigrants reflected upon the organizations that facilitated their immigration and upon the social environment out of which they came.⁶⁶

To ease the transition from metropolitan to colonial life, the FMCES had colonial correspondents in the field to welcome emigrants. Joanna Trollope and Anne Summers both vividly describe scenes in which early female emigrants were swarmed by hordes of men upon their arrival in port;⁶⁷ colonial correspondents were a defense against FMCES emigrants being accosted and misled by any immoral men, or women. These colonial correspondents were 'ladies of good position' who helped emigrants find accommodation and employment.⁶⁸ By avoiding immigration depots (which, we shall see later, were often associated with corrupt morals) and quickly finding employment, women could avoid accusations of impropriety. As Walker states, 'The FMCES self-help narrative propagated the image of a

⁶⁶ Chilton, *Agents of Empire*, 149.

⁶⁷ Joanna Trollope, *Britannia's Daughters: Women of the British Empire* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), 75; Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975; reprint, Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1994), 323.

⁶⁸ Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration,' 3.

stalwart and righteous female individual by repeatedly affirming her difference from and moral improvement of a variety of “others,” including inferior female emigrants, working-class people, and racialized groups’.⁶⁹ Indeed, female emigrants sent out by the FMCES accounted for a tiny percentage of the many thousands of ‘inferior’ women (poor domestic servants from Ireland being an example that contrasted with the FMCES’s notion of an ideal emigrant) who made their way to Britain’s settler colonies. Above all, the FMCES clearly valued morality, and Walker attributes this concern to the pervasive Victorian concern about the ‘fallen’ woman.⁷⁰ Four emigrants aided by the society between 1861 and 1867 were reported as having failed in their ventures due to ‘misconduct’.⁷¹ Although society in the Australian colonies was not as steeped in tradition and – especially in colonies with convicts – the correlation between morality and social status was more muddled compared to Britain, transgressions could still be made, and it was easy for emigrants to be seen with disdain by the FMCES for the choices they made in the colonies. Emigrant 66 learned this lesson in 1863 when she ‘went out to a situation [in Australia], lost it, and married beneath her’.⁷² In this case her unemployment could not be remedied even by marriage, that oft-listed reason for female emigration.

It is easy to generalise female emigrants assisted by societies as a group of young, unmarried women venturing out into the empire to marry and domesticate the colonies, especially when the FMCES itself reduced female emigrants to numbers and recorded an emigrant’s success in finding a

⁶⁹ Walker, ‘Self-Made Maids,’ 284.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-1872, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL002, 6B/106/1/FME/1/2.

⁷² Ibid.

respectable job or husband. In reality, only a small proportion of FMCES emigrants were noted as marrying within a couple of years of emigrating. Approximately 12% of emigrants aided by the FMCES from 1861 to 1872 and 7% of those emigrating from 1880 to 1882 married in the colonies, usually within two or three years of their arrival; it is likely that others may have married later, but these marriages were not recorded in the FMCES annual reports. However, the FMCES tables reveal that women of all marital statuses were helped by the society. A few women (often travelling with teenage daughters) received assistance to reunite them with their husbands abroad. Emigrant 94, for example, went to her husband in Australia, accompanied by her fourteen-year-old daughter; however, despite finding work in a school and seeing her family reunited, the woman was noted as 'not very successful'.⁷³

One noteworthy case recorded in 1882 described the plight of an Irish family:

Mother and four daughters, part of an Irish family reduced to poverty by the late troubles. The father obtained a situation in South Africa and the mother joined him with eight daughters. The four eldest having been engaged in tuition were accepted as the Society's emigrants, and the Society's correspondent procured for them offers of two situations at salaries at £50, but they declined both, not wishing to leave their parents.⁷⁴

This family alone accounted for nearly a fifth of all FMCES emigrants in 1882. No mention is made of the family's religion, and the note about the family being 'reduced to poverty by the late troubles' likely references the Land War that took place in Ireland from the 1870s to the 1890s; it is not clear whether the family were evicted tenant farmers or fallen landlords affected by economic depression and the loss of tenants. Although there is no information recorded about a loan, even without financial assistance this family group

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3.

would have drawn heavily on the society's administrative and colonial resources, signifying that the FMCES was not merely a catalyst of a strictly tailored and structured process of single female emigration as Marie Ruiz has suggested.⁷⁵ Instead, the society aided an array of female emigrants.

Cases of family reunion were not the only instances in which married women were helped by the FMCES. There were, for example, two cases of women travelling alone to join their husbands who had preceded them to seek employment in the colonies: Emigrant 94, who journeyed to Australia in 1864,⁷⁶ and Emigrant 232, who went to Australia in 1881.⁷⁷ Then there was Emigrant 222, who was accompanied by her husband (who does not appear to have been assisted by the FMCES) in 1880 when they emigrated to Australia.⁷⁸ Cases like this suggest that the foremost aim of the FMCES was to aid educated women who were likely to improve the quality of colonial life with their skills. Young families were hardly unwanted in the colonies, as they provided not only more hands for work, but also ensured the continuation of colonial society as its original settlers aged. But families were more likely to receive assistance from other emigration schemes than the FMCES, such as Caroline Chisholm's Family Colonization Loan Society.

Other personal connections were also obvious in the emigration pattern. An existing support network – family, friends, or simply mutual acquaintances – could greatly ease a woman's arrival and settlement. One in

⁷⁵ Marie Ruiz, 'What could they do with their unsealable goods? Organising the transaction of English women to the Australian colonies (1860-1914),' paper presented at the IHR Imperial and World History Seminar: Colonial/Postcolonial New Researchers' Workshop, London, UK, October 27, 2014.

⁷⁶ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-1872, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/2.

⁷⁷ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

ten FMCES emigrants joined relatives or friends already established in the colonies. For many young women this often meant travelling to a brother, but emigrants were also noted as joining uncles, sons, parents, and sisters. Familial connections were also present earlier in the emigration process, as evidenced by several cases of female relatives making the voyage together, or shortly following one another. Other female emigrants journeyed to friends, but no details such as the gender, age, or occupation of said friends are given. The advantages of travelling to acquaintances or family members are obvious. Emigrants with pre-existing colonial networks did not need to worry about being left to their own resources once the society's correspondent had finished helping them find employment and accommodation. These emigrants also had someone to help them as they adapted to the culture and lifestyle of the colonies; or, should they happen to miss home, emigrants in contact with relatives and friends could still feel connected to their former lives and the customs and culture to which they were accustomed.

While most of the female emigrants supported by the FMCES were British, the society also assisted a few foreign women who were living in England. These women tended to be more educated and experienced than their British counterparts, and their presence is a reminder of the exploding population mobility of the nineteenth century. Also reminding us of the increasing mobility of the period are a few FMCES emigrants who had already travelled in the British Empire and beyond. Emigrant 257, for instance, had been in India and hoped to open a school in China, but lack of funding meant she applied to the FMCES and instead went to Australia in 1882.⁷⁹ Another fascinating case is that of Emigrant 290, who spent several years employed as

⁷⁹ Ibid.

a companion in Russia. After taking a break in England, she returned to St. Petersburg in 1884 with the help of a sixteen-pound loan from the FMCES.⁸⁰ The reasoning behind this support of emigration to a non-British destination is unknown, but it was not the only case. A few emigrants were given support to go to the United States in 1871 and 1872: a mother travelling with her teenage daughter and planning to join her husband in Chicago; a widow with three daughters; and two sisters who went to New York, one of whom returned immediately.⁸¹ In 1880, a single woman who had ‘failed wholly to earn a livelihood’ went to be a nurse in Colorado,⁸² followed in 1884 by a governess unable to find a job in Britain.⁸³ In these cases it is clear that the emigrants were, for the most part, struggling to support themselves or their families, but the case of the Russian companion remains an anomaly due to her experience.

The FMCES tables contain many fascinating stories of women who came from a variety of life situations. These women had diverse degrees of education and experience. The individuality of FMCES emigrants has been glossed over in female emigration scholarship and by the society itself, but by combining the FMCES emigrant tables with the society’s letter books, it is possible to recover some emigrants’ voices.

Letters from Home, to Home: First Impressions of Life in Australia

Although the FMCES emigrant tables do not record personal information or detailed stories about their emigrants’ new lives in the colonies,

⁸⁰ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

⁸¹ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-1872, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/2.

⁸² FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3.

⁸³ FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

the society's letter books contain copies of their letters.⁸⁴ Some of the letters accompanied money repaying FMCES loans. Because these letters were meant for society records rather than public view, they give a fuller – and less positive – account of the female emigrant experience than the brief extracts published in the annual reports. These published extracts, as was common in nineteenth-century promotional emigration literature, emphasised success stories. Patricia Clarke has traced the biographies of many of the letter writers in her book *The Governesses*,⁸⁵ but the society's anonymous records of its emigrants makes it unlikely that all of the letter writers will ever be matched to their description on the FMCES tables. Such cross-referencing would be interesting to explore, especially in regards to how the society reported the corresponding immigrant's successes and failures. For example, if an immigrant complained about her new life, how would she be described in the society's report? Were the employment difficulties mentioned by some immigrants attributed to their lack of experience? Unfortunately the limited details contained in the emigrant tables are not the only reason such a study may not be feasible; in some cases the FMCES did not hear from immigrants for months, or years.⁸⁶ The lack of communication also raises the question of

⁸⁴ Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/1. The second letter book (Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2) continues to be unavailable for research due to extreme fragility and is awaiting conservation, but some of the letters from emigrants to Australia have been published in Lucy Frost's anthology *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, as well as in Patricia Clarke's *The Governesses*, which makes extensive use of the FMCES letter books. Letters from FMCES emigrants were also published in the *English Woman's Journal* at the start of the 1860s (in the FMCES's early years), but these were obviously more susceptible to an editing process than those copied into the society's letter books. See Lucy Frost, ed., *No Place for a Nervous Lady: Voices from the Australian Bush* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1984); Patricia Clarke, *The Governesses: Letters from the Colonies, 1862-1882* (Hawthorn, Victoria: Hutchinson Publishing Group, 1985); Walker, 'Self-Made Maids,' 289.

⁸⁵ Clarke, *The Governesses*.

⁸⁶ There are numerous notes such as 'nothing known' or 'has not written' peppered throughout the FMCES report emigrant tables; in one concerning case, it is noted that a recent emigrant's vessel to New Zealand had 'met with bad weather, which so prolonged the voyage, that

whether any women simply never informed the FMCES about their situation abroad, whether due to not caring about their sponsors, or perhaps because they deviated from the expected routes of respectable employment and domesticity; this all must regrettably be left to speculation.

Those immigrants who did write to the FMCES were candid about their experiences in the colonies and their perceptions of the people and culture they encountered. Upon arrival in Australia, some women faced immense pressure to find lodgings and employment before their funds dried up. Even those who were prepared for the job hunt did not have an easy time; Laura Jones wrote in 1869, 'I have been very unfortunate in the Colony, my English Certificate being no good and my letters of introduction did me no service'.⁸⁷ That Jones wrote from a Melbourne immigrants' home underscored her misfortunes in the colony. In 1867, Louisa Agnes Geoghegan voiced her opinions to Jane Lewin:

I am very glad I came to Australia, but I cannot say I like it very much. It is such an out of the world place and so monotonous.... I have very little work here in comparison with London – I do not think £80 per annum here as much as £60 at home, dress is very expensive and the people are dressy.... In fact 'Bush life' is a strange mixture of roughing and refinement. In this district are two distinct sets, one gentry, and one *would-be* gentry – there are more of the latter.⁸⁸

Geoghegan's disdain for colonial society echoed Maria Rye's earlier observation about Australia's unrefined population. Geoghegan apparently changed her mind about her new home in the following year, and by 1870 she had managed to save enough money to join her brother in another part of

friends had not heard.' FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-1872, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/2.

⁸⁷ Laura Jones to FMCES, 13 August 1869, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Clarke, *The Governesses*, 119.

⁸⁸ Louisa Agnes Geoghegan to FMCES, 18 October 1867, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Frost, ed., *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, 192-193.

Australia, buy a piano, and obtain employment at a school opened by her sister.⁸⁹ Australia slowly won the hearts of some immigrants; as Annie Hunt wrote to Jane Lewin in 1870, 'I like Australia very, very much indeed and I fear I shall never like to live... in England again, although I do not mean to be long before I visit it. It is just 10 months to the day since I sailed and God alone knows how much I have endured since then'.⁹⁰ Despite the challenges of work and life in the Australian colonies, immigrants who could overcome post-arrival hurdles were able to settle into colonial life and start to enjoy the possible positives of colonial life: the exciting new landscape, a more relaxed society, and a sense of independence.

M. A. Oliver was less rash in her initial judgment of life in Australia, and opened her letter to Lewin with a statement excusing her delayed letter because she wished to form an opinion of colonial life first. Her opinion of emigration was not positive:

In my opinion it is very disagreeable for a lady alone, travelling in this style, especially in a country where society is so mixed.... I have now had six months experience & without hesitation I can say it is not a life I should like to try long.... Had I known the very isolated life I was to lead I do not think I should have been induced to come out.... One could cheerfully bear it two or three years if there were any advantage to be gained in the end, but... there is no better chance of getting on out here than at home. The expenses are far greater & the salaries not in proportion.... I am perhaps putting things in their worst light but Home ideas of this Country are very false.... All I can say is that I do not like Australia & would rather be in England, or on the Continent with £50, than here.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ibid., 196.

⁹⁰ Annie Hunt to FMCES, 9 May 1870, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Clarke, *The Governesses*, 123.

⁹¹ M. A. Oliver to FMCES, 2 October 1871, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Frost, ed., *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, 197-198.

Oliver repeated Geoghegan's feeling that colonial employment (when found) was not of great value. It is also interesting that she echoed the very anxieties about unaccompanied female travellers that propelled the development of societies like the FMCES and led to the introduction of ship matrons during voyages to the colonies.

Moral anxieties were mentioned in multiple immigrants' letters to the FMCES. The society-assisted immigrants, possibly due to their largely middle-class status, were highly attuned to the discrepancies between British and colonial society and values. Ellen Ollard decried the avarice of the Australian settlers when she wrote from Melbourne in 1876: 'The people here are very different to what they are in England; *gold* is their God and it does not matter to them how ignorant a person is if they have money, but if they have not they are not considered worthy of notice'.⁹² The Australian goldfields attracted settlers, and the focus on the mere sum of money rather than how it was gained ignored the class connotations of 'old' and 'new' money. This blurring drew comparisons to the United States, where generations pursued the American dream of rising above their ancestors, no matter their background; when Ida White wrote to the society in 1881, she noted that Melbourne 'is the most beautiful town, but not at all English, quite American',⁹³ and referred to Victoria as thoroughly American.⁹⁴ Yet White was also frank about the difficulties faced by job seekers in Australia and hinted at the 'misconduct' that was noted in the FMCES tables as a reason for failure. She noted that 'many come here... trying for genteel employment, which is almost as

⁹² Ellen Ollard to FMCES, 4 August 1876, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Clarke, *The Governesses*, 143.

⁹³ Ida White to FMCES, 27 April 1881, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/1, 138.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 141.

difficult to find as at home, until they have spent their last shilling, then become hopelessly shabby, they lose self respect, and take to drinking'.⁹⁵ This description reflects the cycle of unemployment among residents of immigrant depots, which will be examined in Chapter Three. That female emigrants could become so distraught was demonstrated in the remarkable 1869 letter of Rosa Payne:

I hate Australia and the Australians. I shall be with them but never of them.... Australia is by no means the Eldorado it is supposed to be or perhaps once was.... I only feel as if all the brightness had gone out of my life.... One thing I do know. I never never shall like or be happy in Australia, & would leave it tomorrow if I could. I just try not to think, or else I would die, but there are times when I must think, & I am weary of life, & everything, & everyone.⁹⁶

Payne's dramatic letter reveals a woman at her wits' end. It is unclear how long Payne spent in the colony before writing this letter, but it was written in August and mentioned the climate patterns and severe winter, so she was in Australia for at least several months. Like other female immigrants, Payne noted the difficulty in finding governess positions and also expressed her wish to be earning a lower salary in a more agreeable place.⁹⁷ In later letters Payne admitted to Lewin that she had been carried away at first, but she would not budge from her dislike of the colony and the people. She eventually returned to England in 1872, but not before sending a final letter to Lewin begging for assistance in finding employment in London.⁹⁸

Employment (or lack thereof) seems to have been the biggest complaint for dissatisfied emigrants, some of whom felt that the promotion of

⁹⁵ Ibid., 144.

⁹⁶ Rosa Payne to FMCES, 13 August 1869, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Frost, ed., *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, 204-205.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 204.

⁹⁸ Rosa Payne to FMCES, 18 May 1871, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Frost, ed., *No Place for a Nervous Lady*, 210.

the colonies as rife with respectable positions was false and needed to be stopped. Caroline Haselton, writing in 1879, stated, 'Teaching is not plentiful here, as we are led to believe in England; salaries are not high. There are numbers of unmarried ladies. I think it is high time the fables about Australia were ended';⁹⁹ Haselton had previously spent time in Africa (where she earned double her Australia salary) and closed her letter with a request for information about teaching in India or South America. The forthright letters of Haselton and other society-assisted women demonstrate that despite the best efforts of the FMCES to make the venture an easy one, immigrants' constitutions were challenged by the struggles they faced as they searched for elusive well-paid and little-worked positions, as well as the culture shock of colonial life.

Several of the letter writers, however, were positive, or at the very least thankful for the opportunities provided by the society's loans. Cecile Nagelle wrote such a lengthy letter expressing her gratitude and praising Lewin that she had to add a postscript explaining that although she had written that she would include two letters to be posted in England, her letter was overweight and she could only include one.¹⁰⁰ Miss M. Crowley, employed as a governess to the children of a widowed sheep farmer and living about 210 miles west of Sydney, wrote, 'I was dreadfully cut up at not getting to China, but when I found that the money I had would bring me here and a sure promise of work, I took it as an *open* door and looking back can now see the

⁹⁹ Caroline Haselton to FMCES, [n.d.] November 1879, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/1, 83-85.

¹⁰⁰ Cecile Nagelle to FMCES, 14 May 1877, Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/1, 8-17.

leading of the Lord'.¹⁰¹ This mention of China and lack of funds allows us to connect Crowley with Emigrant 257 ('had been in India and wished to open a school in China, not having funds sufficient she went to Australia') in the FMCES annual report tables; the society noted that she found her situation 'pleasant and comfortable'.¹⁰² The adventurous Crowley had managed to find happiness and success in the remote countryside of New South Wales. Although they are few in number, the letters of the FMCES emigrants allow researchers to gain a better sense of the individuals behind the mask of the 'emigrant gentlewoman'.

Once in the colonies, FMCES-assisted emigrants were free to take advantage of opportunities they did not have back in England, such as opening a school or marrying well. Margrette Kleinig argues that the relationship between emigration organisers and female emigrants was a 'complementary partnership', one which provided women with agency in their personal and professional lives.¹⁰³ Assisted emigration certainly benefitted government emigration agencies when it came to control over and manipulation of the colonies' social makeup. But how did small aid societies such as the FMCES benefit? Any profit they received went to paying administrative expenses or bulking up the loan fund.

Instead, it appears that the FMCES and its leaders were driven by a genuine willingness to solve the situation faced by a variety of women dealing with the social shifts of the time, as well as a need to reform the emigration

¹⁰¹ This letter is undated but Clarke conjectures that it was written mid-1881. M. Crowley to FMCES, [n.d.], Letter Book, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, quoted in Clarke, *The Governesses*, 149-150.

¹⁰² FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3..

¹⁰³ Margrette Kleinig, 'Independent Women – South Australia's Assisted Immigrants 1872-1939,' in *Visible Women: Female Emigrants in Colonial Australia*, ed. Eric Richards (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995), 115.

system to make it more accessible to an ideal (in the minds of Victorians) female population for the spreading empire. What has come to light through this study of the FMCES archives, however, is just how diverse that population truly was. The women whom the FMCES aided included middle-aged mothers, wives joining their husbands, experienced teachers and headmistresses, and independent shopkeepers, as well as young women hoping to find a governess job or a husband. The FMCES emigrants made up only a small percentage of female emigrants to Australia, but they are not irrelevant to emigration studies when their individual circumstances are acknowledged. It is also clear from such an approach that not all of the women were successful in adapting to a new life in the Australian colonies. Perhaps more important than the number of emigrants was how, as Jude Piesse notes, the FMCES and Rye 'helped to initiate a mode of engagement with settler emigration that had a much broader imaginative reach, inviting thousands of female middle-class readers to entertain, however unrealistically, the prospect of colonial lives characterized by freedom of movement, activity, and employment'.¹⁰⁴ The stories of women who accepted FMCES assistance have been illuminated in this chapter, but what of the many more women who emigrated with government assistance? Although it is more difficult to collate individual narratives from the Colonial Office records than those of the FMCES, thousands more female emigrants have stories that are waiting to be told, and with the application of a closer archival reading, their experiences begin to come to light.

¹⁰⁴ Jude Piesse, *British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832-1877* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 128.

Chapter Two – From Metropole to Colony: Bureaucracy and Female Emigration

The Female Middle Class Emigration Society lauded female emigration as socially beneficial to both the metropole (by finding proper occupations for ‘surplus’ women) and the colonies (by providing educated settlers and potential wives and mothers), but what were the government’s opinions on female emigration to the colonies? As the Colonial Office records reveal, the reception of female immigrants varied from colony to colony and fluctuated over time. In a survey of letters and reports of various colonial offices, it quickly becomes apparent how divided the Australian colonies were in their views on female immigration. Meanwhile, emigration officials in the metropole struggled to balance the numbers of emigrants in terms of marital status, ethnicity, and employment skills. There was no clear chronological trend in Australian reactions to female immigration. Thus, for example, South Australia formed a special committee to investigate ‘excess’ female emigration in 1856 (culminating in a lengthy report that will be discussed in the next chapter), but the governor of Western Australia suggested in 1861 that one hundred single women should be brought to the colony every four months. This divergence between the colonies underscores the importance of recognising ‘Australia’ – as some emigrants, agents, and historians thought of it – not as a single destination but as a collection of six separate colonies. In the mid-nineteenth century, the administration of the separate colonies fell under the regulation of the Colonial Office.

The Colonial Office oversaw the Empire’s governance on behalf of the imperial government and facilitated the transfer of information throughout the British Empire, with despatches, memoranda, statistical tables, and reports

circulating between the metropole and the various colonies. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Office was arranged by geographical sub-divisions, each of which had a small staff. Under the umbrella of the Colonial Office, the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was formed in 1840 and was responsible for matters relevant to emigration.¹ Fred Hitchins' 1931 study of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission remains one of the few book-length examinations of the Commission and provides a good overview of its history and structure. According to Hitchins, the Commission was most active in the late 1840s (likely due to the spike in emigration caused by famine), when about thirty extra clerks were temporarily hired to deal with the volume of correspondence passing through their offices – tens of thousands of letters were both sent and received each year.² Yet the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission produced more than letters. Hitchins broke down the Commission's output into four categories: 'special publications, the Colonization Circulars, the General Reports, and cautionary and miscellaneous notices'.³ These analyses and notes enabled the government to maximise its control over the colonies and use past outcomes to plan for the future; the high output of documents from the Colonial Office reflected its highly bureaucratic, almost scientific, approach to running all elements of empire, including emigration.

What were the agendas of imperial officials in comparison to metropolitan advocates – were they political, social and moral, or financial?

¹ The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was also referred to at times as the Colonial Land and Emigration Board or simply the Emigration Commission. State Records and Archives Authority of New South Wales, 'Administrative History,' The Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, [n.d.], <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/agency/3050>.

² Fred H. Hitchins, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 76.

³ *Ibid.*, 97.

Zoë Laidlaw describes the objectives of the Colonial Office as twofold: ‘the empire had to be run more efficiently and cheaply; while the authority of the metropolitan government – over governors and settlers – had to be asserted’.⁴ This is certainly true when it comes to the government’s interactions with female emigration. While the Colonial Office records demonstrate that much of officials’ attention was focused on the costs of promoting emigration, both metropolitan and colonial administrators were also concerned with the balance of the sexes and the moral character of the female immigrants. The Colonial Office records include immigration data tables, reports on immigration to the colonies, and memos and letters to and from governors and emigration officers. The raw data produced by various government offices has been analysed by Robin Haines, and some of the Colonial Office correspondence has been cited in female emigration histories by Lisa Chilton and Jan Gothard,⁵ but the records as a whole have not been surveyed in relation to the topic of female emigration.

While it may seem like the Colonial Office archives are unlikely to yield many glimpses of the human side of emigration due to their bureaucratic character, historians of emigration cannot simply ignore these government records. They give us a sense of officials’ anxieties about female emigration and their desperation to control the number and quality of female emigrants. This concern about control is visible in discussions about the numbers of emigrants; the employment of agents, surgeons, and matrons; and even a brief collaboration with FMCES founder Maria Rye. Western Australian settlers’

⁴ Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815-1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 41.

⁵ Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001).

applications to bring over their relatives demonstrate the elongated emigration process and reveal the role of women in facilitating emigration, as well as provide personal details that, in some cases, allow us to trace individuals. Other brief mentions of individual women – accused of immorality, mentally or physically ill, or trying to find lost luggage – enhance our knowledge of the emigration experience. These official records were essential to managing the vast British Empire, from maintaining political control over the colonies to directing the movement of people, goods, and money in and out of the metropole and between the colonies themselves. In my survey of mid-nineteenth-century records it is clear that although selected colonial records have been used in past scholarship of female emigration, the archives reveal more than simple statistics. The dense records divulge the sheer bureaucracy and government interest in female emigration, despite its long association with philanthropic feminist societies operating from the metropole.

Record-Keeping and Recruitment

Statistics formed the backbone of administrators' emigration planning and tracking.⁶ The obvious concern of officials was the number and marital status of immigrants settling in the Australian colonies. Tabulation of emigrant numbers appears throughout the Colonial Office volumes of Colonial Land and Emigration Commission correspondence in the 1850s and 1860s. While unaccompanied by methodological explanation and vulnerable to sometimes unreliable practices of data collection, these tables illustrate patterns of immigration, indicate the sort of information officials were

⁶ Zoë Laidlaw explains that this 'mania for classification' emerged alongside the growing popularity of scientific thoughts and methods. Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 175-6.

working with, and reinforce the need to approach the colonies individually. For example, an 1854 analysis of immigrants dispatched by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission to Australia highlighted the difference between not only the total number of immigrants received by colonies (from nearly 16,000 in Victoria to only 455 in Western Australia), but also the ratio of single female to single male immigrants, with the greatest differences occurring in Van Diemen's Land (926 to 196), Victoria (4451 to 920), and South Australia (2541 to 986).⁷ In addition, girls outnumbered boys among children under fourteen years of age who arrived as part of a family in all five colonies. While the difference is not significant in this particular table (only Victoria received what seemed to be an unnatural ratio of 2,232 girls to 1,440 boys⁸) it is noteworthy that administrators – as well as metropolitan emigration advocates – failed to discuss this future source of single women in the settler colonies. In addition, the natural birth rate would also help to offset gender imbalances in future decades. These girls, whether young immigrants or Australian-born, would likely be more skilled in colonial life than women from the metropole and therefore form a potential source of competition for both jobs and households. They would be acclimatised to the environment, understand the nuances of Australian culture and society, and have a well-established network of friends and relatives. In addition to this Australian familiarity, they would also, as daughters of British emigrants, still have a connection to metropolitan values and, if born in the metropole, direct exposure to British society and morals. It is understandable that emigration societies would ignore such thoughts due to their philanthropic mission being

⁷ 'Analysis of the Emigrants despatched and estimated to be despatched by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners to the Australian Colonies during the year, 1854,' 1854, TNA, CO 386/72, p. 18.

⁸ Ibid.

most focused on aiding British women, with the colonial gender balance seen as a bonus benefit of their schemes. Yet government officials, more concerned with the colonial population, remained focused on the current numbers of women from Britain entering the Australian colonies rather than thinking about future, home-grown populations.

The Colonial Office records do offer historians more statistical information than simply imbalances of the sexes, to which female emigration has been linked since the ‘redundancy’ revealed in the 1851 Census. In 1859, officials recorded a passenger list of single women selected by emigration commissioners and agents to travel to Geelong in Victoria. The full names and ages of the selected women were included, allowing individuals to be more readily identified than via the usual anonymous statistics or the numbering of emigrants as in the FMCES records. The reason for this level of detail was likely financial – a letter accompanying the list explained that the agents were to receive a selection fee for each approved woman. Of the sixty-two individuals listed, all were thirty years old or younger, with fourteen women under the age of twenty, and eight over twenty-five.⁹ Although the age of the women was not commented on by officials, the emigrants selected by commissioners and agents were typically in the prime of life. It is not clear if any of the listed women were related, but the group consisted of a younger array of women than those aided by the FMCES, whose records included women travelling with grown daughters.

The Colonial Office records also reveal the origin of immigrants. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there was considerable concern over the

⁹ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Victoria, 11 March 1859, TNA, CO 386/130, pp. 78-81.

number of Irish women arriving in the Australian colonies, and these immigrants faced religious and cultural prejudice. Officials within the Colonial Office were well aware of the Irish influx and discussed the issue in detail. In a lengthy 1855 letter from Colonial Land and Emigration Commission chairman, Thomas William Clinton Murdoch, and Commissioner Frederic Rogers to the permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Herman Merivale, the officials attempted to analyse the ratios of Irish to English and Scottish female immigrants.¹⁰ Murdoch and Rogers noted that they were responding to complaints from the governor of South Australia about the number of Irish immigrants, as well as reports about the difficulty of finding employment for the women. In response to Merivale's and Secretary of State for the Colonies William Molesworth's earlier instructions to '[take] immediate steps to discontinue the Emigration to South Australia of Irish single women unaccompanied by their Parents',¹¹ Murdoch and Rogers set out to explain how the disproportionate immigration occurred.

According to Murdoch and Rogers, the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission had three main goals regarding the population of the colonies:

First to distribute the emigration among the various divisions of the United Kingdom as far as possible in proportion to the number of their inhabitants – second to avoid any disparity of the sexes in our own Emigration and to correct that which would be naturally produced by the unassisted Emigration – and third to send out none but women of unimpeachable character.¹²

This passage reveals that the moral character of female emigrants was as much a concern as balancing the sexes for the Colonial Office. While Murdoch and Rogers did not explicitly connect their discussion of character to Irish

¹⁰ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to Herman Merivale, 8 October 1855, TNA, CO 386/79, pp. 26-33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

immigrants, there is no doubt that female immigrants' conduct (cases of which will be discussed later) caused enough anxiety to earn mention in bureaucratic records. Irish adherence to Catholicism was not mentioned as a concern, although religion was recorded in emigration statistics.¹³

The main concern of Murdoch and Rogers was correcting the division of Irish, English, and Scottish immigrants.¹⁴ Murdoch and Rogers did not endorse Molesworth's call for an outright end to emigration from Ireland, but rather advocated for a more balanced demographic mix of emigrants – in other words, a small proportion of Irish emigrants. They reasoned that allowing unchecked Irish immigration would upset the levels of immigration from other parts of Britain and destabilise the social makeup of certain colonial societies. Again, religion was not explicitly mentioned as a contributing factor to this fear, but it is certainly possible that the term 'Irish' implied Catholicism; Alyson L. Greiner and Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov have noted an ongoing 'Catholic and therefore Irish' mentality in modern Australia where 'many

¹³ 'Return showing the religious persuasions of the immigrants who arrived in South Australia during the Year 1855,' *Assisted Immigration, 1855, 1856*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 9 (bound and numbered by the Colonial Office as f. 481r.).

¹⁴ Throughout female emigration discussions the Welsh were usually not mentioned – they were likely included with the English and probably didn't produce large enough numbers of single female emigrants to warrant comment. Deirdre Beddoe examines Welsh convicts and Alyson L. Greiner and Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov cover Welsh and Cornish emigration demographics: see Deirdre Beddoe, *Welsh Convict Women: A Study of Women Transported from Wales to Australia, 1787-1852* (Barry, UK: Stewart Williams Publishers, 1979) and Alyson L. Greiner and Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov, *Anglo-Celtic Australia: Colonial Immigration and Cultural Regionalism* (Santa Fe: The Center for American Places, Inc., 2002). Scotland was also at times included under England; like Wales this was probably due to historical reasons (the 1707 unification of Scotland and England [and Wales]) as well as the smaller number of emigrants to Australia produced. Even so, scholarly work has been carried out on Scottish emigration to Australia. See T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1988); Eric Richards, 'Ironies of the Highland Exodus, 1740-1900,' *Journal of Australian Studies* 25 (2001): 74-85; Malcolm Prentis, 'Haggis on the High Seas: Shipboard Experiences of Scottish Emigrants to Australia, 1821-1897' *Australian Historical Studies* 36 (2004): 294-311; T. M. Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750-2010* (London: Allen Lane, 2011); and Jane McDermid, 'Home and Away: A Schoolmistress in Lowland Scotland and Colonial Australia in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,' *History of Education Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2011): 28-48.

Australian Irish descendants express their residual Irishness through a devotion to Catholicism'.¹⁵

Murdoch and Rogers claimed that South Australia was originally meant to be sent English and Scottish immigrants, and they explained:

The original founders of the Colony of South Australia had been English and Scotch, and as we were anxious as far as possible to assimilate the immigration to the existing population, we endeavoured to keep the Irish Immigration into South Australia as low as we could without causing complaint in the other colonies.¹⁶

Murdoch and Rogers noted that the proportion of Irish immigrants had somehow tripled from 1853 to 1854 although they did not comment on the causes of this change.¹⁷ In addition, the Irish female immigrants discussed by Murdoch and Rogers were unmarried and therefore in need of steady employment to support themselves and avoid any potential moral misconduct. Here the administrators faced a dilemma: the obvious solution was to restrict Irish female immigration to members of families, but as Murdoch and Rogers wrote, 'if our Emigration be restricted to families only the number of Adult females will... not more than balance the number of males and no provision would be made against the excess of males'.¹⁸ And so the problem returned to the initial concern of officials: the imbalance of the sexes in the colonies. Yet this was merely the start of the confusion officials faced when attempting to optimise the emigration process, and Murdoch and Rogers quickly turned back to the initial issue of ethnicity:

The objection is not to single women generally but to Irish single women who have not received instruction in domestic service. To this

¹⁵ Alyson L. Greiner and Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov, *Anglo-Celtic Australia: Colonial Immigration and Cultural Regionalism* (Santa Fe: The Center for American Places, Inc., 2002), 75, 101.

¹⁶ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to Herman Merivale, 8 October 1855, TNA, CO 386/79, p. 29.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

we must reply... that young women of unimpeachable character of the class of domestic Servants cannot be got to emigrate from England or Scotland and that those of the Irish who have been for any time trained in domestic Service, are not procurable in any large numbers.¹⁹

Clearly emigration officials were faced with a complex problem and struggled to achieve an ideal balance between their priority of the female to male ratio and general concerns about ethnicity, morality, and employability. It seems that administrators underestimated how difficult it would be to implement and control the emigration process. There were plenty of available female emigrants, but only some of them met the moral and work criteria set forth by the officials. Even if enough suitable women (English, Scottish, or Irish) could be found, convincing them to move abroad was another challenge; as Murdoch and Rogers admitted, 'Respectable young women accustomed to domestic service... can command such wages and advantages as to be little disposed to separate themselves from their friends and connections to take service in a distant Colony'.²⁰ Here we see hints of women's autonomy – the commissioners noted that conditions at home were not necessarily desperate enough to encourage emigration, yet women were nevertheless moving abroad.

Murdoch and Rogers acknowledged the women's priorities of good wages, steady employment, and a support network – none of which they could unconditionally guarantee to immigrants in the Australian colonies. That Ireland's population faced more difficult conditions than those of England, Scotland, and Wales did not help. The potato blight that appeared in Europe in the 1840s greatly affected Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. The famine's effects reached beyond the immediate deaths from starvation; the weakened

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 31-2.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

survivors were susceptible to illness and destitution. For the working-class strata of society the crisis was particularly severe, and women without male support – the unmarried and widows with children – were especially vulnerable.²¹ While the famine was a driving factor in emigration from northern Scotland, with nearly 17,000 emigrants assisted by the Highland and Island Emigration Society or local landlords during the famine period,²² T.M. Devine estimates that never more than 150,000 Highlanders and Islanders were at risk in the years following the initial crop failure; the number of Irish affected, however, ran into the millions.²³

Ireland's population fell from 8.2 million in 1841 to 6.5 million in 1851, eventually decreasing to 4.4 million in 1911 as many of those who survived the initial crisis emigrated, particularly to the USA but also to Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.²⁴ This Irish influx of free immigration is evident in a study of Australian demographics by Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov. Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov estimate that from the first convict fleets to 1852, 73 percent of convicts came from England.²⁵ By 1901, census data revealed that 56.1 percent of Australia's British-born population were of English birth and 27.1 percent were born in Ireland.²⁶ However, Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov discovered in their survey of thousands of Australian epitaphs that only 36.5 percent of sampled graves listed an English birthplace while 37.9 recorded Irish origins, a discrepancy that could not be solely

²¹ T. M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1988), 50.

²² *Ibid.*, 193.

²³ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁴ Kevin O'Rourke, 'Emigration and Living Standards in Ireland since the Famine,' *Journal of Population Economics* 8, no. 4 (1995), 407; Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'After the Famine: Emigration from Ireland, 1850-1913,' *The Journal of Economic History* 53, no. 3 (1993), 575.

²⁵ Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov, *Anglo-Celtic Australia*, 19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

explained by the study's bias towards better-off families (which were more likely to include the Anglo-Irish).²⁷ As Murdoch and Rogers discovered, in the aftermath of the famine, Irish women were understandably more willing to take up the opportunity of a new life overseas.

The struggle to control and maintain an acceptable mix of Irish, English, and Scottish emigrants was echoed in an 1855 letter from Stephen Walcott, Secretary of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, to the Colonial Secretaries of Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales.²⁸ Walcott, like Murdoch and Rogers, admitted that it was difficult to find potential English and Scottish emigrants due to existing employment opportunities in Britain and 'the unfavourable accounts with regard to a labourer's prospects in Australia'.²⁹ The latter point about the psychology of emigration is an important reminder that in the end it was the individual circumstances and choices of the women that drove their movements, not the machinations of bureaucracy. To find success after travelling halfway around the globe and starting a new life without the support of family or friends, an immigrant required resourcefulness and fortitude in addition to employment skills and a social reputation that would not see her ostracised from society. She would have to be strong enough to willingly leave behind all that she knew for an uncertain future in the Australian colonies. To this effect, Walcott admitted that 'the difference of [emigrants'] wages here and in Australia is not sufficient to constitute a temptation to encounter the discomforts of a long sea voyage, and the uncertainties and the breach of

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Stephen Walcott to Colonial Secretaries of Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales, 5 November 1855, TNA, CO 386/128, pp. 187-192.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

family ties attending a removal to Colonial life'.³⁰ Making the move from Britain to the Australian colonies seemed to consist of a series of increasingly negative steps for uncertain reward: leaving behind relatives, undertaking a long and possibly dangerous journey, and facing unpromising wage rates. Due to the many obstacles that deterred potential emigrants, the attempts by the Colonial Office to manipulate emigration by utilising demographic (as seen in government records) or social (in the case of emigration societies) criteria were not enough to shape and perfect the population of the Australian colonies. Instead, the initial journey to the colonies and, perhaps more important, an immigrant's success as a colonial resident depended heavily upon a mixture of mental fortitude and self-confidence. As will be revealed by the testimony of some female immigrants in the next chapter, hearsay and psychology had the power to influence a woman's future choices. Officials seemed to think that female emigrants would be easy to direct, but they failed to account for women's agency in one of the most important phases of emigration: the decision to leave Britain. For many nineteenth-century emigrants this was a permanent move, with few options to turn back no matter their emotions or experiences in the colonies; as underlined by Patrick O'Farrell: 'The fact that many emigrants of all nationalities now return to their homelands, to visit for long periods, to retire, to die, courses of action facilitated by air travel, prosperity, and government policy, suggests perhaps that similar impulses existed in times before their actualisation was possible'.³¹ It is important to consider the various emotions involved in the choice to emigrate. Those women who had no other options left in the

³⁰ Ibid., p. 188.

³¹ Patrick O'Farrell, 'Defining Place and Home: Are the Irish Prisoners of Place?', in *Home or Away? Immigrants in Colonial Australia*, ed. David Fitzpatrick (Canberra: Australian National University, 1992), 16.

metropole could have been desperate enough to take their chances in the colonies, but this situation did not necessarily mean that they were eager to leave their homeland. Likewise, some female emigrants may have had plenty of opportunities in the metropole but decided to move abroad in pursuit of adventure or independence. Again, the acknowledgment of the individual circumstances and agency of women proves to be a keystone of truly understanding female emigration.

Yet Walcott, like his colleagues in the imperial government, believed that a healthy level of emigration could still be achieved ‘without lowering the Standard of character and class of the Emigrants’.³² Thus, while emigration agents had turned to Irish women to fill the ships heading for Australia, Walcott assured fellow officials that ‘in no case... has recourse been had to Workhouses or any Eleemosynary Institutions’.³³ If a woman had to rely on such charity in her homeland, how could she possibly be expected to prosper in colonial society or raise a respectable family? Here the hierarchy for potential emigrants is laid bare: while the lack of English and Scottish women meant that emigration agents had to turn to second-tier Irish emigrants, they still managed to attain emigrants who came from a respectable background. If emigration agents were unable to recruit more English and Scottish women, they would have to make do with Irish emigrants in order to fill their chartered ships, balance their statistics, and meet colonial demands for female immigrants.

Female emigration was not only discussed by officials and agents connected to the land and emigration offices, but also in despatches from

³² Stephen Walcott to Colonial Secretaries of Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales, 5 November 1855, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 188.

³³ *Ibid.*

governors and senior colonial administrators. These discussions demonstrate the nature of government officials' concern with female emigration. They specifically discussed the numbers of women arriving in the Australian colonies. Some (such as Governor Arthur Kennedy and Governor John Hampton of Western Australia) actually asked for more women to be brought to their communities, despite the backlash that female immigration generally experienced from colonial-based critics such as government committees (in the case of South Australia's investigation of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot) and the colonial press (covered in Chapter Four).

Two of the Western Australian governors called for more single females to be sent to the colony. In April 1860, Governor Arthur Kennedy of Western Australia 'request[ed] that steps may be taken for sending out 100 single women to that Colony'.³⁴ In November 1861, another request for 100 female emigrants came from Governor Kennedy, and officials were 'authorized by the Secretary of State to select not only the 100 females but a certain number of married couples with their families' to accompany the single women as 'protection'.³⁵ Apparently the need for single women was not urgent enough to disregard their moral standing, and certainly the families chosen to accompany the female emigrants would be a bonus for the colony's population. Commissioners later recorded 'sending out to Western Australia a party of about 50 young women in compliance with the request of the Governor [John Hampton]' in early 1864.³⁶ A month later, a ship of eighty-nine emigrants was sent to Western Australia of whom '48 were single women

³⁴ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to Thomas Frederick Elliot, 3 May 1860, TNA, CO 386/77, p. 452.

³⁵ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch to Thomas Frederick Elliot, 13 November 1861, TNA, CO 386/77, p. 465.

³⁶ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch to Frederic Rogers, 20 February 1864, TNA, CO 386/77, p. 504.

either selected by ourselves under a previous requisition of the Governor... or the daughters of Exiles and others nominated in the Colony'.³⁷ It appears that in this case, a rapid succession of voyages to Western Australia had somewhat depleted emigration agents' pool of women – while some of the emigrants had been previously selected for passage, others were the daughters of convicts. Their inclusion raises questions of the identity of those associated with convicts in the era, as the final convict ship would not arrive in Western Australia until 1868. It is unclear whether these emigrants' fathers were still serving a sentence or were now freely settled, but any stigma against criminals' daughters did not factor into filling Western Australia's request for single women. In 1867, officials noted 'the wishes of the Governor of Western Australia to despatch a party of fifty single women to the Colony at as early a date as possible'.³⁸ From these examples alone, Western Australia expected to receive about 350 extra single women over a seven-year period. This was more than the number of emigrants that the FMCES sent out (to destinations both inside and outside of the British Empire) in about twenty-five years. Societies such as the FMCES were certainly influential in their advocacy, but it is clear that government officials were also invested in encouraging female emigration, and certainly facilitated the movement of more women than the FMCES did. Imperial administrators were concerned with populating vulnerable settler colonies and bolstering their industrial and economic strength, compared to the FMCES's focus on aiding individual women. But the extent to which these governors' wishes reflected the opinions of settlers is questionable. As will be seen later in Chapter Four,

³⁷ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch to Frederic Rogers, 31 March 1864, TNA, CO 386/77, p. 507.

³⁸ Stephen Walcott to Frederic Rogers, 25 September 1867, TNA, CO 386/77, p. 227.

colonial residents were not entirely welcoming to the influx of female immigrants, especially when the women being received appeared to be ill-prepared for life in the Australian colonies.

Emigration Agents

Discussions of female emigration also appeared in Colonial Office letters and memoranda focused on the financial and logistical aspects of mass migration. The imperial government was obviously concerned with the expense of immigration when infrastructure and industry also needed to be developed, yet officials still devoted time to chartering ships and hiring ship matrons for their incoming female citizens. The emigration process began at the local level in Britain, where selecting agents employed by the government recruited potential female emigrants. In return for providing passengers, the agents received a fee.³⁹ These agents were the gatekeepers of women's voyages to the colonies, and thus integral to the history of female emigration. Colonial Office records of selecting agents and their recruitment areas reveal where female emigrants came from. In 1856, sixty-one emigration agents (along with twelve staff officers acting as agents) were recorded throughout Britain.⁴⁰ The majority of the agents were based in England, but there were thirteen in Scotland (this high proportion was likely due to population dispersion), five in Ireland, and four in Wales, with one each stationed on Guernsey and Jersey (see Figure 2.1).

³⁹ In the mid-nineteenth century these fees were usually ten to fifteen shillings per emigrant. Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Victoria, 11 March 1859, TNA, CO 386/130, pp. 78-81; Herman Merivale to Emigration Commissioners, 29 July 1859, TNA, CO 385/29, p. 157.

⁴⁰ 'List of Selecting Agents appointed by the Emigration Commissioners, and acting during the year 1856,' 21 July 1857, TNA, CO 384/98, f. 328.



Figure 2.1: Map showing the approximate locations of emigration selecting agents in 1856.⁴¹

Selection agents served nearly every area in Britain and Ireland, with only northwestern Ireland and western Scotland remaining relatively sparsely covered, while potential emigrants in the northern reaches of England had to make their way to Carlisle, Newcastle upon Tyne, or the village of Bootle in Cumbria. It is possible that agents travelled through their regions rather than relying on potential emigrants to come to them, but the Colonial Office records do not reveal to what extent this occurred, particularly in the more remote locales. For example, a list of emigration agents employed by the

⁴¹ Map created by the author, using data from TNA, CO 384/98, f. 328.

Emigration Commissioners in 1857 only lists the general areas they served (such as counties) rather than their addresses. However, the 1857 list also shows that sixty-seven agents (fifty in England and Wales, twelve in Scotland, and five in Ireland) were posted across the British Isles, from the Orkney and Shetland Islands to Jersey and Guernsey; as in 1856, those agents stationed in Ireland covered only the northern part of the island as well as the Dublin and Cork regions.⁴² These service area discrepancies raise the question of whether this was due to low population densities or a conscious attempt on the part of the Colonial Office to attract the right sort of emigrants. Certainly the Scottish Highlands had been gradually depopulated over the previous hundred years with the Highland Clearances, and the Highland and Island Emigration Society (active 1852-1858) facilitated the emigration of almost 5,000 Scots in the aftermath of the famine.⁴³ About half of emigrants departing from the major Scottish ports from 1846 to 1856 headed to the USA, with only thirty-six percent going to Canada and thirteen percent sailing to Australia and New Zealand.⁴⁴ The 1850s gold rushes did draw about 90,000 Scots to Australia. Northern England, a centre of the Industrial Revolution, perhaps had less need for emigration as industry jobs (such as milling) provided steady, if not high-paying, employment for the local population. However, in the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission's 1855 general report, the number of women emigrating from England to the Australian colonies in 1854 consisted of 691 from Plymouth, 2,969 from London, 4,854 from Southampton, 11,476 from

⁴² 'List of the Selecting Agents employed by the Emigration Commissioners,' 1857, TNA, CO 384/98, f. 91r-92r.

⁴³ T.M Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1988), 258.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

Liverpool, and 147 from ‘all other ports’.⁴⁵ The figure from Liverpool likely included some Irish emigrants who sailed from there rather than one of the Irish ports, but the concentration of agents in Ireland in only the cities of Cork, Dublin, Belfast, and Derry/Londonderry seems odd compared to the many smaller towns represented in England, not to mention the agents stationed in St. Peter Port, Guernsey, and St. Helier, Jersey. The Colonial Office could not realistically expect to recruit more emigrants from the Channel Islands than Ireland; it is possible that agents in these areas did not act as full-time recruiters but rather held the post as an ‘honorary’ position (Jersey agent James Le Lievre’s occupation, for example, was simply listed as ‘gentleman’⁴⁶). On the other hand, with the massive Irish exodus well under way at this point, perhaps the Colonial Office thought it could save itself money and time by only deploying agents to the larger port cities in Ireland, where those who had already decided to leave were naturally congregated. Even so, Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov noted in their Australian epitaph study that Dublin, Cork, and Belfast accounted for the birthplaces of only 5.8 percent of the Irish-born and claimed that Irish emigration to Australia ‘drew disproportionately upon rural areas and small towns’.⁴⁷

In addition to the geographic range covered by recruiters, these emigration agent lists also hint at the diversity of the agents themselves. For example, emigration agents came from a variety of occupations: many held positions as clerks or registrars, but others were clergymen, farmers, surgeons, booksellers, merchants, and ‘gentlemen’.⁴⁸ Some of the agents also employed

⁴⁵ Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, *Fifteenth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners* (London: George G. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1855), 66.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 91v.

⁴⁷ Greiner and Jordan-Bychkov, *Anglo-Celtic Australia*, 79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 91r-92r

a couple of ‘sub-agents’ to aid recruitment (or in the case of the agent covering Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and parts of Somerset, forty-nine sub-agents).⁴⁹ The most intriguing entry on the 1857 list (at least for the purposes of this study) is an agent recorded as ‘Mrs. Fox – Servants’ Registry Office Keeper’ who was appointed to select female domestic servants from South London – she was the only woman to appear on the 1856 and 1857 lists of agents.⁵⁰ Mrs. Fox’s experience working with domestic servants may have made her more capable of selecting ‘good’ female emigrants than her male colleagues, but the lists do not record any information about agents’ recruitment rates so her influence as the only female agent is unknown. The listing of Mrs. Fox is also evidence that women’s stories remain to be sifted out of male-dominated historical records. But her efforts (and those of her male counterparts) were apparently not enough, for by 1859 officials were still struggling to provide female domestic servants for the colonies. Agents’ fees were increased from ten to fifteen shillings per emigrant in 1859 in an attempt to stimulate their activities.⁵¹ Of course, it seems obvious in hindsight that the agents may have simply run out of suitable candidates and the increased reward for each emigrant provided would only encourage agents to widen their recruitment pool and be less strict with the criteria and background checks; without evidence of agents’ recruitment rates and selected emigrants’ metropolitan backgrounds or colonial outcomes, however, this is impossible to trace. Once again, the government was stuck in the struggle between bodies and souls – there were plenty of the former, but not all of them were ‘pure’ when it came to the latter. While there is no clue in these particular records as to how

⁴⁹ Ibid., f. 91v.

⁵⁰ Ibid., f. 91r.

⁵¹ Herman Merivale to Emigration Commissioners, 29 July 1859, TNA, CO 385/29, p. 157.

successful individual agents were in their recruitment, the geographic diversity of emigration agents proves that the search for emigrants was not contained to specific urban or rural regions of the metropole.

Protected Passage: The Voyage, Surgeons, and Matrons

Imperial government involvement in the emigration process did not end with selection. Indeed, the planning and supervision of the voyages themselves were as anxiety-inducing for officials as the initial selection of women. Commissioners from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, in cooperation with civil servants, oversaw the chartering of ships and, crucially for protecting female emigrants' moral characters, the hiring of surgeons and matrons to supervise the journey. In an 1863 letter from Colonial Land and Emigration Commission chairman Thomas Murdoch to Commissioner Frederic Rogers, Murdoch criticised plans for ships to Victoria to be contracted out to non-governmental parties in the colony.⁵² His greatest concern was losing control over the ships' environment, possibly leading to the moral corruption of the single female emigrants:

When the whole Emigration was in our hands the protection we could afford to young women so circumstanced consisted (1) in their being withdrawn from the control of the Officers of the Ship and placed under the protection of an experienced Surgeon paid by and responsible to us and to the Colonial Government – (2) in the appointment of Matrons and sub-matrons and (3) in the exclusion from the Ship of all except Emigrants sent out by the assistance of Colonial Funds and therefore amenable to the authority of the Surgeon.⁵³

With the responsibility for the ship and its passengers contracted to an outside party, the government would have less authority over the voyage, and

⁵² Thomas William Clinton Murdoch to Frederic Rogers, 24 December 1863, TNA, CO 386/80, pp. 236-9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

Murdoch thought that this would put the female emigrants at risk by exposing them to unvetted crew members and fellow travellers. At the colonial end, officials faced the continuing problem of too many single women arriving in some of the Australian port cities. Britain could not continue to send hundreds of women to an already saturated market, and Murdoch grudgingly admitted,

While... we acknowledge the inexpediency of filling Ships entirely with young women and consequently of introducing at a time more than can readily find employment we cannot but fear that the arrangement now proposed unless conducted with extreme care will be attended with evils of its own of not less magnitude.⁵⁴

Once again, officials struggled with whether to sacrifice their depersonalised numbers and population balance or to risk the ruin of female emigrants before they even arrived in the colonies.

Even on ships under full government control there could be problems. Chairman Thomas Murdoch and Commissioner Frederic Rogers of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission wrote to Permanent Under-Secretary for the Colonies Herman Merivale in 1855 about a surgeon (referred to as Mr. Rowland) who was fined for failing his duties.⁵⁵ The surgeon's attitude toward a crew member who tampered with rations had been apathetic; the commissioners also found Mr. Rowland to be indirectly responsible for 'certain indecorous and arbitrary conduct charged against the Captain'.⁵⁶ However, the surgeon's treatment of female emigrants was even more concerning. One woman was confined for a week as punishment for staying with her mother in the married people's compartment; when she escaped her imprisonment, the surgeon punished her with solitary confinement for the rest

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 239.

⁵⁵ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to Herman Merivale, 27 September 1855, TNA, CO 386/80, pp. 69-70.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

of the journey, lasting ‘no less than five weeks’.⁵⁷ This emigrant’s experience sounds more like that of a convict transport than a ship carrying free settlers.⁵⁸

But she was not the only woman who suffered during the voyage:

[The surgeon] required the single females (on sanitary grounds) to remain on deck at night till ½ past 9 after the first three weeks of the voyage. The Board consider this... to have been judicious during the weather of the Tropics but neither necessary or prudent afterwards when the Evenings are alleged to have become ‘damp and cold.’⁵⁹

This exposure to the elements could have been deadly; as Katherine Foxhall notes, both exposure on deck or confinement below posed a threat to emigrants’ health, and ‘when faced with the inadequacies of maritime ventilation, surgeons were forced to choose between exposing people to the bad weather or immersion in the impure air below’.⁶⁰ In the case of Mr. Rowland, the commissioners condemned the severity of the surgeon’s punishments.⁶¹ Despite the poor judgement behind the surgeon’s decision to keep the women on deck, the risk to their moral characters was deemed an even higher priority than their physical health. A second emigrant was confined for a week for refusing to stay on the cold deck because she wished to ‘avoid witnessing the improprieties’ she claimed were a common occurrence.⁶² In response, the surgeon declared that the emigrants were ‘troublesome women who kept below to escape the supervision which he exercised on deck and to obtain an opportunity of communication with the

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Katherine Foxhall’s study of voyages points out the comparisons between emigrants and convicts: many were from a similar social background, the convict and steerage experiences were similar, and in the late 1830s emigrants and convicts were sailing at different times but with the same ships and surgeons. Katherine Foxhall, *Health, Medicine, and the Sea: Australian Voyages, c. 1815-1860* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 3.

⁵⁹ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to Herman Merivale, 27 September 1855, TNA, CO 386/80, pp. 69-70.

⁶⁰ Foxhall, *Health, Medicine, and the Sea*, 68.

⁶¹ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to Herman Merivale, 27 September 1855, TNA, CO 386/80, p. 70.

⁶² Ibid.

Sailors'.⁶³ Those women who would not follow orders (no matter how illogical) were accused of being immoral; even a simple accusation such as the surgeon's of women wishing to 'communicate' with sailors could harm a female emigrant's reputation. Here was another battle over women asserting themselves and displaying autonomy despite officials' attempts to control them. It clearly was not enough to have a male official on board (especially when he provoked some of the perceived inappropriate reactions of the women). Despite the presence of a government-employed surgeon the voyage had been tainted with tales of misconduct.

In an effort to avoid such conflicts on the ships contracted to outside parties, the Legislative Council of Victoria discussed placing 'unprotected' female emigrants on private ships under strict regulations. In January 1863, Thomas Murdoch sent a draft of the proposed order to Frederic Rogers, who had been promoted to Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the Colonial Office.⁶⁴ The Council was mainly concerned with the movements of female emigrants on board the ship and their interactions (or more important, the lack thereof) with male passengers and crew. The first order of business was to create a physical barrier by berthing the women in the aft of the ship, with a separate entrance from the deck restricted to the female emigrants; married women who were travelling unaccompanied would also be allowed to stay in this compartment along with any of their children under twelve.⁶⁵ It was hoped that this physical segregation would keep the female emigrants from interacting with any men, but the physical constraints of the ship and the need

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch to Frederic Rogers, 13 January 1863, TNA, CO 386/80, pp. 222-7.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 225.

for fresh air meant that women would be exposed to crew members or male passengers sooner or later.

The female emigrants themselves were also to be subject to Council instructions during the voyage to the colonies. Two of the proposed regulations dealt with expectations of emigrants' behaviour during the journey:

6. No unprotected female Passenger shall on any account be allowed to act – shall act as Servant – attendant on the Surgeon, Master or any of the Officers of the Ship or on any Male Cabin Passenger.

7. All intercourse between unprotected Female Passengers and any of the Officers of Crew of the Ship or between such females and any of the male Passengers (except brothers or brothers in Law and in case of unprotected married women their children) is hereby strictly prohibited.⁶⁶

Officials were desperate to control women and prevent them from acting immorally – and autonomously. By limiting the physical and social proximity of the female emigrants and male passengers and crew, the Council ensured that they could not be blamed for any indiscretions, and those who did disobey any of the rules would be threatened with fines and imprisonment.⁶⁷

Additionally this risk of 'intercourse' could be lessened with the presence of a female chaperone.

The Legislative Council decreed that a ship matron, 'charged with the maintenance of discipline among such Female Passengers', would be present on board to supervise the female berths.⁶⁸ Her duties included locking the women's compartment each night (noted as necessary to prohibit entrance by male crew and travellers, but not mentioning the risk of female emigrants sneaking out) and attending any night visits made by the surgeon in case of

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 226.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 227.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 226.

emigrant illness.⁶⁹ The presence of the matron was designed to discourage inappropriate contact between the women and the crew or other male passengers, including the surgeon. She could also provide comfort to the female emigrants and, if she was an experienced traveller, prepare them for arrival in the colonies. Members of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission noted that matrons had plenty of opportunities ‘during a long and tedious sea voyage for imparting good advice and communicating useful knowledge’ to the female emigrants.⁷⁰ The matron’s usefulness depended, of course, on the individual woman employed in the position, but if she was not a motherly figure, hopefully she would at least be a guiding presence.

The matrons were paid gratuities which needed to be recorded by the government: in 1854, for instance, Hannah Woodroffe (sailing from Southampton to Sydney)⁷¹ and Miss M. Stoll (travelling from Liverpool to Sydney)⁷² were each paid five pounds in gratuities for their services as ship matrons. Matrons were selected in a number of ways, as discussed by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission in 1857:

At present Matrons are appointed either on the recommendation of a Committee of Ladies who from motives of benevolence have undertaken to select them – or are selected by us on such information as we are able to obtain – or are appointed from among the Emigrants themselves either by the Emigration Officers at the Ports of Embarkation or by the Surgeons of the respective ships.⁷³

The ‘Committee of Ladies’ (no member details are given) recalls emigration societies like the FMCES where middle-class women defined and decided on

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

⁷⁰ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Charles Alexander Wood to the Emigration Office, 12 March 1857, TNA, CO 384/98, p. 108.

⁷¹ Stephen Walcott to Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, 9 February 1854, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 38.

⁷² Stephen Walcott to Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, 15 March 1854, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 62.

⁷³ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Charles Alexander Wood to the Emigration Office, 12 March 1857, TNA, CO 384/98, f. 107r-107v.

less privileged women's needs and futures, and offers a rare glimpse of female involvement in the government's administration of female emigration. In addition, the mention of an emigrant being selected to act as a matron strengthens the notion that female emigrants were not merely being shepherded around by outside (and largely male) forces; the camaraderie between an emigrant ship matron and her fellow passengers might have allowed the women more freedom (and chances at misconduct) depending on the power dynamic of the group. It also could have given the female emigrants as a whole more confidence and higher morale, as well as a sense of agency. According to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, the most successful ship matrons tended to be either picked by the philanthropic women or chosen from among the emigrants.⁷⁴ Some emigration societies interviewed matrons for positions on the ships their emigrants were sailing on; as one 1855 London advertisement read:

MATRONS WANTED. Persons desirous of obtaining the office of MATRON, in emigrant ships proceeding to Australia, are requested to apply at the office of the British Ladies' Female Emigrants Society, 25, Red Lion-square, Holborn. An additional gratuity is given by the committee to persons appointed on their recommendation. Persons with young families are ineligible.⁷⁵

A successful applicant would not only receive payment for the couple of months of the voyage, but also receive a bonus from the emigration society if they felt she was suitable and recommended her to the government for the position. It is not clear whether mutual comprehension of female emigrants' needs influenced some of these successful appointments by women or from among the female emigrants themselves. Of course, there was also a financial impetus for selecting an intending emigrant as matron: this removed the need

⁷⁴ Ibid., f. 107v-108r.

⁷⁵ 'Matrons Wanted,' *The Times* (London), 5 November 1855, 2.

to pay for an additional passage. For example, in 1857 Thomas Murdoch and Frederic Rogers reported that officials approved Julia Long to join a chartered ship to Western Australia and ‘as Miss Long had been accustomed to teaching she appeared to be a suitable person for the office of Matron’⁷⁶ – furthermore, as her passage as an emigrant was already covered, the arrangement would cost thirty-five pounds, ‘considerably less than if a cabin passage in a private ship had been engaged for her’.⁷⁷ While Long’s teaching experience seems to be dubious criteria for fulfilling the duties of a ship matron, the money saved by appointing her rather than employing another woman was a strong argument for appointing emigrants as matrons.

Emigration Collaborations

Ship matrons were not the only female presences that were noted in discussions of emigration. When it came to women involved in the emigration process, it is clear that officials were aware of the efforts of metropolitan female emigration advocates such as Maria Rye and the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, as well as the British Ladies Female Emigrant Society. Indeed, the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission reported that the government of Victoria was happy to have Rye select emigrants whose passages would be paid for by the colony.⁷⁸ This counteracts the criticism directed at emigration philanthropists for being naïve and detached from colonial life, and will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Equally, it shows that some colonial officials welcomed non-governmental metropolitan

⁷⁶ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to the Emigration Office, 28 April 1857, TNA, CO 384/98, f. 195r-195v.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 195v.

⁷⁸ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Melbourne, 26 May 1866, TNA, CO 386/132, pp. 82-84.

cooperation, breaking down the line between ‘government-’ and ‘non-government-’ assisted emigrants.

In May 1866, Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioner Stephen Walcott wrote to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs in Melbourne regarding Maria Rye’s offer to select emigrants for the colony of Victoria. Rye proposed that she would find single women and married couples to nominate for emigration and the colonial government would arrange and pay for their journeys. Walcott used the phrase ‘obtain shipping for [the emigrants]’,⁷⁹ which places the government’s approach to the emigration process in a financial, trade-oriented context and reflects the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission’s bureaucratic, depersonalised approach to emigration. The discussion of moving humans like commodities brings to mind penal transportation. While free emigration cannot be regarded as a correlation or continuation of slavery,⁸⁰ Walcott’s neutral yet depersonalised and commercialised rhetoric is noteworthy as it has been echoed in current female emigration scholarship.⁸¹ In contrast, philanthropic emigration societies used more humanising terms such as ‘passage’ or ‘voyage’,⁸² terms that reflected how individual circumstances and choices formed the core of the emigration process. Despite these differing outlooks, Walcott and Rye worked together on a plan for emigration.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁸⁰ Walcott himself was born in Barbados to a father who was awarded just over £4400 in compensation for his 202 slaves after abolition. ‘Robert John Walcott,’ *Legacies of British Slave-ownership*, UCL, 2016, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/6834>.

⁸¹ Marie Ruiz, ‘What could they do with their unsealable goods? Organising the transaction of English women to the Australian colonies (1860-1914),’ paper presented at the IHR Imperial and World History Seminar: Colonial/Postcolonial New Researchers’ Workshop, London, UK, 27 October 2014.

⁸² Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3; United Englishwomen’s Emigration Association Minutes, Finance Committee 11 March 1885 - 29 March 1886, TWL LSE, 1BWE/A, Box FL002, 6B/106/1/BWE/1/1.

In addition to providing ships, matrons, and surgeons for the emigrants' journey, the government agreed to offer up to £280 per year to Rye for overhead costs and incidental expenses.⁸³ Considering Rye's many endeavours both in London and abroad, she probably would have had little trouble in spending such a sum. Any emigrants selected by Rye would have access to the same benefits offered to government-selected emigrants, including transportation tickets, depot accommodation, bedding, and eating utensils.⁸⁴ However, the colonial administration was to avoid meddling with Rye's system:

The views of the Colonial Govt. we understand to be that as soon as Miss Rye commences her operation the whole of the selecting business is to pass into her hands that we [the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission] are not to interfere with her discretion, and, in short, that we are to cease to take any part in it, or to be responsible in any way for the quantity or quality of the emigration.⁸⁵

This point of independence was a bold request by Rye, but officials seemed to trust her judgment about emigrants – and Rye certainly had a gift for self-promotion. Although neither the imperial nor colonial governments could direct Rye's actions, they would benefit even if she failed to find enough emigrants, as ships with empty spots could be filled up with emigrants holding passage warrants.⁸⁶ Emigration officials appear to have respected Rye's request not to interfere, for in May 1867 Stephen Walcott again wrote to the Victorian Commissioner of Trade and Customs of ships to Victoria carrying emigrants selected by both Rye and agents and stated, 'With regard to Miss Rye's young women, we have no observations to offer, as it is understood by

⁸³ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Melbourne, 26 May 1866, TNA, CO 386/132, p. 83.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-3.

all parties that we are not to interfere'.⁸⁷ It is not known whether Rye planned to recruit women for this arrangement from applicants to her own society or simply from the general population, but her negotiations with the government underline her position as a strong advocate of female emigration, whether charitable or subsidised by the government, and demonstrate that the two were not necessarily isolated from one another.

Unfortunately, Rye's philanthropic passion clashed with the priorities of emigration officials within a year of her proposal to select emigrants. Rye had been instructed to consider selecting married couples with no children, as there was a strict rule excluding families with either two children under seven years of age or three children under the age of ten, yet she selected two families who broke this rule (one with three children under seven, the other with four children under ten).⁸⁸ Emigration officials wondered whether the families had special circumstances that would make this bending of the rules tolerable. However, Rye 'alleged no such circumstances; but claimed their acceptance on the ground that the young children in the other families on her list were considerably below the recognized number'.⁸⁹ This disregard for the rules took administrators aback, especially when Rye proudly admitted that she had 'observed the spirit though not the letter' of the rule regarding families with young children.⁹⁰ While the FMCES obviously acted on a case-by-case basis, such an approach was unacceptable in the highly regulated world of the Colonial Office. Officials declined to accept the two families, reasoning that they would then have to disregard their own regulations to be fair to all other

⁸⁷ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Victoria, 22 May 1867, TNA, CO 386/132, p. 277.

⁸⁸ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Melbourne, 10 April 1867, TNA, CO 386/132, pp. 215-6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

emigrants. They also argued that the rule had a serious purpose: it was intended to increase children's odds of receiving adequate care from their parents on the ship and surviving the journey to Australia.⁹¹ Rye appealed to the Secretary of State and, when the families were refused yet again, she appealed the decision a second time – by this point, according to the account in the Colonial Office records, it was likely that the families would make it to Victoria eventually because they had already 'broken up their homes' and prepared to sail.⁹² Rye would have her way after all.

Women and Chain Migration

Autonomous women – other than Rye and some of the matrons – are not initially obvious in the government archives, but they were involved in the facilitation of emigration. While the archives contain material created by men, that does not preclude them from offering us rich pieces of women's lives. In some cases (such as the case of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot discussed in Chapter Three), it is even possible to find female emigrants' voices. It is essential to shift from thinking of explicit inclusion to an approach considering how much, if anything, is mentioned about women; what is not included may be just as revealing as what is recorded. Even complete omission of women from particular records still tells us about the gender roles and expectations of the era. Therefore, in spite of the male-oriented nature of many archives, their role in revealing women's experiences and lives is one of limitation rather than simple exclusion. Anonymous anecdotes (as we have seen in the FMCES tables, which were created by

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 216-7.

⁹² Ibid., p. 218.

women) may initially be frustrating for historians hoping to fully map the lives of emigrants, as has been achieved by Elizabeth Rushen and Perry McIntyre with a few emigrant ships from the 1830s.⁹³ As Rushen and McIntyre explain,

Any study of the lives of immigrant women is exacerbated by their invisibility in the official documentation. A full profile of convict women can be gained from the official data, including name, age, level of education, religion, marital status, number of children, place of birth, trade, physical description and criminal record. Such detailed records were not maintained for the free women... and detailed passenger lists did not become the norm until the late 1830s.⁹⁴

Some of these later ‘detailed’ emigrant lists included in the Colonial Office papers do not contain much identifying information, only names and ages,⁹⁵ making further connections impossible in the scope of this thesis. But these brief glimpses of individual women’s stories in the archives are still valuable pieces of information and, particularly, could inspire further research by family historians in the vein of Babette Smith’s tracing of a convict ancestor, Kiera Lindsey’s recent exploration of her ancestors’ experiences in Sydney in the late 1840s and early 1850s, and Graeme Davison’s account of his needlewoman ancestor who sailed to Melbourne in 1850, aided by Caroline Chisholm.⁹⁶

⁹³ See Elizabeth Rushen, *Single & Free: Female Migration to Australia, 1833-1837* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Pub., 2003); and Elizabeth Rushen, *Colonial Duchesses: The Migration of Irish Women to New South Wales Before the Great Famine* (Collins Street East, Vic.: Anchor Books Australia, 2014); Elizabeth Rushen and Perry McIntyre, *The Merchant’s Women* (Spit Junction, NSW: Anchor Books, 2008); Elizabeth Rushen and Perry McIntyre, *Fair Game: Australia’s First Immigrant Women* (Spit Junction, NSW: Anchor Books, 2010).

⁹⁴ Rushen and McIntyre, *Fair Game*, 5.

⁹⁵ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Victoria, 11 March 1859, TNA, CO 386/130, pp. 78-81.

⁹⁶ Babette Smith, *A Cargo of Women: Susannah Watson and the Convicts of the Princess Royal*, 2nd ed. (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2008); Kiera Lindsey, *The Convict’s Daughter: The Scandal that Shocked a Colony* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2016); Graeme Davison, *Lost Relations: Fortunes of My Family in Australia’s Golden Age* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2015).

There are more detailed hints in the Colonial Office archives about how female immigrants facilitated further emigration from Britain. Documents recording which family members settlers wished to bring to Australia show women's roles in building up settler colonies via chain migration. For example, settlers' applications from the latter half of 1861 for government-assisted passage of relatives and friends survive in the Western Australia volumes of original correspondence. These papers include the names, residences, references, and relations of prospective emigrants nominated by settlers. A number of women acting as sponsors challenge the idea of an emigration system in which men emigrated first, and only later sent for their female relatives. On the contrary, there are several cases of women applying on behalf of male relatives, including brothers, nephews, and cousins. While women also appear as potential emigrants travelling to both male and female relatives, the gender dynamic of the sponsors is interesting to note and raises questions of the role of women in actually settling the settler colonies.

Although scant information is provided on the application forms, that which is included paints a picture of the lives of women settlers in mid-nineteenth-century Western Australia. Most of the women who nominated relatives were Irish and worked as servants, with several living in Perth. Ann Cauldwell, a servant who applied for two cousins and two friends to join her from Ireland, even had a listed residence of 'Government House'.⁹⁷ Parlour maid Winfred Carter nominated her two seventeen- and eighteen-year-old sisters, as well as a sixteen-year-old girl whose relation to Carter was simply

⁹⁷ Ann Cauldwell, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 19 December 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 352r.

recorded as ‘connection’.⁹⁸ Other Perth servants whose applications have survived include Catharine Walsh, who sent for her eighteen-year-old sister,⁹⁹ and Eliza Byrns, who nominated her single brother.¹⁰⁰ Mary McDevit, an unmarried servant, applied for her brother Joseph McDevit and his wife, as well as Maria Mackotta, the McDevit siblings’ twelve-year-old niece.¹⁰¹ While these servants may not have had much money or time to offer to their newly arrived relatives, they would be familiar with the city and possibly be able to arrange employment or accommodation before or shortly after their family members immigrated.

Yet servants outside Perth also made applications. Catherine Corbett was employed as a servant in the coastal town of Bunbury, about one hundred miles south of Perth; Corbett applied for passage for a second cousin from County Limerick.¹⁰² Mary Cregan, a domestic servant who nominated her brother (also from County Limerick), lived in the small settlement of Mokine, forty miles east of Perth.¹⁰³ Rebecca Boyd worked as a house servant in the parsonage of York, about fifty-five miles east of Perth and considered the colony’s first inland town.¹⁰⁴ Boyd’s application is interesting because her relation to her nominee, unmarried twenty-five-year-old John Brown from County Down, was noted as ‘None at present but is to be brother in Law

⁹⁸ Winfred Carter, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 22 August 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 131r.

⁹⁹ Catharine Walsh, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 24 Jun 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 117r.

¹⁰⁰ Eliza Byrns, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 18 November 1861, TNA, CO 18/199, f. 337r.

¹⁰¹ Mary McDevit, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 21 December 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 353r.

¹⁰² This was probably a male relative – the first name is illegible due to tight binding but appears to end ‘-hn’ and is likely ‘John’. Catherine Corbett, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 18 November 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 340r.

¹⁰³ Mary Cregan, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 25 November 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 345r.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Centenary of York. The First Inland Settlement,’ *The West Australian*, 12 September 1931, 4.

[sic]'.¹⁰⁵ Was Brown engaged to one of Boyd's sisters, or was Boyd herself about to marry a brother of Brown? It seems unlikely that, if the latter situation, Brown's own male relative would not apply on his behalf. Yet if Brown was preparing to marry Boyd's sister, the question remains as to her location – was she also living in Western Australia, or was she still in Ireland? Perhaps Brown planned to travel to Australia to earn money and return, or to pave the way for his wife and future family. This particular case shows how these documents can open up our knowledge of emigration's complexities; cross-referencing Brown's and Boyd's details with both Irish and Australian vital records and censuses may help to clear this specific conundrum. A cursory search of genealogical databases does not yield any definitive matches for the commonly-named Brown.¹⁰⁶ There is a gravestone for a Rebecca Boyd (1839-1895) in York Cemetery – the epithet 'my old and true friend' suggests that, if this is her, Boyd may have remained unmarried and Brown was likely engaged to a sister.¹⁰⁷ However, a search of the Western Australian Department of Justice's online vital records index from 1860 to 1880 returns four Boyd brides – three in York – but no Brown groom.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps Boyd had come to Western Australia from another Australian colony. Many of the stories behind these applications might only be fleshed out with intensive

¹⁰⁵ Rebecca Boyd, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 18 November 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 341r.

¹⁰⁶ Working with a birth year of about 1836 as calculated from the Western Australia application, there is a John Brown from County Down listed as serving as a merchant navy seaman from 1853 to 1857, but we cannot assume this is the same man. 'John Brown,' 'United Kingdom, Merchant Navy Seaman Records,' FamilySearch, transcription of TNA, BT 116.

¹⁰⁷ It is unclear whether a family group in York Cemetery consisting of parents Andrew (1805-1871) and Elizabeth (1817-1882) Boyd and daughter Jane Boyd (1850-1925) is related to Rebecca Boyd; there are no recorded Brown graves in the cemetery. 'Rebecca Boyd,' ID 50693327; 'Andrew Boyd,' ID 50694006; 'Mrs. Elizabeth Boyd,' ID 50694038; 'Jane Boyd,' ID 50693927, Find A Grave, www.findagrave.com.

¹⁰⁸ Government of Western Australia, Department of Justice, 'Western Australian Online Indexes,' http://www.bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/_apps/pioneersindex/default.aspx.

genealogical research, but the records nevertheless personalise emigration and capture the role of women in bridging metropole and settler colony.

Just as there was diversity among female emigrants, not all female sponsors were single servants. Some were in similar employment, others had a higher social status, and some were supported by husbands. An example of the first instance is seen in the application of Frances McCarthy, a needlewoman from Perth who applied for her young unmarried brother to come to Western Australia from County Cork.¹⁰⁹ McCarthy's occupation put her in a similar social class as the domestic servants; in fact, if she only carried out casual work her finances might have been more precarious. In contrast, Eleanor Sutton was a 'land owner' in Murray, an area about 50 miles south of Perth; Sutton nominated her two nephews in their early twenties.¹¹⁰ Married women also filled out applications for relatives, and as the married held a more secure place in colonial society than the unmarried their declarations about support probably held more weight: 'applies for the following parties, to be sent to this Colony... and undertakes they shall not cause any expense, to the Local Government, after their arrival, and agrees to pay the amount, towards their passage... if the parties themselves are unable to do so'.¹¹¹ Margaret King, a shoemaker's wife from Guildford (now considered a suburb of Perth), nominated her entire family from County Derry: both parents in their late forties; two sisters, aged twenty-four and nineteen; and three brothers aged seventeen, fifteen, and thirteen.¹¹² As a complete unit, the Gillmore

¹⁰⁹ Frances McCarthy, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 10 July 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 126r.

¹¹⁰ Eleanor Sutton, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 31 October 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 335r.

¹¹¹ Applications for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 1861, TNA CO 18/119.

¹¹² Margaret King, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 21 October 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 334r.

family should have been resourceful enough to avoid needing much help from their daughter and her husband, but the Kings committed to providing for up to seven immigrants.

It is not clear whether married women were better able to provide for their relatives compared to single women. For example, Mary Ann Nolan, a farmer's wife from Middle Swan (another Perth suburb), listed her sister and a male cousin, both of whom were twenty years old and single.¹¹³ Elisabeth Laurence, a 'labouring farmer' who was also from Middle Swan, nominated a nineteen-year-old brother, Joseph Anderson, suggesting that 'Laurence' was a married name.¹¹⁴ Another farmer's wife from Swan, Catherine Summers, applied for passage for her mother and three brothers.¹¹⁵ Possibly Nolan, Laurence, and Summers planned for their relatives to also work on the farms, if not permanently then at least until they could find their own homes or procure positions in nearby Perth. Likewise, a joint application by James and Eliza Milligan nominated two of Eliza's sisters, Margaret, thirty, and Catherine Ann, eighteen, both of whom were unmarried.¹¹⁶ The Milligans were farm servants at Rosamel, a homestead north of Bunbury. Had they managed to find similar farm positions for Eliza's sisters, or were Margaret and Catherine Ann simply hoping to find employment in Perth or Bunbury? Again, further case study research outside the scope of this thesis might be able to trace these individuals and find answers, but it may also prove impossible if such information was never recorded or did not survive.

¹¹³ Mary Ann Nolan, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 17 June 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 121r.

¹¹⁴ Elisabeth Laurence, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 23 October 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 333r.

¹¹⁵ Catherine Summers, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 19 June 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 122r.

¹¹⁶ James and Eliza Milligan, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 16 August 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 130r.

Men applied for passage on behalf of their wives, and there are multiple cases of male settlers listing in-laws in their applications. Henry Griffiths, a master sailor from Perth, nominated his twenty-year-old brother-in-law and eighteen-year-old sister-in-law, both of whom were single.¹¹⁷ Perth tailor George Hence applied for his nineteen-year-old sister-in-law to sail from Ireland.¹¹⁸ Those settlers who were not based in the capital city also nominated their in-laws. For example, Guildford labourer Edward Sheehan listed his brother- and sister-in-law in addition to his own unmarried sister.¹¹⁹ John Armstrong lived in Leschenault (just north of Bunbury) and was a foreman to William Pearce Clifton, a magistrate and photographer who was the son of prominent Western Australian commissioner Marshall Waller Clifton.¹²⁰ Armstrong's application lists his own brother and sister as well as his wife's brother and sister; all four nominees were single and ranging in age from nineteen to twenty-eight. John Bowman resided in Toodyay, an old inland settlement,¹²¹ where he worked as a farm servant, and requested passage for his single sister who was living in Shadwell, London.¹²² An even more geographically isolated example is that of Patrick Tierney, who was a

¹¹⁷ Henry Griffiths, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 25 June 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 123r.

¹¹⁸ George Hence, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 17 September 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 135r.

¹¹⁹ Edward Sheehan, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 6 December 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 349r.

¹²⁰ John Armstrong, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 15 November 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 343r. Marshall Waller Clifton had influential connections in both the metropole and the colonies; he was related through his wife to prison reformer Elizabeth Fry and South Australia coloniser Edward Gibbon Wakefield. A. C. Staples, 'Clifton, Marshall Waller (1787-1861),' Australian Dictionary of Biography, first published in hardcopy 1969, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clifton-marshall-waller-3234>; Ann Pheloung, 'William Pearce Clifton, b. 2 February 1816,' Design and Art Australia Online, 19 October 2011, <https://www.daa.org.au/bio/william-pearce-clifton/biography/>.

¹²¹ 'Overview of Toodyay's History,' Shire of Toodyay, 2017, <http://www.toodyay.wa.gov.au/Community-Information/Museums/History-of-Toodyay/Overview-of-Toodyays-History>.

¹²² John Bowman, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 15 November 1851, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 344r.

labourer at the Wanerenooka Mine near Northampton (about 260 miles north of Perth).¹²³ Tierney sent for his three sisters-in-law who were living in Wigan, England: Margaret, twenty, Hannah, seventeen, and Nancy, fourteen.¹²⁴ It is not clear whether these young women were planning to make the journey north to their relatives or if they would try their luck in Perth first.

Male relatives already settled in Australia provided female emigrants with the advantage of having a ‘protector’ in the colonies as they adjusted to a new society. Richard Gallop worked as a gardener in Perth and applied for his two teenaged nieces to travel from County Cork.¹²⁵ Similarly, the eighteen-year-old sister of John Frizell, a farmer in Guildford,¹²⁶ and the two young nieces of Thomas Enright, a farmer in York,¹²⁷ may have counted on their established male relatives for practical help and moral protection. While the guidance of an uncle or brother would aid teenaged immigrants to Australia, some women may only have needed the initial sponsorship of their male relative to jumpstart their new lives in the colonies. Amdon Rendell, a butcher in York, nominated his sister, Adelaide, who was noted as twenty-eight, single, and living in Cattistock in Dorset in September 1861.¹²⁸ The 1861 British census for the parish of Cattistock records Adelaide ‘Rendall’ as twenty-one, unmarried, born in the village of Rampisham (also in Cattistock

¹²³ Copper from this mine would be exhibited in the following year at the 1862 International Exhibition held in South Kensington, London. Edward McDermott, *The Popular Guide to the International Exhibition of 1862* (R1862; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 122. William Pearce Clifton also provided items for the Western Australia display. Anonymous, *The International Exhibition of 1862: The Illustrated Catalogue of the Industrial Department* (1862; reprint Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4.

¹²⁴ Patrick Tierney, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 9 July 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 133r.

¹²⁵ Richard Gallop, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 22 July 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 127r.

¹²⁶ John Frizell, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 13 November 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 346r.

¹²⁷ Thomas Enright, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 30 November 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 347r.

¹²⁸ Amdon Rendell, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 23 September 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 329r.

parish) and working as a servant for a farmer's family in nearby Lower Chalmington.¹²⁹ Despite seemingly spending her previous life within one parish, Adelaide was a strong candidate for becoming a successful settler in Western Australia with her experience in both service and rural life. The age discrepancy is a common occurrence across genealogical records, and it is possible that the two Adelaides were not the same person. However, either listed age could have an advantage for a female immigrant – at twenty-one, Adelaide would be considered to be at the height of youth and have plenty of time to settle down and find a husband; at twenty-eight, her years of employment would make her an attractive candidate (her farm experience certainly made her eligible for rural posts in addition to town service positions), and she might be more mature and better able to handle the adjustment to colonial life.

Like many of the glimpses of female emigrants in the Colonial Office records, some of the Western Australia application forms provide historians with more questions than answers. For example, Ann Tracy, a female servant from Perth, nominated her brother and sister, then listed five cousins (three female, two male) ranging in age from nineteen to twenty-eight.¹³⁰ All five have been crossed out. Perhaps an official felt that Tracy was too ambitious with her selection of relatives and, as a servant, would be unable to cover their passage or other expenses if they could not pay; or maybe Tracy's or her cousins' circumstances had changed and they chose not to immigrate to Western Australia. Another application was made by John Cole, a boot maker, for his single, twenty-five-year-old female friend – was this a possible

¹²⁹ 'Adelaide Rendall,' 'England and Wales Census, 1861,' FamilySearch, transcription of TNA, PRO RG 9.

¹³⁰ Ann Tracy, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 9 September 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 134r.

future marriage?¹³¹ Whatever the stories behind the people listed in these applications, it is clear that women, who had emigrated and then ‘settled’, played a direct role in female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies. While this has already been made clear in earlier discussions of the FMCES, these Western Australia records reveal the grassroots involvement of working-class women in populating the colony. Again, this demonstrates the multiple and complex interconnections between metropolitan and colonial life.

The application forms were filled out by clerks acting for the Perth Immigration Agent and were thus susceptible to misspelled names or incorrect details which make tracing some of these families difficult. Several of the sponsors provided a mark rather than a signature, suggesting limited literacy and an inability to check what the clerk had recorded about their nominees. Aside from the required information, no other comments from the clerks appear, with one exception: on the application form of Guildford labourer Edward Sheehan for his in-laws and sister, a note at the bottom of the page reads, ‘I think Sheehan is able to pay the Expenses,’ hinting that some discussion had taken place over Sheehan’s ability to support the new immigrants.¹³² Unfortunately, no outcomes were recorded on the papers so it is uncertain how the stories of these 1861 nominees proceeded, although it might be possible to trace some via passenger lists and vital records. However, these documents demonstrate that emigration was an ongoing process, not a discrete episode: it permeated many aspects of the metropole and settler society, influencing the lives of intending emigrants, recent immigrants, those more long-established, and those who surrounded them.

¹³¹ John Cole, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 21 September 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 140r.

¹³² Edward Sheehan, Application for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 6 December 1861, TNA, CO 18/119, f. 349r.

Individual Episodes

Although emigrants' voices are not heard directly in these government records (aside from a lengthy document about women in the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot which is discussed in the next chapter), it is still possible to recover snatches of individual stories. Together, these help represent the mass wave of women moving from Britain to the Australian colonies. For instance, there are several references to women whose selection was being reconsidered due to mental or physical illness. Other letters relate tales of female emigrants whose trunks were misplaced or left behind in port, and surviving letters reveal that colonial officials made an effort to reunite the women with what were likely their only possessions. Morality and personal character, as has been shown, matters of great concern for both advocates and opponents of female emigration, also warranted further discussion among emigration officials.

Poor health (psychological or physical) was usually easily identified, and details sometimes made their way into the official record. In 1855 Colonial Land and Emigration Commission chairman Thomas Murdoch and Commissioner Frederic Rogers summarised a despatch from the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria relating the account of a female emigrant who was clearly unwell. The woman, named Ellen Webster, 'became insane on the voyage and was on her arrival... placed in confinement as a dangerous lunatic, having been so confined before she emigrated'.¹³³ Officials naturally investigated how she had been selected for emigration despite her previous

¹³³ Thomas William Clinton Murdoch and Frederic Rogers to Herman Merivale, 17 March 1855, TNA, CO 386/80, p. 41.

mental illness. Her selecting agent in Dublin stated that she had provided references from the reverend of her parish and a Mr. Parnell on whose property her father lived. When the agent questioned the men, the minister claimed that he was unaware of her 'derangement', but Parnell admitted that she had been restrained in the past, though he 'did not expect that the disease would recur'.¹³⁴ The document reflects contemporary perceptions about mental health and illness, implying that Webster's insanity was inevitable and she could make no useful contribution to colonial society. No concern was expressed regarding Webster's well-being; she was now confined in Melbourne. Instead, Murdoch and Rogers simply concluded their report with 'regret that the woman's previous lunacy was not brought to our knowledge when she applied for a free passage, but we do not see what further steps can be taken in the matter'.¹³⁵

Physical ailments were easier for emigration officials to identify, although some emigrants with chronic or terminal illnesses may not have exhibited symptoms upon departure. Margaret Irvine, for instance, was due to sail to Sydney in 1854, but due to 'an unfortunate appearance, from ulceration, in her face of so distressing a character', emigration officials felt that 'it was not thought desirable to place her with so many other emigrants'.¹³⁶ When she first arrived at the port, 'the surgeon of the ship strongly objected to her proceeding, as he stated that from the appearance of marks on her face there was reason to believe that she was suffering from disease of a syphilitic character'.¹³⁷ This accusation raised concerns about Irvine's morality and

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 41-2.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

¹³⁶ Stephen Walcott to Immigration Agent, Melbourne, 9 April 1855, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 74.

¹³⁷ Stephen Walcott to Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, 5 April 1855, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 77.

further investigations were carried out after her mother applied for a second remittance. Emigration officials interviewed Irvine's contacts to ascertain whether there were any moral or medical reasons to refuse passage: the priest of her parish 'certified that her character was unblemished, and a surgeon in the neighbourhood stated... that he had known her from her infancy, and that she had always been well conducted. By another surgeon the mark on her face was attributed to a burn'.¹³⁸ But these testimonies were still not enough to allow Irvine to proceed, for when she arrived to board at Liverpool the ship's surgeon again successfully objected to her embarkation.¹³⁹ The surgeon and one of the medical inspectors at the port examined her and reported: 'The disease in her face is ulceration of long standing, and of an obstinate nature, and having all the characteristics of Lupus, which unfortunately gives her so revolting an appearance, that... it was calculated to excite feelings of disgust in her fellow passengers'.¹⁴⁰ Whereas the initial objection to Irvine revolved around questions of her personal character, this second refusal was framed as protecting other female emigrants from emotional distress. To the credit of the officials, it was decided to send her via a private passenger ship, as her mother was living in New South Wales and had already paid remittance twice for Irvine to join her.

As demonstrated in Irvine's ordeal, any hint of possible immorality warranted investigation. The story of Eliza Williams, who sailed to Melbourne in 1857, reveals that women who did not meet the moral standards of emigration officials could still manage to emigrate. During the voyage, it was discovered that Williams was pregnant. She was interviewed upon arrival

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 77-8.

in Melbourne and claimed that ‘before leaving England, she had been married to a man named William Jones, a hospital assistant, at Liverpool, who had subsequently abandoned her’.¹⁴¹ Williams also provided the names of referees, including a woman she claimed had been a witness at her wedding. When the woman was contacted, however, she denied even knowing an Eliza Williams; other referees denied knowledge of the marriage, though one did state that ‘Jones had promised to marry [Williams]’.¹⁴² Unfortunately this possible declaration of intent was not enough for officials – either she was married or not, and with Williams already several months pregnant and her supposed fiancé thousands of miles away the situation could not be easily remedied. Given Williams’ tarnished reputation, the commissioners had nothing more to add but regret that the deception had managed to progress so far. No mention was made of what the future would hold for Williams and her baby. Once again, the story was dropped as soon as emigration officials had established that they had followed their regulations and suitably investigated the situation, regrettable as it was. Of course, the future of these ill, deranged, or destitute women would likely depend on the support of charities or the state. Emigration officials’ stark demarcation of responsibility for emigrants’ futures contrasts with the FMCES’s concern for women’s lives in the colonies, especially their employment. But emigration officials showed little consideration for female emigrants’ welfare once they had disembarked; as will be discussed in Chapter Three, however, this approach would not keep them from having to deal with the outcome when things went wrong.

¹⁴¹ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Victoria, 25 May 1887, TNA, CO 386/129, p. 71.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Aside from concerns about the female emigrants themselves, the Colonial Office records also mention the logistical problems that affected individual emigrants. On a couple of occasions the emigration commissioners found themselves tracking down and arranging the forwarding of travelling trunks that emigrants had lost or left behind. Female emigrants often possessed only a few outfits of clothing and some small personal possessions. Examples of emigrant luggage can be seen in a sketch from the *Illustrated London News* (see Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2: ‘The Female Emigrants’ Home, at Hatton Garden’, 1853.¹⁴³

This image depicts female emigrants preparing for their voyage in an emigrant home in Hatton Garden, London. As one woman says her farewells to what appears to be her family on the right side of the picture, the women in the centre of the illustration busy themselves with their luggage. Baggage of various sizes lines the table, and two emigrants in the foreground reorganise the packing of a valise. What are possibly books and a few pieces of tableware are stacked in front of them. One of the other emigrants appears to

¹⁴³ ‘The Female Emigrants’ Home, at Hatton Garden – the Chief Room,’ *Illustrated London News* (London: Illustrated London News, 13 March 1853). National Library of Australia.

be travelling with quite a large suitcase, on which she has set her bonnet. Small bundles that look as though they contain only a few pieces of clothing are visible on the opposite side of the table, and the first woman sitting on the righthand bench merely holds a modest basket or satchel. Emigrants' luggage probably had more sentimental than monetary value, as it could contain precious heirlooms or reminders of life in the metropole. More important were the clothes and practical items a woman carried which were essential for her new life in the colonies.

It may seem surprising that officials gave their attention to the lost baggage of female emigrants, but it was important for administrators to keep everything in check and investigate any matters that could keep the mass movement of people from running smoothly as well as to avoid reputation damage. Thus we are left with a few detailed notes about attempts to reunite emigrants and their travelling trunks. In 1856, Honor Walsh was stopped from proceeding after it was discovered that she had given birth to an illegitimate child, but her box of clothes had already been stowed on the ship in Birkenhead and 'either could not be got out or in the hurry of getting off omitted to be relanded'.¹⁴⁴ The assistant immigration agent in Geelong was instructed to return it to Walsh in Dublin should it be found upon the ship's arrival. Eliza Trott reported losing her luggage before her voyage to Adelaide in 1855, but an emigration officer in Plymouth notified the officials that 'he had already heard from the girl's father respecting the loss of the box, and found it at the railway station where she had left it';¹⁴⁵ the trunk was forwarded to Trott in South Australia. Only a few months later officials had to

¹⁴⁴ Stephen Walcott to C. E. Shutt, Assistant Immigration Agent, Geelong, 3 October 1856, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 312.

¹⁴⁵ Stephen Walcott to H. Duncan, Immigration Agent, 13 December 1855, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 206.

deal with another misplaced box. Elizabeth Grennan left her trunk on the steamer from Dublin, but the day was saved by the ship's owner who rather than 'allow the vessel to be detained or the young woman to lose her passage gave her a complete outfit with which she proceeded'.¹⁴⁶ In typical fashion, once it was determined that a solution had been found the case was dropped and it is unknown whether Grennan's possessions ever caught up with her. Nevertheless, with these glimpses into the vicissitudes of emigration, the Colonial Office archives enrich our understanding of the emigration experience. These indirect accounts of female emigrants suggest that official archives can reveal more than assumed about both women and other, often voiceless, groups. In the emigration discourse alone, for instance, what material about children, the elderly, those suffering physical or mental illness, non-Britons, and non-whites is hidden in the Colonial Office archives?

As shown in this examination of the Colonial Office records relating to emigration to the Australian colonies, government records provide more than statistics. In addition to the financial concerns of supporting immigration, colonial officials also demonstrated attention to the background of potential emigrants and even worked with metropolitan emigration societies. The Colonial Office records show that emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies was not a uniform process and concerns about the morality and employability of emigrants were also discussed. They demonstrate how different concerns predominated for individual colonies at different times. Finally, this study of the Colonial Office records reveals the importance of re-reading administrative archives. Stories of individual women – such as those who facilitated the emigration of relatives, or the emigrants who were ill or

¹⁴⁶ Stephen Walcott to Dr. Duncan, 14 May 1856, TNA, CO 386/128, p. 277.

searching for their lost possessions – remain to be found and, as the document discussed in the next chapter will show, it is even possible to find material from the women themselves.

Chapter Three – In the Details: A Case Study of South Australia

Among twenty-first-century historians there is a growing recognition of the fruitfulness of reevaluating the connections between as well as diversity of the colonies, and of the dangers of assuming historical trends apply across the continent.¹ The Female Middle Class Emigration Society, for instance, was usually careful to note the destination of each of its emigrants, often mentioning the intended port city, yet several emigrants' endpoints were simply recorded as 'Australia'. This generalisation reflects a widespread tendency by mid-nineteenth-century Britons to see the Australian colonies as a single entity, despite their distinct histories of colonization and development, not to mention geographic isolation from one another. By narrowing our scope, we can uncover a fuller picture of women's lives and experiences than is possible in the broad 'Australian' approach of the nineteenth century which so often reduced women to numbers. In this chapter I have chosen to take a closer look at South Australia in the mid-1850s.

This South Australian case study is particularly useful as a means of examining a specific time and place (in this case, 1856 Adelaide) while allowing for the subject to be contextualised and connected to larger themes of movements and networks. In the case of female emigration, however, Lisa Chilton argues that it is important to avoid focusing on one destination, and she does just that in her comparative study of Canada and Australia.² But Australia itself was not a single destination, despite being considered one in the rhetoric of metropolitan emigration proponents. According to Angela

¹ Zoë Laidlaw, review of *Colonial Voices: A Cultural History of English in Australia 1840-1940*, by Joy Damousi, in *The English Historical Review* 127, no. 524 (February 2012), 210; Australia in the World Workshop, University of Leicester, 26 June 2015.

² Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 6.

Woollacott, mid-nineteenth-century Australian history has long revolved around convicts and gold rushes, thus focusing mainly on New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land at the expense of other colonies with seemingly less exciting pasts.³ When we allow a few specific colonies – despite recognising their individuality – to stand for all of 'Australia', we lose the motivation to uncover stories from other places, some of which may be more informative than those from the popular colonies. The colony of South Australia is an ideal case study for this thesis not only because of its distinctive origins in 'company colonization' and the emphasis on assisting 'suitable' migrants that was woven into the discourse of systematic colonization, but also because of an 1856 government investigation of female immigration to the colony. The resulting report, published midway between the 1851 British Census that revealed a surplus of unmarried women and the 1861 foundation of the FMCES, offers us an insight into the selection, reception, and maintenance of female emigrants and the attitudes and (in)actions of colonial officials. Woollacott has additionally pushed for thinking beyond the arrival in port and recognising migration as a fluid and complex process.⁴ Likewise, I seek to create a more cohesive understanding of the emigration process as a whole, to demystify the identities and backgrounds of female emigrants, and to understand the colonial experiences of immigrants. In this case study, the testimony of the women at the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot allows us to hear – in immigrants' own words – their reasons for emigrating, their experiences at metropolitan ports of embarkation, their confused arrivals in the wrong Australian colony, and their encounters with unemployment.

³ Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

In 1856, the Legislative Council of South Australia ordered a Select Committee to investigate what they considered to be ‘excessive’ single female immigration. The main concern of the Legislative Council was the cost of supporting recently arrived or unemployed female immigrants in depots or charitable shelters. There were several immigration depots aiding women in the colony, but the main one – the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, or Central Depot – was located in Adelaide, South Australia’s capital city and main port.⁵ No explicit reason was given for the formation of the Select Committee, but since depots operated as charities, only requiring residents to do basic chores in return for their maintenance, their high costs, coupled with the increasing duration of women’s stays, likely encouraged the Committee’s focus on the Adelaide Depot. In 1855 the government spent £5900 (about £500,000 in today’s value) on food and clothing alone at the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot.⁶ In addition to investigating the financial burden of such depots, the Committee was also concerned with female immigrants’ characters and morality. Were the immigration depots negative influences that enabled idleness and immoral behaviour? The resulting report presented the opinions of immigration officials, depot employees, and female immigrants themselves on a variety of topics including reasons for emigration and preparedness for South Australian life. But the Committee’s report also revealed the darker side of assisted emigration, from anti-Irish sentiment; to venereal disease and

⁵ Marie Steiner, *Servants Depots in Colonial South Australia* (Kent Town, S.A.: Wakefield Press, 2009), 7.

⁶ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council of South Australia, Appointed to Inquire into the Excessive Female Immigration; Together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendix* (Adelaide: W. C. Cox, 1856), TNA, CO 13/93, appendix xi. A note on this document’s referencing: this report (including evidence and appendix) was published and later bound into a Colonial Office volume of South Australian original correspondence. For clarity I have used the published page numbers rather than the CO’s folio numbers; the document can be found at TNA, CO 13/93, f. 315r.

pregnancy; to deception over an emigrant's final destination, whether through gross ignorance, manipulation by emigration agents, or the sale and forgery of emigration papers. The report illustrates the extent to which the South Australian government attempted to control both the development of colonial society and recent immigrants. It also reveals how immigrants, rather than the system of emigration, were blamed when things went wrong.

The History of South Australia and Emigration

At the time of the Select Committee's investigation, South Australia was one year away from responsible government. It had been founded only twenty years earlier as an experiment, inspired by Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory of 'systematic colonization'. Assisted emigration – funded through land sales – was central to the theory of systematic colonization and, although the South Australian Company's economic plans were soon revealed as flawed, the notion of South Australia as a distinctive (and superior) colony because of its free rather than convict origins remained pervasive. Despite this promise, as R.M. Gibbs commented: 'As a colony and state of Australia, [South Australia] has been neither the biggest nor the most prosperous, and it was settled after most of the others'.⁷ This was partly due to the colony's isolation from the eastern side of the continent; in 1838, the first overland journey from New South Wales (which at the time included Victoria and Queensland) took Joseph Hawdon and his party over two months to complete.⁸ Of course, the lack of an association with penal transportation has made South Australia extraneous to histories of convicts. Yet South Australia has featured

⁷ R.M. Gibbs, *A History of South Australia: From Colonial Days to the Present* (Blackwood, S.A.: Southern Heritage, 1984), 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

heavily in gender history because of its early introduction of female suffrage in 1894, thanks in part to the work of writer (and later, politician) Catherine Helen Spence, whose novel about a young female immigrant in Adelaide is analysed later in Chapter Five.

Although South Australia had the distinction of its foundation including discussions of Indigenous welfare and a ‘recognition of prior Aboriginal occupancy’, dispossession quickly followed in the guise of basic supplies and Christian instruction offered in return for voluntary transfers of land.⁹ The traditional territory of the Kaurna became the settler capital of Adelaide.¹⁰ In the 1850s and 1860s, a system of ration depots spread across South Australia, but the rations were only intended for ill, poor, or elderly Aborigines; those who had no physical ailments were expected to find a way to support themselves and their families.¹¹ Like immigration depots, the ration depots did little to address the underlying causes of destitution, unemployment, and isolation. Moreover, white female immigrants, unlike their Indigenous counterparts, were able to utilize the depot system as needed; to receive shelter in addition to food; and – though officials worried about the morals of some – were less likely to have their level of ‘civilisation’ judged. Basic government efforts such as the ration depots did little to offset the destruction of Aboriginal societies. From the first arrival of Europeans, disease ravaged the Aboriginal Australian population. Dispossession and the implementation of European pastoral systems limited Aboriginal livelihoods. Finally, aggressive settlement led to the Frontier Wars, a series of violent

⁹ Rob Foster and Amanda Nettelbeck, ‘From Protectorate to Protection, 1836-1911,’ in *Colonialism and Its Aftermath: A History of Aboriginal South Australia*, ed. Peggy Brock and Tom Gara (Mile End, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2017), 27-8.

¹⁰ Peggy Brock and Tom Gara, ed., *Colonialism and Its Aftermath: A History of Aboriginal South Australia* (Mile End, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2017), 8.

¹¹ Foster and Nettelbeck, ‘From Protectorate to Protection,’ 34.

conflicts between Aborigines and European settlers. While settler enumerations of Australia's Indigenous population are notorious for underestimating Aboriginal numbers and must be treated with caution, in 1853, only 180 Aborigines were recorded in Adelaide, with one-third of these noted as originally from the Darling River in New South Wales.¹² According to Christine Lockwood, by 1857 – one year after the Select Committee's investigation of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot – the Kaurna population had been decimated, with some of the remaining survivors joining other Aboriginal clans and others moving away from their homeland.¹³

Despite South Australia's late start as a colony it attracted many settlers. At first the colony's situation was precarious and government financial intervention occurred in 1842; it was only after this that the first flour and wheat cargos were exported from South Australia, highlighting its initial failure to set up a successful economy.¹⁴ Mel Davies even compared 1840s and 1850s Adelaide to 'many European cities before industrialisation' where artisan manufacturing and subsistence farming made up the backbone of the economy.¹⁵ According to Robin Haines, a total of 37,056 British emigrants headed to South Australia from 1855 to 1869, making it the third most popular Australian destination of the period after New South Wales and Victoria.¹⁶ New South Wales and Victoria appealed especially to emigrants due to multiple discoveries of gold in the early 1850s; South Australia, on the other

¹² Christine Lockwood, 'Early Encounters on the Adelaide Plains and Encounter Bay,' in *Colonialism and Its Aftermath: A History of Aboriginal South Australia*, ed. Peggy Brock and Tom Gara (Mile End, South Australia: Wakefield Press, 2017), 81.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mel Davies, 'Australia: A Victorian Bastide?' in *The Origins of Australia's Capital Cities*, ed. Pamela Statham, 179-198 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 187.

¹⁵ Ibid., 188-9.

¹⁶ Robin Haines, *Life and Death in the Age of Sail: The Passage to Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2003), 30.

hand, proved to be more unyielding when it came to mineral wealth in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ The 1851 Victorian gold rush was particularly influential in nearly 16,000 settlers leaving South Australia.¹⁸ British emigration to the Australian colonies as a whole dropped significantly in the decade following the initial gold rushes. In total, the Australian colonies received 83,237 immigrants in 1854,¹⁹ and Australia's total population was 694,417.²⁰ By 1866 the number of immigrants to Australia had dropped to 24,097;²¹ meanwhile, the population of the Australian colonies had more than doubled to 1,443,955.²² This growth was particularly seen in Victoria, site of several goldfields, where the population went from 283,942 in 1854 to 633,602 in 1866.²³ South Australia in the same period grew from a population of 92,545 to 168,907.²⁴ In addition to a lack of gold, South Australia struggled with drought in the mid-1860s, further deterring British emigrants from choosing it as their destination despite its earlier popularity.²⁵

South Australia's legislators were particularly concerned by gender imbalance among immigrants. Relative to the former penal colonies of the eastern seaboard, South Australia attracted far more female immigrants. This was already perceived as excessive in 1841. John Rundle, MP for Tavistock, with connections to the South Australian Company, gave evidence to that

¹⁷ Kathryn Wells, 'The Australian Gold Rush,' 11 February 2015, <http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/austn-gold-rush>.

¹⁸ Davies, 'Australia: A Victorian Bastide?', 189.

¹⁹ Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, *Fifteenth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners* (London: George G. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1855), 9.

²⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Animated Historical Population Chart,' 2 October 2010, <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/Home/Animated+Historical+Population+Chart>.

²¹ Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, *Twenty-Seventh General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners* (London: George G. Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1867), 57.

²² Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Animated Historical Population Chart.'

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Gibbs, *A History of South Australia*, 70-71.

year's House of Commons' Select Committee on South Australia. Rundle claimed that at least half of the immigrants arriving in South Australia were female, whereas in the other Australian colonies 'five-sixths of the persons that have been sent out have been productive labourers'.²⁶ In other words, Rundle did not consider women to be the industrious settlers required by the growing colony. At the time, agricultural labourers and skilled tradesmen were most in demand as settlers.²⁷ Rundle's evidence was merely an early intervention in a decades-long debate about the need for female 'domestic servants' – a capacious term that appeared repeatedly in female emigration discussions, whether from metropolitan emigration advocates (who seemed to have a vague notion of the term as code for respectable employment), or colonial officials and settlers (who complained that there were too many 'domestic servants' and too few immigrants who were actually trained in service or capable of tough manual labour).

The description 'domestic servant', when used in colonial emigration discourse, usually denoted a woman who lacked skills, despite the implied interpretation of a woman capable of carrying out a variety of tasks and running a household. The Legislative Council of South Australia's 1856 Select Committee report included a table of the occupations of single female immigrants arriving in 1855 which illustrates this point. Of a total of 4,049 immigrants, 3,481 were recorded as domestic servants and 390 as farm servants, with the remaining 178 made up of fairly equal numbers of cooks, dairymaids, laundrywomen, and seamstresses:

²⁶ *Select Committee on South Australia, Second report from the Select Committee on South Australia; together with the minutes of evidence, appendix, and index*, HC 394 (1841), 180.

²⁷ Haines, *Life and Death in the Age of Sail*, 43.

Table 3.1: Occupations of Single Women Arriving in South Australia, 1855²⁸

Domestic servants	3,481
Farm servants	390
Dairymaids	58
Sempstresses [sic]	47
Cooks	37
Laundresses	36

The semantic ambiguity of ‘domestic servant’ not only led to misunderstandings and unpredictable expectations of female immigrants upon arrival in the Australian colonies, but also complicated arguments about the required volumes and proportions of emigration. As the *Adelaide Times* quipped in July 1855, ‘According to the Government returns there are still remaining at the Depot the limited number of 798 domestic servants. It is to be hoped we have not robbed England of its legitimate supply of useful drudges’.²⁹ Back in the metropole, however, female workers were still abundant.

As concern was raised in Britain about the perceived surplus number of unmarried women revealed by the 1851 census, some of the Australian colonies were also experiencing uneven populations. Yet the government’s attempts to balance the number of men and women in the colonies through selected emigration could also backfire, leaving colonies with too many women and too few employment opportunities or potential husbands, simply replicating the situation in the metropole. A disparity between the sexes was evident in the 1854 data presented by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission:

²⁸ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, appendix iii.

²⁹ ‘Domestic Servants,’ *Adelaide Times*, 25 July 1855, 2.

Table 3.2: Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, Number of Adult Emigrants from Britain to Australia, 1854³⁰

Colony	Male Emigrants	Female Emigrants
New South Wales	4,552	4,383
Victoria	4,030	7,755
South Australia	2,962	4,477
Western Australia	156	187
Van Diemen's Land	511	1,236

Of the three most popular destinations, both Victoria and South Australia clearly experienced an imbalance of the sexes among emigrants, with Victoria receiving female and male emigrants at a ratio of 2:1, and South Australia at 3:2; this may not have been a problem in Victoria where independent male emigrants heading for the goldfields could balance government-assisted female emigrants. Some of these women may also have been married and travelling with their families, which would lessen the threat of too many unattached female immigrants. Yet this trend was also visible among single emigrants assisted by the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission: the numbers of unmarried immigrants arriving in Victoria were 828 men and 4,553 women, while South Australia recorded 888 men and 2,403 women (by contrast, New South Wales managed to maintain a balance in receiving 2,791 unmarried men and 2,622 single women).³¹ In South Australia, the Legislative Council's Select Committee suggested that the excess female population was due to both the introduction of single women to the goldfields as a 'politic and philanthropic motive' to balance the sexes and the transfer of men from the goldfields to the battlefields of the Crimean War (1853-1856).³² This was not the only way in which the Crimean War upset the imperial government's

³⁰ Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, *Fifteenth General Report*, 19.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³² Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, pp. 7-8.

emigration plan: several of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission's metropolitan-based officials were naval officers who were called away to war in 1854, forcing a reshuffling of the emigration agents posted in various British ports.³³ With so many factors affecting the balance of the sexes it may have been easier for the government to simply step back, but officials were determined to manage the gender balance of the colonial population.

Even though the situation was messy (with different circumstances in each of the Australian colonies), the imperial government still hoped to regain control over the makeup of the population. Demographic manipulation of government-assisted emigrants was possible since emigrants had to be approved by an agent before receiving passage. South Australia became the first Australian colony to send its own emigration agent to London in 1858.³⁴ The South Australian Company employed its own agents before the formation of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, which was responsible for selecting emigrants, chartering ships for the colonies, and providing statistics detailing who was moving where. These figures are not always consistent and must be treated cautiously by historians. For instance, in Table 3.2 the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission recorded a total of 7,439 adult emigrants from Britain to South Australia in 1854. Yet this number differs from the 1854 data presented to the House of Commons. A South Australian immigration agent recorded a total of 8,824 government immigrants (as he possibly included children, the discrepancy is tolerable).³⁵ However, the agent

³³ Fred H. Hitchins, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931), 172.

³⁴ State Records of South Australia, 'Immigration to South Australia' fact sheet, 10 June 2014, <https://archives.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/20140610%20Immigration%20to%20South%20Australia%20Final%20V4.pdf>.

³⁵ *Papers relative to Emigration to Australian Colonies: Part I. New South Wales and Australia; Part II. S. and W. Australia, Van Diemen's Land*, 1857 (144) X.163.

also noted an additional 8,434 immigrants who paid their own passage, leading to a total arrival of 17,258 immigrants – more than double the amount of the initial impression gained from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission data alone. As Haines points out, passengers who were privately funded were ‘not required to negotiate any bureaucratic turnstiles’ and are therefore often missing from the official data.³⁶ The different figures for 1854 are an example of how misleading the government’s statistics can be. The South Australian agent neglected to record the origins of the immigrants, leaving us to wonder whether he included immigrants from outside of Britain and, if not, what the true total number of immigrants received was. The government’s record-keeping left many questions unanswered and individuals unaccounted for, further complicating interpretations of emigration and the growth of colonial populations.

Official statistics concentrated on movement from the metropole to the colonies rather than intercolonial migration in Australia. But immigrants certainly moved within Australia. For instance, the 1856 Select Committee Report recorded an immigration agent stating ‘to his belief, many South Australian immigrants have never landed in South Australia further than was necessary to convey their luggage to a ship starting to one of the adjacent Colonies’.³⁷ This was evidenced in the Committee’s data from the Adelaide immigration depot, which recorded that of a total of 311 women, ‘100 had applied for passages to Melbourne, five to Geelong, and forty-eight for Sydney – leaving 158 only as having applied for Adelaide’, some of whom ‘had been induced to come because they had been informed by the agents...

³⁶ Haines, *Life and Death in the Age of Sail*, 14.

³⁷ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, p. vi.

that they could reach the other Colonies from Adelaide'.³⁸ Thus it is possible that the perceived imbalances of the sexes were not so extreme – or perhaps they were even greater. For the purposes of government discussion and debate, however, the focus was on statistical proof, no matter how flawed or incomplete it was.

The 1856 Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council of South Australia

South Australia's 1856 investigation of female emigration has left historians with a fascinating published report including detailed statistics and lengthy statements of evidence (presented in the form of cross-examination) given by immigration officials, Adelaide Female Immigration Depot workers, and female immigrants themselves. This latter evidence is particularly valuable in allowing us to hear women's stories: though the report was compiled, edited, and published by men, these testimonies of the residents of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot nevertheless provide a glimpse into their lives.³⁹ The Committee did control the direction of the women's testimonies with questions related to the Adelaide Depot, emigration experiences, and employment. The extent of the testimonies was also limited by the Committee, with some immigrants recorded as providing only a few brief answers. Yet several women were candid about their experiences – there was little incentive to present a false sense of satisfaction since enough concern surrounded the Depot to warrant an investigation. Additionally, any

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p vi.

³⁹ A note on terminology: while the Select Committee and Adelaide Depot employees often referred to the immigrants in the Depot as 'girls', I have chosen to use the more neutral 'residents'. Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93.

resulting improvements were unlikely to have an instant effect; closing the Adelaide Depot immediately would send hundreds of women into the streets and was therefore an unfeasible outcome. The residents of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot may have been limited in topic, but they generally spoke freely about their fears and frustrations.

Complementing the individual voices of the Depot residents, the 1856 Report's appendix records each ship's arrival in Adelaide in 1855 and the number of single women immigrants, including their age group, country of origin (England, Scotland, or Ireland), occupation, literacy, and religion. Another appendix lists the names of women who spent time in the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, but left for Melbourne or Sydney, and the circumstances affecting their departure (in most cases a letter and money from a relative already settled in the colonies), while yet another contains the names of female emigrants who applied for assisted passage and later stayed at the Adelaide Depot; other details recorded include ship name, destination, whether the woman had any relatives or protectors on board, whether she had relatives in South Australia, and how long the immigrant stayed in the Depot.

This evidence includes names and arrival dates, making future studies of the women who passed through the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot feasible. It also makes it possible to understand how emigration affected families. One of the appendices in the Select Committee's report lists 301 women arriving by assisted passage who resided in the Depot in 1855.⁴⁰ In addition to the female immigrants' names, ships, and length of time spent in the Depot, the table recorded whether the women had 'any relative... or

⁴⁰ The Adelaide Depot superintendent stated that a total of 311 assisted immigrants stayed in the Depot over the year of 1855, yet numbers 161 to 170 have been omitted from the table. *Ibid.*, p vi.

protector on board'.⁴¹ About three-quarters of the immigrants arrived alone, but twenty-two of them made the voyage to Australia in the company of more than one relative.

Table 3.3: Relatives, if any, accompanying assisted female immigrants who were later residents in the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, 1855⁴²

Relative travelling with female immigrant	Number of female immigrants
Sister	54
Cousin	14
Brother	11
Mother	8
Father	6
Brother-in-law	2
Aunt	1
Niece	1
Sons/Daughters	1
None	225

As this analysis demonstrates, the majority of future Adelaide Depot residents arrived alone in South Australia, but several travelled with female relatives such as sisters or mothers. Because the 1856 Report was focused only on Adelaide Depot residents, their relatives' presence on or absence from the list allows us to trace the fate of immigrants arriving in South Australia together. For example, the McCormack family consisted of a mother travelling with three sons and two daughters.⁴³ All three female members of the family spent two weeks in the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, leaving us to wonder about the three sons – did they head inland to pursue rural opportunities while their mother and sisters settled in Adelaide only to find themselves requiring the help of the Depot? Or did the McCormack women merely spend two

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., pp vi-ix.

⁴³ Ibid., p viii.

weeks in the Adelaide Depot shortly after their arrival to save lodging expenses for half of the family while they looked for employment? Another case indicates that not all female relatives who travelled together faced the same fate. Catherine and R. A. O'Brien arrived alongside their father and a third sister.⁴⁴ But only two of the O'Brien women were listed as Adelaide Depot residents, each for two weeks, suggesting that the third O'Brien sister stayed with their father; perhaps she was the youngest of the three and required the protection of her own father rather than that of an immigration depot as the family adjusted to life in South Australia. In some cases, it appears that relatives parted ways after disembarkation. Mary Hickey, for instance, sailed with two sisters but had no relatives listed as being in South Australia.⁴⁵ Hickey spent four months in the Adelaide Depot; her sisters had probably continued on to another Australian port, although Hickey's intended destination was noted as Adelaide, but it was also possible that they had died or returned to Britain.⁴⁶ Whatever the situation, Hickey's sisters were clearly either unable or unwilling to help her leave the Adelaide Depot. Just as travelling with relatives could have mixed outcomes, having a relative already settled in the colony was an advantage, but carried no guarantee of avoiding a depot stay. C. Parsons was listed as having a cousin in South Australia but nevertheless spent four months in the Depot; Margaret Woods fared better, having two cousins in the colony and spending only one month in the Depot.⁴⁷ Of course, some of these relatives may have been in worse circumstances than the newly arrived immigrants and may have had little to offer other than

⁴⁴ Catherine and R.A. were each listed as accompanied by two sisters. *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p vii.

⁴⁶ It is unlikely that Hickey's sisters returned to Britain so quickly since they were government-assisted emigrants and a return passage would be at their own expense.

⁴⁷ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, 6.

advice – even that small gift would be missed if the family member did not live in the port city and was unable to afford to come into town to meet the immigrants or to send a letter. Other relatives may simply have been known to each other by name and never have met in person (a circumstance that was used as a convenient plot twist in Catherine Helen Spence’s novel *Clara Morison*, discussed in Chapter Five), in which case the women were relying on practical strangers. Ellen Ollard, a Melbourne immigrant who was helped by the FMCES, described such a situation in 1876:

My Cousin (whom I had never seen till I arrived here) is very good indeed to me and never allows me to want for anything and always gives me a home when I’m out of a situation, still I cannot help feeling that I’ve got no right to be living upon her and her husband, although they are both kind enough to tell me not to worry about it.⁴⁸

Ollard captured the discomfort of imposing upon relatives, but at least she had the option to live with her cousin during times of unemployment instead of entering an immigration depot. It is unclear what, if any, role Woods’ and Parsons’ cousins played in their admissions to and releases from the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, but certainly it could not hurt immigrants to have contacts in the Australian colonies before arrival.

A separate immigration report published shortly after the Select Committee’s investigation of the Adelaide Depot recorded the 1855 arrivals of single immigrants sponsored by ‘purchasers of land’ and deserves closer attention.⁴⁹ It lists the ship name, arrival date, and names of the immigrants (some of whom were obviously travelling with other female relatives), as well as the amount of time, if any, spent in the Adelaide Female Immigration

⁴⁸ Ellen Ollard to FMCES, 4 August 1876, Letter Book, 6B/106/1/FME/2/2, The Women’s Library, LSE, London, quoted in Patricia Clarke, *The Governesses: Letters from the Colonies, 1862-1882* (Hawthorn, Victoria: Hutchinson Publishing Group, 1985), 143.

⁴⁹ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Assisted Immigration, 1855*, TNA, CO 18/119, pp. 1-19.

Depot. Since these women were nominated by settlers in South Australia, they had the advantage of having relatives or friends to turn to after they arrived. This is supported by the table which reveals that some ships brought no immigrants who required the Depot, while others disembarked many passengers in dire need of assistance. For example, the *David Malcolm* arrived in Adelaide on 30 April, carrying twenty-six single women nominated by South Australian residents, with every one noted in the table as ‘never in depot’.⁵⁰ But two weeks later, when twenty-five female immigrants disembarked from the *Europa* on 12 May, twelve, or nearly half, were recorded as residing in the Adelaide Depot for anywhere from two to five months.⁵¹ All five of the nominated women arriving with the *Fitz James* on 31 December ended up in the Adelaide Depot, albeit for six weeks or less.⁵²

Table 3.4: Number and percentage of nominated single women using Adelaide Female Immigration Depot services after arrival in 1855⁵³

Month	Total number of arrivals	Number of arrivals using Depot	Percentage of arrivals using Depot
January	27	1	3.5 %
February	26	1	4 %
March	8	0	0 %
April	56	7	12.5 %
May	40	12	30 %
June	10	1	10 %
July	30	9	30 %
August	36	22	61 %
September	9	3	33 %
October	19	10	52.5 %
November	29	4	14 %
December	24	7	29 %

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 19.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 15-19.

Even though these nominated women had contacts who were already settled in South Australia, several still relied upon the Adelaide Depot for support, particularly in the latter half of the year. This increased utilisation of depot services probably contributed to rising concerns about budget strain and overcrowding, eventually leading to the investigation by the Select Committee in early 1856.

Concern about the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot was in the public domain by late 1855. In October, the *Adelaide Times* reported that the Depot had been placed under the control of a board, noting:

We hope some good may come out of this new arrangement, but we do not know what the Board can do, beyond exercising vigilant superintendence over the department, and awaiting the gradual absorption of the excess of female labour.... The late system of sending [female immigrants] out to the District Council Depots, to await employment there, is, perhaps all that could be wisely done, as a supplementary effect towards creating and increasing the demand for their services.⁵⁴

The Adelaide Depot was overcrowded, resulting from an oversaturation of the city's employment market. The rural depots had capacity for these excess immigrants, suggesting that part of the problem was the concentration of immigrants in the capital city – they had not travelled beyond the main port of entry. In December there was talk of closing the immigration depot in Gawler, a town about 25 miles northeast of Adelaide. The *Adelaide Times* decried this proposal:

This is surely a step in the wrong direction.... After having been made the instrument of so much good, and now that the demand for more of the inmates of the Adelaide Depot is increasing, it is surely unwise to break up the establishment, for the mere sake of trying fresh ground and saving 15s. a week.... [If] the depot is closed, we should like to know what apology will be made for keeping the Adelaide depot open. Already there has been an insufficient supply of girls sent up, and now

⁵⁴ 'Female Immigration Depot,' *Adelaide Times*, 13 October 1855, 2.

that everybody is crying out for the clearance of the Adelaide depot, that supply is to be altogether cut off.⁵⁵

According to the *Adelaide Times* it was the Adelaide Immigration Depot that needed reform; as will be discussed later, the rural depots – such as those in Kapunda and Encounter Bay (each forty-five miles from Adelaide), Clare (seventy-five miles), and Robe (165 miles) – provided casual employees during the harvest, a situation that benefitted both immigrants and settler communities. Given South Australia's sparse population outside of Adelaide, the depots nearer the capital – Mount Barker (twenty miles from Adelaide), or Willunga and Gawler (each about twenty-five miles away) – may also have sent depot residents to casual agricultural jobs.⁵⁶ The newspaper also acknowledged concerns about the running costs of the Gawler Depot, particularly when the packed Adelaide Depot had surely strained the colony's resources. At the end of 1855, the *Adelaide Times* declared that 'no effort should be spared to clean out the Adelaide depot, and get those who are there properly placed in different parts of the colony, rather through the instrumentality of the Gawler Town, or any other country depot – it being of little consequence whether they are provided for, east, west, north, or south, so that the provision made for them is suitable'.⁵⁷ The Adelaide Depot required intervention, and the newspaper could not understand why officials would not send women from Adelaide to the satellite depots. There was clearly concern to save money and send labour where it was needed, but the call to 'clean' the Adelaide Depot is interesting, suggesting a perception of the Depot residents

⁵⁵ 'Immigration Depot, Gawler Town,' *Adelaide Times*, 26 December 1855, 2.

⁵⁶ Steiner, *Servants Depots*.

⁵⁷ 'Immigration,' *Adelaide Times*, 31 December 1855, 2.

as not only financially draining, but also morally corrupt. The situation had reached a crisis point and change was needed.

Life at the Depot

The South Australian Legislative Council's anxieties about single female emigration largely stemmed from economic concerns related to the costs associated with running immigration depots. The Select Committee noted that it was initially instructed to investigate destitution alongside female emigration, but explained that such a report would have to be delayed as 'the temporary arrangements for the support of the single female immigrants are distinct from the establishments of the Destitute Board'.⁵⁸ The Committee therefore decided that it was 'undesirable to recognize any necessary relationship' between single female immigrants and destitute women.⁵⁹ By contrast, Jan Gothard claims that government-assisted female immigrants were 'constructed and treated by colonists and colonial authorities as though they were poor' in order to turn the women into 'the workers the colonists wanted: deferential, humble, grateful domestic servants'.⁶⁰ In fact, the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot was located next to the Destitute Asylum, which was built in 1853.⁶¹ The Destitute Board was instrumental in providing relief to women and children left behind in South Australia as men flocked to the gold rush in Victoria only a few years before the Select Committee's investigation; in South Australia – founded without a convict legacy and the

⁵⁸ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, p. iii.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Janice Gothard, "'Pity the Poor Immigrant": Assisted Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia,' in *Poor Australian Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Eric Richards (Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1991), 98.

⁶¹ The site is now home to the Migration Museum next to the University of Adelaide campus. Steiner, *Servants Depots*, 16.

associated immorality – ‘women turned to prostitution and crimes of assault, robbery and drunkenness increased markedly’ and ‘the high moral tone of the colony... was now under threat’.⁶² These women – most of them likely free immigrants and some of them married – were not immune to financial (and moral) ruin. This connection between female immigrants and destitution reflects the challenges women faced when they arrived without a support network of friends and family or guaranteed employment – or when circumstances suddenly changed. As Elizabeth Rushen notes, upon arrival female immigrants ‘had spent up to three months making the most important voyage of their lifetime. Undoubtedly many women felt alienated and disoriented and were in no position to make sound employment decisions.’⁶³ There was immense pressure on immigrants to quickly find employment before they exhausted any savings they had brought with them.

Women who had to enter an immigration depot shortly after arrival might be able to find a position if the depot held a hiring day. An example of such an event in Melbourne in 1867 was portrayed in the *Illustrated Australian News* (see Figure 3.1).

⁶² Davies, ‘Adelaide: A Victorian Bastide?’, 189.

⁶³ Elizabeth Rushen, *Single & Free: Female Migration to Australia, 1833-1837* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Pub., 2003), 100.

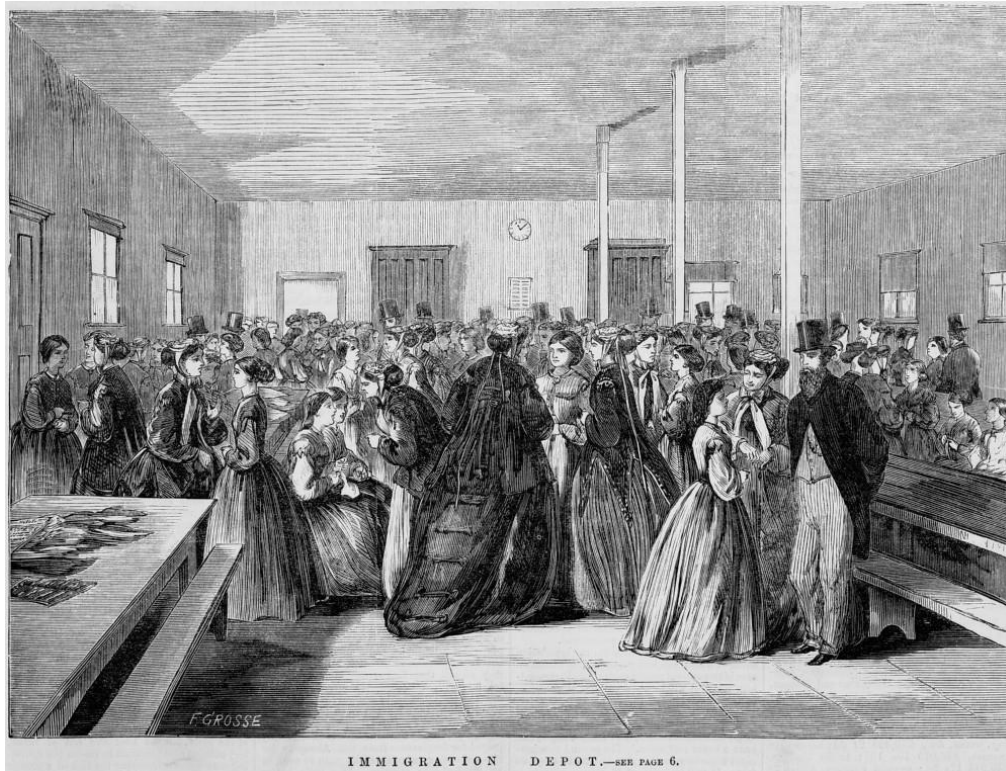


Figure 3.1: ‘Immigration Depot’, Melbourne, 1867.⁶⁴

This illustration depicts a late morning scene in a Melbourne immigration depot. The female immigrants converse with potential employers. These colonial employers – male and female – are well dressed in the latest Victorian fashions (the outfits of the two ladies in the centre of the image are shown in fantastic detail – one wears an ornately tailored bustle skirt, the other is draped in a geometrically cut mantle with visible trim, and both sport delicately beribboned caps) in comparison to the immigrants’ simple dresses and plain hairstyles. It is also worth noting that the female immigrants are depicted as smaller than their interviewers, perhaps to denote their youth; for example, the woman speaking to the couple on the right is so diminutive in stature that she barely appears to be a teenager. The difference in size might also be a nod to the ‘currency lads and lasses’, or native-born Australians to whom the new immigrants were considered physically inferior. Another important detail to

⁶⁴ ‘Immigration Depot,’ *Illustrated Australian News* (Melbourne: Illustrated Australian News, 20 August 1867), State Library of Victoria.

note is the women sitting on the benches in the centre and to the far right who appear to be doing some sort of needlework. Carrying out small mending or embroidery jobs was one of the few ways a woman could respectably earn money through casual piece work as she waited to find a long-term position. These small earnings were unlikely to alter the situations of immigration depot residents drastically, but could be used to buy or replace personal possessions or perhaps contribute to lodging or travel costs if a relative, friend, or employer sent for an immigrant. For those women who arrived in the Australian colonies without an offer of employment or nearby friends or family, the immigration depot essentially acted as a clearing house.

The South Australia Legislative Council's 1856 report made it clear that for a large proportion of female immigrants the depots were an essential last resort. Indeed, at the time of the Committee's report, 227 of the 311 single women at the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot had arrived in the colony 'without protection of any relative or protector whatever'.⁶⁵ In other words, the women had undertaken emigration on their own, with no connections in South Australia, and possibly none in the other Australian colonies. Mrs. Ross, a matron at the Adelaide Depot, confirmed that many of the female immigrants had no relatives in the colony.⁶⁶ This reflects the experience of FMCES-assisted emigrants, the majority of whom did not have family or friends waiting for them in the colonies (although some of them travelled with sisters or other female relatives). A lack of relatives or acquaintances in South Australia meant a lengthy stay in a female immigration depot for some single immigrants, with a few women who had actually

⁶⁵ Steiner, *Servants Depots*, v.

⁶⁶ Evidence of Mrs. Ross, 11 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 21.

applied for passage to Adelaide (unlike others who had friends and family in Melbourne or Sydney but were misled) spending seven to nine months at the Adelaide Depot.⁶⁷ Of course, colonial connections were not a guarantee of stability, and as noted earlier even immigrants with relatives in South Australia often resided at the Depot for anywhere from a few weeks to a couple of months.⁶⁸ From April 1855 to February 1856, seventy-four Adelaide Female Immigration Depot residents were recorded moving on to either Sydney or Melbourne after receiving letters or money from relatives and friends in other Australian colonies. However, these lucky immigrants were not altogether spared the depot experience, with one woman waiting six months for her uncle in Sydney to write to her and arrange further travel.⁶⁹

While depots offered shelter to female immigrants who had just arrived in the colony and were seeking employment, they also offered shelter and support to those who had lost their position of employment. Some such residents stayed for months, which raised concerns among officials since the depot facilities were provided at the expense of the government. Rather than contributing to society and the economy, unemployed female immigrants residing in depots burdened the colony's budget. According to the Committee's findings, female immigrants began to be 'burdensome to the Colony' from the beginning of 1855:

On the 8th of March, 1855, ninety-six females, failing to procure employment, were lodged and fed by the Government: That, in the course of the following quarter, the number rapidly increased, till, at the end of June, it amounted to 470: That, in taking six returns over the next quarter... the average number amounted to 772.... The demands of the harvest then created employment, so that, of 831, on the 2nd of

⁶⁷ Ibid., appendix viii.

⁶⁸ Ibid., appendix vi-ix.

⁶⁹ Ibid., appendix iv-v.

November, 596 remained on the 23rd; and by the 31st December, that number was further reduced to 453.⁷⁰

This massive growth, from 96 to 831 residents, over the course of nine months strained Adelaide Depot resources. Clearly, some immigration depot residents were able to earn money by providing casual help during the harvest, if they were willing to do so and could handle the physical labour. But seasonal employment was by no means a solution to the issue of dependent immigrants. While harvesting might have been an excellent opportunity for easy wages, a casual labourer's income was limited to the height of the agricultural season, making an unstable cycle of insecurity and hardship possible. Adelaide Depot matron Mrs. Ross noted that despite the successful employment rate at the Mount Barker Depot (a 'country depot'), many of the female immigrants would return to the depot once the harvest had finished.⁷¹ It appeared that the availability of short-term jobs alone was not enough to get immigrants on their feet; the Committee's data shows that although the harvest reduced the number of dependent single female immigrants by about half, several hundred remained at the government's mercy. To escape the cycle of dependence upon the depot system, an immigrant had to find a more permanent position that would allow her to earn money year-round.

Former Adelaide Female Immigration Depot residents who wished to return to the Depot had to apply to the Board for readmission, and some of the Board's decisions regarding these women were published in the *Adelaide Times*. The Board took the woman's circumstances and personal character into account when deliberating readmissions. For example, when Margaret

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. iii.

⁷¹ Evidence of Mrs. Ross, 11 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 21.

Woods' mistress dismissed her from her position along the Wakefield River (about sixty miles north of Adelaide) because she had no more work for Woods, the Board readmitted her due to her 'good character'.⁷² It was not Woods' fault that her employer had run out of duties to assign. Honora Ryan, working in North Adelaide, was also viewed sympathetically. Her employer 'had been constantly abusing and ill-treating her', and fired her without notice due to Ryan being 'so slow to do her work'.⁷³ Despite this accusation of poor productivity, the Board allowed Ryan to return to the Adelaide Depot. But the Board could also refuse readmission, as in the case of Mary Cary, who left her job 'without any motive'.⁷⁴ The support of the Adelaide Depot was also denied to Mary Regan, who had been sent down to Encounter Bay (a coastal settlement, about forty-five miles south of the capital, where there was also an immigration depot⁷⁵) but without employment and 'finding her clothes wearing out',⁷⁶ Regan returned to the Adelaide Depot where she 'received an excellent character from the matron' before applying to be readmitted.⁷⁷ For some female immigrants the depot system may have provided a sustainable way to exist in the colonies without making an effort to settle permanently, by moving from one place of shelter and food to the next. But this *modus operandi* could not continue forever, and sooner or later the woman would face criticism for her inability to support herself. In Regan's case, the Board refused her readmission to the Adelaide Depot because 'as she had been sent up at the expense of the Government she had no business to return'.⁷⁸ The

⁷² 'Immigration Depot,' *Adelaide Times*, 14 January 1856, 3.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Steiner, *Servants Depots*.

⁷⁶ 'Immigration Depot,' *Adelaide Times*, 14 January 1856, 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Board would not tolerate those who had wasted other options or did not look for opportunities. From the colonial government's point of view, if an immigrant was unemployed, then she needed to take the initiative to make the most of the government's support and find a job.

The Select Committee, like many who were concerned with single female immigration, believed that immigrants' employment failures were due to a lack of skills needed for obtaining work:

Your Committee are of the opinion that the imperfect qualifications for ordinary service which the greater portion of these females possess, and the total absence of adaptation for any description of employment obtaining in this Colony amongst a few of them, have acted prejudicially to their general employment. Your Committee also think that the public impression of the general character of these females is less favorable than they merit; and that this, together with the limited classification of such qualifications as are possessed by them, and the absence of any direct agency to introduce to employers some, who are suited for occupations not contemplated in the ordinary category appertaining to assisted immigrants, has tended to impede their absorption in the labor-market.⁷⁹

As noted by the Committee, the general colonial public did not hold female immigrants in the highest regard. If an immigrant did not possess marketable skills or a colonial support network, she would likely end up back at a female immigration depot. The more time she spent in the depot, the more her work ethic (and possibly her personal character) was questioned; it did not help that the Adelaide Depot provided necessities for immigrants' lives but not their livelihoods. Depot residents would perform small tasks around the depot compound but otherwise gained no work experience that would make them more desirable to employers.

⁷⁹ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, p. iv.

Depots were not the first female institutions to appear in the Australian colonies. They were preceded by the ‘female factories’ that housed and employed convict women. Like immigration depots, the factories encouraged employment either at the factory itself (such as laundry, weaving, or needlework) or by sending female convicts out in service; they also enabled systematic physical and sexual abuse.⁸⁰ Female factories were structured around punishment – addressing both convicts’ initial crimes and their failure to reform in the colonies – with one hundred solitary confinement cells constructed at the Parramatta Female Factory outside of Sydney in 1836.⁸¹ Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane described the female factories as ‘both refuges and places of punishment’, noting:

This dual character persisted in later institutions erected by both government and private charitable organizations and contributed to the problem of classification of inmates, which was a continuing issue for administrators whose job it was to divide the reclaimable from the lost, and to aid reform of some while punishing others.⁸²

Female immigrants were able to move more freely around the colony than convict women and could be selective in their search for work. They were also subjected to less harsh judgement than convicts, though concerns about women’s morality and sexuality continued to pervade discussions of women in the colonies. Much depended on a woman’s ability to obtain employment and support herself in a respectable manner.

Philanthropic institutions provided skills training that was not offered at immigration depots. One of the earliest examples of such an institution was Sydney’s Female School of Industry, which was established in 1826 and

⁸⁰ Deirdre Beddoe, *Welsh Convict Women: A Study of Women Transported from Wales to Australia, 1787-1852* (Barry, UK: Stewart Williams Publishers, 1979), 137, 141.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁸² Kay Daniels and Mary Murnane, ed., *Uphill All the Way: A Documentary History of Women in Australia* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 3.

trained women in domestic service. Like the female factories, the School of Industry sent women out on ‘apprenticeships’, usually to the charity’s subscribers.⁸³ By the end of the 1860s, Industrial and Training School Acts appeared, aimed at helping destitute and neglected children.⁸⁴ Despite these various institutions providing immediate relief from destitution and some training in domestic skills, the extent to which they were beneficial in the long term is questionable. Schools and institutes, like the depot system, did not address the causes of unemployment among women in the colonies. On the contrary, as Daniels and Murnane explained:

Charities inserted themselves into the economic lives of their beneficiaries, but in solving the individual problem they left the broader question of low pay and competition in the female trades untouched. Furthermore, within the institutions themselves, the wish that institutions should be as nearly as possible self-supporting, led to them being firmly placed within the economic structure of society.... Many of these institutions entered into the female trades (particularly washing), and with the advantages of mechanized equipment and exemption from factory legislation regulating hours and pay, they were often formidable competitors. Pauperization of women in these trades was the result.⁸⁵

Institutions were only aiding women who were already struggling. Similarly, immigration depots served unemployed women who had no other options for shelter and sustenance. Once they were rescued from the immediate danger of destitution and given the chance to stabilise their situation, they went back into the same labour market that had caused peril. Since the Adelaide Depot did not offer any training, its residents had to rely on luck and what pre-emigration skills they possessed to find a job.

Unemployment was a real threat to female immigrants, whether government-assisted and working-class or society-assisted and middle-class,

⁸³ Ibid., 4.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 5.

unless they possessed specific skills or had plenty of work experience. Mr. Moorhouse, the superintendent of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, told the Select Committee that several of the immigrants he encountered were completely unprepared for the colonial lifestyle. He believed that the immigrants' backgrounds had not 'adapted them for Colonial service' and their skillsets were abysmal: 'They can milk and do rough farm-work. About one-third of those emigrating have been totally incapable of cooking, washing, or any other in-door employment'.⁸⁶ This observation about unskilled immigrants was repeated in the South Australian Report by Dr. Duncan, head of the Immigration Department. He said that although some of the women came from workhouses, many of them were brought up at home with no service experience; Duncan reckoned that the female immigrants' knowledge was limited to 'milking the cow, feeding the pigs, and gardening'.⁸⁷ Ignorance of basic household skills such as cooking and washing makes one wonder what chance these women in the Australian colonies had at simply surviving, much less making a living. A female immigrant who moved to an isolated inland household would have to be much more self-reliant than a woman in a port city (or the metropole) where population density and infrastructure made life more manageable.

One solution suggested by the Committee was to promote rural sub-agencies in Britain and implement a selection policy which depended less exclusively on those 'required to sign the testimonials of emigrants, such as clergymen and magistrates, who may be supposed to be too generally interested in relieving the Mother Country from the pressure of a pauper

⁸⁶ Evidence of Mr. M. Moorhouse, 4 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 1.

⁸⁷ Evidence of Dr. Duncan, 6 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 4.

population, and estates from the burden of a useless tenantry'.⁸⁸ Wakefield himself advocated the assistance of paupers to South Australia as a means both for relieving destitution in the metropole and for improving emigrants' lives while spreading colonization.⁸⁹ Government-assisted emigration was an option for the poor female inhabitants of workhouses, or those who burdened their parishes, but Haines claims that most workhouse inmates were excluded from selection for government assistance.⁹⁰ However, it is clear that a few workhouse women did manage to make the voyage, and Dr. Duncan noted that some of the residents at the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot had workhouse experience. The topic was brought up in Parliament in 1860 when Dublin MP John Vance suggested that women in workhouses be sent to various colonies, where he was sure they would find work as servants. Vance was rebuffed by Hugh Childers, MP for Pontefract, who reminded him that the workhouse emigrants sent to South Australia by the Emigration Board in 1857 had been 'most unsatisfactory' to the point of the colony deciding to procure its own emigrants.⁹¹ Colonies were desperate for bodies, but not desperate enough to willingly accept unskilled women to whom the stigma of the workhouse was attached.

The South Australian Select Committee believed that their own emigration agents would be more likely to select adequately qualified emigrants if they focused on rural rather than urban recruitment. However, Captain Bagot, who had recently returned to South Australia from England,

⁸⁸ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, p. vii.

⁸⁹ Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *A Statement of the Principles and Objects of a Promised National Society, for the Cure and Prevention of Pauperism, by Means of Systematic Colonization* (London: James Ridgway, 1830).

⁹⁰ Haines, *Life and Death in the Age of Sail*, 43.

⁹¹ HC Deb. 16 August 1860, vol. 160, col. 1366.

testified that additional rural agents would not be successful, for ‘the people [in the rural districts] are terribly well-acquainted with matters connected with emigration, and prefer going to America, rather than have to go through all the forms required by the Commissioners, and wait for the three months taken up by correspondence’.⁹² He estimated that 20,000 people in Liverpool were looking to emigrate but were deterred from Australia by the lengthy application process. The need for character references was an additional bureaucratic hoop to jump through, despite the willingness of classic referees such as clergymen and magistrates to promote emigration as a way to lessen the burden on their parishes and jurisdictions. But the Select Committee’s priority was employability, not volume. Moreover, while certainly a strong concern, female immigrants’ moral character was of less importance than the establishment and maintenance of economic stability. That did not mean, of course, that a blind eye was turned on the conduct of female emigrants, whether during the voyage or in the colony.

Deception and Depression: Moral and Mental Behaviour of Female Emigrants

As discussed earlier, the journey to the Australian colonies caused concern among emigration advocates – hundreds of single women cramped together on a ship for months at the mercy of male sailors seemed to invite and to promote immoral conduct. The presence of a ship matron to chaperone the single emigrants eased anxieties, but it was impossible to isolate the women for the entire voyage. A ‘gross and scandalous’ incident that took place on an Adelaide-bound ship that had been ‘converted into a sink of iniquity worse

⁹² Evidence of Captain Bagot, 8 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, pp. 9-10.

than any brothel in London' by the actions of its crew was discussed by the House of Lords in 1850.⁹³ The drunk second mate broke into several cabins of female emigrants and 'committed the most revolting debaucheries with those who admitted, and [was] guilty of great cruelty and violence towards those who stood firm against, his advances'.⁹⁴ One woman who complained to the captain was taken to the deck, doused with buckets of water (a male passenger who witnessed the event spoke out but was 'grossly insulted' in return), and told that she would be placed in confinement if she criticised the crew's conduct again.⁹⁵ A public meeting was held in Adelaide to discuss the incident, where it was revealed that alcohol had been publicly (and illegally) sold on board the ship – the disregard for rules, the misconduct of crew members, and the ineffectiveness of matrons led the Earl of Mountcashell to declare the situation faced by the 'friendless young women' as 'productive of the greatest evil'.⁹⁶ Immoral behaviour during the voyage was a dominant concern among emigration advocates and officials (and is covered by historians such as Lisa Chilton and Jan Gothard⁹⁷), but some emigrants were already skirting the boundaries of morality and law in metropolitan ports before boarding the ship to the Australian colonies.

Adelaide Female Immigration Depot superintendent Mr. Moorhouse related tales to the South Australian Committee of young women emigrating under assumed names. This was not necessarily due to an unsavoury past or criminal acts; instead, it could be a convenient way to evade parents' refusals of permission to leave, or an opportunity to earn a quick profit for those

⁹³ HL Deb. 15 February 1850, vol. 108, col. 810. HLPP.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., col. 811.

⁹⁷ Chilton, *Agents of Empire*; Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia*. Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001.

women who discovered that their emigration papers ‘would sell at a premium of from 5s. to £1, and many girls applied in order to get those premiums on their embarkation orders’.⁹⁸ Mr. P. Ennis, yard overseer at the Adelaide Depot, claimed that there were more than twenty women in the Depot who had emigrated under a false name, and there had even been a case of forged papers.⁹⁹ Moving across borders nowadays involves all manner of identity and background checks and special documents connected to biometric data, but a few pieces of paper were all one needed in the mid-nineteenth century to start a new life halfway around the world. A letter from the Adelaide Office presented to the House of Commons described how difficult it was to determine whether a woman’s papers were truly hers:

The embarkation order is sold at the last moment after all the forms have been gone through, and if the parties to the fraud keep their own counsel, and there is no striking difference between the age of the person for whom the embarkation order is made out, and that of the person who presents it, there is scarcely a possibility of detecting the fraud. The usual means of identification among educated persons, by the hand-writing and signature, is unavailing in the case of the large majority of this class, who sign only with a cross.¹⁰⁰

The bustling environment of port made it easy to blend in with the crowd, and the lack of a full signature on many of the papers enabled any woman who could draw two lines to become a potential emigrant. Clare Wright summarises in her work on the Eureka stockade the freedom of identity afforded to female emigrants: ‘In the mid-nineteenth century – a time before passports, credit cards and rigorous records – innocence came in many guises. It could be refabricated too. Many of the women who came to Victoria had

⁹⁸ Evidence of Mr. M. Moorhouse, 4 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Evidence of Mr. P. Ennis, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Papers relative to Emigration to Australian Colonies: Part I. New South Wales and Australia; Part II. S. and W. Australia, Van Diemen's Land*, HC 144 (1857 Session 1), 153.

already lived a thousand colourful, capricious lives'.¹⁰¹ While it is not known how many women emigrated with false papers or assumed names, they are not invisible in records, though few details are given, as is so typical in official mention of female emigrants:

Table 3.5: Female emigrants travelling under assumed names on the *Velocity*, Plymouth to Adelaide, 1855¹⁰²

Assumed Name	Real Name
Margaret Blake	Margaret Casey
Sarah Ryan	Sarah Moore
Bridget Morrissey	Bridget Flannagan
Mary Halloran	Mary Hanrahan
Margaret Condon	Margaret Hanrahan
Ellen Quirk	Ellen Ryan
Catherine Jaines	Catherine Ryan
Margaret Jaines	Margaret Ryan
Honora Enrigh	Honora Ryan
Margaret Hoolahan	Margaret Donovan
Bridget Hynes	Bridget Moylan
Mary Cunningham	Mary Griffin
Jane Connor	Jane McDonald
Letitia Emerson (with John Emerson)	Fanny Jones (with Michael Jones)

Emigration was the ultimate form of escape for women wishing to leave behind their pasts. But most of the emigrants travelling under false names probably did so only to make their journey more convenient by receiving sailing orders more quickly, evading any required medical checks, and having solid moral references which she may not have been able to procure herself. Of course, these references were also susceptible to fraud: Anne Alvosa managed to set sail to Adelaide despite being a resident in the Plymouth Penitentiary (where she was serving probation for having been ‘seduced’) after two women signed her certificate out of compassion.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Clare Wright, *The Forgotten Rebels of Eureka* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2013), 36.

¹⁰² *Papers relative to Emigration to Australian Colonies: Part I. New South Wales and Australia; Part II. S. and W. Australia, Van Diemen's Land*. HC 144 (1857 Session 1), 117.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 153.

Despite the horror of officials at the event, the woman was remarkably successful in South Australia compared to some immigrants; she wrote to the matron of the penitentiary about ‘the place of service she had obtained, with amount of wages, and further, that she was respectably married’.¹⁰⁴ With the goals of both employment and marriage attained, it was difficult for officials to further admonish the immigrant. The woman and her ‘bad’ conduct were not commented on again.

Seemingly respectable emigrants did not necessarily remain so as time passed, and the Select Committee was especially concerned about receiving pregnant, unwed women. Dr. Duncan, who encountered many of the women residing at the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, was explicitly asked about pregnant female immigrants arriving in South Australia:

Have you any means of reporting to the Committee the number of cases of pregnancy among the females at the time of their arrival in the Port?—There is very seldom any case known to me; but sometimes there are one or two on board a ship. However I have no official information on the point. I have no reason to suppose that an immoral class of single women have been shipped to this Colony.¹⁰⁵

Dr. Duncan was also questioned closely about the depot environment and whether it enabled depravity by giving single female immigrants too much liberty, but he could only answer that, despite the risk of immoral women influencing others in the crowded depots, ‘it was a choice of evils, the only alternative being to turn them into the streets’.¹⁰⁶ Better to risk immoral sorority than to encourage begging and prostitution.

Mr. P. Ennis, the Depot yard overseer, claimed that for a ‘great number of girls thrown together’, the Adelaide Depot immigrants’ behaviour was on

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰⁵ Evidence of Dr. Duncan, 6 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

the whole good, and he had 'heard employers speak of some of them in the highest terms, generally it was so, but there were some exceptions'.¹⁰⁷

Though Ennis did not think the depot setting and community were morally influential, he did notice interactions that affected the spirits of new arrivals. Ennis related the case of an immigrant who had been overworked to the point of her hands being stripped because, while she had been very willing to work, she had no assistance with her duties and 'had twenty cows to milk'.¹⁰⁸ The *Adelaide Times* reported a woman telling a similar story to the Governor of South Australia, Richard Graves MacDonnell, when he visited the Adelaide Depot in January 1856:

His Excellency asking a girl her reason for returning to the Depot, she replied that it was from overwork. Her master... in hiring her had told her that she would have to milk three cows, and do the general work. When, however, she arrived at her place she found she had to milk seven cows, and to wash for a family of eleven. This hard work had quite injured her hands, and she had been obliged to leave her place in consequence. She showed her hands to his Excellency, and they certainly were in a very bad state, being cracked and cut all over, with the skin nearly entirely peeled off.¹⁰⁹

This woman's injury was common among the female immigrants who had been overworked in their previous jobs, and Ennis described how 'some of the younger girls have been frightened by the state in which girls' hands have been on returning from service in the country'.¹¹⁰ The Adelaide Depot's ever-changing population mixed new arrivals with women who had longer colonial experience, making it perhaps the first place some women (particularly those

¹⁰⁷ Evidence of Mr. P. Ennis, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 23.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁹ 'Immigration Depot,' *Adelaide Times*, 13 January 1856, 3.

¹¹⁰ Evidence of Mr. P. Ennis, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 26.

whose original destination was elsewhere) gained a true sense of what work and life in South Australia was like.

The tension and stress associated with immigration combined with the constantly shifting residential population of the Adelaide Depot fostered a high emotional state in the women that occasionally bubbled over. Katherine Foxhall reflects on the effects mental illness had on surrounding passengers during voyages, and the same can be applied to immigration depots: ‘Mental disorders had a particularly destabilising effect on crowded ships which had no suitable place to safely hold a patient’.¹¹¹ In his testimony to the Select Committee, acting colonial surgeon William Gosse recalled how at the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot there were at times ‘cases of mere hysteria, which, when one is affected, will run through the whole place’.¹¹² The volatile atmosphere was understandable in a residence in which hundreds of immigrants adjusted to their new environment, interviewed for positions, awaited reunion with family and friends, or merely counted the days as another month of unemployment rolled by. As discussed in Chapter Two, mental illness was a real problem among female immigrants, yet it was usually swept under the rug as soon as officials determined that they had done their duty and confirmed – as they inevitably did – that the illness was the woman’s fault, not theirs. This was true in the case of Ann Morgan, a former Adelaide Depot resident who ‘had been hired out to a place where her cousin was serving, because it was feared she was going out of her mind from being separated from her relations’.¹¹³ Morgan applied for re-admission to the

¹¹¹ Katherine Foxhall, *Health, Medicine, and the Sea: Australian Voyages, c. 1815-1860* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 163.

¹¹² Evidence of William Gosse, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 29.

¹¹³ ‘Immigration Depot,’ *Adelaide Times*, 14 January 1856, 3.

Depot because she had been ill (the nature of her illness – physical or mental – was left ambiguous) and was dismissed after having a disagreement with her mistress; the Board refused to readmit Morgan to the Depot because ‘the disagreement was through her own fault’.¹¹⁴ Victorian assumptions about mental health, combined with expectations of proper female decorum, hampered immigrants’ adjustment to life in the Australian colonies. However, the 1856 Select Committee was largely uninterested in the general behaviour of depot residents, unless it was sexual.

William Gosse, the surgeon, often visited the Adelaide Depot to attend the immigrants. He denied the presence of venereal disease among any depot residents,¹¹⁵ but Mr. Richard Edward Tapley, relieving officer at the Destitute Poor Establishment, claimed, ‘It is evident there has been some misconduct, for the Depot Board have prepared a room in the Destitute Asylum especially for the treatment of cases of venereal disease’.¹¹⁶ What’s more, according to Tapley, discoveries of pregnancy resulted in the transfer of nine women from the Adelaide Depot to the Destitute Asylum in the month before his examination by the Committee – this was an unnervingly high number in Tapley’s opinion because he had previously noted an average number of only three such cases per month.¹¹⁷ Depot matron Mrs. Ross confirmed that seven or eight women had been sent to the Destitute Asylum within the last few months because ‘they were near their confinement’.¹¹⁸ It is not clear whether these women were already pregnant when they arrived in Adelaide, or whether

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Evidence of William Gosse, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 30.

¹¹⁶ Evidence of Mr. Richard Edward Tapley, 8 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 12.

¹¹⁷ Ibid..

¹¹⁸ Evidence of Mrs. Ross, 11 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 20.

they conceived while out ‘in service’, or residing in the Depot. Whatever the circumstances, Tapley openly blamed the assembly of large numbers of single women during the emigration process for loosening the women’s morals: ‘I do not think the whole of them are immoral; but an old saying is—“One bad sheep infects the flock.” I think many of them have become immoral on the voyage.’¹¹⁹ According to Tapley, those who managed to arrive in Adelaide in good standing were not yet safe; he believed that those female immigrants who went into the country instead of remaining in town were ‘in a better position as regards influences upon their character’.¹²⁰ Of course, Tapley failed to advise the Committee as to how the women could ensure they would be hired for rural positions for which many had no training.

Irish Immigration

While the Select Committee was interested in the general character of the female immigrants (and what their moral transgressions might cost the government), they were specifically concerned about the number of Irish arrivals. Of the single adult females listed as arriving in South Australia in 1855, 851 were English, 217 were Scottish, and 2,981 were Irish.¹²¹ This ratio was no doubt influenced by the ongoing exodus from Ireland in the wake of the famine. The displaced masses joined established migratory streams to England, Canada, the USA, and Australia. The religious division between Catholics (associated with the working class) and Protestants (linked with the middle and upper classes of Anglo-Irish society) led to discrimination against

¹¹⁹ Evidence of Mr. Richard Edward Tapley, 8 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 12.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹²¹ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, p. iii.

Irish Catholics around the world. However, Irish of both creeds greatly contributed to the British Empire. As Simon Potter explains,

Irish men and women played a crucial role in the maintenance and extension of British colonial rule overseas. In part, the pattern of participation reflected the divided and unequal nature of Irish society. Protestant engagement with empire was especially marked, with the Anglo-Irish disproportionately represented in the ranks of imperial administrators and military commanders.... Catholics also served the empire however, largely but not exclusively in the lower ranks of the administrative and military machine, and through migration helped shape the development of the settler colonies.¹²²

Haines says the typical government-assisted single female emigrant in Australia tended to be an Irish domestic servant,¹²³ and this is certainly supported by the numbers of Irish women arriving in South Australia. Yet in spite of the large Irish diaspora of single female emigrants, they were not considered favourable settlers.

While those in the colonies criticised English and Irish immigrants alike for being unskilled, Irish emigrants were also looked down upon before their journey even began. Dr. Duncan shared with the 1856 Select Committee a letter he received from the British Ladies' Female Emigrant Society expressing disdain for Irish emigrants:

They regret to observe that in some of the ships mentioned in the Report, that emigrants do not seem to have been of a suitable class, and the consequence of having a number of ignorant Irish unemployed is obvious and most deeply to be regretted. Certainly such persons must be worse than useless in the Colony; but you are aware that this Society has nothing to do with the selection of emigrants, and that all the Committee can attempt is to improve the material given them.¹²⁴

¹²² Simon J. Potter, ed., introduction to *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 13.

¹²³ Robin Haines, 'Indigent Misfits or Shrewd Operators? Government-assisted Emigrants from the United Kingdom to Australia, 1831-1860,' *Population Studies* 48, no. 2 (1994), 21.

¹²⁴ Evidence of Dr. Duncan, 6 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 7.

These harsh words from a philanthropic society are indicative of the strong anti-Irish sentiment prevalent in emigration discussions of the time. Yet prejudice did not deter Irish emigrants, and they continued to outnumber English emigrants. In a second letter presented by Dr. Duncan, an emigration agent explained the dynamics of emigration recruitment in the metropole:

I do not wonder at the Irish girls remaining unemployed. It is undoubtedly less trouble to send to Ireland for any given number of these girls, than to select a more respectable class from England, but in the long run must be more costly to the Colony. It is unquestionably difficult to select respectable English female servants in any large numbers. They are a difficult class to reach and influence, having but limited personal freedom, and yet on the whole better fed, paid, and lodged, than others of the labouring classes.¹²⁵

According to the agent, English women were more likely to be comfortable with their current situation and thus less motivated to start a new life abroad. Yet officials were convinced that English emigrants would be more successful than the Irish due to their supposed refinement. However, as revealed in the records of the FMCES, respectability was by no means a guarantee of employment offers. Nevertheless, the stereotypes held fast as shown in this discussion between the Committee and Dr. Duncan:

Then any prejudice that may now exist against Irish servants generally has chiefly arisen from the fact that an inferior and incapable class of persons was sent to this colony?—I think it has arisen simply from their incapacity to do the work required. I do not think, as far as observation enables me to judge, that there is any bad feeling against them otherwise than that they are regarded as useless for the purposes required.¹²⁶

Incapacity, idleness, and inferiority: inherent traits were assumed to explain the failure of Irish immigrants, not their background of poverty or lack of skills. Religion was an even greater fear, and the *Adelaide Times* proclaimed:

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

We have no national prejudices. We regard all our fellow colonists... as emphatically South Australians; people who have adopted one common country, and combined to establish one common fraternity. But when we consider the recent overwhelming influx of young marriageable Irishwomen in one point of view, we confess it excites anxiety as to future results on colonial character and social harmony. The bulk of these immigrants possess a creed opposed to the majority of our colonists; and many of them will inevitably become the Catholic wives of Protestant husbands, and mothers of children who will be nurtured in the midst of conflicting religious tenets.¹²⁷

Even if Irish female immigrants were able to overcome any employment shortcomings, they clearly would still face religious and cultural prejudice; no doubt some of the English immigrants were even less suitable for colonial work, but they were invariably considered more favourably by officials.

Commenting on immigrants from Devon and Cornwall, Captain Bagot told the Committee, 'I believe there is no part of England that has furnished us with a better class of people than those counties.'¹²⁸ Bagot offered no reasoning for his opinion, and it was not questioned further; perhaps, due to the areas offering English emigrants, the Select Committee felt that his statement did not warrant explanation.

The evidence so far paints a picture of the single female immigrants residing in the Adelaide Depot as young, sometimes naïve, at times immoral, unskilled workers. Richard Tapley in particular seemed to think that the women went wild from the moment they boarded the ship and the only solution was to somehow employ them in isolated rural positions for which they were likely unqualified. Even the more sympathetic Dr. Duncan and Captain Bagot believed that the Irish immigrants only had themselves to blame for being poor workers. Thankfully, the Select Committee was

¹²⁷ 'Present State of the Immigrant Depot,' *Adelaide Times*, 9 May 1855, 2.

¹²⁸ Evidence of Captain Bagot, 8 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 9.

thorough in its investigation, giving us the opportunity to hear from the female immigrants themselves.

Women’s Testimony and the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot

For a government document, the evidence included with Legislative Council of South Australia’s 1856 Report contained a large amount of material from women; the topics of discussion were dictated by the Committee members, but women’s voices were nevertheless strong and clear. For instance, the Select Committee interviewed twenty-six female immigrants at the Adelaide Depot as part of its investigation. Most were Irish and expressed their confusion and disappointment that they had ended up in Adelaide despite requesting to go to Melbourne or Sydney. Many of the women confessed that they were led to believe that the cities were not far apart and it would be easy to travel onward to friends or family in Victoria and New South Wales. Although much of their testimonies revolved around questions about this misdirection, closer reading reveals (much like the FMCES records) the diversity of female immigrants, despite the stereotypical view of the Select Committee that most immigrants were incompetent young ‘girls’. In fact, teenagers were only the second most prevalent age group of female immigrants to South Australia in 1855:

Table 3.6: Age of Female Immigrants in South Australia, 1855¹²⁹

Age	Number of Immigrants
14 – 20	1,887
21 – 44	2,123
45 – 49	21
50 - 69	18

¹²⁹ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, appendix iii.

The women aged forty-five to sixty-nine years were possibly travelling with younger family members, as there were cases of mothers and daughters lodging together at the Female Immigration Depot after arriving in Adelaide.¹³⁰ But youth was no guarantee of an easy life in South Australia – and as is evident in the female immigrants’ testimonies to the Committee, not everyone was a picture of robust youth.

Margaret Hanlon, who was between thirty-five and forty years old, came to Adelaide from County Kildare. She was widowed and had also lost one of her children; her surviving daughter, twenty-one years old, travelled with her. Hanlon was lucky because her sister was already settled in the colony and had sent for her. Despite Hanlon’s willingness to work and ‘earn [her] bread’, employment in service was difficult due to a physical deformity:

I can work, although I have the evil in my arms. [Here the witness turned up her sleeves and exhibited two crippled hands and forearms frightfully wasted]

That is shocking! Is that the result of accident?—No, Sir; the evil which I took after having had the small-pox.¹³¹

Hanlon was not averse to work, but her physical health likely deterred employers and made carrying out chores difficult for her.

Likewise, Frances McDowell also suffered from deteriorating health; at the time of the 1856 investigation, she was rapidly losing her eyesight. As she explained, ‘I could not get a situation, I could not cook, and the heat of the climate was too much for me. I have been under the doctor ever since my arrival’.¹³² McDowell had been in South Australia for a year and lived in the

¹³⁰ Ibid., appendix viii.

¹³¹ Evidence of Margaret Hanlon, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 31.

¹³² Evidence of Frances McDowell, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 32.

Adelaide Depot the entire time – with no sign of acclimatisation or improvement in her eyes, she was stuck. Back in Dublin, McDowell had been a teacher in an industrial school, a position which she had passed on to her sister before travelling to South Australia. McDowell readily admitted in hindsight her recklessness in giving up the school and moving across the world: ‘Were you not wrong in giving up your school and in coming out here?—It was indeed a mad proceeding’.¹³³ With no friends in the colony and ever-worsening health, McDowell had few prospects for improving her life.

Despite the number of ‘domestic servants’ among female immigrants in the Adelaide Depot, the Committee testimonies reveal that the women were not without domestic or occupational experience. Jane Higgins, a housemaid and dressmaker from County Kildare, had skills that gave her a chance of employment. But Higgins, like many of the women interviewed by the Committee, seemed unsure of what to make of her journey to South Australia. She received papers to go to Melbourne but was told in Plymouth that ships only went to Adelaide, where she would spend three months in the Depot.¹³⁴ Higgins told the Committee that she emigrated ‘because other girls were coming, and in the hope of bettering myself’.¹³⁵ Whether these ‘girls’ were going to South Australia or actually hoped to go to Melbourne, where so many had friends and family, is another matter.

That so many female emigrants were unwillingly (and often unwittingly) sent to Adelaide instead of Melbourne or Sydney is disturbing. Some women simply did not understand the distance between the cities. One

¹³³ Ibid., p. 32.

¹³⁴ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, 1856, TNA, CO 13/93, appendix ix.

¹³⁵ Evidence of Jane Higgins, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 34.

immigrant, Bridget Broderick, even admitted to the Select Committee that she had never heard of Adelaide until she received her sailing order.¹³⁶ Ellen Neal found herself in Adelaide instead of Melbourne after being grossly misled by a fellow passenger:

Why did you come to Adelaide?—I applied for a passage to Melbourne, and thought I was going there, but learnt at Southampton that the *Octavia* was going to Adelaide.

Did you object to proceed by the *Octavia* to Adelaide?—No, a passenger told me that Melbourne was only a day's walk from Adelaide, and so I did not object to go on board the Adelaide ship.¹³⁷

Imagine Neal's shock when she first enquired about the way to Melbourne – the cities lie approximately 450 miles apart. Another immigrant, Mary Fitzgerald, confessed that she also had no idea of the distance between Adelaide and Melbourne and assumed that she would be sent onward after arriving in Adelaide.¹³⁸ With little sense of Australian geography, many emigrants would not discover their predicament until they were embarking or already sailing across the open ocean. Captain Bagot related to the Committee an incident he characterised as 'a gross attempt at committing a very glaring act of kidnapping'.¹³⁹ He recalled how he met an Irish servant who had applied to join her brother in Adelaide but was given passage to Western Australia. When Bagot confronted the emigration agent who drew up the servant's papers, the agent simply responded, 'Sir, the Commissioners want emigrants to go to Western Australia, and what could I do?'.¹⁴⁰ Although

¹³⁶ Evidence of Bridget Broderick, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 35.

¹³⁷ Evidence of Ellen Neal, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 34.

¹³⁸ Evidence of Mary Fitzgerald, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 34.

¹³⁹ Evidence of Captain Bagot, 8 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Bagot managed to get the woman's passage changed to Adelaide, he viewed this case as evidence of potential abuse of the assisted emigration system:

The one instance I have stated would lead me to infer that the Agents would use their influence if persons were required to go to certain Colonies; and the ignorance of the people at home is such that they consider that if they were landed in any part of Australia, they could walk to any other part of it to which they might wish to go.¹⁴¹

In short, the combination of oblivious emigrants and target-driven officials was a recipe for human disaster. As evidenced by the testimonies of female immigrants, many of them accepted their new destination without understanding the consequences.

Other immigrants, like seventeen-year-old Jane Carolly, were uneasy with the change of passage but felt unable to challenge the new itinerary:

Why did you not go [to Sydney]?—The embarkation order at Plymouth was for an Adelaide ship.
Did you object to proceed to Adelaide?—No, I did not like to draw back, and put my father to further expense.
Was there any explanation or statement made to reconcile you to the change of destination?—I was told I could get to Sydney from Adelaide in a week.
Did they tell you the cost of a passage from Adelaide to Sydney, or did they promise to send you there?—Neither.¹⁴²

Carolly did not object to her inaccurate passage (Sydney is about 850 miles from Adelaide by land; the journey by ship would have to sail southeast around Melbourne first) due to fear of adding to the expense of her emigration, which her father was covering. It is also possible that, as a teenager, Carolly was not confident enough to confront older male emigration officials. Even those women who did object were left with no choice but to either stay in England or take a ship to Australia, no matter which port was the final

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Evidence of Jane Carolly, 18 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 40.

destination. Mary Riley described how she applied for emigration to Sydney but when she arrived to embark at the port in Birkenhead she was told that she and the other Sydney-bound emigrants would go to Adelaide:

Did not you and those others object to that alteration in your destination?—Yes, we did.

And what was said to your objections?—That we must go in the *Nashwauk*, as there were not enough passengers without us. We were also told that there was no vessel for Sydney.¹⁴³

After going through the application process (or perhaps paying another woman for her papers), there was little else practical for an emigrant to do but follow through with the journey, no matter the destination. Anastatia [sic] Collins applied for passage to Melbourne but when her order arrived for Adelaide her parents ‘were dissatisfied, and went to the person they paid the money to, and he said it would be quite easy to get from Adelaide to Melbourne’.¹⁴⁴ With the passage already paid for and arranged, Collins and her parents faced either trusting the emigration agent or forfeiting the voyage; they chose the former and Collins soon found herself in the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot.

Aside from the stress of the economic and emotional investments in emigration, some female emigrants also faced pressure from authority figures to carry out the voyage. Ellen Power recalled her experience at the docks in Southampton:

Did you apply for a passage to Adelaide?—No, Sir; and at Southampton I was not put with the Adelaide girls at first. I was afterwards told that was a mistake, and told to take my choice either to go to Adelaide or to go back.

Did you protest against that change in destination?—I did; and was brought before a thin gentleman in spectacles. He said it was just as well to go to one place as the other, but that when I got to Adelaide I

¹⁴³ Evidence of Mary Riley, 18 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 37.

¹⁴⁴ Evidence of Anastatia Collins, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 35.

could state the case to the Commissioners if I did not like the Colony.¹⁴⁵

Faced with little sympathy from officials, Power made her way to Adelaide, even though her friends were in Geelong, near Melbourne. Mary Fitzgerald also confronted the person in charge of embarkation at Plymouth, but was told that no ships were going to Melbourne; she resigned herself to the situation and told the Committee, 'As I could not help matters, I consented to come to Adelaide'.¹⁴⁶ Once in Adelaide, government-assisted immigrants had few options for changing their course; one could remain in the city, head toward inland settlements, or perhaps (in the event of employment) save enough money for a ticket to one of the other Australian ports. For many, returning home would be impossible for several years, if not for a lifetime. According to Eric Richards, return migration was given little attention in colonial Australia and continues to be overlooked by historians due to its perceived infrequency (that return migrants were mostly unrecorded by colonial officials demonstrates how much the subject was overlooked at the time).¹⁴⁷ Richards also notes that return migration did not take hold until the late nineteenth century, as until about 1870 even the shorter voyage across the Atlantic from Canada or the USA to Britain deterred potential return emigrants with its expense and length.¹⁴⁸

Despite emigration agents obviously being responsible for many of these stories of misdirection, officials blamed the female emigrants for not

¹⁴⁵ Evidence of Ellen Power, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 36.

¹⁴⁶ Evidence of Mary Fitzgerald, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 34.

¹⁴⁷ Eric Richards, 'Return Migration and Migrant Strategies in Colonial Australia,' in *Home or Away?: Immigrants in Colonial Australia*, ed. David Fitzpatrick (Canberra: Australian National University, 1992), 64-9.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

knowing where they were going and not being more vocal about their grievances. This opinion operated on the assumption that female emigrants had sufficient education, literacy skills, and access to resources to comprehend the layout of the Australian colonies. In addition, the Select Committee seemed baffled that women did not object to the situation when they realised the mistake; the male investigators could not understand how difficult it would be for a working-class woman to be outspoken about her complaints to male authority figures, especially when she was receiving assisted passage.

Officials assigned more agency to female emigrants than was often probable. For example, the 1856 Select Committee chided one immigrant residing in the Adelaide Depot for not wanting to work in the country, even though she only had previous experience as a teacher: ‘Do you know that people of all sorts, on arriving in a new Colony, have to change their habits, and adapt themselves to the circumstances around them?’¹⁴⁹ This question implied that immigrants’ unemployment and unhappiness was not due to the fact that many were hundreds of miles from where they wanted to be, without friends or family, and some women were suffering ill health; to the Committee, the problem was the immigrants’ attitudes.

The testimonies of the Adelaide Depot matrons reveal that, unlike the Committee and male depot employees, the women in these positions grasped the difficulties facing female immigrants. Mrs. Ross, matron at the Adelaide Depot, confirmed that many of the women hoped to be in Melbourne, but believed the cities to be ‘one and the same; or that they were so near as that they could easily go from one to the other’.¹⁵⁰ According to Mrs. Ross, this

¹⁴⁹ Evidence of Bridget Keogh, 18 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 38.

¹⁵⁰ Evidence of Mrs. Ross, 11 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 22.

mistake was greatly distressing for the immigrants: ‘Do any of them appear disappointed on their arrival here?—Many of them do. They seem to think there is very little, if any, chance for them, and I have found them in tears from this cause frequently’.¹⁵¹ Not only did Mrs. Ross reveal the emotional stakes of immigration, but she believed that many of the female immigrants were well aware of the inflexibility and apparent hopelessness of their situation. Several of the interviewed immigrants hoped to join friends and family already settled in Melbourne or Sydney, but without their aid the distance sentenced the women to months of making a living on their own, with only the Depot for support should they fail to find suitable employment.

When Mrs. Ross was asked about the women’s qualifications for domestic employment, she offered sympathetic insight:

A great many are unsuitable. They have never been in service in their own country; but many of them are needlewomen, and they might be taught if people had patience with them. There are so many persons that take girls for a week, and if they do not suit, then they are sent away without a proper opportunity for a trial. I think if a month were fixed as the period for trial, it would be much better.¹⁵²

Female immigrants, according to Mrs. Ross, were not helpless. What they simply needed was a less ruthless employment system to help them settle in the colony. Assistant matron Mrs. Ennis agreed that ‘the ladies are averse to undertake the trouble of teaching the girls, and they know nothing comparatively. They can sew a little, and wash and clean up in their own way’.¹⁵³ Mrs. Ennis noted that the youngest immigrants were the least experienced. Teenagers, she felt, were not fit for work in the country; ‘they would with teaching make house-servants, but they are not able for the work

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁵³ Evidence of Mrs. P. Ennis, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 28.

put upon them.... [d]rawing water from wells, and attending to cattle and horses'.¹⁵⁴ Without any training opportunities, inexperienced immigrants had few prospects for improving their situation, and those employers who only hired them on a brief trial basis doomed the women to failure.

According to Mrs. Ross, the longer a female immigrant residing in the Adelaide Depot was unsuccessful, the more careless her behaviour became:

What has been the general behaviour of the numerous immigrants you have had under your care within the last ten months?—Some of them have been very rough in their behaviour. I think this has been in some degree caused by the contamination of those whom they have met on their arrival in the Depot. Those who have been in the Colony a long while are worse than those who have recently arrived.¹⁵⁵

Note that Mrs. Ross did not say that the female immigrants arriving were of poor moral character; to the contrary, it was extended time in the colony that worsened their behaviour. After hearing how some immigrants in the Adelaide Depot were completely alone, hundreds of miles from where they wished to be, and without steady employment or good wages, it is possible to understand how long-term depot residents might have felt: deceived, dejected, trapped, and failed. William Gosse, the surgeon who attended the Adelaide Depot, confirmed the presence of mental illness among immigrants at the Depot:

[Disappointment] exercises considerable influence on [the immigrants'] nervous system, and many of them are so reduced that they cannot resist disease.

They suffer from nervous depression?—Precisely so.¹⁵⁶

The emotional depot environment was also captured in the *Adelaide Times*:

The scene in front of the depot yesterday afternoon was most disheartening. One hundred and forty of those young women... were

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁵⁵ Evidence of Mrs. Ross, 11 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 19.

¹⁵⁶ Evidence of William Gosse, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 29.

yesterday brought up from the Port, and the blank look of despair, often ending in a bursting flood of tears, with which many a poor girl, as she was put down at the building, with her small bundle, mutely regarded the crowd of fellow unfortunates who already stood there loitering about in idleness was most distressing.¹⁵⁷

In this scene any immigrant who had not yet realised the potential difficulty of her situation was confronted with a possible future version of herself – it must have been a discomfiting welcome to colonial life. It is no wonder that some of the women in the depots acted out or gave up hopes of, as Jane Higgins gave as her reason for emigration, ‘bettering’ themselves and their position in life.

The Select Committee’s examination of Mrs. Ross ended with mundane questions about the decreasing meat rations provided at the Adelaide Depot, but her final answer is intriguing: ‘Do [the immigrants] generally consume the whole of their rations?—Not always.’¹⁵⁸ After Mrs. Ross’ testimony about distraught recent arrivals, weak and ill immigrants, and ‘old’ depot residents who viewed the depot as their home after multiple failed employments, as well as the stories about the upsetting experiences of misled emigrants, one is left wondering what (whether depression, a sense of entitlement, or illness) drove some immigrants to leave their small meat ration – an offering from a place that for many was a lifeline – untouched.

Despite the Legislative Council’s anxieties of excessive female emigration and the cost to the colony in money and labour, a close reading of the testimonies presented in the 1856 report demonstrates that it was the female immigrants who were suffering most. Misplaced, separated from friends and family, and desperate for a living wage that did not cause bodily

¹⁵⁷ ‘Female Labour,’ *Adelaide Times*, 12 July 1855, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Evidence of Mrs. Ross, 11 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 22.

harm, the female immigrants who took refuge in the depots were effectively backed into a corner. They exemplified what colonial officials and immigration advocates believed would happen to unprotected and poorly selected emigrants. Sadly, in the case of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, it was frequently the actions of agents and commissioners that trapped the women in miserable situations. The Select Committee time and again blamed immigrants for being inexperienced, unassertive, and immoral, yet failed to consider the faults of its own assisted emigration system and offered no urgent suggestions for change.

As this particular case study of South Australia has demonstrated, looking beyond ‘Australia’ – or even the more commonly-studied colonies – can uncover a wealth of information. The testimonies of the immigrants in the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot reveal the individual experiences of women in their own words. While it may not be possible to fully trace these women from their metropolitan beginnings through their later lives after the Depot, their stories of misleading emigration agents and cycles of unemployment in South Australia confirm the need to think about the emigration process as a whole and how each element – selection, voyage, arrival, settlement – could positively or negatively affect women’s lives. The 1856 Report reflects the common concerns – morality, ethnicity, and economic cost – of government emigration officials and philanthropic emigration advocates. But more importantly, the women’s own concerns are revealed: physical and mental illness, separation from family, and unemployment. Government records, as explored in Chapter Two, can reveal similar anxieties in the brief mentions of individual immigrants, but the concerns of the Adelaide Depot women are presented autonomously. This

case study has underlined the importance of re-considering the sources we turn to when thinking about female emigration; re-reading FMCES and Colonial Office records has nuanced our understanding of emigrants, but more remains to be found outside of these archives.

Chapter Four – A Warm Welcome? Female Emigration in the Press

While governments were debating the need for and the success of female immigration, so too was the press in the metropole and each of the Australian colonies. Newspapers and other printed periodicals were a major part of the imperial communication network and were responsible for circulating news to and from the metropole and the various colonies, as well as sending information between and within the individual colonies themselves.¹ Published material helped to shape, reflect, and disseminate opinions geographically. Nineteenth-century British and Australian readers were exposed to female emigration through printed material such as newspapers or magazines. Although newspapers have not traditionally been considered important sources for studies of female emigration, the spread of digitisation has made it easier to pinpoint references to key emigration figures and societies, and to follow coverage of events and reactions from the different parts of the British Empire to various pieces of news. While newspapers do not provide many individual stories of female emigrants, they nevertheless give us a sense of the reach of female emigration, whether through stories of emigrants drowning, notices of society meetings, or the publicity spread by emigration advocates. Through newspapers, one can also gain an understanding of how female emigration, particularly emigration organised by societies, was received by the general public both in Britain and abroad. A comparison of metropolitan and colonial opinions reveals that British papers were supportive of the work of people like Maria Rye, but colonial sources

¹ Julie F. Codell, ed., *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 16.

viewed female immigration as either a noble but misguided cause or an outright curse.

An obvious concern when using newspapers is overestimating the correlation between published views and general public opinion. As Simon Potter states, historians must ask, ‘How representative are the opinions that they encounter? Do they reflect popular views or merely those of the paper’s editorial staff?’² Although papers reflected contemporary public debates and opinions, these discussions were curated by journalists, editors, and publishers. Letters to the editor provide insight into public opinion, but they were often sent from the same demographic as the writing and publishing staff: white, literate, and male. While newspapers certainly reported on women, much as in the Colonial Office records female voices are not obvious. Women writers were not entirely excluded, however; Lucy Brown claimed that journalism was ‘exceptional and noteworthy in its employment of women’ in comparison to other occupations, but throughout the nineteenth century reporting and publishing remained male-dominated professions.³

Understanding opinion ownership is complicated by the anonymous and itinerant nature of nineteenth-century journalists who moved from job to job, or perhaps provided material for multiple newspapers.⁴ While we cannot assume that newspapers accurately represented the full array of public opinion (or even those opinions that were most popular), it is clear that the published opinions existed among people who had the potential to wield power and influence due to their social position (again, as educated white men). Brown noted that the newspaper hierarchy often correlated with education and social

² Simon J. Potter, ed., *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 16.

³ Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 77.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

standing, with ‘gentlemen and scholar’ editors responsible for communicating their ideas to the newspaper owners – it was these proprietors who had the final say in decisions regarding the paper.⁵ The power of journalism reached beyond the social sphere and into the political; John M. MacKenzie calls the press a ‘concentration of power’ that had the ability to affect the status of politicians and governments.⁶ In the case of female emigration, this reach extended to the reputations of emigrators such as Maria Rye and the emigrants themselves, with discussions about the merits of emigration and letters to the editor that criticised Rye appearing in metropolitan and colonial papers, respectively. Of course, the pressure flowed both ways and political parties could also influence owners’ and editors’ publishing decisions, although this varied from paper to paper.⁷ Indeed, Potter suggests that rather than take the press as a bona fide representation of public thought, historians should think of newspapers as catalysts for shaping public opinion.⁸

Newspapers in Nineteenth-Century Britain and Australia

Readership of printed publications boomed in the mid-nineteenth century. Technological improvements and lower costs of printing enabled the newspaper industry to thrive, while the repeal of the Stamp Act newspaper tax in 1855 encouraged the development of the penny press and the expansion of provincial papers.⁹ This web of nearly a thousand suburban and regional newspapers would last into the 1880s, when a trend for national press gained

⁵ Ibid., 89.

⁶ John M. MacKenzie, ‘The Press and the Dominant Ideology of Empire’ in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 23.

⁷ Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers*, 3.

⁸ Potter, ed., *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain*, 17.

⁹ Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 63.

hold.¹⁰ The prevalence of newspapers allowed the printed press to become a part of everyday life. As MacKenzie notes, Victorian readership far exceeded circulation due to the fact that ‘newspapers were available in pubs, news rooms, coffee houses, mechanics’ institutes, workingmen’s clubs (as well as clubs for the elite) and... town and district libraries’.¹¹ Newspaper reading was not simply an individual action taking place in private places; the availability of printed press in social spaces meant readers could discuss the news and related issues with friends, colleagues, or total strangers. Clearly newspapers were an important element in encouraging public debates and the exchange of ideas.

Yet this sprawling, influential news network was not limited to Britain. Instead, British papers were simply one point in the greater interconnected web of imperial communications through which news travelled. This network relied upon written and printed material, such as newspapers, magazines, books, and letters, to make news available to colonial and metropolitan residents alike. The growth of colonial media helped to strengthen colonial identities by fostering settler-centric presses and home-grown writers. But Alan Lester argues that while the imperial network encouraged the creation of colonial newspapers, the network also ‘helped to bind settlers located in different colonial sites into a broader collective imagination based on the idea of a trans-global British settler identity’.¹² Much as the line dividing immigrants’ metropolitan and colonial lives was murky at best, there was no completely solid partition of the various components of the British Empire or

¹⁰ MacKenzie, ‘The Press and the Dominant Ideology of Empire,’ in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain*, 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹² Alan Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire,’ *History Workshop Journal*, no. 54 (Autumn 2002), 31.

its media. Julie Codell agrees that the colonies and the metropole in general, while a ‘convenient...abstract dichotomy’,¹³ were never permanently separated, but rather always interacting. Likewise the imperial and metropolitan presses were not exclusive of one another. In fact, Potter notes that British newspapers often employed settlers as local, colonial correspondents, allowing the settler perspective to be directly represented in the metropolitan press.¹⁴ Codell also notes that newspapers covered an array of views, ‘from jingoism to critiques of imperial administration, both supportive and critical of colonial wars and imperial policy’,¹⁵ allowing for debates and exchanges of ideas throughout the empire. Yet Lester suggests that both metropolitan and colonial publications maintained a decidedly British status:

Editors permitted political quarrels within the pages of their newspapers, but all their readers would wish, as the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* put it, to 'sail under the broad banner of British freedom, protection and law'. Even when settler newspapers became the main organs of dissent against metropolitan government interventions, they retained the same conception of a trans-imperial Britishness in which settlers had a stake.¹⁶

Despite their conflicting views on particular subjects, such as levels of female emigration, mid-nineteenth-century newspapers in Britain and the Australian colonies shared a common origin. At their cores, they embodied similar values and legacies, reflecting the collective heritage of Britain and its settler colonies like those in Australia.

¹³ Codell, introduction to *Imperial Co-Histories: National Identities and the British and Colonial Press*, 16.

¹⁴ Simon J. Potter, “Empire and the English Press, c.1857-1914,” in *Newspapers and Empire in Ireland and Britain: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1857-1921*, ed. Simon J. Potter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 47.

¹⁵ Codell, introduction to *Imperial Co-Histories*, 18.

¹⁶ Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire,’ 31.

However, the flow of information in the imperial network was not always smooth and even; some communication ties (between metropole and colony, for instance) were stronger than others (colony to colony).¹⁷ These ties made it easy for the Australian press to become a booming industry, albeit one with a high turnover rate; widespread syndication using news items from places like London, Melbourne, and Sydney allowed even small cities and towns to support – if often fleetingly – their own newspaper.¹⁸ Lester notes that by the 1830s, colonial papers were already extracting information and stories from metropolitan and other colonial newspapers.¹⁹ Access to news items from abroad certainly stimulated the development of small papers, but this interchange of information would become a cornerstone of the industry, one made possible by nineteenth-century innovations in engineering and technology that increased the speed with which news travelled.

According to Potter, the large number of small presses with varying colonial and national agendas meant that mass media was highly diverse until greater systematization accompanied technological advances (such as faster ships and the installation of telegraphs) in the latter part of the nineteenth century – editors no longer had to wait to obtain news from the latest ship in port, or comb through provincial papers for news items to reprint.²⁰ It took about three months for news (and other shipping and emigrants) to travel between Britain and Australia in the first half of the nineteenth century, although the development of steamships shortened the journey, with an early

¹⁷ Simon J. Potter, 'Webs, Networks, and Systems: Globalization and the Mass Media in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Empire,' *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 3 (July 2007): 646.

¹⁸ Graham Law, 'Savouring of the Australian Soil?: On the Sources and Affiliations of Colonial Newspaper Fiction,' *Victorian Periodicals Review* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 78.

¹⁹ Lester, 'British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire,' 32.

²⁰ Potter, 'Webs, Networks, and Systems,' 628.

1850s voyage lasting about two and a half months;²¹ steamships halved the time to about forty-five days in the 1860s.²² The delay in news travelling between metropole and colonies is evident when tracing syndicated news items.²³ In addition to steamships, the advent of the telegraph greatly sped up communications. Relaying news by ship was slow and unreliable for the price,²⁴ but with the telegraph, both metropolitan and colonial publishers had access to fresh news from a variety of sources, rather than a single report on an event that may have happened a few months ago. The increased amount of available material further enabled a cherry-picking method that allowed newspapers to provide readers with news tailored to regional interests. At the same time, editors were able to carefully curate articles and thus influence readers; Potter claims that this was especially true among colonial newspapers selecting local news for a future metropolitan audience.²⁵ Thus, the mid-nineteenth-century colonial press developed into an industry able to hold its

²¹ Australian National Maritime Museum, 'Passenger Ships to Australia: A Comparison of Vessels and Journey Times to Australia between 1788 and 1900,' 2013, <http://www.anmm.gov.au/Learn/Library-and-Research/Research-Guides/Passenger-Ships-to-Australia-A-Comparison-of-Vessels-and-Journey-Time>.

²² Potter, 'Empire and the English Press,' 42.

²³ For example, news of Queen Victoria's donation to the British Ladies' Female Emigration Society in August 1851 spread through Britain within one week but did not appear in Australian papers until December 1851. See 'Town and Country Talk,' *The Examiner* (London), 16 August 1851, 524; 'Miscellaneous News,' *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (London), 17 August 1851, 8; 'Domestic Intelligence,' *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 August 1851, 3; 'County Financial Boards Bill,' *The Leeds Mercury*, 16 August 1851, 5; 'Family Matters,' *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian* (Southampton), 16 August 1851, 7; 'Her Majesty's Visit to Scotland,' *The Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties* (Colchester), 22 August 1851; 'Domestic,' *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet, and General Advertiser* (Truro), 22 August 1851, 2; 'Late English News,' *Adelaide Times*, 6 December 1851, 7; 'English News, The Female Emigration Society,' *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (New South Wales), 10 December 1851, 3; 'Latest English,' *The Tasmanian Colonist* (Hobart), 15 December 1851, 4.

²⁴ Sydney's *Empire* complained in 1852 that the opening of steamship lines between Britain and Australia had elicited 'a severe shock of disappointment' because 'the only reason for the desire was contained in the hope of regularity, certainty, and rapidity. Apart from these, what is the value of steam?' There was also anger that 'we are called on to pay for this tantalising deception, an extra 50 per cent upon all correspondence,' which was certainly a concerning expense for a colonial newspaper. 'General Progress,' *Empire* (Sydney), 26 Feb 1853, 4.

²⁵ Potter, 'Webs, Networks, and Systems,' 628.

own against metropolitan (particularly London) papers as a news source for the colonies.

In Potter's study of the relationship between the English press and the British Empire, he asks a series of questions:

How did English newspapers provide their readers with coverage of events taking place in the British empire?... Was English press coverage of empire distinctive in relation to that provided in other parts of what was then the United Kingdom? Can coverage and comment be taken as representative of an 'English' national response to empire?²⁶

These questions can be applied to the colonial Australian press as well, and must be taken into consideration when reading about critiques of female emigration. As will be explored through coverage of emigrant shipwrecks and debates about female emigration, topics related to emigration elicited responses from metropolitan and colonial newspapers, magazines, and journals. Because both British and Australian (and, in a wider context, other imperial) presses often worked with syndicated material and frequently reprinted news items from each other, it can be argued that Potter's questions about distinction and representation regarding empire – England versus other parts of the United Kingdom; comparisons of the various Australian colonies; or even generally referring to metropole-empire dynamics – are slightly flawed. While there were certainly regional papers, the exchange of news between different parts of the empire blurred the lines of metropole-colony, colony-colony, and even urban-rural paradigms.

Historians influenced by 'new imperial history' continue to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the empire and the important role of newspapers in transferring information between the metropole and Britain's colonies, as well as the multi-layered webs that stretched across all parts of the

²⁶ Potter, 'Empire and the English Press,' 39.

empire. A recent work examining the colonial press is Angela Woollacott's *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, in which she highlights the role of newspapers in the struggle to create a new society and to keep it connected to the vital network of imperial communication.²⁷ Australia's newspapers, though acknowledged as a booming industry and record of the times, have not been fully exploited as a means of uncovering public discussions and reception of female emigration. And how can newspapers enhance our understanding of the attitudes and trends surrounding female emigration? Newspapers have a high density of information and cover a broad range of time and space, although many nineteenth-century papers mostly offered brief summaries rather than in-depth coverage. Historical newspapers, however, contained not only articles about female emigration, but also bulletins about meetings of societies, summaries of talks by prominent emigration figures, and details about ships heading to the colonies. The capacity – via digital databases – to survey a large number of newspapers more rapidly gives us a sense of how metropolitan and colonial sources covered female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies. It must, of course, be remembered that this survey – aside from frequent appearances by the tireless Maria Rye – gives a very male-dominated perspective. This raises the question of to what extent the representation of female emigration in printed media was influenced by the experiences and affiliations of authors and publishers, and who was the intended audience.

²⁷ Angela Woollacott. *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Press Coverage of Emigration

As noted, the volume of available material has been made more manageable with the spread of digitisation, but syndication, cross-references, and the slower movement of nineteenth-century news remain challenging for researchers to navigate; as Potter put it, ‘one newspaper would pirate an item from an overseas journal, and others would then reprint the reprint’.²⁸ A search of metropolitan newspaper databases for ‘female emigration’ from 1845 through 1885 (the rough period relevant to this thesis) returns thousands of hits: 108 from London’s *The Times*,²⁹ 1,273 from metropolitan papers *The Guardian* and *The Observer*,³⁰ and 1,493 in newspapers from around Britain.³¹ The same search carried out in the National Library of Australia’s database of digitised newspapers returns a similar amount, with 2,545 hits; a search for ‘female immigration’ in the same time period returns an overwhelming 5,662 results.³²

Table 4.1: Results for searches of ‘female emigration’ and ‘female immigration’ in British and Australian historical newspaper databases, 1845-1885

Database	‘Female emigration’	‘Female immigration’
The Times Digital Archive	108	1
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer	1,273	226
19 th Century British Library Newspapers	1,493	74
(Total British)	(2,874)	(301)
Trove, National Library of Australia	2,545	5,662

²⁸ Potter, ‘Webs, Networks, and Systems,’ 629.

²⁹ The Times Digital Archives, 1785-1985.

³⁰ ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

³¹ 19th Century British Library Newspapers. Despite the geographical diversity of British newspapers, the provincial press orbited around not only London publications but also the more cosmopolitan local papers; according to Potter, *The Manchester Guardian* was probably England’s most influential provincial newspaper. Potter, ‘Empire and the English Press,’ 39.

³² Trove, National Library of Australia.

Table 4.2: Results for searches of ‘emigration’ and ‘immigration’ in British and Australian historical newspaper databases, 1845-1885

Database	‘Emigration’	‘Immigration’
The Times Digital Archive	13,539	2,925
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer	8,898	1,816
19 th Century British Library Newspapers	151,263	21,774
(Total British)	(173,700)	(26,515)
Trove, National Library of Australia	280,648	387,890

Table 4.3: Results for searches of ‘female emigration’ and ‘female immigration’ in British and Australian historical newspaper databases by decade, 1845-1885

Decade	British: ‘female emigration’	British: ‘female immigration’	Australian: ‘female emigration’	Australian: ‘female immigration’
1845- 1855	1,293	109	1,285	1,424
1855- 1865	885	76	842	3,087
1865- 1875	446	79	327	1,138
1875- 1885	344	53	266	917

As demonstrated in Table 4.2, female emigration and immigration accounted for only a small percentage of general emigration and immigration discussions in both British and Australian newspapers. While British discussion of female emigration was most frequent in the late 1840s and early 1850s (probably due to the effects of the famine), Australian discussion of female immigration was strong in the period of 1845 through 1855 and peaked in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Some of the articles relating to female emigration were published in syndication across both the British and Australian papers, thus there are fewer distinct results than appear in total. The reprinting of content from other published sources also poses a problem in tracing the provenance of

information, as even when another newspaper was cited, it cannot be assumed that it was the original source of the material and did not copy the news itself. Potter claims that ‘while much of the raw news published by papers around England was similar or even identical in content, there remained room for differing editorial interpretations, allowing marked partisan divides’.³³ In many cases, however, the material was directly copied from one newspaper to the next. The use of pseudonyms by journalists, as well as their outright anonymity in most papers, further complicates historians’ abilities to clarify who created or shaped particular articles. Despite these obstacles, newspapers do offer considerable insight into the subject of female emigration: they allow us to gain a sense of general public opinion of female emigrants, from naïve metropolitan optimism in Britain to the realistic colonial scepticism of Australian settlers. Overall, metropolitan publishers tended to be slightly positive toward female emigration schemes such as that of Maria Rye and the Female Middle Class Emigration Society. Australian newspapers, on the other hand, expressed more concern at the number of single women arriving unprepared for a rough colonial life; as visible in Table 4.1, discussions about female immigration in the Australian colonies vastly outnumbered discussions about female emigration in the British press.

These discussions covered multiple aspects of female emigration. Several articles and letters to editors link back to the ubiquitous Maria Rye and FMCES. However, pieces of the emigration process – emigration society meetings, disasters at sea, and debates about the level of female immigrants – fill in the framework of female emigration. While newspapers rarely offered personal details about female emigrants, a few of their lives – or rather, deaths

³³ Potter, ‘Empire and the English Press,’ 60.

– and experiences during the voyage from Britain to the Australian colonies were sometimes briefly captured in the aftermath of one of the greatest dangers of emigration: shipwreck.

Sensational Shipwrecks: Capturing the Voyage

Emigration societies and the Colonial Office both collected newspaper clippings of stories relevant to their interests, suggesting that they regularly scanned publications to keep up with recent developments at home and in the colonies.³⁴ Both the Women's Library and Colonial Office archives contain reference to shipwrecks; it is quite possible that society-assisted (but more likely government-assisted) emigrants were among the passengers, although Patricia Clarke claims that 'there is no record of any of the [FMCES] emigrant governesses being lost in a shipwreck'.³⁵ Nevertheless, occurrences of shipwrecks added to the general anxiety emigrants faced as they left Britain. Such incidents affected relatively few passengers when compared to the millions of people travelling across oceans in the nineteenth century, but they were nevertheless a frightening prospect. In addition to scaring potential emigrants, these disasters captured the attention of journalists and readers alike, and reading them today reminds us just how perilous emigration could be.

³⁴ Press Cutting Books, Records of the British Women's Emigration Association, TWA LSE, 1/BWE, Box FL002, GB106/1/BWE/3/2; Press Cutting Books, Records of the British Women's Emigration Association, TWA LSE, 1/BWE, Box FL002, GB106/1/BWE/3/3; TNA, CO 384/155, p. 14.

³⁵ Patricia Clarke, *The Governesses: Letters from the Colonies, 1862-1882* (Hawthorn, Victoria: Hutchinson Publishing Group, 1985), 28.



Figure 4.1: Emigrant shipwreck, 1857.³⁶

Although this image depicts the fate of a ship sailing from Britain to Quebec, the sense of impending doom is universal. The tragedy of ambitious emigrants leaving behind their homes to start new lives in the colonies only to be lost to the sea during the journey was one that journalists found irresistible. Shipwrecks offered journalists multiple avenues to explore: from dramatic details of the disaster, to sad statistics of those lost (especially the numbers of women and children), to the bravery (or cowardice) of the crew at the end as the vessel slipped below the waves. Dramatic scenes of the disasters brought the horrors and tragedies of death at sea to life for landlubber readers. For example, *The Manchester Guardian* depicted the somber final moments of doomed passengers as their voyage from London to Melbourne ended prematurely:

The whole of the passengers and crew gathered, as with one consent, in the chief saloon, and, having been calmly told by Captain Martin that there was no hope left, a remarkable and unanimous spirit of resignation came over them at once. There was no screaming or

³⁶ 'Wreck of "The Martin Luther" Emigrant Ship,' *Illustrated London News* (London: Illustrated London News, 2 May 1857). The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003.

shrieking by women or men, no rushing on deck or frantic cries. All calmly resorted to the saloon, where the Rev. Mr. Draper, one of the passengers, prayed aloud, and exhorted the unhappy creatures by whom he was surrounded. Dismay was present to every heart, but disorder to none. Mothers were weeping sadly over the little ones about with them to be engulfed [sic], and the children, ignorant of their coming death, were pitifully inquiring the cause of so much woe. Friends were taking leave of friends, as if preparing for a long journey, others were crouched down with Bibles in their hands, endeavouring to snatch consolation from passages long known or long neglected.³⁷

This passage exudes and exalts the famed British stoicism. While the passengers' serenity in the face of imminent drowning was probably exaggerated, eyewitnesses did survive to tell the tale. Several crewmen and a couple of passengers managed to launch a boat. The captain gallantly refused to leave his ship and her passengers, and the survivors witnessed how 'the fine steamer went down stern foremost, with her crowd of human beings, from whom one confused cry of helpless terror arose, and all was silent forever'.³⁸ Newspapers heralded the heroism of the emigrants who undertook a journey to better themselves, Britain, and its empire but paid the ultimate price on the open ocean.

While many newspaper articles about shipwrecks do not provide much (if any) detail about the emigrants they were carrying, it is still possible to find published pieces that enrich our understanding of the perils of emigration in a female context. In 1866, for instance, the Melbourne *Argus* reported the sinking of the *Wanata* while en route from London to Melbourne.³⁹ The ship collided with another vessel that was heading for Melbourne but miraculously no one was lost. On board were sixty single women emigrating to Australia, and the collision was only the start of their troubles. The paper claimed that

³⁷ 'The Storm: Foundering of a Steamer & Loss of 270 Lives,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 January, 1866, 3.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ 'Loss of the *Wanata*,' *The Argus* (Melbourne), 14 Apr 1866, 2.

after the accident the ship's crew became drunk and 'the doctor was assaulted when preventing some of the crew from going among the single women'.⁴⁰ The female emigrants, 'chiefly Irish.... [and] badly supplied with clothing',⁴¹ under the care of matron Mrs. McAvoy, 'made grave complaints of the conduct of some of the crew of their ship'.⁴² Whether these complaints were acknowledged by the shipping company in any way is unknown.

Another example of a shipwreck involving female emigrants and extensively covered by the press is that of the *Kapunda* in 1887, which was heading from London to Fremantle, Western Australia, when she collided with another ship and sank – the majority of her more than three hundred passengers and crew drowned. It was reported that there were many children on board and 'thirty of the emigrants were domestic servants'.⁴³ Perth's *Western Mail* claimed that 217 of the passengers were bound for Western Australia, and 'of these 154 had been nominated by their friends, 34 were selected for the W. A. Land Company and 29 single girls for our Board of Immigration'.⁴⁴ Articles including passenger lists followed some shipwrecks, and according to such a list almost all of the domestic servants sailing on the *Kapunda* were from southern England, ranging in age from thirty-five-year-old cook Emma Gaultier down to laundress Elizabeth Telling, who was only fifteen when she drowned; about half of the female emigrants on board were teenagers.⁴⁵ *The Ipswich Journal* pointed out that 'it was only by accident that this list was not augmented by about 70 other names of servants who should

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ 'Terrible Disaster at Sea,' *The Australasian* (Melbourne), 5 February 1887, 29.

⁴⁴ 'Terrible Disaster. Loss of the "Kapunda." With Emigrants for Western Australia,' *Western Mail* (Perth), 5 February 1887, 19.

⁴⁵ 'The Emigrant Ship Disaster. A Sudbury Family Lost,' *The Ipswich Journal*, 2 February 1887, 5.

have been booked... for Western Australia by this vessel, but at the last moment they were transferred to another ship sailing later'.⁴⁶ Though tragic, these events nourished the morbid fascination of journalists and readers, with the extensive coverage of shipwrecks 'enabling [them] clearly to picture the dreadful scene of crash, confusion, and sudden death'.⁴⁷ Newspaper articles were obviously able to stimulate discussions about a particular topic, and compelling journalism could certainly sway the reader's emotions and opinions. Likewise, confident and compelling emigrators took advantage of widespread readership to spread word of their emigration schemes and generate debate about the state of female emigration.

Blessing or Curse? Metropolitan and Colonial Opinions of Female Emigration and Maria Rye's Emigration Scheme

The efforts of Maria Rye on behalf of female emigrants certainly attracted a lot of attention in the press despite the small number of FMCES emigrants. This was probably partly due to the FMCES's distinct focus on middle-class, educated women and their 'plight' in the metropole – it stood out compared to the thousands of working-class, government-assisted emigrants and reflected nineteenth-century themes of class, morality, and philanthropy. Metropolitan publications were generally supportive of female emigration to the colonies, especially when undertaken in conjunction with an emigration scheme such as that offered by the FMCES. A reference to the recent foundation of a female emigration society appeared in *The Examiner*, a London paper, in April 1862. The article announced that 'a few earnest and excellent ladies in London, whose energy and benevolence deserve all praise,

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

have set on foot a scheme for the assistance of young persons of the seamstress and nursery governess class in emigrating to Australia'.⁴⁸ This is possibly a reference to the Female Middle Class Emigration Society – the description of 'energy' certainly brings the multitasking Rye to mind, and she was known to be sending pamphlets about the newly formed FMCES to newspapers that year (the Melbourne *Argus* received a pamphlet in June 1862).⁴⁹ On the other hand, the inclusion of seamstresses in addition to governesses seems to depart from the FMCES mission, as does the unnamed society's focus on Australia as a destination, though the majority of the FMCES's early emigrants did go to Australian colonies (see the FMCES emigrant data tables in Appendix 1 at the end of the thesis). Whether this new society was the FMCES or another philanthropic organisation, the article's author was delighted with the scheme and continued, 'As no women suffer more intolerable hardship in this country than those who seek to gain a scanty livelihood by work more or less intellectual, we rejoice that their condition should be cared for'.⁵⁰ A lengthy article about the FMCES published in the London *Daily News* on the same day further suggests that the discussion at the time was inspired by the FMCES; the *Daily News* thought it important to spread the word of female emigration schemes, saying, 'Perhaps not many of our readers know how numerous is the class of women who, in this country, have to earn their own living, instead of administering the earnings of husbands, fathers, or brothers'.⁵¹ The highlight of this particular article is the inclusion of examples of 1861 FMCES emigrants (all successful, of course)

⁴⁸ 'Highways of Emigration,' *The Examiner* (London), 19 April 1862, 242.

⁴⁹ [no title], *The Argus* (Melbourne), 17 June 1862, 4.

⁵⁰ 'Highways of Emigration,' *The Examiner*, 242.

⁵¹ 'Emigration of Educated Women,' *Daily News* (London), 19 April 1862, 6.

presented with details along the lines of the FMCES annual report tables (see Appendix 1).

The women listed in the 1862 newspaper article were still anonymous, referred to only by the initial of their surname, but their ages were provided along with typical notes about their employment prospects and salaries in the colonies. It is difficult to match the selected cases published in the article with the notes from the FMCES annual reports, but some connections can be made, demonstrating the ability of the press to convey information about individual lives that were not necessarily newsworthy or exceptional. For example, a Miss P., twenty years old, had her situation in Sydney summarised as ‘engaged to be married’;⁵² this is a similar account to that of Emigrant 5, whose outcome in Australia was recorded in the FMCES records as ‘married directly, and returned to England’.⁵³ The notes in the *Daily News* confirm the diversity of FMCES emigrants’ age and marital status. Age did not exclude women from the society’s assistance, as evidenced in the inclusion of Miss P., forty years old and (as her title suggests) unmarried. She initially emigrated to Canada, but had returned ‘with the family she went out with’⁵⁴ – it is not clear if this is meant to refer to her own relatives or her employers, but given the FMCES’s focus on placing governesses, the latter is more likely. In spite of an age that was considered quite advanced in the rhetoric of female emigration that focused on robust workers and potential brides in their teens and early twenties, Miss P. was not done with her imperial adventures: the *Daily News* recorded that she was to sail to Melbourne in the following month. As the FMCES annual reports revealed, not everyone aided by the society was young

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ FMCES Annual Report, 1861, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/1.

⁵⁴ ‘Emigration of Educated Women,’ *Daily News*, 19 April 1862, 6.

and single. Another woman listed in the *Daily News* article was Mrs. B., a ‘widow without family’.⁵⁵ Mrs. B., though a widow, was still young at only twenty-six years of age, so perhaps she had hopes to marry again; she obviously had little or no support from either her own or her late husband’s relatives in England, leaving her to turn to the FMCES. She was sent out to Sydney, after which she went to the Murray River (the exact location is not specified, but since the river forms the border between New South Wales and Victoria, and also stretches into South Australia, it is safe to say that she was far from Sydney). According to the article, Mrs. B. was able to improve her situation from an income of twelve pounds per year in England to sixty pounds in Australia. With a colonial salary five times that in England, Mrs. B. had no need to rush into a second marriage. While it is clear that the FMCES assisted widows in addition to single women, Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair note that ‘contemporaries and modern historians have given less attention to the Victorian widow than to the spinster, perhaps because widows were not seen as exuding the aura of social, moral and psychological dubiety that clung to unmarried women’.⁵⁶ Indeed, the FMCES was impressed with Mrs. B.’s outcome, and a parenthetical note after her case read, ‘A very superior woman’.⁵⁷ Another example also demonstrated how seemingly easy it was for women to be successful in the Australian colonies. Miss R., twenty-two years old and gone to Melbourne, was noted as being ‘engaged [in employment] within three weeks of landing...; [she] had been out of a situation six months before starting’.⁵⁸ Rye’s scheme to end the suffering of women languishing in

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 187.

⁵⁷ ‘Emigration of Educated Women,’ *Daily News*, 19 April 1862, 6.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

England had paid off with miraculous swiftness in Miss R.'s case. There was clearly a need for emigration schemes such as the FMCES which offered women the ability to maintain respectable lives and to pursue employment opportunities in an effort to exert their agency by controlling their own lives and finances. The final example published in the *Daily News* article exemplified the philanthropy of Rye and the FMCES, relating the story of a 'miserable child taken off [a] door-step, [who] was in training as [a] servant for two years, aged 16'.⁵⁹ The young woman was sent to Canterbury, New Zealand, where she obtained a servant position within two weeks of her arrival; the inclusion of this pitied servant demonstrated the FMCES's charitable drive in its feminist mission to elevate British women as a whole.

The *Daily News* lauded Rye's work and her successes, but also acknowledged that 'she has undertaken a work of vast responsibility, one calling for constant exercise of the soundest judgment, and in which, moreover, the greatest and most uniform wisdom cannot always avert difficulty and disappointment'.⁶⁰ Despite the strong start of the FMCES, not every emigrant could succeed in the colonies (though those selected as examples for the *Daily News* obviously did), as was discussed in Chapter One. Even the most optimistic and confident philanthropist must be aware of possible shortcomings in their work. The article closed with the note that Rye could be contacted at 12 Portugal Street near Lincoln's Inn Fields; in a strange twist of fate, this is the very address where the library of the London School of Economics now stands – its Women's Library holds the surviving records of the FMCES.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

In 1863 John D. Cartwright, a writer for *Sharpe's London Magazine*, praised the early efforts of Maria Rye (no mention of the FMCES appeared in the article) to improve the quality of female emigrants sent out to Britain's colonies. Cartwright recalled how the selection of government-assisted emigrants relied upon rushed emigration agents who were unable to make thorough investigations of a woman's personal character, with some women leaving Britain because they had 'fallen' and were ostracised for their behaviour; indeed, 'mothers remembered what occurred in Indian vessels among women travelling even in first-class, and acknowledged that any alternative was better than emigration; so the colonies got a class of women sent out not of the most satisfactory kind'.⁶¹ Rye was seeking to 'right these cruel wrongs' with the help of her own 'zeal and moral courage'.⁶² Cartwright found Rye inspiring, but he noted the backlash she received from the colonial press, calling out an unnamed New Zealand newspaper 'having large influence in the colony [which] has thought fit to question the motives of those who favour Miss Rye's scheme. It sneers at women who come out to the colony with a predilection for matrimony'.⁶³ In Cartwright's view the colonies were undeservedly unappreciative of Rye's work.

Full newspaper or journal articles are not the only source of information about female emigration available to researchers. Small bulletin items allow historians to track the movements and actions of people and organisations involved in emigration. In metropolitan newspapers, for instance, there were notices of meetings to discuss and support female emigration. These meetings were not always held by already established

⁶¹ John D. Cartwright, 'Emigration, Emigrants, and Miss Rye,' *Sharpe's London Magazine of Entertainment and Instruction for General Reading*, July 1863, 38.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39.

societies, but in some cases by groups of concerned citizens. For example, an Edinburgh meeting led by several ministers in April 1862 led to the formation of the Edinburgh Emigration Society in response to the ‘destitute and perilous condition of so many young women in Edinburgh at present unemployed and exposed to temptation [that] urgently calls for relief, which may, to some extent, be afforded by emigration to the British colonies’.⁶⁴ The Bishop of London, along with the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, a few MPs, and ‘other gentlemen’ also formed a society in 1862 with the purpose of ‘enabling young women to emigrate to the colonies under proper arrangements on both sides of the water’.⁶⁵ But other meetings about female emigration were not so obviously linked with religion. It was recorded in March 1863 that ‘about forty gentlemen, a large proportion of whom are connected commercially or otherwise with Victoria, met at the London Tavern, and formed a society to promote female emigration to the colony’.⁶⁶ Perhaps some of these men were already donors to emigration societies, but whatever the case, it is clear that female emigration was an important topic of discussion for people with colonial connections. For the more philanthropically-inclined metropolitan citizen, involvement with female emigration also offered the chance for one’s charitable contributions to be made public knowledge, as for donors to the Female Middle Class Emigration Society: their contributions were published in the society’s annual reports or acknowledged in letters printed in newspapers.⁶⁷ Charitable benefits also supported female emigration societies;

⁶⁴ ‘Female Emigration Society,’ *The Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh), 10 April 1862.

⁶⁵ News of this society’s foundation was carried in an Australian paper in October 1862; I have not been able to trace the original news bulletin in the metropole, but the establishment of the society probably took place at the end of summer in 1862. ‘Female Immigration,’ *The Kyneton Observer* (Victoria), 18 Oct 1862, 3.

⁶⁶ ‘Meetings,’ *The Observer* (London), 23 March 1863, 2.

⁶⁷ In 1862, Maria Rye and Jane Lewin thanked several donors in a letter to the editor of *The Times*. ‘Female Middle-Class Emigration,’ *The Times* (London), 9 April 1862, 12.

for example, a notice in the *Daily News* announced the performance of a ‘new oratorio... with a chorus of 400 voices’ on behalf of the British Columbia Female Emigration Society.⁶⁸ A particularly popular news item in both metropolitan and colonial papers was Queen Victoria’s donation of one hundred pounds to the British Ladies’ Female Emigration Society in 1851; the event was published in papers across Britain (including London, Liverpool, Leeds, Southampton, Colchester, and Truro) as well as in South Australia, New South Wales, and Tasmania.⁶⁹

Another source of information about female emigration in newspapers is the notices of ships heading out to Australia. These announcements often listed the number of passengers and in some cases contained details about the journey itself. In 1866, for instance, a ship sailing from Manchester to Melbourne was described as

divided into compartments, for single women (aft), married people (amidships), and single men (forward)... Mrs. Graham, an experienced matron, and Dr. Newbold, an emigration practitioner, accompany the emigrants; and Miss Rye, assisted by Mr. Chant, the despatching emigration officer, superintended the embarkation.⁷⁰

Here readers learned about the various personnel involved in the emigration process (though the precise duties of an ‘emigration practitioner’ are unclear; Dr. Newbold was probably a ship’s surgeon), and it was emphasised that the operation was a proper one with both a chaperone for the single women and a

⁶⁸ ‘Music,’ *Daily News* (London), 15 July 1862, 3.

⁶⁹ ‘Town and Country Talk,’ *The Examiner* (London), 16 August 1851, 524; ‘Miscellaneous News,’ *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (London), 17 August 1851, 8; ‘Domestic Intelligence,’ *Liverpool Mercury*, 12 August 1851, 3; ‘County Financial Boards Bill,’ *The Leeds Mercury*, 16 August 1851, 5; ‘Family Matters,’ *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian* (Southampton), 16 August 1851, 7; ‘Her Majesty’s Visit to Scotland,’ *The Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties* (Colchester), 22 August 1851; ‘Domestic,’ *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet, and General Advertiser* (Truro), 22 August 1851, 2; ‘Late English News,’ *Adelaide Times*, 6 December 1851, 7; ‘English News, The Female Emigration Society,’ *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* (New South Wales), 10 December 1851, 3; ‘Latest English,’ *The Tasmanian Colonist* (Hobart), 15 December 1851, 4.

⁷⁰ ‘Female Emigration,’ *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 December 1866, 3.

physical design (including a buffer of married couples) to prevent any immoral conduct. It is notable that Rye herself is mentioned as being involved in the embarkation of this ship; while it is known that Rye actually sailed with emigrants on a few occasions, her presence at the docks signalled to readers her investment in the scheme (or at least her acute sense of public relations).

The same bulletin also described the female emigrants being assisted by Rye and her colleagues:

Many of the young women set out are very poor, and many are orphans (but not direct from orphanages); and in these cases assistance has been rendered by Lord Shaftesbury and a number of his friends, whose liberality has obtained outfits for them. There are girls from every part of the United Kingdom, all capable of hard and useful work; and the utmost care has been taken to secure those of good character. The orderly and cheerful demeanour of these emigrants during the week in the depot at Birkenhead, under Miss Rye's care has given great promise for their future career.⁷¹

The passage's optimism and skillfully sympathetic description of the emigrants sounds like it could have been written by Maria Rye herself.

However, the attention given to the emigrants' financial situation, while at the same time avoiding associating their characters with dependence upon social institutions ('not direct from orphanages'), is noteworthy – while they may have been poor, they were pure. In case readers missed the point, the author also spelled out the work ethic and good disposition of the emigrants.

Although no surviving evidence has been located, it is interesting to speculate just how much influence Rye and some of her more powerful connections – such as the aforementioned Lord Shaftesbury, who served as president of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society – had when it came to publishing news about female emigration.⁷²

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME.

As especially evidenced in the 1851 reports of the Queen's support of the British Ladies' Female Emigration Society, even these brief articles were not exclusive to either metropole or colony. Some of these news items were edited from metropolitan sources and reprinted in colonial newspapers, usually in sections containing news items (that were perhaps not always newsworthy) from Europe. The appointment of a new Precentor of York Cathedral likely had little effect on the daily lives of Tasmanians aside from underlining their sense of belonging to a single imperial community, but the following lines would be cause for thought:

On Saturday night a meeting was held under the auspices of the Social Science Association, at their rooms, Waterloo-place, London, with the immediate object of wishing Miss Maria Rye 'God Speed' in her undertaking of taking out a large number of females to the Australian colonies, and generally to promote the emigration of educated females.⁷³

This particular excerpt was extracted from London news that was nearly three months old, and with the more informative details omitted.⁷⁴ Although we do not know how readers in the Australian colonies reacted (if at all) to these notices, it is not difficult to imagine some of the questions possibly asked by concerned settlers: How many women were coming? Who were they – ethnically, religiously, morally? Where would they go and what would they do? In this case, the answers were carried a day later, albeit in an 'English Shipping' bulletin, eleven hundred miles away in Brisbane's *Courier*:

The John Duncan sailed on November 5th for Otago, with about 250 passengers, of whom 130 are single women, assisted through the agency of the Provincial Government. A considerable number of the girls have been selected by Miss Maria S. Rye, who goes out a passenger in the ship.⁷⁵

⁷³ 'Latest from Europe,' *The Mercury* (Hobart), 22 January 1863, 3.

⁷⁴ 'Emigration of Educated Females,' *The Observer* (London), 2 November 1862, 4.

⁷⁵ 'Emigration,' *The Courier* (Brisbane), 23 January 1863, 2.

Here we learn that Rye's women accounted for at most half of a single ship, and they were bound for Otago, New Zealand, as well – a bit less threatening than the initial briefing of a large number of women descending upon Australia. This situation demonstrates how nineteenth-century newspapers consisted of a range of sensationalism and factualism. Yet newspapers, even if inaccurate in their reports, were a lifeline of knowledge for settlers whose main connections to the rest of the world were via printed or written word or physical travel.⁷⁶

There was much debate in the colonial press about the supposed benefits of female immigration. In February 1853, the Sydney newspaper *Empire* lamented, 'The moral and religious aspects of the colony do not vary from month to month. Immigration has done nothing yet to elevate us. The female immigration is strangely absorbed, and the comfort of families does not keep pace with the quantity of young women imported'.⁷⁷ Although British emigration advocates thought that women from the metropole would bring some morality and class to loose colonial societies, the *Empire* noted the adverse effects of the recent discovery of gold, which had 'produced a deleterious effect upon the industrious inclinations even of young females. They are not willing to commit themselves to industry for support, and to learn all that is requisite to make them honourable members of society'.⁷⁸ It appeared that female immigrants, like many colonial residents, had fallen under the spell of gold-driven greed and pinned their hopes upon striking it rich (or finding a husband with successful diggings) rather than entering stable

⁷⁶ Katherine Foxhall refers to shipping as the 'lifeblood' of the empire, bringing not only news but also 'labour, ... goods and food, ideas and government orders'. Katherine Foxhall, *Health, Medicine, and the Sea: Australian Voyages, c. 1815-1860* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 3.

⁷⁷ 'General Progress,' *Empire* (Sydney), 26 February 1853, 4.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

employment. This criticism eventually found its way back to the metropole where it was reprinted by *Reynolds's Newspaper* in London in June 1853, but the paper added no analysis or comment in response to such a negative report.⁷⁹ The blame for the state of the colonies in relation to emigration went both ways, and in 1858 *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* wrote of the imbalance of the sexes in the colonies, claiming that 'non-intervention in social subjects has been carried to an obnoxious and prejudicial extent'.⁸⁰ The irony, as the publication pointed out, was that the colonies were dependent on the metropole for providing a labour force to keep them afloat, yet they complained about their lack of control over immigration.

Disdain for the influx of female immigrants pervaded colonial newspapers. In 1861, when the governor of Western Australia was badgering the Colonial Office for shipments of single women, the Tasmanian press celebrated the halting of government-assisted female immigration with strong language:

The public will, we are sure, be glad to learn that the Immigration Commissioners have determined for the present to suspend the further introduction of female immigrants from England, at the cost of the funds of the colony, except in cases in which persons settled in Tasmania are desirous of bringing out their female relations. It will be felt that the fact of this decision will be to relieve the colony of a curse.⁸¹

It is interesting that even though the immigrants were explicitly described as coming from England, rather than maligned Ireland, *The Mercury* nevertheless felt that Tasmania was being overrun with female immigrants and its budget depleted to fund their passages and upkeep. In 1858, a report from a Hobart immigration agent appeared in *The London Journal*. It claimed that 'the

⁷⁹ 'Emigration Intelligence,' *Reynolds's Newspaper* (London), 26 Jun 1853, 3.

⁸⁰ 'Emigration and the Sexes,' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, September 1858, 511.

⁸¹ 'Female Immigration,' *The Mercury* (Hobart), 22 November 1861, 2.

demand for useful female domestic servants continues great, and... they obtain excellent wages'.⁸² Either Tasmania had been inundated with female immigrants over the next three years, or there were divided opinions about the demand for domestic servants in the colony. Whatever the circumstances, residents of the colony were apparently overwhelmed by the perceived level of female immigration, and the Hobart newspaper was confident that the Tasmanian public would share its 'glad' reaction to this notice that they would soon be free of the 'curse' of female immigration.

But such colonial criticisms did not slow the efforts of metropolitan female emigration advocates. In 1862, Rye sent a pamphlet about the fledgling Female Middle Class Emigration Society to the Melbourne-based *Argus*. The paper published a lengthy critique of the scheme, which stated, 'We hardly know how to deal with Miss Rye's pamphlet'.⁸³ The editors were initially supportive of Rye's plan to balance the sexes of Victoria's population and add to its growth. However, concerns were raised about the true feasibility of success for middle-class female emigrants:

It is one thing, however, to approve of the immigration of educated women in the abstract, and another to encourage them to come here by the promises and hopes held forth by Miss Maria S. Rye.... We are afraid that Miss Rye is deceiving herself and her friends, by the flattering pictures she has set before them of the condition of governesses in this colony. Any keeper of a 'labour mart' in Melbourne could give her better information on this point than all her lady patronesses in Melbourne or Sydney.... For an educated woman, of high class, who comes here to better her prospects, we cannot conceive a more hopeless venture, if she is to be a governess all her days. She had better be a good plain cook or a pretty barmaid.⁸⁴

⁸² 'Emigration,' *The London Journal, and Weekly Record of Literature, Science, and Art*, 13 Feb 1858, 381.

⁸³ [no title], *The Argus* (Melbourne), 17 June 1862, 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

The author was clearly convinced that Rye did not understand colonial life or the needs of the colony. Indeed, the author claimed, there was little use for so many governesses, and few of these middle-class women would be able to find a suitable husband among the unmarried working-class men of Victoria. As discussed in South Australia's 1856 investigative report, female immigrants who did not find suitable employment soon after arrival could face a cycle of menial work and dependence upon an immigration depot, although this may have been less of a risk in booming Victoria. *The Argus* was also cynical about Rye's colonial correspondents and 'lady patronesses' in the port cities; to the contrary, these correspondents were mentioned in Female Middle Class Emigration Society reports as proof that Rye and the society were aware of conditions in the colonies.

While a survey of colonial newspapers reveals wariness and scepticism regarding female emigration schemes such as Rye's, some editors expressed a more positive opinion. Following Rye's problems in New Zealand, the *Adelaide Observer* declared:

Had this energetic lady only brought her band of young women to these shores she and they would have received a cordial welcome, and she would have soon discovered that their services could be turned to profitable account. We do not mean to say that we have any very pressing demand for young women who contemplate matrimony as a speedy eventuality; but for industrious, respectable, and 'handy' domestic servants we could find immediate employment at highly remunerative wages.⁸⁵

This opinion was at odds with the 1856 South Australian investigation of female immigration and employability. The Australian newspapers' opinions about female immigrants were not monolithic; instead, they shifted and stirred over time in reaction to news from both the metropole and other colonies (both

⁸⁵ 'Female Emigration Scheme,' *Adelaide Observer*, 28 March 1863, 6.

Australian and further afield) in addition to local events. Rye, in particular, was responsible for keeping the topic of female emigration in the colonial press, either through her tireless actions in promoting the FMCES, or by directly engaging with colonial criticism in the form of letters to the editor. In the 1860s (when Rye was still active with the FMCES), a search of Australian newspapers for 'Maria Rye' returns fifty-five results; the less specific 'Miss Rye' for the same decade has 579 matches, with almost all of the results appearing to refer to Maria Rye.⁸⁶ Her character was so familiar that in 1862, shortly after the inauguration of the FMCES, the *Melbourne Punch* published a poem about her:

AN ODE TO MISS A. RYE

For educated women with a 'polish,'
There is a want; at least, such is your cry—
Would that the single state you could abolish,
And then, indeed, there would be Miss A. Rye (mis-e-ry);
But until then I deem your ends mistaken,
If you allow me to be so candid,
Pray to the slight reality awaken;
Some time before the polished dames have landed.
Are there no women in the land to wed?
No well-bred ladies with an education?
Of thee, Victoria, shall such things be said
Without exciting some slight observation?
Thy female population, it is true,
May fall far short of any male return.
Yet such a fact being anything but new
Why should it give my dear Miss Rye concern.
The advocates of female immigration
May think their logic very sound and wise,
But 'midst bur widely scattered population—
Must we despair to view the females rise (Rye's)
Surely the unfledg'd minds cannot advise,
The rest of mankind to the married station;
Whose maiden name existing still denies.
The owner aught, save her 'imagination.'⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Trove, National Library of Australia.

⁸⁷ 'An Ode to Miss A. Rye,' *Melbourne Punch*, 26 June 1862, 7.

For Rye, this was only the start of her sparring with critical colonial opinion about female emigration.

Rye vs. Queenslander

While it is difficult to find individual emigrants' stories in newspapers, it is possible to discern the strong autonomy of one of their most dedicated advocates, Maria Rye. In the Australian colonies, newspapers provided a public platform for debate about female immigration. Papers provided a starting point for debate with acquaintances, but they also gave readers a chance to share their own opinions more widely by writing a letter to the editor. These letters could trigger debates that were entirely contained within a publication, as seen in a chain of letters to the editor written by Maria Rye and a Queensland resident, which appeared in March 1866 in the Hobart *Mercury*. At first it seems odd that Rye chose to write to a Tasmanian paper regarding female immigration to Queensland and Otago. However, she opened her letter by stating her intention to correct previous news about the 'supposed failure of [her] scheme in Otago and Queensland, and to the mistaken idea that [she is] only interested in the emigration of educated women'.⁸⁸ The offending text about Rye is not evident in database searches of *The Mercury*, unless Rye took offense to a general article about female emigration; she wrote a similarly defensive letter two years earlier to the editor of the *Canterbury Home News* in New Zealand, which was then carried in the *Portland Guardian* in Victoria.⁸⁹ Whatever the offense, the letters of Rye and

⁸⁸ 'Miss Maria Rye to the Editor of The Mercury,' *The Mercury* (Hobart), 7 March 1866, 2.

⁸⁹ 'Miss Rye and Female Emigration.' *Portland Guardian and Normanby General Advertiser* (Victoria), 28 January 1864, 3.

the anonymous 'Queenslander' expose in detail both practical and theoretical concerns about Rye's female emigration scheme.

Rye's first letter to the editor of *The Mercury* consisted of Rye explaining her emigration scheme and providing evidence of its success. In response to her supposed focus on governesses, Rye denied proposing 'anything so wild, and utterly devoid of common sense as a wholesale emigration of educated women',⁹⁰ and acknowledged the continued success of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society in raising loans for emigrants. Rye was critical of the situation facing newly arrived immigrants in Brisbane and painted a graphic picture of the filthy conditions and lack of accommodation that faced the sick and dying passengers who had managed to survive the journey. It was these sights that led Rye to comment harshly on the situation in Queensland, and she felt that it was her duty to speak out:

As one of my principal objects in visiting these seas was to learn exactly how each colony conducted its emigration, you can scarcely expect me to be silent when such atrocities are committed. No woman volunteers to probe such wounds unless under the pressure of a very direful necessity. So remember I have not been more severe than the occasion fully justifies, and that I am deeply impressed with the fact, that to praise and to admire is not only a much easier but a much pleasanter task than to censure and condemn, but of this, all colonists may rest well assured that the very evils of which I have complained so bitterly, as having occurred in Queensland and in Otago, very materially influence the emigration or rather non-emigration to their own shores.⁹¹

Rye's comments on the conditions facing immigrants suggests that she understood the gravity of her emigration scheme and was not naïve when it came to understanding what awaited her emigrants when they reached Australia. Yet despite her criticism of Queensland and Otago, Rye's last

⁹⁰ Rye claimed that she had assisted 315 working women to the colonies, compared to only 54 educated women. 'Miss Maria Rye to the Editor of *The Mercury*,' *The Mercury* (Hobart), 7 March 1866, 2.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

sentence suggests that she believed that Australian settlers were supportive of immigration. As seen in a response to her letter, this was not entirely the case.

Rye's sparring partner, 'Queenslander', described themselves as 'an old habitant of Queensland' but signed their letters from Hobart, Tasmania.⁹²

This geographical discrepancy raises the question of whether Queenslander was truly aware of the situation when asserting:

For the information of Miss Rye, I may state that the new barracks are nearly, if not quite, finished, which would do credit to any colony. In the accommodation provided by these, the comfort of the immigrant will henceforth be duly regarded; that is, of course, within proper bounds; for Miss Rye must know that such places must not be too comfortable, or the asylum provided would, in a great many cases, be most grossly abused, especially in a rising colony such as Queensland, where hundreds of immigrants are monthly arriving.⁹³

Queenslander then went on to suggest that improved conditions would only encourage more immigrants to arrive and further strain resources. However, Queenslander admitted that the educated female immigrants, such as those assisted by the FMCES, were met with a warmer welcome:

They, at least, were not sent to the barracks; on the contrary, the ladies were accommodated with residence in the private houses of certain ladies of Brisbane, or in a house provided for them by the bishop, whilst the remainder were marched to the Normal Schools, where comfortable rooms had been provided for them, and where they were visited by several influential ladies and gentlemen, including the members of the Government and parliament. That these immigrants have done well is also true; for nearly all of those, in the school, obtained employment in a few days; and most of the governesses, instead of, for any great length of time, teaching the youth of their fellow colonists, very soon put themselves in the way of having children of their own to teach.⁹⁴

⁹² Queenslander's identity was apparently revealed to the editor: 'I usually attach my name to any production of mine, but in this instance, for reasons stated in the commencement of this letter, I have adopted a nom de plume. I have, however, enclosed my card, as a guarantee of good faith.' 'Miss Maria Rye,' *The Mercury* (Hobart), 9 March 1866, 2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Rather than have to live in close quarters in the barracks (Queenslander nevertheless made a military allusion with the word ‘marched’), the ‘ladies’ were able to have accommodation befitting their social status, with suitable rooms and social visits, probably all arranged by the colonial correspondents the FMCES employed in Australian port cities. This was certainly a more welcoming arrangement than an immigration depot. According to Queenslander, the educated women had some social advantages that might have eased their transition to colonial life. As we know from the 1856 South Australia investigation, however, some educated and trained women did require the aid of a female immigration depot, at least in South Australia. Also noteworthy is Queenslander’s recognition of immigrants’ success not as governesses attaining steady employment, but rather by marrying and having families. While marriage certainly was discussed as a suitable outcome for an immigrant, it was not the foremost aim of female emigration societies – they instead prioritised a woman’s capacity to improve her situation via respectable employment. In a final blow to the objectives of societies like the FMCES, Queenslander closed the letter with the claim that Maria Rye received an eighteen-pound land order (convertible to cash or available for colonial land investment) for every statute adult brought by her to the colony. This was a significant accusation, considering some of Rye’s immigrants could expect to have an annual salary of forty pounds.⁹⁵ In Queenslander’s eyes, Rye’s ventures were not driven by philanthropic concern, but rather by capital gain.

In her reply to Queenslander, Rye angrily denied receiving any such sum, writing, ‘You accuse me, not of receiving wages, but of actually appropriating to myself that which legally and morally belongs to another, and

⁹⁵ Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME.

that too under the cloak of desiring to assist my countrywomen'.⁹⁶ Rye insisted that her motivation to encourage female emigration was driven by philanthropy rather than greed. As we have seen in Chapter Two, Rye did arrange an agreement with the government in 1866 to select emigrants for Victoria, which entailed claiming up to £280 per annum toward her expenses. While the details were settled over the course of 1866, Commissioner Stephen Walcott noted that the government of Victoria had accepted Rye's offer on 24 March,⁹⁷ shortly after the start of the debate between Queenslander and Rye – did Queenslander have inside knowledge of the deal or hear rumours from acquaintances and somehow twist the fact of Rye's eligibility for expense claims into the belief that she was receiving land claims? When Queenslander replaced Rye's philanthropic motives by material, Rye was riled enough to conclude her response with an appeal to a higher power:

The Saldauha has just arrived in Hervey's Bay, reporting exactly 77 deaths as occurring between port and port. You will probably class all this under the head of 'colonial experience,' or 'incidental casualties in connection with roughing it,' but I am quite sure that One, from whom nothing is hid, and who weighs every action in His most just balances, calls all these most unnecessary sorrows and disgraceful proceedings by a very different name.⁹⁸

Rye did not usually make religious references in her usual writings; clearly Queenslander's accusations had stung her. Perhaps colonial residents accustomed to 'roughing it' had forgotten their own struggles to reach Australia (either via their own means or as convicts). However, it is likely that they simply were more familiar with the harshness of colonial life and

⁹⁶ 'Miss Maria S. Rye to the Editor of The Mercury,' *The Mercury* (Hobart), 22 March 1866, 2.

⁹⁷ Stephen Walcott to the Commissioner of Trade and Customs, Melbourne, 26 May 1866, TNA, CO 386/132, p. 83.

⁹⁸ 'Miss Maria S. Rye to the Editor of The Mercury,' *The Mercury* (Hobart), 22 March 1866, 2.

therefore more realistic about female immigrants' chances of success, particularly the educated, middle-class 'ladies' who were discombobulated by the Australian colonies. As noted in Chapter Three, the South Australia Select Committee's 1856 investigation revealed how unprepared some of the women were for work, if not life, outside of cities.

Rye's shifting tone was not lost on Queenslander, who opened the final letter in the exchange with faked trepidation:

The tone adopted by her in the present instance is such that, in spite of my aversion to controversy, especially with a lady, and being, moreover, destitute of a guardian angel of her own sex who could take up the cudgels for me, I feel it incumbent upon me, unprotected bachelor as I am, to offer a few re-marks in reply.⁹⁹

Here at last we get a bit more information about Queenslander – he was an unmarried (and bitter) man. But despite the attempt at humor, Queenslander immediately launched into an examination of Rye's involvement in emigration. Regarding the allegations of possible monetary benefit, Queenslander set forth an interrogative set of questions:

- No. 1. Who received the £18 land-order to which each of those governesses and others, introduced by Miss Rye, was entitled by the then existing laws on the subject?
- No. 2. Did Miss Rye, for herself, or on behalf of others, demand and receive any monies from any one or more, or from each of the abovenamed individuals?
- No. 3. If so, how was that money applied?
- No. 4. If not, by whom was the passage money paid?
- No. 5. Did Miss Rye, for herself, or for others, obtain any gratuity from the owners of the Black Ball Line?
- No. 6. What was the amount paid for the passage of each individual shipped by her, and was the amount in each case equal?
- No. 7. Did any of these people pay their own passage money in full?
- No. 8. Am I to understand from Miss Rye's letter that she has neither directly nor indirectly received any pecuniary benefit whatever, by the introduction of those immigrants into Queensland?¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Queenslander admitted that the questions were perhaps overly intrusive, but he felt that they were necessary to better understand Rye's emigration scheme and how she and the emigrants benefitted from such a setup. Rye did not dignify these questions with a response, but it is unlikely that she was turning a profit on her emigration scheme. The FMCES relied on donations to function and provide loans to emigrants, and it seems odd that Rye would have allowed the organisation she created to founder like it did in the 1880s when the money ran low if she was indeed raking in cash from the delivery of female emigrants from Britain to Australia. As this chain of letters proves, Australian settlers seemed to have a more logistical and perhaps commercial view of female emigration in comparison to the moral and philanthropic ideals of the metropole.

As Rye's attention shifted toward her many other philanthropic ventures, the FMCES faded from the pages of the colonial press. Yet in late 1882, Jane Lewin (who had helped to create the society alongside Rye) and Emma Brooke, secretaries of the FMCES, began to send out letters to the editors of Australian newspapers. The first batch appears to have been sent to Queensland, where papers published the letter in November and December, with letters appearing in New South Wales and Victoria at the end of December¹⁰¹. Another batch of letters with the same text was sent to South Australia in early February, and the letters were published in various

¹⁰¹ Emma Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 24 November 1882, 3; Emma Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' *The Brisbane Courier*, 25 November 1882, 6; Emma Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), 2 December 1882, 787; Emma Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Correspondence. Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' *Maryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser* (Queensland), 23 December 1882, 3; Emma Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration Society. To the Editor,' *Goulburn Herald* (New South Wales), 21 December 1882, 3; Emma Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Correspondence. Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' *Mount Alexander Mail* (Victoria), 30 December 1882, 3.

newspapers at the end of March 1883.¹⁰² The timing of this mass mailing is interesting because the FMCES ceased to exist as an independent society in 1886,¹⁰³ only a few years after Lewin's and Brooke's promotion of the organisation in the colonial press. The 1880s had proven financially unstable for the FMCES as their donations fluctuated and the earlier fervent support of the society faded.¹⁰⁴ This appeal was quite likely influenced by an anxiety about the society's difficulties, although it is possible that Lewin and Brooke were most interested in securing new donors or colonial contacts.

Lewin and Brooke opened their letter to the editor by asking whether the paper would allow them some 'space in your columns to make known to the public the work of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society... founded in 1861, by Miss Rye, in order to promote the emigration of educated women in the belief that by so doing she was materially helping both the old and the new countries'.¹⁰⁵ The focus on education reflected Rye's confidence when founding the FMCES that educated women would be able to help themselves by being gainfully and respectably employed while also taming and shaping colonial society; these beliefs were shared by Lewin.¹⁰⁶ Lewin and Brooke stated that they received applications for women from a variety of backgrounds – governesses, teachers, cooks, nurses, maids, and even those

¹⁰² Emma E. Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Female Middle-Class Emigration Society,' *The Express and Telegraph* (Adelaide), 28 March 1883, 2; Emma E. Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Female Middle-Class Emigration Society,' *The South Australian Advertiser* (Adelaide), 28 March 1883, 5; Emma E. Brooke and Jane E. Lewin, 'Female Middle-Class Emigration Society. To the Editor,' *South Australian Weekly Chronicle* (Adelaide), 31 March 1883, 12.

¹⁰³ 'Women's Library: Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' Aim25, 1 March 2008, <http://www.aim25.ac.uk/cats/65/10438.htm>; 'The Women's Library: Records of the British Women's Emigration Association,' Archives Hub, 1 March 2008, <http://archiveshub.ac.uk/features/0806bwea.html>.

¹⁰⁴ FMCES Annual Report, 1883-1886, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

¹⁰⁵ Brooke and Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration Society,' *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 24 November 1882, 3

¹⁰⁶ J.E. Lewin, 'Female Middle Class Emigration... a paper read at the social science congress, in October, 1863,' TWL LSE, 304.8171241041 LEW, 2.

involved in missionary work – and the society would be happy to hear from any of ‘those in the colonies who require the services of such women’.¹⁰⁷ It reads as though the FMCES was struggling to place applicants, but it is unclear if this was due to the lack of positions or the qualifications of the potential emigrants. Lewin and Brooke asserted that each applicant’s background, work experience, and personal character were thoroughly investigated; not only did this relax any concerns about the ability of these women to adapt to and shape society and life in general in the Australian colonies, but it also meant that the FMCES would be able to make good matches between applicants and employers. It was for the development of such an arrangement that Lewin and Brooke wished to hear from possible employers in Australia. However, they were careful to note that they would ‘be glad to hear from any employers who need the assistance of women, not domestic servants’.¹⁰⁸ The FMCES was clearly still catering for the niche of educated middle-class women. Any potential correspondents among those who read the letter were asked to contact society secretary Miss Strongitharm at 19 Sutherland Gardens, in north London’s Maida Vale.¹⁰⁹ For those in the metropole who interacted with the FMCES, personal callers to the secretary would be visiting one of the wealthier parts of the neighbourhood.¹¹⁰ Obviously the FMCES had not lost its middle-class connections over its twenty-five year history. Despite the extensive promotion of the FMCES,

¹⁰⁷ Brooke and Lewin, ‘Female Middle Class Emigration Society,’ *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 24 November 1882, 3

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ T. F. T. Baker, Diane K. Bolton and Patricia E. C. Croot, ‘Paddington: Maida Vale,’ in *A History of the County of Middlesex: Volume 9, Hampstead, Paddington*, ed. C. R. Elrington (London: Victoria County History, 1989), 212-217, *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol9/pp212-217>.

¹¹⁰ Building plans from 1880 called for houses worth ‘at least £1,000 each’ to be constructed along the street. Ibid.

Lewin and Brooke were unable to keep the society from waning. They could no longer rely on the press, which had served the society so well with publicity – positive and negative – in the early years of the FMCES.

British and Australian newspapers raised readers' awareness of female emigrants and emigration societies, but it was colonial editors who raised questions of logistics and practicality regarding mass female emigration. One of the key figures of organised female emigration, Maria Rye, appeared frequently in newspapers, whether in reports of meetings of London, news bulletins of groups of women coming to Australia under Rye's wing, or in letters to the editor written by Rye herself. Despite Rye's attempts to garner support for female emigration to Australia, colonial newspapers were wary of Rye's emigration scheme and some readers (like the anonymous 'Queenslander') even accused Rye of acting for her own benefit rather than providing opportunities for metropolitan women. Editors were sceptical that metropolitan emigrators fully understood the colonial situation.

Metropolitan and colonial newspapers did not reveal radical bipartisan public opinion toward female emigration, as it was nearly impossible for the British and Australian presses to remain completely distinct due to the collective nature of syndicated and reprinted articles. However, there was a clear trend of uncertainty and scepticism evident in the Australian colonies, perhaps because those living in the colonies were more aware of the extent of the hardships emigrants (particularly middle-class women such as those assisted by Maria Rye) would face upon arrival. Assisted female immigration initially caused a stir in the colonies, but as the FMCES lost its momentum, co-founder Jane Lewin's final-hour appeal to the Australian colonial press was unable to halt the society's dissipation. Perhaps most telling is the obituary of

Maria Rye from 18 November 1903. The only British paper to be found carrying notice was *The Manchester Guardian*, which merely recalled Rye's charity work for poor children and noted that her favorite pastime was gardening.¹¹¹ The notice was syndicated in Australian papers; again, all described Rye simply as 'the pioneer of the movement for the emigration of destitute families',¹¹² rather than as a campaigner for female emigrants and a looming presence in the public media fervor surrounding female emigration from Britain to Australia. Despite the early metropolitan hope and colonial dismay surrounding female emigration schemes, it seems that the women melted into the rest of the streams of people, goods, and news heading to and from the Australian colonies and were quickly forgotten in the press. Thanks to the efforts of Australian women writers, however, female immigrants' experiences were made available to the general public and offered dramatic and entertaining contexts in which women's voices could be finally be heard in full.

¹¹¹ 'Memorial Notices,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 November 1903, 12.

¹¹² 'Death of Miss Rye,' *Evening News* (Sydney), 18 November 1903, 6; 'A Pioneer's End,' *The Australian Star* (Sydney), 18 November 1903, 3; 'Obituary, Miss Rye, London,' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November 1903, 9; 'General Cable News,' *The Argus* (Melbourne), 18 November 1903, 7; 'Death of Miss Rye, London' *The Brisbane Courier*, 18 November 1903, 5; 'Obituary,' *The Maitland Daily Mercury* (New South Wales), 18 November 1903, 5.

Chapter Five – Settling in a New Society: Women Authors and the Emigrant Experience

In addition to the mid-nineteenth-century boom in Australian newspapers, there was also an emergence of a distinct Australian literature written by authors who spent time in the Australian colonies, particularly from women writers. These female authors addressed both colonial and metropolitan audiences, and some of them were immigrants themselves and spent time in Australia. Their novels have been discussed relating to literary analysis and domesticity, particularly in a book about domestic fiction in Australia and New Zealand edited by Tamara S. Wagner,¹ as well as in Marion Amies' study of governess novels.² However, these literary analyses have not been explicitly connected to the discourse of female emigration, our understanding of which benefits from more emotional and personal stories than are provided in most official records. Wagner highlights the value of literature in thinking about individual lives: 'We need to refract established histories in order to read the different, always highly individualized experiences and their re-presentation in a larger context'.³

When female emigrants reached their destination, they continued to be judged in terms of their success by the FMCES. Discussions of the cost of female immigration by governments and criticisms of emigrants and emigrators by the general public in colonial newspapers also occurred. It was with the emergence of novels by women that the public began to hear about the emigration experience and colonial life from a female voice. Unlike

¹ Tamara S. Wagner, ed., *Domestic Fiction in Colonial Australia and New Zealand* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011).

² Marion Amies, 'The Victorian Governess and Colonial Ideas of Womanhood,' *Victorian Studies* 31, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 537-565.

³ Wagner, *Domestic Fiction in Colonial Australia and New Zealand*, 11.

newspaper editorials, reports, and letters, women's novels provide insight into what everyday life was like for women in the colonies, in contrast to fiction produced by male writers which 'often brooded upon the law and lawlessness, justice and injustice.... [and] gave the bushranger a mythic status'.⁴

According to Amies, almost all Australian women writers saw themselves as 'middle or upper class in education, values, and expectations, though often they were without finances to match';⁵ their education and status gave them the skills and time needed to write books, even if – as in Murray's case – they were motivated to publish by financial insecurity. Their works reveal the lives of immigrants not only through female eyes, but also through an individual everyday lens rather than one focused on societies' and officials' directing of movement.

For this interdisciplinary analysis of female immigrants' experiences and the challenges women faced in adapting to life in the Australian colonies, I have chosen three fictional works by women writers, each of whom emigrated from Britain to Australia. The books span three decades of the mid-nineteenth century (the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s) and take place in New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria, respectively. Mary Theresa Vidal's *Tales for the Bush* (1845) and Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia During the Gold Fever* (1854) shed light on women's experiences with emigration and life in the Australian colonies, while Elizabeth Murray's *Ella Norman; or, A Woman's Perils* (1864) specifically discusses female emigration societies.⁶ Although these works do not focus

⁴ Bruce Bennett, 'Some Early Australian Storytellers and Their Tales,' in *Caring Cultures: Sharing Imaginations: Australia and India*, edited by Anurag Sharma and Pradeep Trikha (New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2006), 8.

⁵ Amies, 'The Victorian Governess and Colonial Ideas of Womanhood,' 539.

⁶ Mary Theresa Vidal, *Tales for the Bush*. 1845. Digital text, Sydney: University of Sydney Library, 1997; Catherine Helen Spence, *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia During the*

solely on female emigration, themes relating to emigration are prevalent. Vidal, for instance, was highly concerned with morality and the importance of leading a Christian life in the colonies; Spence described the employment difficulties single female immigrants faced, while Murray, echoing the concerns voiced in colonial newspapers, was critical of naïve metropolitan philanthropists. Both Spence and Murray – in the vein of earlier British novels such as the Brontës’ *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey* – focus on women hoping to become governesses, a position described by Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair as ‘a desperate last resort for the genteel spinster reduced by the death or bankruptcy of parents to making her own financial way in the world’.⁷ A synthesis of these fictional works with the themes already discussed in this thesis enables us – due to the literary context – to think about the female immigrant experience in a more personalised, empathetic way. Most importantly, it allows us to hear more from a woman’s perspective.

Mary Theresa Vidal’s *Tales for the Bush*

Mary Theresa Vidal (nee Johnson) was born in Devon in 1815, but emigrated to Sydney in 1840 due to her husband’s health.⁸ Patricia Clarke notes that one of Vidal’s fellow passengers described her ‘as “genteel” in appearance, an “excellent sailor” but “so inanimate that one cannot take much interest in her”’.⁹ This description of a demure, if somewhat bland,

Gold Fever, 2 vols. London: John W. Parker and Son West Strand, 1854; Elizabeth A. Murray, *Ella Norman; or, A Woman’s Perils* (1864; reprint, Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1985).

⁷ Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 181.

⁸ J. C. Horner, ‘Vidal, Mary Theresa (1815–1873),’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1967. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/vidal-mary-theresa-2759/text3911>.

⁹ Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits: Women Writers and Journalists in Nineteenth Century Australia* (London: Pandora Press, 1988), 23.

personality certainly correlates with Vidal's straightforward moralistic writing style. Vidal's husband, Francis Vidal, served as a Church of England minister in Penrith for five years before the family returned to England in 1845. In that same year, before Vidal's return to England, her collection of stories *Tales for the Bush* was published, first as individual parts at a price of sixpence each, then as a collection, followed by a third edition printed in London and a run of five editions total.¹⁰ Interestingly, an early Sydney review of the first part of *Tales for the Bush* attributed the work to a male author: 'This is the first of a series of religious tales, understood to be from the pen of a clergyman of the Church of England'.¹¹ Whether the reviewer confused Vidal with her husband or simply assumed the material was written by a man is unclear.

With the publication of *Tales for the Bush* Vidal produced one of the first works of fiction about Australia written by a woman (and written in Australia). Of the ten fictional works Vidal wrote after her return to England, several also dealt with Australia, including two of her best-known novels: *The Cabramatta Stone* (1849) and *Bengala: or, Some Time Ago* (1860). Vidal died in 1869 at the age of fifty-four, suffering from severe facial neuralgia. The 'sincere, moralistic style of writing she introduced to Australia' continued, according to Patricia Clarke, 'to have a following for many years'.¹² Vidal's focus on morality is clearly evident in her debut *Tales for the Bush*.

Vidal's work has a religious tone, and the most obvious theme in her work is morality and the role of Christian values in characters' lives. The book consists of short stories portraying characters' everyday lives – and the

¹⁰ After returning to England in 1845, Mary's husband became a tutor at Eton. Horner, 'Vidal, Mary Theresa (1815-1873)'; Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 11, 24, 26.

¹¹ 'New Publication. Tales for the Bush, No. 1 – Sydney; Welch, 1844,' *The Weekly Register of Politics, Facts, and General Literature* (Sydney) 2, no. 31 (1844): 450.

¹² Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 26.

hardships they faced – in New South Wales. Vidal did not need to employ complex plots (like those in Spence’s and Murray’s novels) in her short stories. Indeed, the 1844 Sydney review noted that the stories’ focus appeared to be one ‘of the ordinary moral and religious duties’ told in a simple style with plots ‘equally free from art’.¹³ Despite the religious agenda and short story format, Vidal invested in and developed her characters in order to prove her points. For instance, she frequently commented on her characters’ personalities, and this usually ties into the moral lessons of each particular short story. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, the protection and promotion of morality was a major concern for those managing and critiquing the emigration system and the female emigrants themselves. Tanya Dalziell claims that Vidal’s *Tales for the Bush* was directed at the women recruited by Caroline Chisholm for domestic service.¹⁴ Morality, or lack thereof, among the working-class immigrants was especially of concern, but Dalziell suggests that the novel was ‘as much a collection of stories for the middle classes of the imperial centre *and* the outposts of empire as it was for their servants’,¹⁵ particularly women. After all, these women were expected to refine colonial society with the same proper conduct required in the metropole.

When it came to positive moral traits among female emigrants, Vidal valued industry, loyalty, honesty, and a pleasant demeanour. The character of Susan Fletcher in ‘Susan’s Dream’ was described as ‘a brisk, tidy girl, good tempered and cheerful’ and ‘a conscientious and pious person’.¹⁶ In the story ‘Marion Martin or, The Month’s Trial’, a longtime colonial resident named

¹³ ‘New Publication. Tales for the Bush, No.1’, *Weekly Register*, 450.

¹⁴ Tanya Dalziell, “No Place for a Book? Fiction in Australia to 1890,” in *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pearce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 101.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁶ Vidal, *Tales for the Bush*, 147-8.

Mrs. Grey wished to find a girl to raise as a servant and tried out several candidates 'but found them so very inattentive and idle that she would not keep them'.¹⁷ Mrs. Grey finally found a young girl to take in, but she had been 'brought up in bad ways and with bad examples before.... She did many wrong things; she was sly, and when her mistress did not see her, she stopped in her work and idled'.¹⁸ Vidal portrayed a positive relationship between employer and employee as being dependent on the servant's honest and affable behaviour. For example, her character Rebekah Davy in 'Little Annie and Her Nurse; or, The Effects of Pain', serving as a nursery maid for a family bound for Australia, 'possessed many very good qualities; she was faithful and trustworthy, strictly honest and careful of her master's interests. She was moreover attached to them, and readily agreed to go with them when they left England to settle in this country'.¹⁹ Seemingly positive traits, however, could also create problems if not kept in check; unhappy with her new life in New South Wales, Davy could not bring herself to complain to her beloved employers, and they began to think that she was spiteful. In 'Hannah and Anne Sandford; or, The Quick and The Slow Girl', another character's husband despaired that she made more time for the material than the spiritual:

But Anne Sandford was one of those busy, bustling, thrifty women, who give themselves no time for thought; she said that it 'was impossible for her to go to church.' She thought her whole duty consisted in making the most of everything, keeping her house clean, and everything polished and bright. She often blamed her husband for neglecting to turn a penny when he might have done so. And very proud was she of the sum her butter and eggs and poultry brought her in.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 45.

¹⁸ Ibid., 48.

¹⁹ Ibid., 137.

²⁰ Ibid., 14.

Sandford's industrious nature could be seen as essential to colonial prosperity, but Vidal valued good Christian practice above all, and several of the short stories hinged on characters' ability or willingness to regularly attend church services. It is unknown how much domestic support Vidal had in New South Wales, but as the wife of a minister she likely did not miss church services for domestic duties.

The characters in *Tales for the Bush* are usually of the working class, but Vidal was careful to note that their social status did not preclude them from respectability. Vidal pointed out that Anne Thompson, a working-class character in the story 'Thomas and Anne Thompson', was raised by 'a careful and pious mother' who had 'taught her to be respectful to her superiors, and that politeness to one another is taught in the Bible'.²¹ This power of Christian teaching to influence social behaviour is mentioned too in 'Susan's Dream', where Susan had 'always lived with good people, and her parents, though very poor and simple, had taught her some of that wisdom which is from above'.²² Despite Susan being raised in poverty, she was properly taught religion. Clearly Vidal did not believe that morality was tied to social standing.

Vidal strongly correlated appearance and cleanliness with respectability. In *Tales for the Bush*, what is on the outside reflects what is on the inside:

A person's dress is in some sort a picture of their mind. With some it is all for show: so long as the gown and bonnet is smart, 'no matter what is under;' if a hole in the stocking does not shew, 'no matter.' Others do not even care for this: but a dirty, slovenly, rugged woman, cannot be right in her heart; she will not care for her actions either. To be habitually clean and neat, neat without shew or display, neat whether people are by to see it or not, is a sort of proof that, that person is also

²¹ Ibid., 4, 7.

²² Ibid., 147.

careful of her ways - careful to be modest, humble and regular in her temper.²³

In Vidal's mind, poor moral character was outwardly expressed by dirtiness and messiness. Note that Vidal did not say that one should dress richly or fashionably, but instead stressed simple cleanliness and neatness. This concept is echoed in the story 'Ruth Walsh' in which Vidal describes a woman who is 'very respectable looking, and, although in her working dress, and doing a dirty job, she was clean and neat'.²⁴ The character's goodness shines through her dull surroundings. In the story 'The Little Cousins', Kitty Right prays, 'Please God if I can work, I'll not be dirty, when she sees me again, be I ever so poor'.²⁵ In Vidal's stories, having a proper appearance allows women to prosper, such as in the case of Anne Thompson, whose 'tidy appearance and respectful manner brought people to the shop',²⁶ or that of Ruth Walsh, who took up needlework for a lady who, 'pleased with Ruth's appearance and respectful manners, asked her if she thought of going into service'.²⁷ A lack of cleanliness was connected to failure:

What an uncomfortable, wretched state every thing was in! The father was nailing down an old box, and the mother, all rags and dirt, with a pipe in her mouth, sat on a low stool looking on.... They made loud lamentations, complained of the hard-heartedness of their landlord, and the undutifulness and wickedness of their children in bringing disgrace upon them. 'There's Jacob in gaol - he'll be sentenced to the gang; there's Betsy run off with Sam Foster, turned out of place as a thief; there's John in Norfolk Island, and the rest must starve!'²⁸

²³ Ibid., 31.

²⁴ Ibid., 53.

²⁵ Ibid., 96.

²⁶ Ibid., 6.

²⁷ Ibid., 29.

²⁸ Ibid., 59.

With Vidal's belief in the correlation between cleanliness and morality, it is no surprise that the 'wretched' environment of 'rags and dirt' produced criminals in her writing.

Despite Vidal's obvious moral concerns regarding women, she also offered readers glimpses of the emigration process and the customs of Australian settler society. None of Vidal's personal papers from her time in Australia remain extant, so we have no insight into her experiences of Australia beyond those recorded in her fiction. Here, life in New South Wales is portrayed as difficult, crude, and unpleasant. In a couple of stories Vidal mentions the circumstances leading her characters to leave England. The Thompson family, for instance, emigrated after hearing 'of other families emigrating and that they easily got high wages, and lived in plenty'.²⁹ They soon regretted their decision. It took them five months to reach Sydney during which 'there were many discomforts on board the ship [and] a great many passengers, and some of the bad ones quarreled'.³⁰ After their long and cramped voyage, the family was relieved to settle near the edges of the city. Their story is contrasted with that of Ruth in 'Ruth Walsh', who faced a four-day journey following disembarkation with her mother, 'who was lifted off the dray and seemed more dead than alive, with all the jolting and heat'.³¹ Here is a hint of writers' fascination with the Australian environment, with the stifling climate adding further misery to new immigrants' fatigue. Unsurprisingly, some immigrants must have questioned the wisdom of their decision, no matter their motives for leaving Britain.

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

³¹ Ibid., 26.

Another motive for emigration that Vidal mentioned was applicable to the families of convicts. In 'The Little Cousins', Mrs. Right decides to emigrate because she was not a widow, but rather a 'lone' woman, 'for her husband was yet alive; he had fallen into temptations, and had broken God's commandments, and the laws of his country, and he was therefore taken from his home, his wife and his young child, and was transported to a far land';³² in other words, her husband was transported to New South Wales as a convict. Despite her fervent wish to reunite her family, Mrs. Right and her daughter were not able to leave England for at least a year.³³ By the time they were together again in New South Wales, it was clear that the husband, Samuel, relished his new, rebellious lifestyle and had 'boasted with his fellow laborers, of being "sent out," or he boldly expected the same advantages and indulgences which others, who were not convicts, enjoyed. He called it a "misfortune," not a punishment'.³⁴ He soon abandoned his wife and child and although Mrs. Right searched for him throughout Sydney, he was never heard from again.³⁵

Convicts only appear briefly in *Tales for the Bush*, most notably the story of Mrs. Right and her convict husband. Penal transportation to New South Wales was suspended in 1840, but Vidal's characters were well aware of New South Wales being a land for the punished. Mrs. Right's daughter, Kitty, for example, worried about going there despite the possibility of reuniting with her father:

After a short time, Kitty said, 'I don't like to go away mother, I don't like to leave Jane, and the village, and the fields, and go in a ship, to a bad place.'

³² Ibid., 86.

³³ Ibid., 88.

³⁴ Ibid., 97-8.

³⁵ Ibid., 98.

‘Why do you call it a bad place?’ said her mother.
‘O, Jane, and Eliza, say it is a bad place, where wicked people are sent. Why did father go, and why do you go?’
‘Your father was sent there because he did wrong, but I hope he is sorry now, and that God has forgiven him; and he is very lonely there, so you and I Kitty, will go out to him, we can get work there, and we shall be all together again, and if it please God, we shall be much happier.’³⁶

Likewise, in the story of ‘Ruth Walsh’, Ruth (who left her position as housemaid for Mr. Benson, a clergyman, in order to emigrate with her mother and brother) searched for her brother after her arrival in New South Wales but found him in the company of convicts who felt no remorse and made the most of their new environment:

They were prisoners who had escaped, and were robbing every one they met. Tom Grant was a colleague, though he had not openly left Mr. Manley's service; but he helped them to much of his master's property, and he had enticed Dick Walsh to join him in a drinking bout that day; and then, when he was not sober, induced him to join in a cattle-stealing expedition. To drown his remorse, which began to show as the effects of the liquor wore off, they gave him more; and now... he lay dead drunk on the grass.³⁷

Vidal did not comment more on the role of convicts in settler society, but her strong moral themes made clear her disapproval.

Like other commentators, Vidal noted that social customs were looser in colonies than the metropole. After a girl curtsied in the story ‘Thomas and Anne Thompson’, Vidal commented that it was a custom ‘which some people think unnecessary after they leave England’.³⁸ The young Ruth Walsh was shocked by the candor of the Australian settlers: ‘The blunt manners of everyone she saw in New South Wales struck her very much, and often she wondered what Mr. Benson would say to the disrespectful way in which the

³⁶ Ibid., 87-8.

³⁷ Ibid., 35.

³⁸ Ibid., 7.

lower orders treated those in any way above them'.³⁹ Immigrants in Vidal's stories are surprised by the lack of a class system in a land in which hard work was more essential to survival than a good name. As an older resident in 'Ruth Walsh' exclaimed to recently-arrived Ruth:

Ye're a fresh one and no mistake; why darling in this country we're all gentlemen; we don't think of 'Misters' and titles d'ye see! We all get good pay and there's no need for bowing and curtsying, Sirring and Ma'amng; we servants are great folks out here and I advise you my dear, to speak up more and forget your English manners, unless you mean to be the laugh of the whole settlement.⁴⁰

The resident explained that English manners were no longer necessary and were even considered a faux pas in settler society. As Penny Russell clarifies in her work on manners in colonial Australia, proper behaviour 'consisted not simply in knowing the etiquette for particular social situations, but in judging when and how far it should be observed'.⁴¹ Titles and manners were superfluous when it came to earning a living – working was the most important element of survival in the Australian colonies, and several stories in *Tales for the Bush* highlight the necessity of employment.

Despite Vidal's overlay of pious morality, her stories speak to the immigrant experience. Finding employment was a great concern for Vidal's characters, just as it was for female immigrants who faced the depot system if they were unable to support themselves. Mrs. Right (whose husband was a convict) was given a letter of recommendation by her local parson before leaving England to aid her search for work should she not be able to find her husband.⁴² Yet after her husband disappeared she and her daughter, Kitty,

³⁹ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁴¹ Penny Russell, *Savage or Civilised? Manners in Colonial Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010), 3.

⁴² Vidal, *Tales for the Bush*, 92.

struggled to make ends meet in Sydney. Mrs. Right injured her leg, further limiting their income, although their landlady allowed them to remain rent-free while Kitty searches daily for work.⁴³ As seen in the discussion of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot, any illness or disability could greatly hamper an immigrant's ability to procure employment, quickly leading to destitution. Vidal presented Mrs. Right and Kitty in a dismal scene in which the women could not afford a light source for nighttime and therefore simply sat in the dark; later Vidal described how Kitty used a mat and old cloak as a bed and was 'cold and hungry, for Kitty allowed herself only just what would support her'.⁴⁴ Eventually Kitty managed to find a needlework position paying nine pounds per year – Vidal then promptly described Kitty attending a church service and calculating a tenth of her wages so she could provide a proper tithe, driving home her point about the importance of Christian morality.⁴⁵

Vidal made it clear that there was a fine line between making a living and just managing to survive in the colonies, and several of her characters found themselves in terrible conditions. Mrs. Grey, the colonial resident searching for a servant in 'Marion Martin, or The Month's Trial', proclaimed that she would only hire someone on a trial basis:

Well, I'll take the girl for one month, on trial. I shall give her a few necessary clothes, but if I part with her at the end of the month, I shall not let her take these clothes; if, however, she pleases me and remains on, they will be hers, and I shall give her things to the value of £6 a year at first. By and bye, if she learns to do her work well and is steady, I will add £2 to this.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 49.

Anyone hired by Mrs. Grey would be at her mercy and must work as hard as she pleased in order to keep the position. This impermanence of employment could easily leave women in a precarious situation. For example, Ruth Walsh and her mother were evicted from their housing and felt that ‘this was a sad blow; they had but a little money, which would very soon go, nor had they any friends in the country’.⁴⁷ As discussed in earlier chapters, female immigrants without a support network were often left to rely on social support (such as immigration depots) and work that carried social (such as class or moral) stigmas. The presence of relatives or friends in the colony was an invaluable resource. However, even those who were not alone could face poverty if colonial connections were unable or unwilling to assist. Vidal particularly explored this theme of destitution in the story of the Fletchers, a family with eight children below the age of fourteen and a persevering mother, in ‘Susan’s Dream’.

The Fletchers lived in the countryside of New South Wales and struggled to farm their land due to the youth of the children and the father, Tom, who had ‘one great fault’ – he drank.⁴⁸ Tom’s neglect of his family and land in favour of working odd jobs (but mostly drinking) with a friend soon left the family facing starvation: ‘there was no bread, and, except a cup of tea, the children must go to bed supperless’.⁴⁹ Mother Susan struggled to keep her family afloat. Tragedy struck when she was out gathering firewood during one of Tom’s absences: one of her unsupervised young sons fell into the fire and ‘for days and weeks he was in a dreadful state, and Susan hardly hoped he could live. It pleased God, however, to spare his life, though he was a piteous

⁴⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 155.

object, and quite a cripple'.⁵⁰ After this accident, Susan decided that her eldest daughter, Betsy, must stay home from school while Susan searched for work. Susan managed to do a bit of needlework, her eldest son started to work their land, and Betsy was hired as a nursery maid (with an annual salary of eight pounds).⁵¹ But in Vidal's story, they were only happy again when Tom swore off alcohol and returned to his family and property, a plot which not only expounds Vidal's Christian values but also reflects the importance of the family. Even though Vidal was a 'family' emigrant and her characters include both single women and wives and mothers, the challenges they faced – physical, mental, financial, and moral – were, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, prevalent in the general female emigration experience.

It is clear in Vidal's stories that life in the Australian colonies was rough and trying. Even characters less desperate than the Fletchers did not have an easy time. Anne Thompson, who ran a shop with her husband, prospered at the expense of enjoying life:

She worked hard, and now she did not look forward to any day of rest. There was no quiet Sunday when cares and troubles were forgotten; no regular attending church, but only now and then when she could persuade Tom to mind the shop. There was no quiet evening walk; no hearing the children read. They had meat, and bread and butter, and plenty of tea and sugar, it is true, besides many other little luxuries; but it was eaten in discomfort; there was no regular time for anything.⁵²

While the woman's family was in a comfortable situation, she was not able to appreciate her success. In addition, observation of the Sabbath and church attendance were ignored – for Vidal, crucial elements of a fulfilling and proper life.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 149.

⁵¹ Ibid., 163.

⁵² Ibid., 8.

Finally, Vidal underscored the difficulty of life in New South Wales by evoking imagery of the harsh wilderness of the Australian bush in contrast to the peaceful quaintness of the English village. England was a green, fertile utopia, while Vidal's descriptions of Australia paint a picture of a harsh and unforgiving land. This focus on landscapes reflected the prevalence of agricultural motifs in emigration advertisements and as inspiration for national symbols.⁵³ In Kay Schaffer's exploration of the role of the feminine in Australian culture, she notes that 'landscape looms large in the Australian imaginary, although its infinite variety has been reduced to a rather singular vision – the Interior, the outback, the red centre, the dead heart, the desert, a wasteland'.⁵⁴ It is this alien vision that was depicted in the works of Vidal, Spence, and Murray, with Vidal especially contrasting the roughness of the Australian bush to the peace of England's fields.

In *Tales for the Bush*, England is depicted as a lush, peaceful Eden, and Vidal naturally invoked religion in her descriptions of the place. In 'The Little Cousins', for example, she described an idyllic Sunday evening:

The meadows seen from the door looked green; the sun set very gloriously, and threw its slanting red beams on them as they sat: the roses and sweet briar smelt very sweetly and they heard the chimes of the village church; for in that place they chimed every Sunday evening. As they sat, feeling sorrowful and sad, the old mother again spoke, 'I'm thinking that's a sound ye'll not hear yonder; I suppose there's no church bells across the seas.'⁵⁵

The church bells are an intrinsic element of the place, and their relation to the metropole was reinforced by the old woman's fears that there are no churches (and, by extension, no morals) in Australia. Vidal's positive portrayal of the

⁵³ Cecilia Morgan, *Building Better Britains? Settler Societies within the British Empire, 1783-1920* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2017), 73.

⁵⁴ Kay Schaffer, *Women and the Bush: Forces of Desire in the Australian Cultural Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 22.

⁵⁵ Vidal, *Tales for the Bush*, 5.

English landscape was not limited to overt religious allusions. She also wrote a quintessentially pastoral scene that established England as a happy and fruitful place:

One summer evening in England, when the fields were scattered with hay and the hedges gay with flowers, a carriage drove slowly through a small hamlet. The cottages were for the most part empty, as all the men and women were in the neighbouring fields making hay.... Men, women and children were there: old and young seemed to find something to do, and as the day was far spent, and evening closing in, here and there the hay makers were seen resting.⁵⁶

Here England is a charming place of flowers, gardens, and hayfields. In addition, its inhabitants are cheerful and productive people, with their happiness tied to their industry. Of course, the strong religious theme of Vidal's writing always connected basic moral values back to Christianity, as happened when one of these happy rural citizens decided to leave for Australia: 'The birds sang, and the morning was bright and beautiful. The sun lighted up the edges of the church spire, as [she] turned to give it one last look, and it seemed to point to Heaven, and bid her take comfort'.⁵⁷ The physical structure of the church served as a reminder of its metaphysical teachings, ones that would guide the female emigrant on her journey.

Vidal juxtaposed pastoral, utopian, and Christianity-infused portrayals of England with depictions of Australia as unkempt, harsh, and irreligious. Instead of rolling fields, quaint cottages, and gay gardens, an evening scene of a 'very hot' December day depicts New South Wales as barren and hard: 'the grass in the paddocks looked brown; no green was to be seen, but the leaves of a few gum trees which stood near the huts'.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 33.

The unpleasantness extended beyond the landscape to the climate. The intense weather reinforced the difficulty of life in the Australian colonies. In the story 'Ruth Walsh', Vidal wrote, 'Not a leaf stirred; it was close and heavy; distant thunder rumbled, and every now and then came a vivid flash of lightning. There was an oppression in the air, which seemed to weigh on everyone's spirits'.⁵⁹ The oppressive atmosphere symbolised the pressures immigrants faced in the colonies – although they were surrounded by open land, they would need employable skills and mental strength to survive and to replicate metropolitan society. These literary depictions of New South Wales were not explicitly tied to female emigration but are nevertheless valuable to historians. Since the Australian landscape and climate were not discussed by emigration societies or government officials, Vidal's descriptions add dimension to emigrants' destinations and enrich our understanding of the emigration experience.

The physical replication of society was also subject to Vidal's critiques. The sparse infrastructure of New South Wales was discussed at length in the story of the Fletcher family:

Susan Fletcher and her husband lived in a slab hut which they had put up themselves, and they cultivated a small piece of ground which they had cleared round it. The hut faced the road, indeed they had placed it near the road on purpose, that they might see any drays that might chance to pass - they thought it was more cheerful. Behind them was all thick bush, but on the opposite side of the road was more cleared land, and they could see the smoke from two or three other huts. About two miles from them there was a school house, and once a month there was divine service.⁶⁰

The passage conveys the self-reliance and isolation that immigrants faced when they ventured outside of the city. The family did have a couple of

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 147.

neighbours (in similar ‘huts’) and access to education but, coming back to the religious motif, there was no proper congregation to attend to their spiritual needs. Vidal’s aversion to colonial housing was not lessened by small – but tidy and sturdy – houses. In ‘Ruth Walsh’, even a domestic touch of flowers merely improved a house in comparison to the poor dwellings nearby: ‘A rough verandah and a few geraniums and roses round it, gave it a snugger and more habitable look than the others, which poor Ruth thought looked more like cow-sheds or pig-sties, than dwellings for human beings’.⁶¹ Rough attempts at metropolitan gardening in the New South Wales countryside could not make the landscape similar to the heavenly English ones Vidal described.

However, Vidal did not entirely write off Australia as an uninhabitable land. In ‘Little Annie and Her Nurse; or, The Effects of Pain’, Vidal attributed an immigrant’s unhappiness to her personal character rather than the place:

How she wished she had some money, to be independent, or for good strong health; and then she remembered all the disagreeable things in this country - the excessive heat, the insects and other annoyances, forgetting that she was not a bit more contented or happy in England. It was not a change in her circumstances that was wanting, but a change in her heart - in her temper!⁶²

In this passage the Australian environment aggravated the character’s misery, but her faults were long-standing. Similarly, Vidal’s most positive description of the Australian landscape accompanied a character’s flexibility:

Amy had a bright thought in her head; she carried out the bench to the shady side of the hut, placed a little table before it, and laid their evening meal in order. ‘Come out father,’ said she, ‘and see how pleasant ’tis outside, the sun is nigh down and the bush and blue hills yonder look so beautiful.’⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid., 26.

⁶² Ibid., 139.

⁶³ Ibid., 133.

The coolness of the dusk and blue hills echoes the lush greenness of England rather than Vidal's portrayals of New South Wales' dried brown grass and scorching wind. But it is not simply a natural vista – the inclusion of the dinner table completes the scene as one of adapted domesticity. Most of Vidal's Australian settings, however, proved wild and challenging to her characters.

Vidal's *Tales for the Bush* seems like a moral sermon on the surface, and religion is a significant theme across the stories. However, the book also provides a look at the struggles immigrants, particularly women, faced as they started a new life in the Australian colonies. Vidal depicted the challenge of not only prospering, but merely surviving in a place with harsh weather, odd customs, and a tough labour market. The difficulties Vidal's female characters faced – moral concerns, poor health, and unemployment – reflect the noted problems faced by FMCES emigrants, government-assisted emigrants, and Adelaide Female Immigration Depot residents. For nineteenth-century readers, this was a warning that emigration was not to be taken lightly, a warning that was explicitly connected to single female emigration in Elizabeth Murray's novel, *Ella Norman; or, A Woman's Perils*, published twenty years after Vidal's *Tales for the Bush*. In the meantime, however, readers were treated to a novel from an immigrant who would become one of Australian history's most famous female figures.

Catherine Helen Spence's *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia During the Gold Fever*

Catherine Helen Spence is remembered not only as an author but also as a feminist, politician, preacher, and journalist. Unlike Mary Theresa Vidal and Elizabeth Murray, Spence lived in Australia from her immigration in her

teens until her death in 1910.⁶⁴ She was born in Scotland in 1825 and arrived in South Australia in 1839, where her father was appointed town clerk of Adelaide and Spence worked as a governess.⁶⁵ In 1854 Spence's first novel, *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia During the Gold Fever*, was published. Spence, hoping interest in the gold rush would garner one hundred pounds for her story, sent the manuscript to London where it was initially rejected, but a second publisher agreed to pay her forty pounds, although not before deducting ten pounds for abridging the manuscript for publication.⁶⁶

Unlike Vidal's *Tales for the Bush*, Spence's *Clara Morison* is a sweeping novel in two volumes that follows a nineteen-year-old Scottish woman, Clara, who was sent by her uncle to South Australia in 1851. Clara hoped to find employment as a governess despite her lack of experience and skills but was forced to enter domestic service when she was unable to find a position. At the end of the first volume, Clara's employers decided to head to the goldfields in Victoria, at which point Clara conveniently discovered that her neighbours were in fact distant cousins of hers and she no longer needed to worry about finding new employment in rapidly depopulated Adelaide. The novel's focus shifts to the Victorian gold rush and secondary characters in the second volume, so the focus here is on the first volume which describes Clara's experience as an immigrant woman in Adelaide.

Spence's heroine, Clara Morison, is introduced as a pleasant but non-descript character, with 'soft grey eyes, sunny brown hair, radiant smile, and graceful figure' but 'without one accomplishment that had any marketable

⁶⁴ Susan Eade, 'Spence, Catherine Helen (1825-1910),' *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, published first in hardcopy 1976. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spence-catherine-helen-4627/text7621>.

⁶⁵ Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 28; Eade, "Spence, Catherine Helen (1825-1910)."

⁶⁶ Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 29-30.

value. She neither played, nor sung, nor drew, but she read aloud with exquisite taste... she understood French... but could not speak the language; she could write short-hand... she played whist and backgammon remarkably well, but she hated crochet and despised worsted-work'.⁶⁷ Clara's uncle decided that he would be able to employ her sister, Susan, as a governess for his own family in Edinburgh, but Clara's lack of accomplishments left little hope for her. As Mr. Morison explained to the girls in the novel's *deus ex machina* exposition, 'I do not see how I could get a situation for her, except perhaps as a nursery governess.... My idea for Clara is, that she should emigrate to Australia'.⁶⁸ The orphaned sisters were understandably upset at being separated ('"Australia! Sixteen thousand miles off!" cried both sisters, bursting into tears'⁶⁹), but Mr. Morison reasoned with them:

If you would look on the thing rationally, you would see that the greater the distance the better for her. In Australia they cannot want accomplished governesses; Clara might get fifty or sixty pounds a-year.... And Clara, you are a pretty and a good girl; you will be sure to marry well in a county where young ladies are so scarce, and where nobody looks for a fortune with his wife.⁷⁰

His claim that high-quality governesses were not needed in the Australian colonies is at odds with FMCES promotional literature, which centred on facilitating emigration for educated women. While Spence did not openly critique emigration societies in her novel (unlike Elizabeth Murray in *Ella Norman*), this point stands out in the context of Clara being a young, unmarried, middle-class woman – all ideal criteria for emigration according to the FMCES. Mr. Morison was confident that the unskilled Clara would easily

⁶⁷ Spence, *Clara Morison*, 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

find a position and become ‘a capital colonist’.⁷¹ In addition, Clara’s beauty would give her a better chance than her sister to attract a husband despite her lack of wealth. Clara’s aunt echoed these sentiments, telling her that ‘governesses of every kind are so much wanted, that I have heard of people going in quest of them on board every newly arrived ship, and engaging them before they put foot on shore’.⁷² Although Clara’s lack of skills spell doom for her employment as a governess in Scotland, her uncle and aunt had no doubt that she will be employed as soon as she arrived in Australia. Mrs. Morison also hinted that they ‘hear of servants and distressed needle-women making brilliant marriages in Australia’; surely Clara, as a governess, would also be able to make an excellent match.⁷³

Despite the assurances of Clara’s aunt and uncle, she struggled to find employment as a governess. An acquaintance explained to her, ‘If you had been a strong servant girl, instead of an educated lady, there would have been no difficulty in getting you a place, and good wages, too’.⁷⁴ This need for domestic skills reflects the manual labour and ‘domestic servant’ discussions in the 1856 South Australia investigation and the press. With no other options and her money running low, Clara agreed to look for housework. Upon hearing of this decision, her landlady exclaimed, ‘Go to service? Don’t think of such a thing! You are not fit for the work, and will lay yourself up in a week; and besides, you will quite spoil your chance of getting well married; and that would be a pity’;⁷⁵ apparently Mrs. Morison’s earlier claim of servants marrying well in the colonies despite their position was false. These

⁷¹ Ibid., 4.

⁷² Ibid., 6.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 86.

disagreements about marriage prospects are later overshadowed by the musings of a colonial gentleman, Mr. Reginald, who befriended Clara:

She was going to be a governess to some half-dozen children, with domestic drudgery enough besides, and would be glad to marry any one, to put an end to it. Governesses generally make bad wives, and their manners are often not agreeable; but Miss Morison had evidently never taught yet. But yet a lovely, accomplished English wife was preferable to a girl like this, thrown into the colony with no connexions that any one knew of, and with merely a letter-of-introduction passport into society.⁷⁶

Although he found Clara charming, Mr. Reginald made it clear that even governesses could not expect to be considered good marriage material, and perhaps it was best for a man to look back in Britain for a wife.

It is clear from the start of the story that Clara will face many challenges, and Spence's novel encapsulates the female emigrant experience from voyage to employment. The descriptions of Clara's travel preparations and the journey itself allow readers to imagine the feelings female emigrants had about their voyage. Mr. Morison gave Clara a letter of recommendation and told her to seek out an old friend of his, Mr. Campbell, who was now 'a rising merchant in Adelaide' and, along with Mrs. Campbell, would provide housing until Clara could find a position.⁷⁷ A standing offer of shelter could relieve at least some of an immigrant's anxiety – without such an option available it is possible Clara would have ended up in the very Adelaide Female Immigration Depot discussed in Chapter Three. With these logistics in place, Clara focused on packing her possessions. Her family organised her 'outfit, which was a very good one, though principally adapted for summer wearing; for English and Scotch people never reckon on Australia having a winter at all,' and 'a great proportion of her friends gave her books, chiefly

⁷⁶ Ibid., 59-60.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 3.

religious ones'.⁷⁸ While Clara was unprepared for the Australian weather, she was ready for any religious dilemmas, and her uncle reminded her to 'hold fast by your religious principles even in such a distant land'.⁷⁹ Like Vidal's characters, Clara's friends and family obviously believed that she would need religious support in the loose colonial society of South Australia.

Clara's foremost concern was loneliness, for she was only nineteen years old and anxious about facing such a long journey without any friends; luckily her uncle had already spoken to the ship's captain and promised Clara that 'his wife will be a mother to you during the voyage' and act as a ship matron.⁸⁰ Spence's comment on this plan later in the book summarises the practicality of such an arrangement: 'We need not go into detail with the monotonous life on board a passenger ship during so long a voyage. To fancy that a captain's lady can take a motherly charge of any intermediate passenger is a splendid absurdity'.⁸¹ Though amusement on the ship was limited, Spence was of the opinion that a matron could not realistically chaperone female passengers. The importance of shipboard conduct was referenced later in the book when Clara interviews for a job. Mrs. Denfield, her potential employer, told Clara, 'I have met a Mrs. Hastie, just come from Scotland; I suppose a fellow-passenger of yours. May I inquire from her as to how you conducted yourself on board?'.⁸²

In the shipboard scenes, the psychological effects of emigration – revealed in the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot case study – are described. Clara set sail from Leith in autumn 1850 and shared her cabin with

⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁸¹ Ibid., 17.

⁸² Ibid., 71.

the boisterous twenty-five-year-old Miss Waterstone, who was headed for Melbourne. Both of the women were initially distraught upon leaving Britain: ‘Miss Waterstone was drowned in tears on taking leave of all her friends; and they both felt ill and miserable as they lay in their respective berths, Clara above and Miss Waterstone below, sobbing and crying’.⁸³ This display of anxiety and grief upon leaving home, possibly forever, seems natural to modern readers, yet Spence’s depiction of Miss Waterstone’s heightened emotional state throughout the book is juxtaposed by Clara’s resolute determination and attempts to maintain her composure no matter what she faces. Spence, it is clear, thought Clara had a character more suited to life as a colonial immigrant. For example, when their cabin was suddenly plunged into darkness Miss Waterstone became hysterical and cried out, ‘Clara, we are going to have a dreadful storm.... We shall all be drowned!’⁸⁴ The prospect of shipwreck – covered so sensationally by nineteenth-century newspapers – was terrifying, but Clara calmly rationalised the situation and explained that preparations for dinner had temporarily blocked the light from their small cabin window. This unruffled reaction hinted that Clara was well disposed to handling the uncertain situations she would likely face in South Australia.

Despite her calm demeanour, Clara remained unsure about her uncle’s decision to send her away to Australia. Clara hoped to find some comfort from Captain and Mrs. Whitby (the substitute mother Mr. Morison mentioned earlier). They talked about South Australia, and the Whitbys spoke of the colony ‘with raptures’, which initially encouraged Clara, but ‘when she discovered that this was their first voyage thither, she felt that their praises

⁸³ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 16.

were no recommendation'.⁸⁵ It seems that the Captain and his wife, like Mr. and Mrs. Morison, had been taken in by tales about Australia; while Spence did not explicitly comment on metropolitan naivety, this recurring theme certainly hints at the ignorance expressed by emigration advocates and emigrants themselves (in the case of misled Adelaide Depot residents). Before she was able to form her own opinions of the colony, however, Clara struggled to look forward during her voyage. She ruminated on the uncertainty of what awaited her in South Australia: 'Clara tried hard to get up her confidence as well, but could not. She saw a thousand difficulties from within and from without, which no one else seemed to see for her'.⁸⁶ Clara's rational manner was not enough to overcome her anxiety at life in Australia. Later in the book, Clara reflected on the rumoured improved life in Australia when she stopped at a cottage to rest during a walk and saw children: 'They had all dirty faces, but looked healthy enough; their clothes were neither fine nor altogether whole... Clara did not see that overpowering contrast between the exterior of this dwelling and those of people in the same rank in Scotland which she had been led to expect'.⁸⁷ Spence made it clear throughout the book that contrary to metropolitan rumours about the colony, life in South Australia was tough; however, it was not torture, and those willing to put in a bit of extra work could enjoy life in the colony.

Upon her arrival in South Australia, Clara met with her uncle's acquaintance, Mr. Campbell, and confidently showed him her three letters of introduction, to which he sighed, 'Oh, my poor child... these are quite valueless. One of the parties addressed, to my certain knowledge, lives at

⁸⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 64.

Hobarton, another in Sydney; so much for Edinburgh folks' knowledge of Australian geography'.⁸⁸ Thus, due to her uncle's ignorance, Clara found herself without many contacts in the colony. Mr. Campbell further warned Clara that she 'must form no extravagant idea of the remuneration of governesses' in Adelaide, for they made the same wages as they did back in Britain and were often made to do household or nursing work in addition to their teaching duties.⁸⁹ Despite this warning, Mr. Campbell made inquiries in his social circle about the possibility of finding Clara a position:

He found that very few of them wanted governesses. Most of them sent their children to school; it was cheaper, and more convenient; some would like a governess, but had not accommodation, for the children had too little room already. Some wanted an elderly person, who had had experience in tuition; but could not think of entrusting their children to a girl of nineteen.⁹⁰

With no sign of a governess position in her near future, Clara moved into Mrs. Handy's boarding house, where she woefully declared, 'Some have greatness thrust upon them, and I think I may say that emigration was thrust upon me'.⁹¹

While many women happily chose to leave their homes and move to the Australian colonies, others did so because they had no other options. In Clara's case, her uncle was no longer able to support both Clara and her sister; while the sparse FMCES emigrant records are unenlightening, it is possible that some of the middle-class emigrants faced similar situations in which they were no longer to maintain their station in a respectable way and had to turn to emigration societies like the FMCES.

Resigned to her fate in South Australia, Clara began to look for any position she could find. Her first interview with Mrs. Denfield did not go

⁸⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 62.

⁹¹ Ibid., 40.

well; it is best summarised by Mrs. Denfield's sour assertion to Clara that 'servants are the plague of my life'.⁹² Thankfully Clara managed to find a more pleasant employer and told Mrs. Handy, her landlady, that she shall be happy with her job, and 'even if I am not, we were not sent into the world to be happy'.⁹³ Clara's answer betrays her pessimism and apprehension toward her situation – these feelings were understandable among female immigrants; the wrong decision could spell ruin, so it was best not to get one's hopes up. However, these feelings are overridden by Clara's commendable stoicism, a beneficial trait for an immigrant. When Mrs. Handy asked what life's purpose is if it is not to be happy, Clara rallied and declared, 'To be useful, to be strong, to conquer our faults, to uproot our pride'.⁹⁴ These tenets echo Clara's quiet, yet determined, character.

Clara entered service on a trial basis for Mrs. Bantam, confident that she would be able to overcome the ordeal and be a good employee. However, she was a terrible servant:

She made a considerable smashing of crockery the first week; next week she scalded her arm pretty severely, and felt almost unable to move it for two days; the third week she was becoming more fit to be trusted, but yet she was conscious that if Mrs. Bantam had not been a paragon of good nature she would not have patience with her even for the month that she got no wages.⁹⁵

Clara was aware that it was only the forgiving nature of her employer that was keeping her from failure in South Australia. Spence's description of Clara's disastrous first weeks of employment allows us to imagine the scene created by the inexperienced domestic servants among the female immigrants. A 'trial period' method of employment – allowing female immigrants to ease into

⁹² Ibid., 69.

⁹³ Ibid., 79.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 90-1.

service – was suggested by Adelaide Depot matron Mrs. Ross as a way to keep women employed (and out of the depot) for a month.⁹⁶ However, such an arrangement did not negate immigrants' stress. They risked the wrath of their employers if they were unable to properly carry out their duties; in addition, they risked their own safety as they attempted to improvise manual labour tasks. Like the overworked Adelaide Depot women, immigrants had little choice but to do their jobs if they wanted an income, no matter the physical effects.⁹⁷ Clara herself was afflicted with eye problems after trying to keep up with her duties; fortunately her friends were able to somehow cure the illness with leeches.⁹⁸ Any immigrant who became ill was suddenly in jeopardy, especially with a steady stream of others arriving ready to work, and Clara's situation mirrors that of Frances McDowell, who was going blind and had spent a year in the Adelaide Depot at the time of the 1856 Report.⁹⁹

In spite of Clara's awful experience in service, she wrote to her sister that the experience had changed her outlook:

I suppose that when you receive this you will be in London with my uncle and aunt to see the world, and to wonder at the Great Exhibition. But, Susan, I am seeing life, and learning lessons which I hope I shall never forget; it is not merely the things I am learning to do, useful as they undoubtedly are, but the new thoughts and feelings which my present employments awaken, which will benefit me much. I have hitherto lived too much in books, and thought them all-important; now I see what things fill the minds of nine-tenths of my sex – daily duties, daily cares, daily sacrifices.... If I ever, by any chance, should again have a servant under me, I shall surely understand her feelings, and be considerate and kind.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Evidence of Mrs. Ross, 11 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 20.

⁹⁷ 'Immigration Depot,' *Adelaide Times*, 13 January 1856, 3; Evidence of Mr. P. Ennis, 13 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 26.

⁹⁸ Spence, *Clara Morison*, 180.

⁹⁹ Evidence of Frances McDowell, 15 February 1856, Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee*, TNA, CO 13/93, p. 32.

¹⁰⁰ Spence, *Clara Morison*, 93.

Clara recognised that it was only the kindness of Mrs. Bantam keeping her from unemployment (and, possibly, the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot). Spence related Clara's revelation to the feminist idea of women from different social classes standing together and supporting one another. The Morisons obviously had a servant in the past, and Clara swore to be more considerate to the woman in that position should she herself ever manage to rise above service again. Clara slowly adapted to her new life, accepting that her position as a servant was keeping her off the streets. Mr. Reginald declared, 'This is a sphere for which you were not formed, and it must be painful to you to submit to the position you hold here',¹⁰¹ but Clara sagely replied, 'I had no alternative. I am not accomplished enough for Adelaide people; I had no money'.¹⁰² Even Clara, with her letters of recommendation and well-connected colonial acquaintance (Mr. Campbell), struggled to support herself in South Australia. She revealed that she was slightly in denial about her situation, referring to it as 'the station in life in which God has seen fit to place me'.¹⁰³ If she could not find success in South Australia, then it must have been for a divine reason.

The theme of uncertainty runs throughout the novel. As the gold rush took off in Victoria, the future of Adelaide began to look bleak. Mel Davies described the sudden changes in the city: 'Trade came to a standstill, coin was scarce as the diggers took funds with them, properties deteriorated.... Women and children were left without support.'¹⁰⁴ The conversations Clara heard on the street revolved around 'the universal distress in Adelaide, and how this

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 107.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 108.

¹⁰⁴ Mel Davies, 'Australia: A Victorian Bastide?' in *The Origins of Australia's Capital Cities*, ed. Pamela Statham, 179-198 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 189.

man had failed, and that stopped payment, – how one lady had parted with her governess, and another dismissed her servant’.¹⁰⁵ Citizens left the city in increasing numbers, hoping to find wealth in the goldfields of Victoria. Spence described the city as being ‘in such a state that those who left it were uncertain as to their ever seeing it again’.¹⁰⁶ Houses were boarded up, possessions were loaded onto wagons, and neighbours and friends said their farewells. Mrs. Bantam, Clara’s mistress, and her family decided to take their chances in Victoria, leaving Clara in the care of their neighbours (who, when all hope seemed lost, Spence conveniently revealed to be Clara’s distant cousins); as Mrs. Bantam said goodbye, she sadly admitted, ‘The colony is ruined.... I know I shall never like Melbourne as I have liked Adelaide, or ever have a house I shall be so fond of as this cottage. My children have been born here and buried here, and you cannot think... what a wrench it gives me to leave the place where my darlings’ graves are’.¹⁰⁷ After working hard to land on their feet in the colonies, immigrants were not necessarily set for life. Financial problems or agricultural catastrophes could throw immigrants back to where they were when they first set foot on Australian soil.

Spence, as an immigrant herself, was aware of British attitudes toward colonial life in Australia and two characters in *Clara Morison* seemingly exist merely to complain about Australia. Spence’s development of her female characters gives us a rich and lively insight into the lives of female immigrants to the Australian colonies. Unlike Vidal’s short stories – valuable in their own right for their strong themes of morality and depictions of immigrants’ encounters with the Australian landscape – Spence’s full-length novel allows

¹⁰⁵ Spence, *Clara Morison*, 225.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

us to more fully explore the range of women's emigration experiences and perceptions of the Australian colonies. In *Clara Morison*, Miss Withering came from England and hoped to find a job as a teacher. Spence described her upon arrival as 'dissatisfied with the colony generally, and as this was a very wet day, and she had got splashed in the cart, she felt justified in complaining of a climate which she had been led to believe, from books published, and general conversation in England, was the finest under the sun'.¹⁰⁸ Miss Withering's attitude does not improve throughout the book; when Mrs. Bantam took Miss Withering out calling, Miss Withering was shocked by the tiny houses and poor furnishings, out of control children, and the many babies brought out for her to admire, which she found 'really quite intolerable'.¹⁰⁹ Miss Withering later admonished Clara's friend for her inappropriate discussion topics: 'You would find yourself at a loss in English society, Miss Hodges. It is not customary for young ladies there to talk about babies cutting teeth, or the wearing out of children's shoes; or to discuss the best method of ironing and clear-starching'.¹¹⁰ Miss Withering clearly felt that South Australia's settler society was improper. When it came to colonial men, Miss Withering declared of Mr. Reginald, 'He is a bear. I have never seen such a thing as a gentleman in the colony. I suppose there are none'.¹¹¹ Miss Withering found fault with everything possible, but she did decide to stay in Adelaide at the end while other residents flocked to Victoria as part of the gold rush. Her reason for doing so, however, was driven by her usual haughty superiority: 'I have seen one Australian colony, and I have no desire to see any other, particularly Victoria, where vulgar wealth is so completely in the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 117.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 118.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 122.

ascendant, and where talents, education, and refinement are trodden under foot'.¹¹² Despite Miss Withering's negative (and truly 'withering') attitude toward South Australia, she clearly felt that it was the lesser of two evils when compared to Victoria's focus on mining and speculating, things any able-bodied person could pursue as long as they were amenable to dusty tents and hours outdoors (which would certainly mean the end for Miss Withering).

The second character who holds a wholly negative view of Australia (despite having never been there) is Julia, fiancée of the immigrant Mr. Reginald. Julia's letters to her fiancé appear throughout the novel. Julia made it clear from the beginning that she had no desire to leave Ashfield (the Reginald family home) and join him in South Australia, dramatically stating, 'I know I could not live in the bush; I should mope to death. Much as I love you, Charles, I cannot consent to live so many miles from civilization, among savages and snakes'.¹¹³ Even her love for him cannot overcome her disgust at South Australia and its Indigenous inhabitants. In an appeal to the supposed 'civilising' nature of middle-class female emigrants, Mr. Reginald suggested that Julia and his mother emigrate to Australia, where his mother 'may make a new Ashfield of my poor station of Taringa; she shall change its name into something more English'.¹¹⁴ Mr. Reginald stood firm in his wish to remain in Australia, but demonstrated a willingness to give the women a sense of purpose and responsibility by making his station more respectable according to English standards. After Mr. Dent, one of Mr. Reginald's colonial friends, visited England and called on Julia at Ashfield, she was convinced that colonial life would be too rough for her: 'I cannot learn to wash dishes and

¹¹² Ibid., 246.

¹¹³ Ibid., 49.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 52.

scrub floors, as Mr. Dent says all colonial ladies must do. And the idea of snakes peeping out of the fireplace is too much for my nerves altogether'.¹¹⁵ Surely with Julia's social standing and Mr. Reginald's successful station she would hire a domestic servant or employ casual help as needed, but perhaps the mere possibility of having to carry out household duties was enough of a deterrent. She was set in her belief that life in South Australia would be unbearable and lamented in a letter to Mr. Reginald, 'Can you really expect me to leave all my beloved friends here, and live so miserably as people do in Australia?'.¹¹⁶ Julia saw no future for herself in a land where she would die of misery; that is, if a snake did not frighten her to death first. Julia's obstinate negativity, together with Mr. and Mrs. Morison's naïve optimism, highlights Spence's message that Britons were ignorant about life in South Australia.

Like Vidal, Spence included descriptive passages about the Australian landscape and climate. From Clara's first sighting of Australia it is clear that she found the landscape uninspiring, despite her friend Miss Waterstone's misplaced praises: 'The voyage was got through at last, and, after seeing a very unpromising-looking island, about which Miss Waterstone fell into raptures, and misquoted some sentimental poetry about yon green isle, and which, they were informed, was called Kangaroo Island'.¹¹⁷ Spence continued the theme of uncertainty in Clara's first impressions of Adelaide, noting that its streets, though laid out straight, were built up with 'houses of brick, wood, earth, and stone, [which] seemed to be thrown together without any plan whatever, and looked too incongruous even to be picturesque'.¹¹⁸ Clara's impressions of the South Australian landscape were no more ordered, for

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 197.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 22.

‘everything looked as disconsolate as Clara’s own thoughts. The grass was scanty, and so burnt up, that one wondered if it ever could have been green; there was not a flower to be seen; the sun was scorchingly hot; the wind, direct from the north, blew as if out of a furnace’.¹¹⁹ This imagery, particularly the mention of a furnace, made it seem as though Clara had entered hell rather than a colonial capital city. Indeed, Miss Waterstone ‘pitied Clara, who had been condemned to live in such a fiery furnace as Adelaide seemed to be’;¹²⁰ here the term has even greater effect when combined with the idea that Clara had been ‘condemned’ to residence. Clara later longed for ‘the green sheltering hedges of her own country’ to protect her from the sun.¹²¹ Spence’s juxtaposition of the comforting green hedges of Britain and the fiery wind of Australia highlighted the environmental changes immigrants faced, and recalls Vidal’s writing on New South Wales.

Despite the unwelcoming climate, Spence was not entirely dismissive of the weather. In a scene in which Miss Waterstone sings, Spence wrote, ‘Never had she sung so well. The hot wind clears the voice, if it has no other good effect’.¹²² Mr. Reginald, the colonial gentleman, assured Clara that she had arrived at a bad time of year, but also warned her that her ‘beautiful imaginary pictures of the Arcadian scenery and pastoral tranquility of Australia have been too like fairyland to be ever realised’.¹²³ Despite this warning, Mr. Reginald also admitted that Australia’s weather and society exceeded England’s:

When our weather is fine, it is very fine indeed; there is something in the air so clear, so bracing, that it seems to be enough of happiness to breathe it. Then, when our society is good, it is so cordial and

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 23.

¹²¹ Ibid., 63.

¹²² Ibid., 35.

¹²³ Ibid., 39.

unceremonious. There is not that universal desire to keep up appearances here which poisons English society, and renders hospitality a toil to the giver and a bore to the receiver of it. In fact, six years' residence in this colony has made me quite unfit for England, and I feel very much indisposed to submit to either its climate, its restraint, or its etiquette.¹²⁴

Here the refreshing, invigorating air was tied to the friendliness and openness of colonial society which allowed more freedom than the stuffy social ceremonies of English society. Australia could be pleasant and charming.

The countryside, at times brutal, had moments of beauty: 'It had been a very dry winter, and the crops in the plains near Adelaide had been very poor....

[But] there was an appearance of civilisation and comfort in the numerous cottages on the way, each having a small garden, and generally a patch of vines, which were loaded with fruit'.¹²⁵ Spence's descriptions of scenery include hints of (white) human habitation, but she was also able to appreciate the natural beauty of South Australia.

Spence also depicted characters writing to relatives about their new environment, a device which reminded readers of South Australia's geographical isolation as well as climatic and environmental difference. Mr. Reginald related, 'I have made several sketches of Australian scenery to send home to my mother and other friends... but whether I have not done them justice, or that the scenery is not really fine, I know not, but they have not been much admired'.¹²⁶ Mr. Reginald was obviously more taken with the Australian landscape than his metropolitan acquaintances. When Clara wrote home to her sister, Susan, it was clear that she had adjusted to her new environment: 'The house I am living in is situated in a little garden; it is a real

¹²⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 63-4.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 57.

cottage of one story, which almost all the houses in Adelaide are, with only a trap ladder leading up to the little attic where I sleep. I have a fine view of the hills from my bed-room window, and now that the great heat has moderated I think the climate delightful'.¹²⁷ Although she slept in a small attic room, she appreciated the view from her window. Clara then noted that people in Adelaide left their doors and windows open all night (a practice necessary for circulating air through the building in the hotter months) and said, 'I think that shows that the colony must be an honest place; but you must always bear in mind that this never has been a penal settlement'.¹²⁸ Thus in addition to the climate being tolerable, there was also a low threat of crime due to South Australia's history as a free settlement.

Indigenous Australians were almost entirely ignored by both emigration promoters and emigrants. The omission – intentional or not – of Aboriginal Australians erased them from the narrative of the Australian colonies and distanced emigration from the dispossession and violence of settler colonialism. As Penny Russell noted, 'Women's blindness to other aspiring groups was their greatest weapon in the preservation of the exclusive world of the gentry';¹²⁹ the silent treatment of Aborigines achieved the same, framing Australia as a truly European entity. There are hardly any mentions of Indigenous populations in female emigration discussions, whether fiction or non-fiction, but Spence provided us a rare (and callous) aside that is suggestive of more widespread settler prejudices. Clara was spending two weeks alone when she was visited by an Aboriginal woman:

¹²⁷ Ibid., 92.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 93.

¹²⁹ Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (ACLS Humanities E-Book edition, Carlton, Vic.: University of Melbourne Press, 1994), 14.

She considered herself fortunate in a visit from black Mary... and bribed her, by crusts of bread and an old gown of her own, to relate to her what she remembered of her history. It was uninteresting enough.... Mary had no way of recording time except by moons, and no power of counting more than ten; after that they were called many moons; and when she told Clara about the pickaninny she had had many moons ago, who had wasted away and died, she did not weep as an English mother would do, nor did her voice sink to sorrowful pathos; but she talked of it with indifference... and then burst out into a long expostulatory whine, which terminated in a request for medicine.... Almost all the natives are fond of medicine, particularly of castor oil; and if you keep a good medicine chest in the country, they will besiege you for it... or any other nauseous drug you choose to give them, which they swallow without a grimace, and always profess to feel much the better for. Clara indulged Mary with a dose, which she swallowed with a horrible relish, and took her departure forthwith.¹³⁰

Clara found Mary boring, stupid, unmaternal, and alcoholic. Yet the ignorance here clearly lies with Clara. Female emigration discourse intersects explicitly with gender, age, class, and religion, but race is only invoked in discussions of Irish emigrants, while the dispossession of Indigenous Australians, and the damage inflicted on their societies by settler colonialism and associated immigration was never touched upon. Some metropolitan philanthropists may have supported humanitarian efforts on behalf of Aborigines in addition to female emigration, but there is no obvious crossover in emigration material. Thanks to Spence's inclusion of Mary, we see one Indigenous woman within the loose context of emigration.

Spence's main focus on the female emigrant experience is nevertheless fascinating in its portrayal of a single emigrant's story. Like Vidal, she noted the potential difficulty of supporting oneself in colonial Australia as well as the challenges of adjusting to the Australian climate and landscape. *Clara Morison's* novel format allowed Spence to portray a range of female

¹³⁰ Spence, *Clara Morison*, 212.

characters and their respective views of South Australia and colonial life, and to express Britons' ignorance about the Australian colonies. She underlined the psychological effects of emigration and the difficulty of domestic service in South Australia in the early 1850s, reflecting themes revealed in the 1856 investigation of the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot. Ten years after *Clara Morison's* publication, readers would be presented with a similar emigration story about an individual in Victoria – and with explicit criticism of female emigration societies – in Elizabeth Murray's *Ella Norman*.

Elizabeth Murray's *Ella Norman; or, A Woman's Perils*

Elizabeth Murray also exposed readers to colonial life in her novel *Ella Norman; or, A Woman's Perils*, published in 1864. *Ella Norman* concerns a young female immigrant who fails to find a position in Melbourne and becomes a governess for a Scottish family in the bush. Along the way she meets an aristocratic Englishman living in disguise as a stockman; an old friend fallen upon hard times (who is also living under an alias); a young man searching for his lost love as well as success; and various other colourful characters from rough diggers to not-so-polished members of Victoria's social circles. Improbable as some of their stories seem, imposters, aliases, and scandals were not absent from the Australian colonies.¹³¹

Murray's novel is entertaining, if complex and somewhat implausible, but her detailed portrayal of life in mid-nineteenth-century Victoria makes *Ella Norman* a valuable source for researchers of Australian history (although a contemporary metropolitan reviewer claimed that 'those portions of the tale

¹³¹ Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820-1850* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2004).

which relate to high life in London are among the best in the book'¹³²). With descriptions of the landscape, architecture, people, and day-to-day life of settlers in Victoria, *Ella Norman* brought colonial Australian life, particularly the experiences of female emigrants, to life for metropolitan readers.

However, Murray made it clear that this life had its dangers and disappointments, and clearly (and explicitly, unlike Spence) disapproved of the imprudent emigration encouraged by philanthropic societies and other well-intentioned, but ill-informed, metropolitan advocates.

Elizabeth Murray (nee Poitier) herself had quite a bit of experience with the British Empire. She was born in Jamaica in 1820 to an army officer, and her maternal grandfather prospered in the Bahamas. After the death of her parents, she went to Ireland and married Captain Virginius Murray in 1844 (as his name suggests, Murray – a Scot – had his own imperial connections; his father was the last British governor of Virginia). Captain Murray moved to Melbourne in 1852 and was appointed goldfields commissioner at Beechworth (where he was known as ‘a colourful character with a reputation as a ladies’ man’¹³³) and later Dunolly; Elizabeth and their five sons were reunited with him in 1855. After five years in Victoria, Elizabeth and all her children except her eldest son returned to England, apparently for educational reasons.

Captain Murray remained in Victoria but died the following year.¹³⁴ Murray did not learn of her husband’s death for some time and the compensation she received from the Victorian government amounted to only £325 rather than

¹³² ‘New Novels. *Ella Norman*. By Elizabeth Murray. 3 vols. (Hurst & Blackett),’ *The Athenaeum*, no. 1896 (27 February 1864), 299.

¹³³ Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 54.

¹³⁴ Brian Murray, foreword to *Ella Norman; or, A Woman’s Perils* by Elizabeth A. Murray (1864; reprint, Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1985).

the two thousand pounds she expected: it was under these circumstances that she began to write *Ella Norman*.¹³⁵

Although Elizabeth Murray was not an immigrant governess herself, she likely would have come across a few while living in Melbourne and searching for instruction for her children. Murray felt strongly that metropolitan encouragement of emigration was causing women to arrive in Victoria unprepared for colonial life, where they were left disappointed – and stranded – by the lack of employment opportunities. She confessed in the preface to *Ella Norman*, ‘My own personal sympathies are, and have long been, strongly excited by the sufferings of members of my own sex, exposed too often to a heartrending fate, by the mistaken kindness of “friends at home”’.¹³⁶ Perhaps by connecting her fiction so closely to her own experiences as she revealed the possible fates of naïve female emigrants, Murray hoped to discourage not only the female emigration societies and advocates, but also the potential emigrants themselves.

Murray’s heroine, the titular Ella Norman, is introduced as a ‘refined, gentle-looking girl’,¹³⁷ one with middle-class skills and a good education. Ella and her widowed mother followed Ella’s brother to Australia, but he was killed at a sheep station while training a horse. With only her officer father’s pension to maintain them, Ella was left to support her ailing (and increasingly alcoholic) mother. The novel opens in Melbourne, where Ella was searching for a governess position. Unfortunately, she was put off by the perceived lack of sophistication among Australian families, admitting, ‘There were *sixteen* publicans wanting governesses – some in Ballarat and Castlemaine; but most

¹³⁵ Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 54.

¹³⁶ Murray, *Ella Norman*, preface.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

of them in country districts, and on the diggings.... Those people are so coarse, and so free',¹³⁸ to which her friend replied, 'Only *colonial*, and you must try and get used to it'.¹³⁹ But perhaps Ella was right to be cautious, for she soon discovered that many advertisements were for café waitresses and barmaids, positions which at the time were not considered proper for a middle-class woman. The husband of Ella's friend stated,

There will be plenty of candidates, but I question how many will be able to return to quiet situations after this training. What a bait for new arrivals! A bait soon swallowed, as a matter of necessity, by such, and digested at leisure. I do not for a moment reflect on the intentions of the proprietors, yet why, for the sake of gain, expose poor girls to such an ordeal? How few can escape from it unscathed!¹⁴⁰

Newly arrived female emigrants could easily be taken advantage of, especially when governess situations in the bush were unappealing and jobs in pubs and cafes required no special training to start earning money. Thankfully, Ella's friends found her a place with the McLarens, a Scottish family. Ella hoped that her new mistress would be 'a nice motherly person, and untainted by colonialism'.¹⁴¹ Clearly Ella viewed colonial mores with disdain; little did she know that her own life was about to be overcome with 'colonialism'.

Ella headed out to her new position at Inverary Station; although the station is imagined, a rough central Victorian location can be determined by noting that the last non-fictional place mentioned during Ella's travels is Maryborough (about eight-five miles northwest of Melbourne, and thirty-five miles north of Ballarat) where a shopkeeper says they may consider themselves neighbours and friends at a distance of only forty miles.¹⁴² Ella's

¹³⁸ Murray, *Ella Norman*, 8-9.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 62.

journey is long and arduous, covering miles of rough terrain via coach, cart, and horse. One can only imagine what nineteenth-century readers thought of the unfamiliarly large distances and monotonous landscapes described by Murray.

But it was not only the distance that was trying. Like Vidal and Spence, Murray described the Victorian landscape as both fascinating and dangerous:

Such a journey! It was a bush road; that is to say, the trees had been removed to such an extent as to allow the coach to wind over the smoothest places between them. For some miles, it was on the edge of a range, and passengers had to lean out over the upper side, to keep the vehicle from upsetting. Then they got into what was called the 'Bay of Biscay,' after being walked through the Lodden, and the swampy spongy plains on its sides. There were pretty glimpses of distant hills, particularly towards the west, as the sun set behind them, and that brilliant red glare of an Australian sunset threw them out in bold relief; still, there was a monotonous sadness in the scenery, in the everlasting mournful gum-trees, very different from the joyous country influence in Britain.¹⁴³

Alongside the obvious dangers of travelling over rough ground, the implication here is that the very terrain had a deleterious mental effect on new immigrants. It was a shocking new sight, perhaps arousing curiosity or anxiety, and the difference from British landscapes likely underscored for many immigrants what they had left behind. This new environment, coupled with the immensity of the colony, made adaption to colonial life as much of a psychological journey as a physical one. With the added stress of social isolation, starting a new life in the bush was a great trial indeed for immigrants.

Yet perhaps it was class isolation as much as social isolation that challenged newcomers. The greater opportunities for social mobility in the

¹⁴³ Ibid., 54-5.

Australian colonies and the need for life necessities and survival took precedence over social norms. Even Ella's mother urged her to marry a suitor because 'he is a gentleman here [in Melbourne], although he is the son of a convict, and although his father was a house-breaker';¹⁴⁴ this chequered past mattered little if he was now a gentleman in the colony's capital city.

Convicts were also mentioned as living on the station where Ella worked, and despite Mrs. Norman's nonchalance regarding the ancestry of her daughter's suitor, real convicts appear to have been considered a different (and dangerous) matter. When the McLarens went away on business, Ella did not object to the rough stockman Jock (later revealed to be Lord Merrivale) staying at the main house with her and the children for protection from convicts, an action which might have caused scandal in Britain. But in Victoria, as Murray explained, 'people were so often out of their proper places, that it did not signify so much'.¹⁴⁵ It seems that convicts were afforded more caution than other strangers due to their criminal (though not always violent) pasts; in this respect Murray's approach was similar to that of Vidal's once a convict, always immoral attitude.

Murray's novel suggests that exposure to a wide cross-section of society was unavoidable for people in sparsely settled and poorly provisioned rural Victoria. Places off the beaten track had limited services in the mid-nineteenth century – as Ella learned after disembarking from the coach at Maryborough, she would have to ride a horse through the bush to reach Inverary. Public coaches served an assortment of colonial inhabitants:

A woman with three children (the one on her knee was not counted) occupied the space allowed for two. They were opposite to her; and beyond them a 'person,' – for what else he was she could not make

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 215.

out. Next the window, a digger. On her side, a clergyman of some dissenting church... and two ladies – perhaps his wife and sister. On the cushions behind her were two Chinese, in their blue costumes, smelling excessively of opium, and two diggers. On the back seats, opposite her, was a gentleman; she knew that by the delicate purity of his linen – a ‘new chum,’ she thought; and three men who would smoke – apparently shopmen – or the better class of diggers.¹⁴⁶

From diggers, to clergymen, to gentlemen, Murray’s description of Ella’s fellow coach passengers is a slice of colonial society and, like the varied backgrounds of women in the FMCES records and Western Australian relative applications, demonstrates the social diversity of male immigrants and settlers. Even more interesting is the diversity of nationalities encountered during Ella’s journey to her Scottish employers. Aside from the Chinese men in the coach, Ella also encounters Germans in Castlemaine.¹⁴⁷ Although the Australian colonies and much of their population cultivated a solidly British settler identity, this obscured – especially in the wake of the gold rushes – a much more cosmopolitan population.

The most notable (or, perhaps, notorious) group was the Irish, and throughout, *Ella Norman* portrays them as thriving in the Australian colonies. First, there is Jane, a servant and cook in a Melbourne household. Jane was not dutiful and submissive; her mistress complained that she took extra time off, did not clean anything unless told (and then often broke something as revenge), and compared her current position unfavourably with all she had held previously.¹⁴⁸ Jane eventually quit so that she may marry, announcing, ‘Me young man says that in a year or two I can be as good a lady as any in the land, and have me cawriage too, if I have a mind to.... He giv me this

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 50.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 53.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 17.

(showing a massive gold ring) [sic]'.¹⁴⁹ She then boldly asked her employer for some extra money so she could buy new dresses, explaining, 'I never saved a ha'porth in my life. It takes all I earn to keep me genteel'.¹⁵⁰ Jane serves as a stereotype of a wild Irish lass, especially in comparison to the demure and modest Ella. Murray repeated this theme of Gaelic inhibition multiple times in the speech and actions of Ella's Scottish charges and their mother.

Although the Irish were not always at the top of the social ladder, and – as demonstrated in government correspondence – caused emigration officials consternation, Murray made it clear that they were essential to navigating colonial industry and politics. Like government officials, Murray did not directly allude to Catholicism in her depictions of the Irish population of Adelaide (though it may have been assumed that readers would make the connection) but she highlighted their influence in colonial society. Francis Pierrepont, a young English gentleman in search of his lost love, discovered the importance of Irish connections in a farcical conversation with his initial contact:

'Have you any other introductory letters?'
'Yes, one to the Governor.'
'*That* you may put into the fire.... Were you ever in Ireland?'
'Never!'
'Bad, very bad! Know any Irishmen?'
'None.'
'Worse and worse. Any returned convicts, pickpockets, housebreakers?'¹⁵¹

Francis was out of luck, for these were the men to know if he wanted introductions, according to his acquaintance. It is interesting that Murray

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 25-6.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 77-8.

portrayed adjustment to colonial life as a difficult endeavour for both middle-class men and women. Just like the female immigrants whose skills were only suitable for work as governesses or ladies' companions, men with neither the labour experience of the working class nor the financial resources of the upper class were also faced with the difficulty of finding employment in the colonies. Unless a man was willing and able to take up an occupation such as farming, he faced stiff competition. As Francis' acquaintance explained, 'I am sorry for you, but we don't want gentlemen here; they are impediments in our social progress'.¹⁵² Without the ability to contribute to the building of a new society, particularly in a physical manner, Murray suggested that a well-off (but not wealthy) male immigrant would find himself in a similar state of limbo as many middle-class female immigrants.

Francis' friend made it clear that the skills and virtues valued in the metropole were of little use in the colonies. Having a good education and being of excellent character were not enough to procure employment, despite the FMCES proclaiming the opposite. In addition, Anglo-Irish tensions were not forgotten by the influential Irishmen of Victoria; as Francis' contact explains:

In the first place, suppose you want a government office. Do you think Mike O'Flaherty, or Dennis O'Toole, will be attracted towards Mr. Francis Pierrepoint's name? And suppose he gets over that objections, every time he comes into his office and sees you, or every time you go to him, he remembers days gone by in the old country, when an O'Flaherty, or an O'Toole, polished the boots of a Pierrepoint, or dug in the garden of a Pierrepoint, or was turned off his holding by one of the race.... Why, you are a walking reproach to half of us.¹⁵³

Unfortunately for Francis, even the best colony-building skills would not spare him from his association with the English aristocratic control from which

¹⁵² Ibid., 79.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 78.

some Irishmen had found relief in Victoria. Although this failure to find a position loomed over Francis, neither Ella nor any other female characters (aside from unruly Jane's poor mistress) were affected by the supposed Irish hold on the colony. Given the time Elizabeth Murray spent in Ireland as a young woman, it is possible that she held some bias in portraying the Irish so significantly. The focus certainly reflects official discussions (covered in Chapters Two and Three) about the proportion of Irish immigrants to the Australian colonies.

Later in the story, Ella was reunited with the absconded maid Jane (now Mrs. O'Connor) on the streets of Melbourne. Dressed in a white bonnet and riding in a 'dashing' dog-cart, Jane appeared to have the happiest situation of all the characters at this point in the novel, despite having the poorest work ethic.¹⁵⁴ Her rise from indignant servant girl to lady about town exemplifies the upward social mobility considered possible in the colonies. Of course, Jane had only managed to improve her position via marriage, suggesting that – despite efforts by emigration advocates and officials to encourage independent female employment – a female immigrant's success was still largely dependent on men. Although Jane's improvement in social standing relied upon her husband, Murray's description of Mr. O'Connor summarised the importance of hard work in Victoria:

O'Connor and Brady, contractors, were making a fortune: two government emigrants, but whose relatives in the Colony had pushed them on.... The Irish, to their honour be it recorded, push their relations through every obstacle; so one day Mike O'Connor will be a Member of Parliament.... Jane will then frequent balls, and lawn-parties, and other fetes. These are the people who get on in Victoria, because they help each other.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 262.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 263

This passage recalls the middle-class English character Pierrepont's lack of connections when seeking employment. It also highlights the importance of having family and friends in the colony; the success of all immigrants, not just females, could depend heavily upon existing support networks in Australia. For female immigrants, however, the lack of support often meant not only financial but also moral ruin.

The 'fallen' woman in *Ella Norman* is Ella's schoolmate and Francis Pierrepont's sweetheart, Mary Hawley, alias Bella Dyce. Just in case readers were in doubt as to her virtuous nature, Murray referred to Bella as a Madonna several times throughout the novel. We meet Bella when Ella falls off a horse in the bush and must recover at a remote public house. To her surprise, the barmaid was none other than her old friend who was last heard from when teaching at a school in the Melbourne suburb of St. Kilda. Ella was shocked to learn that Bella came to Victoria with the assistance of an emigration society, and it is this association which Bella blamed as the root of all evil. How could a metropolitan organisation supported by numerous philanthropists and dedicated to educated, moral, middle-class women be responsible for Bella's plight? In *Ella Norman*, such societies were portrayed as having the greatest intentions but not the slightest clue when it came to life in the colonies.

Murray used her novel to voice her thoughts about organised female emigration. She believed it to be misguided and lacked subtlety in presenting her opinions. At various points in the novel, her characters suddenly launched into preaching against the mass movement of women from Britain to Australia. Agnes Townshend, one of Ella's Melbourne friends, exclaimed to her husband,

There is a great want of common sense with your professed philanthropists.... Look, again, at these emigration societies. Who can doubt the amiable intentions of the good people who inundated this country with those hapless girls, who came out only to meet their ruin? They were made to believe that they were coming to happy homes! It drives me mad, sometimes, to think of the benevolent feelings, and the money expended by injudicious great people in working out unmitigated evil for their fellow-creatures, when possessed by some ridiculous crotchet or whim.¹⁵⁶

The optimistic naivety of emigration societies was a theme raised in public discussions of female emigration, as seen in criticism from the Sydney *Empire*, Hobart *Mercury*, and especially the Melbourne *Argus*, which accused Maria Rye of deceiving herself, emigration supporters, and emigrants ‘by the flattering pictures she has set before them of the condition of governesses’ in Victoria.¹⁵⁷ While blunt truthfulness would not have been beneficial for societies trying to attract emigrants, there is no doubt that some immigrants were totally unprepared for the changes in climate and culture. The only ways potential emigrants could learn about their destination were via static images (photographs and maps), written reports (letters, books, or newspapers), and word of mouth (largely rumour if not heard directly from someone who had actually travelled outside of the metropole). Although Mr. Townshend rather insultingly told his wife, ‘I never gave you credit for such deep observation’,¹⁵⁸ he agreed that emigrators ‘imagine that they purchase the right to control the destinies of their fellow-creatures with the money they spend on them’,¹⁵⁹ with little regard for possible mishaps.

Murray expressed this disdain for the organisers of mass female emigration many times in *Ella Norman*. The stockman Jock (really a

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 302.

¹⁵⁷ ‘General Progress,’ *Empire* (Sydney), 26 February 1853, 4; ‘Female Immigration,’ *The Mercury* (Hobart), 22 November 1861, 2; [no title], *The Argus* (Melbourne), 17 June 1862, 4.

¹⁵⁸ Murray, *Ella Norman*, 303.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

disguised English aristocrat) declared his intention to work against the ‘meddling’ ladies in London once he returned home:

There are some of the most influential women in England – and, I firmly believe, the most well-intentioned – who are leagued in all these Colonization and Emigration Societies; and the effect of what they have worked out has been, that they have actually decoyed and sent out more unfortunate and innocent girls to irretrievable ruin than any similar number of the most depraved women in England could possibly have destroyed.¹⁶⁰

Jock’s views reflect the colonial press perceptions of emigration societies as misguided in sending out women unprepared for the harsh realities of colonial life. Another of Murray’s characters, Lady Duckworth, is portrayed as one of these ‘influential women’ who also had money to spend in the vein of the misguided philanthropists discussed by the Townshends.

Lady Duckworth was ‘patroness, or vice-president, or treasurer, or secretary, for a dozen branch societies’ under the umbrella of the Social Science Association.¹⁶¹ The Social Science Association, of course, did genuinely promote a variety of reform platforms, including emigration, although Duckworth was a fictional character; Maria Rye was known to have connections to the Social Science Association, but we cannot be certain whether she was the inspiration for Murray’s multitasking philanthropist character.¹⁶² Lady Duckworth was described as a proficient statistician, and it was upon her mathematical work that she based her conviction that female emigration from Britain to Victoria was absolutely necessary: ‘After severe work she had come to the most satisfactory conclusion, that in Victoria (Australia) there were four and three-seventeenths of males to one female!

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 316.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 369.

¹⁶² Joy Parr, ‘Rye, Maria Susan,’ *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, 1994, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/rye_maria_susan_13E.html.

Appalling!... These men must have wives at once!'.¹⁶³ Lady Duckworth's fraction of bachelors (which switches between 'four and three-seventeenths' and 'three and three-seventeenths' throughout the passage despite her supposed mathematical skills) reflects the absurdity of the situation, as if social equations alone could solve the problem. Yet this statistical approach was not only applied to colonial society; a surplus population of women was a real concern in nineteenth-century Britain (particularly after the 1851 Census), one for which emigration was considered a possible solution.

In order to solve the imbalance of the sexes, Lady Duckworth decided that more must be done to convince young women to emigrate to Victoria.

She concluded that:

All the governesses, companions, milliners, shop-women, country girls, town girls, all must be told that they are standing in their own light by remaining at home. They must receive no encouragement to loiter at home, with the chance of some time or other requiring aid from the rich, with such splendid expectations before them.¹⁶⁴

Duckworth's character had never been to Australia, yet assumed it could only improve the lives of female immigrants. As she appeared only near the end of the novel, readers would have been all too aware of how foolish this assumption was based on other characters' experiences, pointing to Murray having an explicitly critical agenda as she crafted her novel. But Lady Duckworth decided that it was her duty to begin a new emigration society:

Yes, her name should head this movement. She had had predecessors, but *her* movement should be something unique. There should be lists of matrimonial candidates, with names, ages, and personal recommendations sent out by each mail, to precede the model ships, so that the three and three-seventeenths of disconsolate swains should have time to reflect, and make a mental selection before presenting themselves on the arrival of the cargoes in Melbourne.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Murray, *Ella Norman*, 369-70.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 370.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The aim of Lady Duckworth's society would be marriage; here Murray possibly accused real emigration societies of having a similar approach despite claims of helping women chiefly find employment. Of course, in Murray's novel marriage was also a way to success in the case of Irish servant Jane. To ensure that her society was unique (and to gain publicity by being novel), Lady Duckworth decided she would not only provide a matchmaking service for female emigrants, but also deliver trousseaux to the emigrating brides-to-be:

They should get trousseaux at wholesale prices, perhaps even charitable prices. And Lady Duckworth stared up at her chandelier, as was her custom, poised her pen in the air, and looked the picture of gratified philanthropy. She had thought of something new. No one had ever suggested trousseaux by contract, at twenty-five per cent discount! That would attract emigrants.¹⁶⁶

The trousseaux resulting from 'gratified philanthropy' might have provided a few useful items to women starting a new independent life in Australia, but the marital connotations cannot be ignored. Thankfully for readers, the convoluted plans taking shape were interrupted by Jock/Lord Merrivale, whom Lady Duckworth immediately badgered about how much he would contribute for a subscription to her new society.

The most bitter criticism of emigration societies is voiced by a character who was aided by one herself, and who suffered dearly for it. As Ella's old friend 'Bella Dyce' narrated her story, she recalled how she first learned of emigration:

We were living in London, and there were meetings which great people attended.... We always went, and this woman always spoke. A great fat vulgar woman, I thought – I could never bear her from the first. Still, she talked so plausibly, and all the great ladies seemed to

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 370-71.

believe in her, and she made it such a favour to obtain a passage for any one.¹⁶⁷

One wonders whether Murray used the description of the speaker to create a general dislike for such people, or if she meant it as an insult to a particular promoter of female emigration, such as Maria Rye. Bella was eventually won over, however, and agreed to sail to Melbourne.

Before reaching Victoria, Bella met with trouble on the journey.

Despite being under the supposed protection of a married couple (the Smiths) and travelling with other young women, Bella soon realised that all was not as it seemed:

There were about one hundred young ladies... but I found out there were very few who were above the rank of dressmaker. Instead of being like other ships, with different classes and different tables, we were all alike... and none of us admitted to the captain's table.... Mr. and Mrs. Smith were kind enough in their way, but he was only a bush store-keeper, and she drank!... I was very proud, and I was so ashamed of being mixed up with such people, that I could have thrown myself overboard sometimes with vexation.¹⁶⁸

Bella blamed the mixing of classes and her wayward chaperones for introducing her to the moral indecency and alcoholism that plague her throughout the novel. Upon landing, Bella found her social status lowered due to her associations with some of the other female emigrants who were immoral. Bella turned to one of the immigrant homes, but had no luck:

The Melbourne ladies did all they could to serve us. There was an 'Emigrants' Home,' and these ladies met us there, and tried to get situations for all; but it was then found out who some of us were.... I was friendless, with only £100 in my pocket, in a strange land, – so I went to the 'Home.'¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 137.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 138.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 139.

Despite her wealth of skills, Bella learned that what was really needed was work that would be considered beneath her in England, such as washing and housekeeping. Without these skills, she was forced to rely on an immoral shipmate whose friendship only hastened Bella's downward spiral. By the time Ella found her, Bella was cohabiting with the inn's proprietor and had taken to drink.

Once fallen, it was difficult to get back up when it came to morality. It seemed that Bella was resigned to her lot in life and frightened that even worse could befall her if she attempted to leave her situation. She rued her decision to emigrate, exclaiming to Ella, 'Would to God I had never come! The cruel, cruel cheats! The cruel deceivers, who made fools of us, and led us all out here to ruin and destruction!'.¹⁷⁰ Ella noted that she had heard similar outbursts before, but never in such a desperate manner. Bella clearly blamed her downfall on the 'deceptive' emigration societies and promoters who encouraged her to go to Victoria.

Despite Ella's support (mainly in the form of urging religious reform, which – as we saw – so often proved the cathartic catalyst in Vidal's short stories), Bella was wary of causing more trouble and could not see a way out. Much drama ensued when Ella finally convinced her friend to escape, an action that culminated in a spectacular fire and attempted murder. Even though shamed Bella and her former sweetheart, Francis Pierrepoint, were finally made known to each other, both silently accepted that no reconciliation was possible. Bella returned to England and with the help of Ella opened a small stationer's shop. It is noteworthy that Bella was successfully – respectably and independently – employed only when she returned to England,

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 127.

in contrast to emigrators' beliefs that emigration would open such an avenue to women in the colonies. Despite Bella's newfound security and happiness, the novel ends with a tragic scene of Francis and his new bride stopping at Bella's shop.

As Murray made clear in *Ella Norman*, Victoria was not a place where one could expect to be easily comfortable and live happily ever after. Even Ella, despite her proper behaviour and success at taming her charges, returned to England in the end, where she married her sweetheart, a well-to-do officer from her father's former regiment. In fact, all four of the main characters gave up colonial life: aside from Ella and Bella, stockman Jock returned to claim his inheritance and take on the role of Lord Merrivale; Francis Pierrepont was employed by Jock/Lord Merrivale and married a middle-class English woman.

For these characters, their names and backgrounds were of little use in Victoria. As Murray explained, 'it is not who you are, or what you are, but *what you have* (and never mind how you have got it)'.¹⁷¹ Few middle-class female immigrants either had the labour skills or were willing to shift social positions to find employment, and Marion Amies believes this predisposition to failure can be traced back to the trend of 'genteel invalidism' in nineteenth-century girls' education in which 'a high moral tone was considered paramount to intellectual development; training in housewifery gave way to the acquisition of accomplishments and handicrafts; initiative and confidence were subdued to submissive dependency'.¹⁷² Elizabeth Murray clearly felt the same way, and blamed emigration societies for sending out women who were ill-prepared for the roughness that colonial life could entail.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 244.

¹⁷² Amies, 'The Victorian Governess and Colonial Ideas of Womanhood,' 542.

Elizabeth Murray also decried emigration societies for their naivety. She acknowledged the good intentions of metropolitan philanthropists but criticised the way female emigrants were misled with promises of good jobs. Even the heroine of *Ella Norman*, a proper, educated woman, could not tolerate Victoria and returned to England. Clearly, better preparation for colonial life would not necessarily have guaranteed success for female emigrants. As R. O. McGechan said, Australia ‘was that part of the globe where anything conceivable or inconceivable might happen’.¹⁷³ In the end, it was often colonial connections, a willingness to adapt, and luck that determined how successful an immigrant would be, and the Australian public understood this better than the British emigrators and the female emigrants themselves.

These three fictional works by women writers provide historians with a way to hear about women’s experiences in the Australian colonies from a female – if fairly middle-class and English and Scottish (for which we might also read Protestant) – perspective. As Horst Prießnitz notes, ‘in Australian society, with its male orientation, it was difficult for women to gain serious acceptance as intellectual partners on an equal footing with men’.¹⁷⁴ Yet Vidal, Spence, and Murray managed to share not only entertaining stories, but also their views on female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies. Their literature enriches our understanding of the many challenges that awaited women when they started a new life in the colonies, from the harsh environment to the difficulties of finding employment and fitting in with colonial society. The framework of fiction allowed women authors to explore

¹⁷³ R. O. McGechan, ‘Australia in Victorian Literature,’ *The Australian Quarterly* 3, no. 11 (September 1931): 110.

¹⁷⁴ Horst Prießnitz, “Australian Literature: A Bibliographical Introduction: Part I,” *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 8, no. 1 (1983): 88.

immigrants' feelings and personal relationships in the Australian colonies, facets of individual experiences that are easily lost in the broad wave of female emigration; as Penny Russell notes, these 'moments of intense feeling or intense intimacy were shielded from the public view, silenced even in diaries'.¹⁷⁵ The inclusion of such personal themes in novels therefore makes literature a valuable source for uncovering emotional experiences. As demonstrated in this chapter, Vidal, Spence, and Murray give us a greater sense of women's interior lives, emotions, and psychology – themes hinted at in the testimonies of the Adelaide Depot residents but brought to life via literature. These writers' strong female characters allow us to better imagine some of the scenarios women faced as they left their homes, sailed across the ocean, found employment, and settled into colonial life.

¹⁷⁵ Penny Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (ACLS Humanities E-Book edition, Carlton, Vic.: University of Melbourne Press, 1994), 128.

Conclusion

This thesis has revealed the multifaceted nature of female emigration, a subject that proves to still be open to re-examination and further exploration. Interpretations of female emigrants as a mass of brides or faceless working-class women have given way to a more nuanced understanding of the individuality and agency of female emigrants. The metropolitan and colonial sides of the long ocean voyage have been connected, acknowledging that the transition between life in Britain and the Australian colonies was a series of subtle shifts rather than an open-and-closed door. Emigration affected many aspects of women's lives, from their relationships with relatives and friends left behind (or awaiting them in the colonies) to the simple struggle to survive in a harsh and unforgiving landscape. Female emigration reached into many imperial corners, inspiring philanthropic organisations, causing headaches for Colonial Office clerks, appearing in the metropolitan and colonial presses, and entertaining Australian and British readers.

The Female Middle Class Emigration Society has been a focus of historians of female emigration since A. James Hammerton's *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, probably due to its niche mission.¹ The society was created to aid middle-class women in finding positions as governesses yet, as demonstrated in my analysis of the society's records, the FMCES assisted women from an array of backgrounds. Some had few skills, while others had extensive experience as teachers or governesses. Several of the female emigrants set out alone, others travelled with sisters or friends, and a few made the journey to reunite with their husbands. Clearly the society-assisted

¹ A. James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen: Genteel Poverty and Female Emigration, 1830-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1979).

emigrants were not all simply young potential brides. Despite the small number of emigrants sent out by the FMCES, they represented a small cross-section of women who left Britain for the Australian colonies.

Of course, philanthropic societies such as the FMCES were not the only parties interested in female emigration, and we cannot dismiss – or underestimate – the reach of government-assisted emigration. Imperial officials – desperate to control the colonial population – discussed the scale and logistics of female emigration, focusing on statistics that recorded not only the number of women headed to the Australian colonies, but also their age, marital status, and religion. Although these numbers give us only a general picture of the mass migration taking place in the nineteenth century, other pieces in the archives offer us glimpses beneath the surface. Letters from imperial officials, for example, reveal the extent of debates about the number of women arriving in the colonies. There was no unanimous clamour for an importation of domestic servants; on the contrary, some officials called for more female immigrants while others felt that their colonies were being overwhelmed with inexperienced women. Officials expressed anxiety over the character and autonomy of women and attempted to supervise and regulate emigration via agents, surgeons, and matrons – there were, however, female emigrants who managed to subvert the system and whose cases necessitated analysis by officials. There were also notes passed between offices as officials attempted to track down the lost trunks of immigrants, signaling just how far-reaching the bureaucracy of the British Empire was and providing a hint of individual stories in a largely depersonalised collection. Pieces of individual lives and family networks spanning the emigration process are also found in surviving application forms made by Western Australia residents. These

forms upend assumptions of gender dynamics in emigration and demonstrate the role women played in facilitating future emigration and developing settler society.²

One of the most fascinating documents related to female emigration held in the Colonial Office archives is South Australia's 1856 Report on the Adelaide Female Immigration Depot.³ At first glance the report appears to be merely an investigation of economic and moral concerns regarding the depot. But the document provides an in-depth look at both the running of the Adelaide Depot and the women who were its residents, with the most valuable feature (in the context of this thesis) being its inclusion of testimony from the female immigrants themselves. While this thesis has established ways in which we can better understand the experiences of women who emigrated to Australia, many of the women whose voices have been recorded were from educated classes (such as the FMCES-assisted women or the women writers). Thus, although the 1856 Report was collated by male officials, the depot immigrants' testimonies allow us to hear from working-class women. Their stories – with themes repeated in Australian women's literature – reveal the difficulties that awaited female immigrants in the Australian colonies, from psychological and physical illness, to implications of moral misconduct, to dependence on immigration depots for basic needs such as food and shelter. Even those immigrants who were able to find short-term employment were not always able to save enough money to escape the vicious cycle of depot residence.

² Applications for Passages to Western Australia as Government Immigrants, 1861, TNA CO 18/119.

³ Legislative Council of South Australia, *Reports of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council of South Australia, Appointed to Inquire into the Excessive Female Immigration; Together with Minutes of Evidence and Appendix* (Adelaide: W. C. Cox, 1856), TNA, CO 13/93.

Discussion of female emigration was not confined to government officials. The survey of metropolitan and colonial newspapers reveals how emigration captured the attention of journalists, from tragic shipwrecks to mundane notices of society meetings. These items, whether sensational stories of disaster or brief bulletins about society benefit concerts, add dimension to the story of emigration despite the press lacking coverage of individual women, aside from the ever-present Maria Rye and her colleagues Jane Lewin and Emma Brooke. There was much metropolitan support for female emigration schemes such as the FMCES, but the colonial press was critical of the many unprepared 'domestic servants' arriving in the Australian colonies, and Rye and other proponents of female emigration faced harsh criticism. Letters to the editor were dueling grounds between settlers and emigration advocates, as shown in the debate between Maria Rye and an anonymous writer from Queensland. Although newspapers were dominated by male voices, they are enlightening when thinking about both the metropolitan and colonial sides of female emigration; exploring female emigration through the press also allows us to establish the public's awareness of female emigration and get a sense of how it was perceived.

Finally, my analysis of three fictional works by immigrant women writers gives us a better understanding of the challenges women faced as they adapted to life in the Australian colonies. It also serves as an example of the need for historians to read against the archival grain and look beyond traditional sources in an effort to recover the hidden voices and experiences of marginalised groups.⁴ The works of fiction, though at times melodramatic,

⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).

exposed the general public in both the colonies and the metropole to the female immigrant experience. The stories reflect the moral concerns so prevalent in the Victorian era, and the difficulties immigrants faced in trying to adapt to colonial society. The fictional writings also depict the harsh environment of Australia which, especially when combined with struggles to earn a living, could make the place seem extremely oppressive. By looking at non-archival sources such as women's fiction, I have addressed women's personal experiences after immigration to the Australian colonies and found their voices in a male-dominated world. As literature, these works are valuable to historians for providing a richer insight into women's lives than the sparsely-detailed archival records.

At first glance female emigration appears to be a very specific topic, one which is isolated from recent trends in Australian history that are focused on Indigenous people and convict transportation. The extent to which female emigration was discussed in the nineteenth century in comparison to emigration in general or other imperial themes is also worth considering; as revealed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, press coverage of female emigration was overshadowed by general emigration discussions. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship has steadily moved toward framing female immigrants' experiences as distinct from those of convicts, and also deepened our understandings of both philanthropic emigration societies in Britain and the development of settler society in the Australian colonies.⁵ As

⁵ A brief outline of these scholarly shifts follows: Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975; reprint, Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 1994); Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen* (1979); Eric Richards, ed., *Visible Women: Female Emigrants in Colonial Australia* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995); Jan Gothard, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007); Katherine Foxhall, *Health, Medicine, and the Sea: Australian Voyages, c. 1815-1840* (Manchester: Manchester

demonstrated in this thesis, however, the subject is one that continues to be open to re-examination and interdisciplinary connections. Making these connections allows us to not only better comprehend mid-nineteenth-century female emigration from Britain to the Australian colonies, but also to understand how it fits into the greater subjects of imperial, migration, and women's history. As this thesis has shown, the process of emigration had no strict demarcation between metropolitan origin and colonial destination. Rather, it was a shifting spectrum between one and the other, especially regarding society, identity, and values. For example, although colonial society was modeled after Britain's, a settler (and eventually 'Australian') interpretation of social conventions and character clearly existed. Questions of what was British or colonial and the emergence of settler identities and cultures can be extended to studies of Britain's other settler colonies, such as Canada or South Africa. Just as these discussions of identity apply across British imperial history, so too are the physical and mental challenges of undertaking a journey to a new land and a new life relevant to stories of migration throughout history as a whole. Themes of fear, hope (or hopelessness), discrimination, and assimilation flow throughout modern debates about immigration and refugees. With advancements in travel, medicine, and the everyday quality of life and work, it is easy to forget the dangers and hardship nineteenth-century emigrants (and many modern migrants) faced when they left their homes, such as shipwreck or illness, not to mention the inability to easily remain in contact with family and the world in general.

University Press, 2012); Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self-Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Marie Ruiz, *British Female Emigration Societies and the New World, 1860-1914* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

In this thesis I have connected the metropolitan and colonial vertices of the emigration process, but I have also acknowledged how the emigration experience expanded past both of these points, from the effects of a potential emigrant's moral past on her selection to immigrants' struggles to find and keep employment, reunite with their family and friends, and simply survive in the Australian colonies. Throughout the chapters I have also pursued, to an extent feasible in the scope of the thesis, the stories of individual people and places, demonstrating how aspects of female emigration are still open to discussion and interdisciplinary exploration. In many cases it is not possible to fully trace women's lives before and after emigration, or even track their journey from metropolitan port to colonial port. Nevertheless, illuminating a small section of an emigrant's trajectory and piecing it together with others allows us to more fully comprehend the emigrant experience. These were ordinary people living ordinary lives, yet experiencing the most extraordinary things. As this thesis has demonstrated, arrival in Australia signaled an ending, but it was also a beginning. Emigration was death and birth in one – the grief for all that was lost intertwined with the wonder of a new life.

After a long journey, our ship of female immigrants sails into port under a blazing sun. The women disembark and trudge forward down dusty roads and into 'new' lives, carrying skills and memories from their 'old' ones. The lucky immigrants make their way to relatives or friends already settled in the colonies; the unlucky search for a job with increasing desperation, or head to the local immigration depot. They all face incredible challenges, from acclimatising to the harsh environment, to navigating the morals and values of colonial society, to building a settler colony and, eventually, a new nation. Some women – overwhelmed by colonial life, ashamed by unemployment (or

unrespectable work), trapped in a loveless marriage, or separated forever from their families and all they know – may simply choose to commit suicide: after a year in Western Australia, Agnes Howard threw herself down her employer's well; Kate Teehan, in the colony for less than a week, died of self-immolation at the Perth Women's Depot.⁶ Catherine Helen Spence recalled in her autobiography that upon her arrival in South Australia at age seventeen, 'When I saw the place at which we were to land I felt inclined to go and cut my throat;'⁷ she went on to become one of Australia's most famous women. Other female immigrants will live long, prosperous lives in cosmopolitan cities or on picturesque homesteads, surrounded by children and friendly neighbours. A few immigrants might even manage to experience more independence than they or their mothers ever could have dreamed of: running a shop, writing a popular book, or, when older, casting their vote in an election. The 'mad proceeding' of the emigration process has drawn to a close, but it has changed these women's lives forever.

⁶ Gothard, *Blue China*, 204.

⁷ Catherine Helen Spence, *Catherine Helen Spence: An Autobiography* (Adelaide: W. K. Thomas & Co., 1910), 16.

Appendix 1: Female Middle Class Emigration Society Annual Report Tables¹

1861-1872

Number	Destination	Date of Sailing	Salary in Colonies (£)	Remarks
1	Australia	1861	70	Was nursery governess in England, at £20 per annum
2	Australia	1861		Very young and inexperienced, obtained situation after a time
3	Australia	1861	60	Had failed entirely to obtain employment in England, from inability to teach music
4	Australia	1861	35	The climate caused severe headaches, which much affected her success
5	Australia	1861		Married directly, and returned to England
6	Australia	1861	45	Obtained situation immediately
7	Africa	1861	25	Obtained situation shortly, -- very comfortable and happy
8	Africa	1861	20	Obtained situation with family returning to India
9	Australia	1861	50	Got employment as daily governess, three days after arrival
10	Australia	1861	50	Obtained employment as daily governess immediately
11	Australia	1861	60	Had experienced great difficulty in obtaining employment in England, on account of slight deafness

¹ This table is compiled from the emigrant data tables included in the FMCES 'annual' report pamphlets. FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1861, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/1; FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1862-1872, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/2; FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1880-1882, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/3; FMCES Annual Report, Records of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society, 1883-1886, TWL LSE, 1FME, Box FL001, 6B/106/1/FME/1/4.

12	Australia	1861	40	Obtained comfortable situation, two months after landing
13	Australia	1861		Went to live with brother
14	Australia	1861		Obtained situation as shopwoman, but lost it through misconduct
15	Africa	1862	45	Obtained situation immediately, -- has since started a school
16	Africa	1862	45	Successful in obtaining employment
17	Australia	1862		Nothing known
18	Australia	1862		Nothing known
19	Australia	1862		Obtained situation, but failing health obliged her to return to England
20	Africa	1862	30	Two situations offered on landing, --married after six months
21	Africa	1862		Nothing known
22	Australia	1862	70	Left situation shortly, and opened a School which prospered
23	Australia	1862		Not at all successful, -- too old for adaptation to a new scene.
24	Australia	1862		Ditto. Sister of preceding, --similarly disqualified
25	Australia	1862		Obtained situation, salary unknown
26	Australia	1862		Opened school with her sister, --fair prospect of success
27	Australia	1862		Opened School with preceding
28	Australia	1862		Nothing known. Sister to three preceding
29	Australia	1862		Took engagement to sing in public
30	Australia	1862		Went to sisters
31	Australia	1862		Married very comfortably
32	India	1862		Remined two months, met with no employment, and returned

33	Australia	1862		Nothing known
34	Vancouver's Isld.	1862		Nothing known
35	Vancouver's Isld.	1862		Got situation as mistress of a Parochial School, married in two years
36	Vancouver's Isld.	1862		Not very successful, -- got employment as a needlewoman
37	Vancouver's Isld.	1862		[with 38, 39] Family sent out by special donation. --Nothing known
38	Vancouver's Isld.	1862		[see above]
39	Vancouver's Isld.	1862		[see above]
40	Vancouver's Isld.	1862		Left situation rashly, and afterwards found difficulty in obtaining employment
41	Africa	1862		Opened School, and after a time succeeded pretty well
42	Africa	1862	40	Obtained comfortable situation shortly, after a time returned home
43	Australia	1862		Nothing known
44	Australia	1862		Obtained situation as companion, shortly, at low salary
45	Australia	1862	40	Obtained situation shortly, as governess to one little girl
46	Australia	1862	40	Very eccentric, -- experienced considerable difficulty
47	Australia	1862	35	Took situation as shopwoman, and did well
48	Australia	1862		Obtained daily situation at first, at low salary
49	New Zealand	1862		Went to her brother
50	New Zealand	1862		Opened a School at first. --Married shortly
51	New Zealand	1862	60	Married within two years

52	New Zealand	1862		Went to Sydney to her brother
53	New Zealand	1862		Opened a School, with No. 50, with fair success
54	New Zealand	1862		Opened School and married shortly, within two years
55	New Zealand	1862		Obtained good situation shortly
56	New Zealand	1862		Nothing known, -- mother of No. 50
57	New Zealand	1862	40	Obtained situation as nursery governess
58	Australia	1862		Prospered after awhile
59	Australia	1862		Very incompetent, -- married in four years
60	Australia	1862		Middle-aged, --opened middle class day School, with moderate success
61	Australia	1862		Engaged as assistant in a school, --very young and quite inexperienced
62	Africa	1863	60	Went to a situation, married, died suddenly, within three years
63	Africa	1863	40	Nursery governess, -- married comfortably in a year
64	New Zealand	1863	100	As mistress of Parochial School
65	New Zealand	1863	100	Unfitted for colonial life; unsuccessful, left situation to open a school
66	Australia	1863		Went out to a situation, lost it, and married beneath her
67	Australia	1863	84	Obtained a situation two days after landing, and has done well
68	Australia	1863		Not highly qualified, health failed, was not very successful
69	Australia	1863		Married within a year
70	Australia	1863		Went to an uncle; experienced great

				difficulty in obtaining employment
71	Australia	1863		Obtained situation shortly after arrival
72	Australia	1863		Middle-aged woman with broken constitution, unsuccessful
73	Australia	1863	105	Obtained situation as head mistress of a School
74	New Zealand	1863		Went to friends
75	New Zealand	1863		Obtained situation and married within two years
76	New Zealand	1863	50	Obtained situation, was not satisfied and returned shortly
77	Australia	1863		No qualifications as governess, failed entirely in obtaining employment in England, and met with many difficulties in Australia
78	Australia	1864		Obtained engagement
79	Australia	1864	90	Obtained engagement at £90, to be increased in a year to £100
80	Australia	1864		Nothing known
81	Australia	1864		Lost situation, and failed entirely, through gross mis-conduct
82	Australia	1864		Obtained employment as book-keeper in a store
83	Australia	1864	50	Obtained engagement, but experienced much unkindness
84	Australia	1864	40	Comfortable situation was obtained a week after landing
85	Australia	1864	50	Went out to situation, gave satisfaction, employer returned loan for passage

86	Australia	1864	40	Obtained engagement soon after landing; died three years afterwards
87	Australia	1864	108	Obtained engagement very soon, afterwards went to New Zealand
88	Australia	1864	63	Obtained an engagement where she was comfortable and contented, finally married well
89	Australia	1864		Middle-aged, no accomplishments, obtained comfortable engagement
90	New Zealand	1864	40	Went out to her family, --obtained situation immediately
91	New Zealand	1864	40	Sister to preceding, also obtained engagement
92	Africa	1864	60	Obtained a very comfortable engagement
93	Australia	1864		Obtained situation in a School; came home after some years, but failing to obtain employment, sailed for New Zealand
94	Australia	1864		Went out to her husband; engaged in a school, not very successful
95	Australia	1864		Aged 14. Daughter of preceding, accompanied her mother
96	Australia	1865		Nothing known with certainty
97	Australia	1865		Went to brothers, nothing known
98	Australia	1865		Had resident situation since landing
99	Australia	1865		Suffered much from ill health
100	New Zealand	1865		Not successful, from limited capacity
101	New Zealand	1866	60	Went out to a situation, which she kept some

				years, left to open a School, which is doing well
102	Australia	1866		Was not at all successful, from very limited acquirements
103	Africa	1866	24	Obtained a suitable engagement, and seemed very happy
104	Australia	1866	80	Obtained excellent engagement, with prospect of increased salary
105	Australia	1866		Went out for health, -- did not benefit by the change, returned home
106	New Zealand	1866	60	Went out to a situation, but found it filled, afterwards obtained good engagement
107	New Zealand	1866		Very moderately qualified, took needlework as more lucrative than teaching
108	Australia	1866	80	Went out to engagement, where she met with kindness and consideration, --since married
109	Australia	1866		Went to a brother, nothing further known
110	Australia	1866	70	Very comfortable, daily engagement obtained
111	Australia	1866		Obtained engagement three weeks after landing, very comfortable
112	New Zealand	1866	120	First engagement at £40, then £80 In Otago, afterwards govt. school
113	New Zealand	1866		Failed through misconduct. Died in hospital of consumption
114	Australia	1867		Failed through misconduct
115	Africa	1867		Not very successful
116	Africa	1867	25	Obtained situation shortly , and was very kindly treated

117	Australia	1867		Went to a brother, nothing known
118	Australia	1867		Had some difficulty in obtaining situation, owing to limited education, suffered from ill health
119	Australia	1867		National schoolmistress, obtained engagement and was comfortable
120	New Zealand	1867	108	Obtained situation as milliner, a fortnight after landing; married well
121	New Zealand	1867	75	Obtained engagement day after landing, afterwards married well
122	New Zealand	1867		Obtained good employment, particulars not known
123	Australia	1867	70	Obtained engagement 5 weeks after her arrival, as daily governess
124	Africa	1867	25	Obtained comfortable engagement day after landing
125	Australia	1867		Went out to friends, and after a time married comfortably
126	Africa	1867	80	Obtained excellent engagement ten days after landing
127	Australia	1868	150	Obtained situation in a school under Government, --salary to increase to £250
128	New Zealand	1868		Nothing known, went to a brother
129	Africa	1868		Secured a comfortable engagement, one week after landing
130	Africa	1868	25	Obtained suitable engagement, --sister of the preceding
131	New Zealand	1868	40	Obtained comfortable engagement, stated she was well, strong & happy
132	Australia	1869		Not very successful

133	Australia	1869		Went to her parents, and assisted her mother in a school
134	America	1869	35	Went with Miss Rye to Canada; took situation within a month, was comfortable and happy
135	Australia	1869	100	Obtained situation as milliner, dressmaker, and machinist
136	Australia	1869	40	Obtained engagement, remained two years, disliked the country, returned home
137	Australia	1869	100	Held situation 3 years, then took a school, which is flourishing
138	Africa	1869	25	Obtained very comfortable engagement shortly after arrival
139	Australia	1869		Was successful in procuring engagement
140	Australia	1869		Obtained employment, --particulars not known
141	New Zealand	1870	40	Engagement obtained within a week, settled afterwards most comfortably at Wellington
142	New Zealand	1870	40	Very comfortably placed
143	New Zealand	1870		Not very successful, went to a brother
144	New Zealand	1870		Obtained employment
145	New Zealand	1870		Went to friends, after a time took a situation, and was very happy
146	Australia	1870	80	Went out to engagement, found colonial life dull, after Versailles.
147	Africa	1871	36	Obtained engagement ten days after landing
148	America	1871		Went to her husband in Chicago; obtained employment soon in needlework

149	America	1871		Daughter of preceding, --aged 15, -- accompanied her mother
150	America	1871		Went to New York, but returned immediately
151	United States	1871		Sister of preceding
152	B. Columbia	1871		Went to a sister
153	Australia	1871	45	Found friends, and a situation, to teach one pupil, was very comfortable and happy
154	America	1872		[with 155, 156, 157] Widow, with 3 daughters, in less than a month, all obtained employment, as matron, governess, and dressmaker
155	America	1872	35	[see above]
156	America	1872		[see above]
157	America	1872		[see above]
158	New Zealand	1872		Vessel met with bad weather, which so prolonged the voyage, that friends had not heard

1880-1882

Number	Destination	Date of Sailing	Salary in Colonies (£)	Amount of Loan (£)	Date of Repayment	Remarks
216	New Zealand	1880	30	5	1882	Clergyman's Daughter - Had been teaching for many years in England on salaries carrying from £15 to £20. She obtained a situation immediately on landing, and married

						about a year afterwards
217	New Zealand	1880	40	5	1882	Sister of No. 216; far better qualified; prepared pupils successfully for the Cambridge Local Examination. Was second mistress in a High School in a country town, with salary of £60, without board or lodging. Obtained resident situation directly on landing which she held until she married two years afterwards
218	Australia	1880		20	1881	Went out from the Society some years before and held very comfortable lady housekeeper's situation in Australia; was obliged to come home for health, but went out again in a year to resume the situation she had left

219	United States	1880	35	20		Station Master's Daughter -- Had been a dressmaker, but failed wholly to earn a livelihood. She went to Colorado as nurse and helper, and in a year took another situation at a higher salary
220	South Africa	1880	50	33	1882	Went out to an engagement as governess in a school; writes—'In enabling me to come here when I did, you assisted me to take a step which has afforded me much pleasure and benefit throughout.'
221	South Africa	1880	150			Went out to engagement for three years as music mistress in a girls' school
222	Australia	1880	90			Accompanied her husband, intending to resume her calling of governess; obtained situation in a school to teach French, painting and drawing; writes—'Any

						good musician, artist, or linguist, could really obtain £100 a year on a station, and more in a school, with a good home and the kindest treatment.' Less qualified persons must be content with £40 to £60
223	New Zealand	1880	38	15	1881	Had been companion in England to a lady who partly brought her up. She tried in vain to obtain another situation, and therefore decided on emigrating; met with employment directly, and was highly esteemed and valued for her practical usefulness and pleasant disposition
224	New Zealand	1880				Had been daily governess at £25 salary, and then for ten years kept a school. Her health failed and she went to the colonies for

						changes of air. Friends got her a situation and she was 'delighted with the country and was most comfortable till her health failed' when she returned to England
225	South Africa	1880		25	Not due	A Frenchwoman, wife to a young French experimental chemist; taught music and French, but, from delicate health, lost her pupils. Went to South Africa with her husband where both soon obtained employment
226	Australia	1881		25	1882	Went to her mother, and when heard of last was living at home and had a daily engagement
227	New Zealand	1881		25	Not due	Clerk in a place of Business in London at £52 a year; obtained employment soon after landing as a dressmaker or milliner, and was 'tolerably satisfied' with

						what she earned
228	New Zealand	1881	40			Well-qualified governess; obtained situation in five weeks after landing
229	New Zealand	1881	50			Well-qualified governess, sister of No. 228. Owing to the absence of the Society's correspondent from New Zealand, these ladies met with difficulty at first, but obtained employment, nevertheless, in a few weeks
230	Australia	1881	120	25	1882	First-class governess; obtained situation immediately on landing
231	New Zealand	1881				Nursery governess, but slightly qualified; found difficulty in meeting with a situation, but finally found one after some weeks

232	Australia	1881		20	Not due	Went out to join her husband, who had preceded her to seek employment
233	South Africa	1882				[233-237] Mother and four daughters, part of an Irish family reduced to poverty by the late troubles. The father obtained a situation in South Africa and the mother joined him with eight daughters. The four eldest having been engaged in tuition were accepted as the Society's emigrants, and the Society's correspondent procured for them offers of two situations at salaries at £50, but they declined both, not wishing to leave their parents
238	South Africa	1882		20	Not due	[238-239] Two sisters, one a governess, the other never in any situation. They both obtained

						situations directly on landing, having several to choose from, and their accounts induced a third sister to follow them in a few months
240	Canada	1882				An orphan, had never taken any situation in England. She obtained employment immediately on landing as attendant upon an elderly lady and was 'very comfortably settled'
241	Canada	1882	30			Had been a governess with indifferent success in England, could not meet with an engagement, therefore resolved to try Canada; was engaged immediately as governess in a wealthy family
242	New Zealand	1882		25	Not due	Manufacturer's daughter, obliged to maintain herself, from her father's loss of

						fortune. Thoroughly practical and conversant with house and farm management. Had tried without success, for a year, to get employment in England. Obtained an engagement in ten days after landing to teach three little children, and assist in the household management
243	New Zealand	1882		30	Not due	Widow of a clergyman, with two daughters. She went to friends in New Zealand, purposing to take pupils to educate with her own daughters. Has not written
244	Australia	1882		30	Not due	Middle-aged foreign governess, had given lessons in foreign languages with success for many years, but latterly found it difficult to meet with employment. Had good pupils in

						Sydney very soon after landing
245	Australia	1882	60	30	Not due	Young well-qualified English governess, whose health had given way from over-study; doctors advised change of climate. She took a situation directly on landing, and wrote, 'I am glad I came'
246	Australia	1882	120			Middle-aged Swiss governess, very well-qualified; suffered from bronchitis and was ordered to try Australia: obtained work immediately up the country
247	Australia	1882				Widow with a son in Australia, to whom she went
248	New Zealand	1882				[248-250] Widow lady and two daughters, of whom the elder kept a

						school in England with some success, but the younger daughter could not live in England, and for her sake they went to New Zealand, selecting a port where they were warned there was not much opening, on account of its suitability for the younger daughter's health. They took a house and received boarders, and were quite satisfied with their success
251	Australia	1882	40	12 10s.	Not due	Moderately qualified governess, helpful in domestic work. Obtained a situation a fortnight after landing and was very comfortable. Had found great difficulty in getting employment in England

252	Australia	1882	60			Went out for her health and finally settles in New Zealand, where the climate suits her. Is happy and comfortable
253	South Africa	1882				Went to a brother, and wrote from his house very happily
254	Canada	1882				Suitable for housekeeper. Had kept a boarding house in the Isle of Man which did not succeed. Has not written
255	Australia	1882				Had never filled any situation in England, having a small income; went to Australia by doctor's advice, for her health; returned in a year, not liking colonial life
256	Australia	1882				Skilled in nursing and parish work; went to friends, with whom she stayed some months, and soon married
257	Australia	1882				Moderately qualified governess, had been in

						India and wished to open a school in China, not having funds sufficient she went to Australia, and very soon got an engagement, which she found pleasant and comfortable
258	Australia	1882		25	Not due	Reduced by her father's death from affluence to poverty; well-qualified to teach, especially languages. Had two situations offered her a few days after landing, but declined them, the pupils being too advanced, in her opinion, for her to undertake. Accepted a third shortly
259	Canada	1882	40	15	Not due	Had an uncle in the colony to whom she went. Became mistress of a district school, and was very comfortable

260	Canada	1882	80	8	Not due	Assistant teacher in a Board school at £35 a year; very highly spoken of. Within four days of arrival obtained a 'nice engagement' as lady's help. Is now 'most comfortably settled in Manitoba; enjoys the best of health and never regrets going out.'
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1883-1885

Number	Destination	Date of Sailing	Salary in Colonies (£)	Amount of Loan (£)	Date of Repayment	Remarks
261	Australia (Brisbane)	1883		25	May, 1885	Went to her son
262	Tasmania (Hobart Tn.)	1883		10	Nov., 1883	Went as nurse to the hospital, Hobart Town; happy, well and successful
263	Canada (Montreal)	1883		8	Feb., 1885	Middle-aged widow, had failed in England and abroad to secure a living; Found situation on low salary
264	Canada	1883		3 3s.	August, 1885	Teach in Board School; went to a situation in a hospital
265	Canada	1883				Lady-help; did not keep her situation, and was when last

						heard of in Female Emigrant's Home
266	Canada	1883				Failing to satisfy her employers in England; took a situation in Canada in a hospital
267	Canada	1883				Converted Jewess; cast off by her family; took situation as cook in Canada
268	Australia (Sydney)	1883	40	15	June, 1884	Governess; with slight qualifications and some experience of nursing, had in England only £25 in a hard-worked school; took place as attendant on invalid lady
269	Australia (Sydney)	1883, July		15	overdue	Governess; has not written particulars
270	Australia	1883				[270-271] Sisters; milliners
272	Australia	1883				[272-273] Sisters to 262; whom they joined, and were independent of help
274	Australia (Sydney)	1883	40			Governess; moderately qualified, earning from £25 to £30, England; within a week of arrival found resident situation

275	Australia	1883				Governess, superior; went to a brother
276	Australia (Melbourne)	1883, Nov.		10	Mar. 1886	Went to friends
277	South Africa	1883	40			Housekeeper; engaged with and passage paid before leaving England
278	Australia	1884				Nursery governess; going to look for openings for her mother and younger sister as well as herself
279	Australia	1884				[279-280] Sisters; reduced by failures in business; willing to be housekeeper or hospital nurse, having experience in each
281	Australia	1884				Fairly qualified governess; went to friends, unable to earn a living in England
282	Colorado	1884				Nursery governess; went out with engagement to a lady, unable to meet with anything here
283	Australia (Brisbane)	1884	very good			Experienced and capable governess; went with a sister to Sydney, but found better openings at

						Brisbane; happy
284	Australia (Brisbane)	1884				Well qualified governess; at Brisbane had within three weeks two situations at £60 offered, declined on account of unhealthiness of place
285	Australia (Brisbane)	1884, May	60	15	Oct., 1886	Fairly qualified; found a well- paid situation on an Up Country Station with a very kind family, teaching Music and English
286	Sydney	1884, May	45	24	Oct., 1886	Fairly qualified, having lived in Germany and in a Paris Convent, where want of air and good food injured her health; found situation in a school, rather hard work
287	Sydney	1884				German Swiss; speaking German, French and English fluently, taught music; soon found a situation

288	Sydney	1884	40			German Swiss nursery governess; trustworthy recommendations, obtained situation with very pleasant lady a few days after landing
289	West Australia (Perth)	1884				Musical governess; went out engaged to the Ladies' College
290	St. Petersburg	1884, June	50	16	Nov., 1886	Companion; after several years successful employment in Russia but had to leave for an interval's rest and is now again in Russia giving daily lessons
291	New Zealand	1884				Accomplished German; advised to try the warmer climate for weakness of chest
292	Sydney	1884	60			Widow, German; teaching French also music, found resident situation in school of 100 pupils within a few days
293	Sydney	1884				Well qualified governess; went with friends with whom she remained

294	Melbourne	1884		17 10s.	June, 1885	Governess: more experienced in sick nursing; went to brother's
295	Sydney	1884		17 10s.	June, 1887	Clergyman's daughter; energetic, but without training or experience
296	Australia	1885, Feb.	35	30	1887	Without experience and unable to obtain more than three months engagements in England; six weeks after arrival found comfortable situation 'up country'
297	New Zealand (Auckland)	1885, July		23	1887	Musical and used to parish work; was hoping to be appointed Head of a Girls' Home, but found no opening in Auckland for teachers
298	Canada	1885, July		6	1887	Well recommended; 'domesticated'
299	Tasmania	1885				Highly qualified
300	Canada	1885				Schoolmistress
301		1885				
302		1885, Nov.		12	1887	Of some experience

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