

## Reviews

JUDE PIESSE, *British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832-1877*. New York: Oxford University Press 2016. Pp. x + 219. \$100.

Jude Piesse's *British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832-1877* offers a timely reminder that the press shaped public perceptions of migrants and migration long before the twenty-four-hour news cycle turned its attention to our current global refugee crisis. This book persuasively demonstrates the Victorian periodical press's powerful part in shaping nineteenth-century readers' understandings of and attitudes toward British emigration.

There have been a number of studies of Victorian emigration literature published in recent years, but they have tended to focus either on the novel (e.g., Diana C. Archibald's *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration in the Victorian Novel* [Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2002]; Janet C. Myers's *Antipodal England: Emigration and Portable Domesticity in the Victorian Imagination* [Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 2009]; and *Victorian Settler Narratives: Emigrants, Cosmopolitans and Returnees in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, edited by Tamara S. Wagner [London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011]) or on historical documents such as letters, journals, and pamphlet propaganda (e.g., Robert D. Grant's *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005]; James Belich's *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009]; and Alexander Murdoch's *British Emigration, 1603-1914* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004]). Yet, in contrast to the novel, the Victorian periodical, Piesse contends, was an "intrinsically migratory" literary form (p. 2). Periodicals, after all, were intended to circulate, and were relatively inexpensive to send abroad by post. They did not simply reflect geographic mobility but actively produced and regulated it. Moreover, their contents formally embodied the tensions between mobility and containment, circulation and cohesion,

emigration and settlement, fluidity and fixity that, according to Piesse, structured their accounts of emigration.

Victorian periodicals included a range of emigrant literature that was not to be found elsewhere: accounts of ships before departure, sensational reports of wrecks, exposés of cruelties on board ships, and snippets of migrants' diaries or letters, to name just a few (p. 35). The uses that any particular periodical made of such pieces depended upon whether it was mainstream, feminist, or radical.

Mainstream periodicals, such as *Household Words*, the *Graphic*, or *Chambers's*, tended to have large, middle-class readerships, and generally promoted emigration. In these publications, articles and stories about emigration display "the periodical's generic capacity to hold currents of movement in tension with models of spatio-temporal fixity and order" (p. 40). Mainstream periodicals countered the anxieties caused by "potentially incendiary mass movement . . . from established places into deregulated spaces" (p. 39) with what Piesse describes as strategies of "space, place, and pace" (p. 40) that could operate within an individual article or a single issue, or across multiple issues. For instance, an exhilarating description of the bustle and confusion attendant on boarding ship might be counterbalanced by a detailed account of the ship's interior. The layout of a page might surround prints such as "Searching for Stowaways" or "Dancing between Decks"—both reproduced in *British Settler Emigration in Print*—with advertisements for domestic products; or the pacing of a serial about emigration might bring "regulation" and "consistency" to its subject (p. 42).

Whereas mainstream periodicals typically represented emigration as a means of re-creating British domesticity in a new setting, feminist and radical periodicals were skeptical of this outcome. Feminist periodicals emphasized the opportunities for self-betterment that emigration opened up for women. *Eliza Cook's Journal*, for example, offers "some of the most unqualifiedly enthusiastic visions of emigration written during the period," associating it with "open spaces, mobility, and transformation" (p. 119). The radical press, by contrast, tended to oppose emigration as a solution to unemployment, poverty, and overpopulation in metropolitan Britain. Rather than rejecting entirely the "dominant genres and spatio-temporal models" of the mainstream press (p. 145), however, radical periodicals such as the *Poor Man's Guardian* and the *Northern Star* subversively reworked them to unsettle mainstream representations of emigration.

Piesse's division of periodicals into mainstream, feminist, and radical varieties usefully differentiates a massive archive of materials.

It reveals a close and perhaps unsurprising alliance between mainstream periodicals and novels about emigration, which also tended to embrace the portable domesticity that feminist and radical periodicals challenged. However, the tripartite categorization raises the question of what additional distinctions it might be possible to make among Victorian periodicals based on their intended readerships and their attitudes toward emigration. For, as Piesse acknowledges, “to lay claim to any definitive interpretation of the corpus of texts introduced here. . . . would . . . be problematically ahistorical, in that it would wilfully miss that peculiar sense of being flooded by a diverse and seemingly never-ending stream of print that so many contemporary readers observed” (p. 46).

The hefty corpus of texts with which Piesse contends requires her carefully to circumscribe the scope of her study, which necessarily excludes not only much of the “never-ending stream” of Victorian periodicals, but also certain types of emigration. Piesse regards British settler emigration as a distinct phase of imperial history that preceded the emergence of the New Imperialism. Settlers “sought to replicate Anglo culture at the point of destination,” and, because their emigration tended to be both permanent and voluntary, settlement “served to redeem emigration, at least partially, from older negative associations with exile, criminality, and national depletion” (p. 7). Settler emigrants, Piesse asserts, were motivated to leave Britain by “personal considerations” such as unemployment or poverty, in contrast to the colonists who, under the New Imperialism, were motivated by “expansionist, militaristic, and racialized ideologies” (p. 11). The distinction is tenuous, as Piesse’s discussion of the marginalization or absence of indigenous peoples in most periodical accounts of emigration suggests.

*British Settler Emigration in Print* does not address the substantial emigration caused by the Irish famine or the Highland clearances because these emigrants did not leave home voluntarily, although most did in fact settle permanently overseas. As Piesse rightly points out, each of these emigrations could form the subject of an entire book; yet to exclude them entirely occludes the degree to which the distinction between voluntary and involuntary settler emigration is a matter of degree rather than kind. To suggest that those who emigrated due to unemployment did so voluntarily while those who emigrated because they were evicted from their homes did so involuntarily is pressing a point. *British Settler Emigration in Print* claims to focus “on the less studied field of emigration from mainland Britain, incorporating England, Wales, and primarily lowland Scotland”

(pp. 8–9), but its scope is effectively limited to England. It discusses no distinctively Welsh periodicals and only mentions a few of the Scottish periodicals that circulated most widely in England (*Blackwood's*, *Tait's*, *Chambers's*). It would be difficult to determine the extent to which an English periodical such as the *London Illustrated News* circulated in Scotland and Wales, but the absence of this data, and of any consideration of the extent to which English, Scottish, and Welsh periodicals might represent emigration differently, undermines the book's claim to discuss a comprehensively British settler movement.

Some of the most surprising and original readings in *British Settler Emigration in Print* gesture toward “a vast, Anglophone emigration literature that was significantly sustained by the periodical's wide circulatory paths” (p. 183), and that might include Australasian, American, and Canadian archives in addition to the British sources Piesse uses. One chapter examines how emigration-themed Christmas issues served to consolidate a sense of shared identity between metropolitan and colonial readerships by situating “emigrant readers within the same implied reading space and moment as British readers” so that they became “members of a vast reading circle around an extended national hearth” (pp. 54, 55). And a section of another chapter shows how popular westerns incorporated “the elements of domestic dismantlement and inversion” found in radical periodicals' representations of emigration (p. 175). Piesse persuasively suggests that situating the western within a transnational framework of settler emigration literature might challenge its association with American exceptionalism.

Although Piesse limits the focus of her book to British periodicals, she pioneers the research techniques we will use to explore periodical archives across the Anglophone world as we uncover the literary and cultural connections established by emigration routes in an age of mass mobility. The book's many discursive footnotes sometimes include information on the search terms Piesse used in particular lines of inquiry and the numbers of hits they generated. She brings together incisive close readings of particular texts with responsible and replicable distant readings of patterns among the 234 periodicals she cites. *British Settler Emigration in Print* opens up an exciting new area of research—a transnational Anglophone print culture established through the circulation of periodicals and reprinting of their contents—that invites a great deal of further work.

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