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SELF-MADE MAIDS: BRITISH EMIGRATION TO THE PACIFIC RIM AND SELF-HELP NARRATIVES

By Melissa Walker

THE VICTORIAN DISCOURSE OF SELF-HELP, popularized by Samuel Smiles in the mid-nineteenth century, was integral to the success of mid-Victorian British emigration and colonialism. As Robert Hogg notes in his study of British colonial violence in British Columbia and Queensland, Samuel Smiles's notion of character, which embraced the virtues of hard work, perseverance, self-reliance, and energetic action, helped sanction masculine colonial violence and governance in these regions (23–24). According to Robert Grant in his examination of mid-Victorian emigration to Canada and Australia, one's desire "to better him or herself" was closely entwined with Smiles's self-help philosophy and the rhetoric of colonial promotion permeating British self-help texts "in the projection of the laborer's progress from tenant to smallholder to successful landowner through hard work" (178–79). Francine Tolron similarly observes the pervasiveness of the success narrative in emigrant accounts of New Zealand, noting that this story often constitutes "yet another tale of the British march of Progress" (169) with the yeoman, John Bull, as the hero at its centre, who adopts the imperialist impetus to subdue the wilderness and recreate an ideal England in which a man can earn gentility through hard work and uprightness of character (169–70). She extends accounts by male emigrants to New Zealand to the "collective psyche" of all New Zealanders "whose stuff is made up of earth, so to speak, the inheritors of the old archetypal Englishman who worked on the land before the dawn of the industrial era" (173). These studies contribute significantly to a growing body of scholarship that considers the connections between self-help literature and British emigration and colonialism.[1] Yet, occasionally such analyses apply the meaning of self-help rhetoric universally across British male and female emigrant groups when the rise from tenant to landowner was typically a male, not a female, prerogative. Building on this important body of work, this paper considers how domestic concerns, rather than a sole focus on controlling foreign lands and people, informed versions of success penned by a particular group of mid-Victorian middle-class female emigrants and these women's understanding of their positioning within the colonies.

Apart from the story of the "hardy pioneer" who rose to prosperity in the colonies, another story of the economically self-sufficient and moral individual emerged for single middle-class women in 1862, when Maria S. Rye began the Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES) with the support of the Langham Place Group and the National Association for

the Promotion of Social Science (NAPPS). The heroine of this tale, the "self-made maid," as she is termed here, was a single female who exercised self-reliance and spotless morality in the colonies while employed as a governess, or as superior form of servant known as "a help" if she could not find a governess position. As an organization specifically directed at assisting single middle-class females to the colonies, the FMCES reacted to the large surplus of poor redundant middle-class females in Britain who were never expected to marry or become mothers. It responded to the pathetic range of employment opportunities for these women, especially after various feminist initiatives, aimed at removing the social and economic barriers for women, became inundated with applications for a relatively small number of positions.[2] Insisting that single females "must decide their own fate" and be self-reliant (Letter, *Times* April 29, 1862), Maria Rye offered a vision of female independence that contrasted starkly with W. R. Greg's conservative proposal in "Why are Women Redundant?" to transport female middle-class emigrants to the colonies where they could find husbands,[3] a practice that could be compared to shipping redundant populations to other parts of the empire.[4] The FMCES also countered colonial charges that they were transporting useless, educated husband-hunters by emphasizing that the female emigrants were women of good character who would improve the colony as workers and educators.[5] Moreover, they reacted to public fears about female sexual impropriety abroad by claiming to accept only "those whose characters were unblemished" (Rye, "Another Mail from Miss Rye" 269) and to supervise the women's safe passage and attainment of good situations ("The Last News of the Emigrants" 183).

Of the 302 women sponsored by the FMCES between 1862 and 1885, the majority emigrated to Australia, followed by New Zealand, and a number also went to North America, Canada being the preferred destination on this continent.[6] The Antipodes and North America could not have been more different destinations in terms of their diametrical positioning within the Southern and Northern hemispheres. Even so, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are all located on the Pacific Rim, and share similar colonial pasts. Each had significant indigenous populations, each had gold rushes that drew large numbers of British male emigrants in the mid nineteenth century, and each possessed a colonial government and press that welcomed only single females who could complete the difficult domestic tasks expected of settler women. This article traces the struggles of the FMCES to establish a new feminist ideal of the self-made maid for these colonies by examining Maria Rye's and the FMCES emigrant letters, which appeared in the Langham Place's main publishing organ, the *English Woman's Journal*, and contextualizing these female self-help narratives in relation to various emigration works directed predominantly at men. Additionally, it reads against the grain of the published output of the FMCES by drawing on examples of unpublished letters that are part of an extensive FMCES archive housed at the Women's Library in London, which contains the correspondences of 113 women assisted through the society. These selected letters attest to various negative points of the emigrant experience – the sickness, unemployment, poverty, loneliness, hard work, and crude employers – that were touched on, in varying degrees, by most of the FMCES emigrants, and that proved unmanageable for a small contingent of them. Then, this essay examines how these difficulties culminate in the little-known novel *Ella Norman; Or, a Woman's Perils* (1864) by Elizabeth Murray, a work which criticizes female emigration societies for leading single women to their moral ruin in Australia, suggesting that female self-help and the domestic plot are only possible in Britain.

By interpreting a body of texts produced by British emigrants who relocated to the Pacific Rim, this paper focuses on the tension between these emigrants' efforts towards maintaining cultural continuity – their status as British and respectable – and grappling with the unknown – especially given the relative newness of these Pacific Rim countries and their more flexible social relations. Given the pervasiveness of the mid-Victorian ethos of self-help, as well as some of the similarities among Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, emigrants travelling to and living in these regions described these tensions in often compatible and concomitant ways. Yet, the struggles of the emigrant experience in these countries were deeply gendered, which becomes particularly evident when analysing male and female emigrants' respective wielding of self-help discourse in these regions. Male emigrant texts constitute more straightforward success narratives that deal with colonial anxieties through the language of mastery and exclusion, while the FMCES texts push for female independence within the terms of female domestic employment and moral influence, particularly in relation to the Victorian novelistic and cultural conventions of the fallen woman and working-class inferiority. The story of the self-made maid, this article argues, is deeply unstable, for it obfuscates the ways in which the more flexible constructions of gender, class, and race in these Pacific Rim colonies were actually limiting and unmanageable for many single middle-class females, always threatening to disrupt the dominance of a unified social reality and feminist individual subject.

While various feminist critics have recognized how Maria Rye and the FMCES manipulated ideas of self-reliance and morality in order to establish the potential usefulness of single middle-class women in the colonial setting (Kranidis; Myers; Faymonville; Henderson), this paper contextualizes these character values in relationship to masculine notions of self-help. This interpretative strategy is important because self-help discourse, which enticed prospective working-class male emigrants and was incorporated in many of their letters, was a powerful rhetorical tool for the FMCES and attractive to female emigrants who also yearned after self-sufficiency and independence in a new life abroad. The FMCES texts, like their male counterparts, presented themselves as truthful accounts of success in the New World, contributing to what Jennifer Henderson describes, by way of Foucault and others, as the role of veridical discourse in "helping constitute the 'social' reality that it claims to be describing" through discursive renderings of the "truth," and moulding subject positions associated with these versions of the truth (Henderson 55). Henderson, much in the way that Nancy Armstrong argues for the political value of domestic fiction, proposes that the term veridical discourse, which Georges Canguilhem applied to scientific texts, be extended to "those discourses that establish their truth claims on the basis of unmediated experience, and an authority predicated upon an alleged distance from power" (15). The rhetoric of self-help, with its focus on bettering an individual's prospects through exercising character values, is one such discourse that appeared distant from politics, but which helped emigrants both maintain a sense of cultural continuity with their place of origin and establish less rigid social distinctions under which new subject positions could thrive. However, while the self-help discourse of much FMCES literature may attest to the female emigrants' ability to exert their moral authority and fashion a broader range of working opportunities and social experiences, it does not point to a significant increase in earning potential, or comfort in terms of class mobility, benefits which are clearly outlined in masculine success narratives. In order to insist upon the veridity of a female domestic individual for the colony, the FMCES needed to counteract any evidence to the contrary, which it did through moulding

women's independence within the terms female domestic employment and moral influence, and suppressing negative female emigrant accounts.

A Fraught Model: Victorian Feminist Individualism

THE FMCES SELF-HELP NARRATIVE propagated the image of a 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, yet especially the former two groups. Unsurprisingly, these narratives draw strongly on the Victorian convention of the fallen woman, a pervasive figure in Victorian culture and the domestic novel against which versions of the middle-class domestic female became ratified.[7] They also employ the convention of working-class inferiority, another idea that was evoked and debated vociferously in the Victorian domestic novel and forms of social critique, and that crucially helped define the moral mission of women to improve others.[8] Moreover, they relegate non-whites to positions of passivity, a tendency that has been noted in scholarship on Victorian women's contributions to British imperialism and colonialism.

In connection to Victorian women's fiction, Jane Eyre's individualism has been famously interpreted by Gayatri Chavortky Spivak as dependent on the exclusion of the racially other woman, and reinterpreted by Jenny Sharpe as a triangular relationship in which the grounds for the speaking subject of feminist individualism passes through a series of racially-inflected metaphors and the ultimate silencing of the Indian female other (Sharpe 54). Various feminist interpretations of female settler and emigrant literature have since argued that Victorian feminists validated their bid for individualism through their moral mission within British imperialism to redeem and civilize Indian women and indigenous others (Burton; McClintock; Chilton). Building on Sharpe, I would suggest that the fashioning of the FMCES female domestic individual in Pacific Rim regions rendered both indigenous women and men silent and practically invisible. As Mary E., who emigrated to British Columbia, wrote in 1862, "I am quite surrounded by Chinese and Indians. I was a little timid of them at first, but they are very harmless, and I do not fear them now" and a little further on in the letter, "There are very few white women here, so they are treated with politeness by all" ("The Last News of the Emigrants" 185). As this passage indicates, the female emigrant's ability to establish her authority in the colonial environment relied on her rhetorically asserting her presence as a white woman who commanded the respect of racial others.

Strategic as Mary E.'s brief acknowledgment of her unique presence among racial others appears, however, it stands apart as one of the only references to non-whites in the FMCES letters. Although the FMCES emigrants had some contact with indigenous peoples in the mining and logging communities of Canada and the outback stations of Australia and New Zealand, they rarely describe such encounters in the letters, which again points to the relative invisibility of racial others in these works. As Patricia Clarke notes, only one of the female emigrants to Australia, Maria Barrow, mentioned the Aborigines in an 1862 letter:

> A great party of Natives had their dinner out under the [?tree], opposite the house and within a stone's throw. They are very ugly and old, the women particularly, and I was rather afraid of them, however, they appear to be quite harmless. (qtd. in Clarke 64)

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Barrow's assessment of the Aborigines, especially the women in the gathering, is both more specific and more overtly condemnatory than Mary E.'s reference to the Chinese and "Indians" of British Columbia. Yet, akin to Mary E., Barrow also emphasizes her unassailable superiority in the colony by dismissing these inhabitants as "quite harmless" and thus hardly worthy of attention.

Beyond these brief emigrant assessments of racial and indigenous inferiors, other colonial encounters surface more frequently in FMCES literature and are managed more obviously through the middle-class female's Christian moral and civilizing role. Being in the presence of working-class men, for example, necessitated that the female emigrants be able to govern themselves and avoid sexual involvement with these men. Within the more fluid social constructions of the colony, unmarried female emigrants occupied an in-between position as single women, not wives, and faced continual pressure from the British and colonial publics to maintain their sexual propriety and retain their class distinction (Myers, "Performing the Voyage Out" 130). The employment of these women by inferior Scots and Irish employers also depended on these females' ability to mitigate class and racial threats through improving those who were considered inferiors at the levels of race and class. The structure of the narrative of the self-made maid embodies a number of contradictions, then, including the realizing of female independence in the circumscribed fields of governessing and domestic service, the exercising of middle-class respectability even in the face of adapting to working-class roles, and the imparting of benevolence, often taking the form of superiority, in relation to marginalized others –contradictions which rendered such a woman difficult to make, and often hard to find.

"The Right Sort of Woman": The Letters of Maria Rye and the Emigrants

AS WAS SUGGESTED IN THE *English Woman's Journal* in 1862, the greatest challenge facing the FMCES and their project of female emigration to the sought-after destinations of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada was convincing the British and colonial publics that the colonies had not obtained the services of "the right sort of women" ("Middle-Class Female Emigration Impartially Considered" 82). This type of female was projected as a single middle-class woman between the ages of 18 and 35, who could improve herself and colonial society through her superior education and values. The FMCES raised money for the passages of educated women who were expected to repay the society within a period of two years, once they were established abroad.[9]

In the early 1860s, colonial papers categorically rejected single middle-class women as unwanted workers. In a letter to the *Times* in 1868, Montreal resident J. E. Pell indicated that the only women Canada needed were reliable domestic servants:

> I have no hesitation in saying women are not wanted in Canada; there are plenty and to spare here; but the class who should fill the position of household servants prefer a bare living at anything else with their liberty. Consequently, good household servants, and they alone are needed. (12)

From a limiting and commoditizing perspective that referred to middle-class women's undesirability as workers, a writer in the *Melbourne Argus* claimed in 1862: "There is no article, perhaps, in the labour market of less demand than governesses." With regard to the chances of matrimony, he continued: "What shall we do with the articles which

don't 'move off,' and the goods which are found unsalable?" (qtd. in "Middle-Class Female Emigration Impartially Considered" 81). Such condemnatory statements were also prevalent in the British press, such as in the article "The Export Wife-Trade," printed in the *Saturday Review*, which insisted that courtship proceeds as slowly in Australia as in England, and that a middle-class female becomes even more impoverished and unmarriageable abroad "for good looks are her stock in trade. She might as well go out fishing without bait, or shooting without powder, as attempt to fascinate a squatter with a starved face and ragged clothes" (276). The rhetorical challenge taken up by the FMCES and the *English Woman's Journal* constituted nothing less than transforming the "wrong sort of woman," the unwanted and superfluous woman, into the "right sort of woman."

The first assertion that the *English Woman's Journal* made in order to convince the British public of the viability of the FMCES was that it only offered "truthful accounts" of colonial experience, "that letters describing the voyage to, or the condition of, particular colonies, are likely to be in some respects more satisfactory that information received in books" ("Stray Letters on Emigration" 109). It also represented Maria Rye as an authority on female middle-class emigration and granted her space to "tell her own story" ("The Last News of the Emigrants" 180). The editors argued that Miss Rye possessed the same spirit of self-help as Mrs. Chisholm, a pioneer of assisted female emigration in the 1830s and that, like her predecessor, Rye exemplified the first half of the Saxon expression – *"If you want a thing done, do it yourself; if you don't – send!"* (180). Unlike Caroline Chisholm, however, Rye was concerned with helping women find employment opportunities abroad, not just with women's civilizing potential as future wives and guardians of colonial society (Diamond 56). Rather than focus on such differences, the *English Woman's Journal* emphasized these women's shared values of doing for oneself and forthrightness, thus wielding self-help discourse to establish the historical validity and continuity of female emigration.

The supposed authenticity of FMCES literature and Rye's authority as an emigration assister are questionable, however, based on what is left out of her accounts of female emigration. Notions of femininity, in addition to class, shape Rye's letters in the way they gloss over the earning potential of the female emigrants. As wage-earning was often regarded as a degrading practice for Victorian middle-class women that was aligned with working-class women's employment, even prostitution, it needed to be dealt with delicately.[10] Additionally, the fact that women's employment opportunities and earning capacity abroad were still limited and undervalued had to be suppressed in order to attract the support of prospective female emigrants and sponsors. Rye's account of landing in Otago, New Zealand in March 1863, fails to indicate the ratio of successful and unsuccessful placements, or to give any sense of how colonial rates of pay for women stack up against men's wages, merely stating that "nearly all the girls (except about fourteen) have found places – the governesses at from 60l. to 40l., and the servants from 40l. to 20l." ("Another Mail from Miss Rye" 263). Although room and board were included in the wages for domestic servants and governesses, Rye's letter lacks pertinent information on other expenses, such as the costs of transportation, clothing, or how quickly the women could be expected to pay back their loans to the FMCES.[11]

In contrast, Rev. A. Styleman Herring's letters, published on behalf of the St. Paul's emigration society of London in 1871, offer detailed information on living and travel costs, as well as on Canadian wages for male labourers, farmers, tradesmen, female housemaids, and cooks. The discrepancy between masculine and feminine wages is strikingly obvious, as Herring notes that the lowest category of male earners, farm labourers, earned 60 shillings

per month with board and lodging, while housemaids earned 25 shillings per month.[12] The only women wanted in the colonies, Herring suggests, are those able to do domestic chores including sewing, cooking, cleaning, poultry management, and milking.[13] This sentiment is also reflected in E. Wilson Gates's *Hints to Emigrants* (1892): "A single woman with a few of these qualifications will not remain long in single blessedness, unless she so wills it; she may soon become a happy wife and the appreciated mistress of a snug farm" (6). While Gates utters none of the vitriol often levelled at single women, he nevertheless insists that the only type of single women that his Self-Help society will assist are good domestic servants (Scrivener, *Hints to Emigrants* 7; "With the 'Self-Help' Emigrants" 9).

Although emigration texts aimed at men often point to the need for female domestic workers in the colonies, they typically only attest to the economic and social mobility of male emigrants. Many adopt the rhetoric of self-help, implying that hard work, temperance and Christian morality lead to success in the colony, such as a letter penned by George W. in *Canada as a Field for Emigration* (1861): "At this moment I have increased my property, by care and industry, under the blessing of an overruling Providence, about ninefold, as I consider it worth little less than 3000l." (Fyfe 86). Many also refer to the act of rising above difficulties and becoming self-made men. As Evelyn Sturt wrote of his experience in Mount Gambier, Australia in 1853:

> When I fixed on the site of my new homestead I had not a shilling in the world; unfortunately, the boot was very much on the other leg, but thanks to the success attending sheep-farming I have outlived my difficulties. (Sayers, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* 374)[14]

Rye's account of New Zealand contains none of the remunerative guarantees of self-help found in George W.'s or Sturt's letters. The material and social improvements for female emigrants remain ambiguous and secondary to the dominance of a domestic plot that focuses on women's power to overcome difficulty through self-maintenance and positively influencing others. Because Rye and the FMCES promoted employment rather than marriage as the most optimal outcome for single women, Rye's letter lacks an overarching love story. Nevertheless, it draws on the domestic fictional conventions of the threat of sexual falling and working-class inferiority, which the middle-class heroine, Rye, helps remedy through instilling in female emigrants and working-class men moral values.

These domestic plot elements are apparent in Rye's description of a near-mutiny on the voyage to Otago, and how, in the days after this occurrence, Rye and her female protégées studied morality, and she assumed a leadership role with the sailors as their preacher. According to Rye, a disruption during the voyage transpired when a few female emigrants lingered past curfew to converse with sailors and single men on the main deck. After the women refused the captain's orders to return to their quarters, "the hand-cuffs were produced, and they were marched off to solitary confinement" ("Another Mail from Miss Rye" 261). Rye, who left her cabin to see what was happening, discovered that "the birds were caught and caged by the time I got on deck" (261), yet no sooner had the women been caught than the men grabbed their firearms and "demanded their liberation" (261). Rye's reference to the women as "caged birds" reflects the Victorian cultural obsession with controlling female sexuality, especially aboard an emigrant ship in which the sexes and classes mingled more freely. Female emigrants, as Jan Gothard notes, had the status of commodities that required protection and safe delivery to their destination (134). A female emigrant's "character" or

conduct aboard ship and in the colonies, as in Britain, was absolutely inextricable from her respectability as a woman and as a worker. If deviant female emigrants were free from admonition and became sexually fallen, they would be quite literally damaged goods.

Rye admits that she and the other female emigrants were passive in the face of male violence and punitive action, as she states, "Oh how like rats in a hole we felt that night, and how wearily the hours passed, as with hot cheeks and parched mouths we sat or rather rolled about till daybreak!" ("Another Mail from Miss Rye" 261). Yet, she soon illustrates how female morality manages to keep any further problems or threats of male violence at bay for the remainder of the journey. Dropping her comparison of the second-class female passengers to lowly and skittish vermin that inhabit the vessel, she describes how these women emerge from their humble berths to become educated:

> With the women we held classes every day at three o'clock, Bible lessons on Sunday, reading, writing, arithmetic, and work alternately every day, and singing and dancing at night, wind and weather permitting. (262)

Rye attests that "On board ship is a fine place for studying character, and *we* were at school all the four months" (262). The italicized "*we*" in this passage sets the FMCES emigrants apart from other non-assisted emigrants aboard ship, and suggests that the voyage was an important time for self-improvement for all the females associated with the FMCES, Rye included. The more fluid gender and class boundaries aboard the ship allow the women to study character values and achieve an education, the like of which most of the passengers aboard ship, and especially the female emigrants, probably could not have received in Britain, as efforts toward self-help were typically the purview of men.

Rye differentiates herself from the other FMCES emigrants, however, by proving her aptitude for ministering to working-class men, an action that places her in the position of philanthropic lady, and thus in a less assailable position than the female emigrants whose employable status makes them more morally and sexually suspect. She begins a prayer circle with the "motley, red, blue, and brown shirted crew, bare-footed men with curious peering eyes, a strange mixture of shy and cynical faces" (262). The formerly reprobate crew members eventually become her "congregation" to whom she preaches one Sunday "a sermon out of my own head, spoken without book or notes" and, subsequently, sermons every Sunday for the remainder of the journey (262). These working men clean up their act in the presence of the philanthropic woman, both in terms of personal hygiene – the men come to church "ready and clean for me [Rye]" (262) – and in terms of moral improvement. As Rye exclaims, "I had not been long with them before they were my men for the rest of the voyage, and the first cheer they gave after crossing the line was for their chaplain!" (262). She attributes the peacefulness of the remainder of the journey to her abilities as a preacher and moral presence as a middle-class woman.

This sense that moral teaching and knowledge were the purview of middle-class teachers is hardly unique to Rye's work. It is also apparent in the literature of the Self-Help Emigration Society, a late-Victorian emigration society that concentrated mainly on assisting working-class men to Canada. In one of its reports "Off to Canada" (1893), the author E. Wilson Gates, writing under the pseudonym Septimus Scrivener, invests middle-class male emigration assisters like himself with the power to impart values of self-help that are meant to control various vices endemic in British and colonial culture:

> Since no one room in the ship was large enough to contain all the passengers, we decided to hold on Sundays two simultaneous services morning and evening. On the afternoon of the 23rd, I held a Young Men's Social Hour, when we discussed "Our Chief Dangers, and How to Avoid Them." This general subject was chosen by them, as also the minor heads: 1) Moral fog; 2) Drinking; 3) Gambling; 4) Fighting; 5) Licentiousness; 6) Bad Company; 7) Selfishness. (10)

According to Gates and other emigration works of the period, vices including drinking, gambling, and other forms of dissipation impinged upon the potential of working-class men and their role in colonial development and imperial expansion.[15] Unstated in this passage is the need to control and eliminate forms of behaviour that might otherwise compromise the racial superiority of working-class men and further degrade them to the level of paupers and indigenous others. Gates represents working-class men as willing partners in their moral education, as they choose the lecture topics; other documents published by the society corroborate Gate's observations, highlighting emigrant letters that attest to how the values of sobriety and industriousness are fundamental to these men's financial security abroad ("The Old Country and the New"; "Report for the Year 1893").

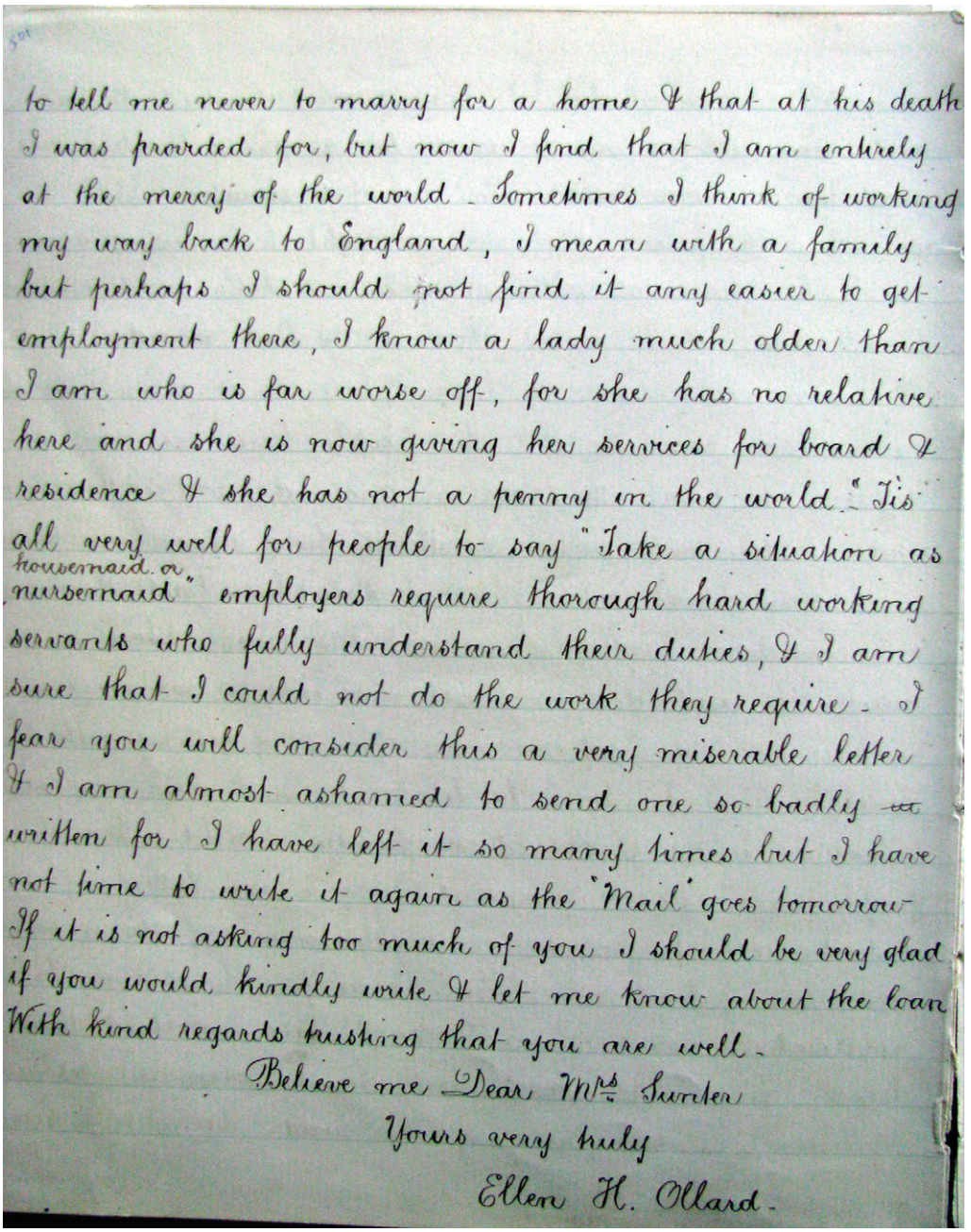
The main difference between Gates's reference to ministry and Rye's is that she occupies the pastoral role of minister and moral teacher, a practice that was unusual for a woman in this era and even in many religious denominations to this day. In this position, Rye challenges Victorian gender ideology mutedly, insofar as she becomes a female chaplain when there is presumably no male in this role; however, she never overtly challenges the system of patriarchy, for she avoids condemning the sexual double standard that leads the Captain to cage the female emigrants and not the sailors. If the main deck of the ship is a type of Benthamite prison, its rules, as enforced by the Captain, men like Gates, and women like Rye, were meant to institute measures of self-governance, to make emigrants watch themselves and others, thereby keeping behaviour in check. The centralized form of power – the supervisor in the central tower of Bentham's prison – as Foucault observes, or, in this case – the supervisors on the deck – need not be visible to the prisoners, or to the female emigrants aboard the ship, to make them feel like they are being watched (Foucault 470). As a floating microcosm of British society bound for a new world, the ship could be seen to shift gender and class boundaries in new directions, thus allowing new possibilities for female influence that are nonetheless still contained within an overall patriarchal structure.[16]

If Rye fashioned herself and the female emigrant as a self-governing, moral woman, it must be asked whether or not the female emigrants represented themselves as the type of woman that Rye and the FMCES imagined. The *English Woman's Journal* published several letters written by single female emigrants from the period of 1861–1862. As various critics have noted, the emigrant letters were collected as public records that were typically sent to members of the society and other patrons, including relatives, who had contributed to women's journeys abroad (Hammerton; Clarke; Myers). The accounts published in the journal tend to be brief, optimistic, and written by middle-class women who attest to having been able to adapt to the new demands of the colony. For example, a woman A. R. writes of her experience in Antwerp, Australia, in 1862: "For three months after Mrs. E – 's confinement she was an invalid, and very much has entirely devolved on me, in the way of housekeeping and other things, which I never expected, but still I am very happy, and have never once regretted leaving my native land" ("The Last News of the Emigrants" 184). According to Mary E. of British Columbia, domestic work was a fact of life in the colony:

"They do not want governesses here; what is wanted is strong, active, hard-working women, who are willing and able to chop wood and milk cows, and do all kinds of rough work; this is the simple truth" (185). Although Mary E. admits, "I suffered much in mind when I first left my native land," she also admits to feeling "resigned to whatever it may please God to direct" and to receiving "*great kindness here*" (185), thus appearing poised for contentment in her new life.

A slightly longer letter written November 16, 1861, by a Brisbane immigrant, also expresses a willingness to embrace domestic tasks, thus reflecting Rye's contention that the female emigrants had to be adaptable and "reconsider the question of domestic service, and not rush so blindly at teaching, and factories, and 'genteel employments'" ("Female Middle Class Emigration" 27). This letter also points to the disciplinary strategies that the FMCES emigrants adopted in order to ensure that they did not lose caste while performing domestic duties. The female emigrant explains how she took over the job of cooking for the other passengers, "scolded the cooks, and talked about the rights of the people, and demanded some rules about how and when the things were to be cooked" ("Stray Letters on Emigration" 113). Her list of grievances continues regarding the poor provisions, very tight quarters "leaving no room for crinolines," drenched berths, wretched seasickness, and a night without a bed (113–14). Like Rye, this emigrant assumes a managerial role as she takes the liberty of instructing the working-class people around her, yet in contrast to Rye, who describes sexual impropriety and male violence aboard the ship, this writer reports, "We suffered no annoyances from the sailors" and they were "always ready to lend a hand" (114). Nonetheless, she similarly attributes the sailors' good behaviour to exemplary womanly behaviour: "If they see you are willing to make the best of everything, they become willing to make the best of everything for you" (115).

What these letters and indeed Rye's account conceal are the inevitable tensions that ensued when a middle-class woman stepped outside of her conventional gender and class position as she assumed new domestic roles in the colony. To cross the great divide between middle-class female employments and domestic service, as Marion Diamond notes, was impossible in England, but in the colonies boundaries were more fluid: "This class ambiguity was one of the great threats, and also one of the attractions, of colonial life" (83). As middle-class women typically possessed limited credentials for performing domestic duties, and were educated to believe that they were meant to improve working-class people, they often found being employed by working-class employers awkward and uncomfortable. Indeed, some of the letters held in the FMCES archives indicate the power struggle that resulted from a middle-class woman working in a servile position, especially when the employer was of a lower class than the female emigrant. Miss Annie Davis of Sydney alludes to the disagreeableness of such a situation in 1867: "I wrote to you last when I was on the point of going inland to enter a situation; – it did not prove a very comfortable one as the people were vulgar" ("Records" 257). Other letters blatantly resist the expectation (as endorsed by Maria Rye and the FMCES) that a female emigrant be open to accepting servile roles, instead claiming that a genteel female's class background and training make her unsuited for such positions. As Ellen H. Ollard, a newcomer to Melbourne, indicates in a letter dated Aug. 4, 1876: "Tis all very well for people to say 'Take a situation as a nursemaid or a housemaid' employers [sic.] require thorough hard working servants who fully understand their duties, and I am sure I could not do the work they require" ("Records" 501; see Figure 7).



to tell me never to marry for a home & that at his death I was provided for, but now I find that I am entirely at the mercy of the world. Sometimes I think of working my way back to England, I mean with a family but perhaps I should not find it any easier to get employment there, I know a lady much older than I am who is far worse off, for she has no relative here and she is now giving her services for board & residence & she has not a penny in the world. 'Tis all very well for people to say "Take a situation as housemaid or nursemaid" employers require thorough hard working servants who fully understand their duties, & I am sure that I could not do the work they require. I fear you will consider this a very miserable letter & I am almost ashamed to send one so badly ~~written~~ written for I have left it so many times but I have not time to write it again as the 'Mail' goes tomorrow. If it is not asking too much of you I should be very glad if you would kindly write & let me know about the loan. With kind regards trusting that you are well.

Believe me Dear Mrs. Sumter
Yours very truly
Ellen H. Ollard.

Figure 7. (Color online) Transcribed letter from original written by Ellen H. Ollard, 4 Aug. 1876. Records for Female Middle-Class Emigration Society, The Women's Library, London.

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Another emigrant, Marion Hett of Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, expresses her relief at being spared a brief and potentially uncomfortable foray into domestic service in 1870:

> Mrs. Sutton does not ask me to do anything but teach the children and keep their clothes in order, but 2 or 3 ladies called upon me in the first instance, who wanted helpers, but who said when they saw me, that they could not think of asking me to perform many of the duties which they should require. I got quite into a fright and had some thoughts of dressing myself as a *servant* and calling myself one, but now, having made a beginning, I do hope I may keep employed for so long a time as may be necessary. ("Records" 373)

Although these letters indicate the difficulty for FMCES emigrants to step into foreign domestic working situations, this third letter suggests moreover the practice of disguise involved in attempting to pass oneself off as a working-class woman, a sort of cross-dressing gesturing towards the sense that class, like gender, is another form of identity that involves performativity. While Hett expresses relief that she can remain in the more socially acceptable position of the middle-class governess, her letter highlights how identity can be destabilized, thus implying that both working-class and middle-class womanhood are regulatory fictions.[17]

Even though gender and class conformity often involved a tricky and uncomfortable performance for women, this combination of disguise and compromise is relatively invisible in male emigrant narratives. Masculinity, like whiteness, historically constituted a taken-for-granted normative category, and in terms of class, the majority of assisted male emigrants – working-class men – were not typically forced into roles that threatened a loss of caste. Although many working-class artisans had to accept lower working-class positions abroad as farm labourers, these men did not risk losing their class status. Rather, male emigrant texts typically portray low-paid labour as a brief passage in the working-class man's path towards financial prosperity and social betterment. Moreover, for workmen there was no conflict between their class position and accepting remunerative employment, whereas for middle-class British women, traditional Victorian domestic ideology ostracized them for working in paid roles, and even British feminism suggested that they should only work in the private and proper middle-class domestic role of governess. Being a self-made maid in the colonies posed a new and difficult dangerous proposition for these women: upholding middle-class manners and values in any situation, even in the most despised field of working-class labour, female domestic service. The FMCES could not possibly publish some emigrant letters because they too obviously undermined the veracity of a female colonial individual who felt competent and superior as a middle-class woman while working in a paid domestic role. Thus, they only published accounts that attested to a female colonial individual who, in the face of the threats of sexual fallenness and working-class inferiority, could maintain British imperial middle-class norms and morality in extended fields of employment and social experience. Cultural acceptance of this new female ideal absolutely hinged on letters that discursively fashioned the truth that they claimed to be describing.

Ella Norman; Or, a Woman's Perils

ALTHOUGH FMCES PROPAGANDA invested the middle-class female with the capacity to maintain herself and discipline class others within the more fluid social relations of colonial society, Elizabeth Murray's Australian novel *Ella Norman; Or, a Woman's Perils* (1864)

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brings into sharp view how gender, class, and racial concerns combine in ways that are uncomfortable and ultimately intolerable for the single middle-class heroine. The novel offers up an antithetical nightmare to the colonial story of female independence and domesticity, as Ella Norman, the governess heroine, is painfully unable to adapt to Australian society. Murray overtly attacks the philanthropic efforts of female emigration societies "not the less cruel in effect because mistaken, and *meant for the best*" (Preface). In a reversal of the FMCES letters, which incorporated popular cultural conventions in order to both justify a broader range of opportunities for these women and their ability to uphold cultural norms, this text employs the same conventions, but in an effort to overturn the ideal of the self-made maid and to ratify Britain as the only viable social reality for middle-class women.

Murray, like Rye and the FMCES emigrants, drew on first-hand experience with emigration, as she had accompanied her husband, an army officer, and five sons to Melbourne in 1852. However, unlike these women, she had been wholly disenchanted with the emigrant experience, returning to England in 1859 and leaving behind her eldest son and husband. In the preface to her novel, Murray claims to present as objective an account of Australian society as possible through fiction:

> [I]t has been my aim to make my characters representatives of the different sections of society, and, as such, utter the opinions which I have myself heard expressed by members of those various orders with whom I have been brought in contact, without in any way identifying these opinions with my own. (Preface)

Yet, Murray's attempt to present a true account of Australia through fiction is ironic and painfully flawed, as her novel offers one continuous indictment of the colony.

Her text echoes the sentiments of some other emigration literature of the day that depict Australia as the most corrupt of all the colonies based on its large influx of convicts during the early nineteenth century and the profligacy associated with the gold rush. Such opinions circulate in Catharine Parr Traill's popular guidebook *The Canadian Settler's Guide* (1854):

> [T]he industrious, sober-minded labourer, with a numerous family of daughters, one would imagine, would rather bring them to Canada, where they can get immediate employment in respectable families . . . than form connexions with such characters as swarm the streets of Melbourne and Geelong, though these may be able to fill their hands with gold, and clothe them with satin and velvet. (20)

Traill and Murray's representations of Australia are not identical, however, because while the former promotes Canada as a healthy alternative to the morally diseased-ridden Australia, the latter suggests that domestic happiness for the single middle-class woman can only be achieved in England.

The British and Australian literary public saw Murray's book as overwhelmingly one-sided in its castigation of Australia as a corrupt society. As a writer in the *Saturday Review* in 1864 sardonically wrote, "In short, for discomfort, for privation, for a hopeless dragging on of a miserable existence which before long ought either to kill or to uncivilize the sufferer, a gentleman or lady can find few places to go to like a flourishing gold colony" (2). The Melbourne publication the *AGE* claimed that Mrs. Murray's negative and exaggerated account of the colony was motivated by personal reasons, namely her receipt of far less money than she had expected from the Australian Legislature upon her husband's death a year after her

return to England (qtd. in Murray 407). Although the reviews dismissed Murray's negative assessment of the colony itself, the *Saturday Review* admitted that the book may do some good "[i]f it helps to teach intending emigrants, or their friends and advisers, to look more thoughtfully at both sides of the question in weighing the advantages of settling in the various colonies" (2). Only the liberal publication the *Athenaeum* defended the women's emigration societies, if somewhat tepidly, stating that Murray's words were harsh towards "those ladies who devote their lives to the promotion of female emigration" (1). The reviews, while determined to contradict Murray's negative perceptions of Australia as a corrupt penal colony, reflected the general public discomfort surrounding female emigration to the colonies.

Murray's novel centres on a pretty and timid middle-class woman who emigrates with her mother and brother to Australia following her father's death. Soon after the family arrives in Australia, Ella's brother dies and, left without financial support, Ella's mother begins drinking heavily and pressures her daughter to make a good marriage with a prospector, the nephew of an ex-convict, whom Ella finds extremely distasteful. The heroine's resistance to marrying a working-class man with a corrupt family history resembles some of the anxieties surrounding courtship articulated in unpublished FMCES letters. Indeed, marriage was a common outcome for many of the single middle-class emigrants and was approved of by the FMCES as long as it was for love, not necessity (Dreher 8). Yet the wide gulf between many male settlers and female emigrants, particularly in terms of class, made the choices seem extremely narrow to some women. As Miss I. U. Carey, an emigrant to Wanganni, New Zealand, complains in an account written in 1867: "a great many girls are left unmarried – the men who come out are the younger sons of poor families, *many* are very much addicted to drink. Just such men as no nice girl would marry" ("Records" 283). In the way that "no nice girl" like Miss Carey can imagine marrying any of the crude and drunken working-class male emigrants, Ella Norman also refuses to marry the son of the ex-convict on the grounds that "he drinks – drinks raw spirits in the morning" (14; vol. 1, ch. 1).

Ella's refusal to marry beneath her respectable middle-class station ironically leads Mrs. Norman to push her daughter to accept the first teaching position she can find so that she can support her mother's own devolution from a position of middle-class respectability to the depths of alcoholic dissipation and over-spending. Ella begins teaching at a school at St. Kilda, a job that soon terminates after she suffers from fever; subsequent to being employed in three other unsatisfactory positions, she obtains an occupation as a governess in the Australian bush. Finding a position as a governess proves to be no insurance, however, against the vulgar manners of Celtic working classes who constitute the *nouveaux riches* of the colony. Ella could be seen as occupying an in-between position, what Janet Myers, by way of Anne McClintock, refers to as the colonial governess's status as "'a threshold creature,' precariously positioned not only by virtue of class, but also by virtue of education and race" (*Antipodal England* 116). According to McClintock, the colonial governess was "[g]raced with an education" that she did not have a chance to use (277): "Racially a member of the white elite, she was in reality a member of the serving class. She was protected by racial privilege but not by economic security" (277). As Myers and McClintock point out, a British middle-class education was of little utility to colonial governesses who were uncomfortably aligned with working-class and indigenous servants or, in Ella's case, with lower-class and racially inferior Irish and Scots settlers.

The rough half-Scottish/half-Irish family who finally employ Ella put little stock in her superior British education beyond its ability to facilitate their own class mobility, and to satisfy

their bossy Irish relative who insists that "the bairns mun be leddies" (Murray 72; vol. 1, ch. 4). Ella's genteel middle-class manners and deportment contrast starkly with the McClaren's Scottish household, which is hopelessly disorganized and incapable of improvement. Upon approaching the McClaren's rural homestead, she is led through "a variety of tumble-down slab huts covered with bark – through dogs of all sorts and sizes, through turkeys, geese, ducks and hens, all outrivaling each other in noise" (68; vol. 1, ch. 4). As she enters the backdoor, she finds that the house fares little better; elements of the Australian bush infiltrate the inside, in the form of bark ceilings and gum tables, and her first supper consists of greasy mutton chops and potatoes still in their skins (70; vol. 1, ch. 4). The crude and disorganized features of the household are metonyms for her Scottish mistress's disproportionate and inferior racial and class characteristics, including a low forehead, sunken eyes, a shield-like chin,

> a yellow parchment-like vacant face, unbroken in outline, save horizontally by the long narrow slit which served as a mouth, and perpendicularly by a small pinched nose – a face of stupid stolidity it would have been, but for the compression of the narrow bloodless lips. (71; vol. 1, ch. 4)

Such class and racial prejudice aimed at Irish and Scottish colonials reverberates with Rye's own claims in a letter to the *Times* in 1862 that the female emigrants whom she assists, mostly English women, are "vastly superior to the hordes of wild Irish and fast young ladies who have hitherto started as emigrants" (*Times* 14). Yet while Rye champions the superior behavior and morality of her English female emigrants, Murray views the markers of Ella's class and racial superiority as useless in an uncivilized country.

The McClaren children, Donald, Christina, and Jessie, possess the same uncouthness as their mother, even Jessie, a handsome and inquisitive girl whom Ella initially views as a promising pupil. On a ride with the girls in the bush, Ella encounters birds – "*noisy* ones they were; but their shrill, discordant sounds, to a musical ear, only made the scene less endurable" (Murray 122; vol. 1, ch. 8). The birds resemble the wild, untamed girls and are diametrically opposed to Ella's educated and musical abilities as a governess. Within these discordant surroundings, Ella is violently thrown into the dead branches of a tree while her pupils gallop off far ahead of her, past a local watering hole (124; vol. 1, ch. 8), a scene that contrasts starkly with Rye's idealistic portrayal of the colonial governess, printed in the *English Woman's Journal* in 1862, in which she contends that

> half-holidays and after lesson time would find them scampering across the plains on horseback with their young charges and companions, or busily engaged in some out-of-door cheerful occupation or amusement; really, and not nominally, one of the family. ("Female Middle Class Emigration" 24–25)

The colonial kinship ties apparently forged between a governess and her pupils in Rye's account are notably absent in Ella's experience of scampering through the bush on horseback which produces any feeling but being part of the family.

The imperilled nature of middle-class femininity in the colony is thrown into further relief when Ella takes the opportunity to visit a sexually degraded middle-class woman, Bella, who, Ella has heard, works at a pub at the edges of the bush. Murray devotes the remainder of the text to Ella's attempts to rescue the fallen "Bella Dyce," a reverend's daughter named Mary Hawley, who had attended school with Ella in England. A bar singer and mistress to an

abusive Australian pub manager, this fallen middle-class emigrant tells Ella the "sad but too common tale" (Murray 133; vol. 1, ch. 8) of coming to Australia through the assistance of a female emigration society, and being led astray during the voyage by a beautifully dressed, "ladylike" woman (139; vol. 2, ch. 1) who attempted to lure her into a life of prostitution in Australia. Murray's fallen woman plot expands on a common British anxiety that morally suspect emigrants or colonials could lure female emigrants to their ruin. As Jan Gothard notes,

> Sometimes other women were included amongst the ranks of 'predators', with a number of cases recorded over the years of older women 'contaminating' young single women – presumably seeking to recruit them for prostitution. (129–30)

Having been approached by such an older woman and further degraded through her contact with a crude working-class man, Bella appears severed from her prior identity as Mary Hawley and her former classmate, Ella. Yet, as the echo between the names Bella and Ella suggest, both women share a bond. Ella too has been led astray by inferior colonials, first in her many failed working positions in the colony and, quite literally, by the unruly Scottish McClaren children who leave her stranded in the bush.

Each woman also shares the experience of being unknowingly followed to Australia by an English gentleman suitor who suffers his own share of humiliation in the colony. Bella's former English lover, Francis Pierrepoint, emigrates to Australia after learning that his late uncle, Lord Tiptree, never executed his will. Pierrepoint, "left penniless in the world; – a cousin on the male side inheriting the title" (88; vol. 1, ch. 5), attempts to earn his fortune and find his love Mary Hawley, but comes to Melbourne only to have his hopes dashed:

> Arrived as many had done before him, strong in hope, in self-reliance – strong in his own integrity of purpose – strong in his belief in the effect of honesty, of honest industry, and in all those points which the worldly religious, hold out to the young and inexperienced as the sure means of *temporal* advancement. Arrived to find all these so many stumbling blocks in his way. (102–03; vol. 1, ch. 6)

This passage overturns the contentions of popular emigration literature for men that gentlemanly self-help values of honesty and hard work could assure success abroad. It reflects the failure of self-help discourse to obtain mastery and control over colonial threats, as is sometimes the case in male emigration narratives, in which expressions of defeat disrupt the so-called truths of masculine self-control and dominance that these texts typically propagate.

Such an avowal of the all-consuming evils of colonial society appears in a letter penned by Foster Fyans, a soldier, administrator, and magistrate in Geelong. In this epistle, Fyans describes the rampancy of venereal disease in the white and indigenous populations and the moral degeneracy of different classes of squatters, concluding, "For a new colony, only eighteen years inhabited, I consider that there is more vice than is to be found in any part of the world" (Sayers, *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* 194). Here, Fyans expresses a deep-seated fear of sexual intercourse and interbreeding between British emigrants and aborigines. Murray's narrative, by contrast, presents the sexual degradation of British women in their relationship to working-class others, not miscegenation, as the greatest threat to middle class respectability. Just as Francis Pierrepoint's British moral values have no way of preparing

him for colonial life, his opinion of Mary Hawley as a proper middle-class woman – an "angel" (85; vol. 1, ch. 5) and a "Madonna" (100; vol. 1, ch. 6) – cannot prepare him for her sexually degraded state. Pierrepoint only ever vaguely fears that "she may have to do something beneath her birth and education; . . . and he pictured her in various picturesque attitudes performing various domestic offices – she would be always lovely, do what she may" (101; vol. 1, ch. 6). Once he learns about Mary's unfortunate fall, however, Francis swiftly abandons his dream of asking her to be his wife and returns to England, eventually marrying another woman.

This all-pervasive sense of colonial vice, and the middle-class Englishman's defenselessness in the face of it, is also reiterated in the experience of Ella's English suitor, a man named Maberley. He learns that a cultivated and moral Englishman cannot make it in Australia when a settler, Henry Townsend, warns him:

> You must come down from your cherished pedestal of honour and integrity, and so forth, and lose your own identity, your self-respect, your best characteristics, before you can compete with men who cannot understand your feelings, or lump them as "bosh." (346; vol. 3, ch. 8)

Townsend's subsequent suggestion that gentlemen may emigrate to "India, to China, to America" (346; vol. 3, ch. 8), but must not go to Australia, reinforces the notion that Australia was a particularly treacherous destination for middle-class male emigrants. Murray's text holds out no hope at all for middle-class female emigrants when it indicates that Ella and her mother represent "two helpless women in this land of horrors" (12; vol. 1, ch. 1) and, as Jock, Pierrepoint's friend, says of Bella: "That unfortunate girl is one among a thousand others who have fallen because they could not help themselves in this cursed colony" (284; vol. 3, ch. 1). Only Britain itself offers any chance of female self-help, as Bella, the reformed fallen woman, agrees to "bury" her past and look for respectable work in England (300–01; vol. 3, ch. 3), while Ella returns home as Mrs. Maberley, becoming a married mistress of an English household.

Murray's ultimate rejection of the domestic narrative of improvement in Australia, in particular her restoration of the domestic plot back to England, is not dissimilar to Anthony Trollope's insistence in *John Caldigate* (1879) on the return of the middle-class female emigrant widow, Euphemia Smith, and the eponymous hero who was scandalously involved with her. In Trollope's text, "[h]owever, whereas the eponymous hero is gradually reassimilated into British life through the resolution of the domestic marriage plot, Trollope's female emigrant, Euphemia Smith, is not" (Myers, *Antipodal England* 63) and is arrested for falsely accusing Caldigate of bigamy. Trollope perceives that the single woman's experience in Australia violates conventional gender roles so completely that she cannot be reabsorbed into British society. By contrast, Murray envisions employment or marriage as options for middle-class women in England, and even permits the fallen woman to access respectable employment in Britain.

Murray blames the false colonial "ladies" and abusive men, as well as the female philanthropists who assisted them to Australia, for the unfortunate fate of female emigrants. A considerable portion of the text ridicules an English woman, Lady Tiptree, who dreams of heading up her own emigration organization to ship prospective brides to Australia (370; vol. 3, ch. 10). Lady Tiptree also concerns herself with supporting efforts to civilize aborigines in Australia when, according to her grandson Charles, she would do better to assist the

Tiptrees' poor emigrant cousins, the Claverings, back to England: "I would sooner give my money to people I know, than to those nasty blacks, who eat people" (367; vol. 3, ch. 10). As a busy-body female philanthropist who overlooks the plight of her own kin, Lady Tiptree resembles Mrs. Jellyby in Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), a character Dickens modelled after the emigration assister Caroline Chisholm, who spends all of her time on philanthropic efforts to civilize Africans while overlooking the domestic disarray of her own household.

Murray's condemnation of female emigration societies, plus her insistence on the middle-class female's better chances at independence and happiness in Britain, represents the experience of colonial failure and return that is gestured towards in some articles on female emigration in the British Press and unpublished FMCES letters. For example, in an article published in the *London Standard* in 1868, William Douth, the London-based Agent-General for Canada, details the failures associated with Rye's emigrants, among them the hardships that two governesses endured while working as servants in Toronto which led to the raising of a subscription to send them back to England.[18] In an emigrant account of Newcastle, New South Wales, in 1862, every bit as perilous as Ella Norman's experience in Australia, Ellen Ireland describes the horrors of travelling second-class, her multiple illnesses, and experiences working for a series of difficult families, concluding that she intends "to go back to England once I pay back 20 pounds" ("Records" 15). Such articles and unpublished letters that disclose the discomforts of colonial life for middle-class women endangered the FMCES enterprise. As much as Maria Rye and many of the FMCES emigrants rigorously managed and obfuscated these threats through the language of self-sufficiency and female morality, other literary documents indicated that for some female emigrants, the difficulties of colonial life proved insurmountable. Disastrous versions of the domestic plot continually threatened the veracity of a self-made maid who was fit for the colonies.

Colonial Legacies: Hardy Pioneers and Self-Made Maids

SELF-HELP DISCOURSE WAS PART and parcel of the British story of masculine success in the colonies; it also integrally informed and shaped the female colonial domestic narrative propagated by the FMCES. While male and female emigration works represented themselves as veridical texts, they were, in effect, carefully-structured fictions. Masculine narratives of achieving material and social mobility abroad depended on self-help discourse in order to exert rhetorical control over moral problems that were seen as endemic to working-class and indigenous cultures and to ensure the respectability and superiority of white men in the colonies. These texts acknowledged female emigrants insofar as they deemed female domestic servants to be crucial to men's colonial survival and success, while they rejected single middle-class women as useless husband hunters. Within the terms of Victorian ideology, middle-class females were supposed to be wives and mothers, not independent workers, which meant that the British and colonial publics largely shared the view that single middle-class women were "redundant."

The promotional articles and letters published by the FMCES counteracted such stereotypical views by carefully tailoring notions of female domestic employment and improvement in relation to the Victorian novelistic and cultural conventions of the fallen woman and working-class inferiority. Through its published output in the *English Woman's Journal*, the FMCES represented Rye and the female emigrants as self-reliant women whose ability to improve supposedly inferior "others" guaranteed their spotless reputations and class

authority. The success of the self-made maid, however, often necessitated the obscuring and sometimes outright suppression of negative aspects of colonial life, including the sickness, homesickness, destitution, and humiliation that most FMCES emigrants experienced to some degree, and to which several of the unpublished FMCES letters attest. One disenchanted female emigrant, the novelist Elizabeth Murray, while not assisted by the FMCES, disparaged female emigration societies as forms of misplaced philanthropy by foregrounding the miseries of assisted female emigrants throughout her novel *Ella Norman; Or, a Woman's Perils*. Murray's ultimate restoration of the domestic plot back to England represents her final move in bringing home her uncompromising argument that Australia and, indeed, none of the colonies was a place for a woman.

Male and female emigrants to the Pacific Rim respectively grappled with the challenges of maintaining cultural continuity with their British past and navigating the unknown in new physical and social environments. Many of these men and women drew inspiration from self-help discourse, wielding it in their own narratives in order to satisfy these challenges, while others experienced intractable difficulties that rendered the discourse unusable, or, as in Murray's view, only feasible in an English domestic environment. The FMCES narrative of self-help proved to be deeply unstable not only because of the negative emigrant accounts that threatened to overturn its validity, but also because of the contradictory positioning of the female domestic individual in colonial society. Her story constitutes a less straightforward narrative of colonial achievement than those of her male counterparts, riddled as it is by various instabilities, including the limited nature of women's colonial wages and working opportunities, the difficulty of maintaining class and racial privilege while working in servile roles, and the sexual double standard that marked women and not men as susceptible of losing their livelihood and social meaning through sexual fallenness.

As Robert Grant has noted, the British success story and "the trope of the hardy British pioneer" have helped reify "the Canadian 'man of the North,' the New Zealand pioneer, and Australian bushman as blazing trails for later generations who might now see their history as a product of hardy pioneers" (Grant 182–83). They have contributed to a framework that has sanctioned

> the relocation or outright destruction of indigenous populations, and the shaping of specifically European futures in distant lands that was to have a profound impact not only on the expectations of emigrants themselves but also on developing ideas of the colonial "nation," colonial "people," and colonial history that were to ramify well into the twentieth century. (182)

The narrative of masculine success abroad, as Grant suggests, was pivotal to the reification of settler experience and identity in the Pacific Rim colonies, to the colonization of these lands and their indigenous populations, and to the formation of colonial history and national identity. Self-help discourse also proved to be integral to Maria Rye and the FMCES's small, yet culturally significant, feminist initiative that propagated and instituted practices of female moral instruction and disciplinary control in these regions through its fashioning and transportation of self-made maids. Given the significant scholarly understanding of the connections between mid-Victorian masculine articulations of success and colonialism, the careful consideration of the respective wielding of self-help discourse by male and female emigrant groups represents an important analytical strategy. Such an approach facilitates the ongoing challenges of charting the gendered articulations of British colonial emigration,

the various – if subordinated – forms of control British females exercised in new fields of experience, and women's profound – if often shaky – footing within colonial histories.

University of Guelph

NOTES

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1. For other works that explore the interconnections between Victorian self-help discourse and colonialism, see Richards's "Spreading the Gospel of Self-Help: G. A. Henty and Samuel Smiles" and Neetens's "Problems of a 'Democratic Text': Walter Besant's Impossible Story."
2. For a discussion of other mid-Victorian British feminist organizations, such as the Society for Promoting Employment for Women, the Victoria Press, and the Telegraph Agency, and how they were overwhelmed by applications for limited working roles, see Clarke. In response to the meager employment opportunities for redundant women, Rye began the FMCES in 1862 and was associated with the society for its duration, until 1882. A single woman herself, Rye had been forced to work in various roles to bring in extra income into her own family. She had a longstanding association with the mid-Victorian feminist Langham Place group as a journalist and manager of a law-copying business for middle-class women. Another ardent feminist, Jane Lewin, ran the FMCES during the times when Rye was away, accompanying various groups of women to the colonies. As Hammerton and Clarke note, as leader, Rye had expanded FMCES efforts to include some working-class women, while Lewin stood firmly behind a policy of recruiting educated middle-class females. From the mid-1860s and on, Rye also concentrated on various other emigration initiatives apart from her work with the FMCES, finally focusing the bulk of her efforts on assisting single domestic female servants and orphans to Canada.
3. Greg cites the emigration of males, the postponement of middle-class marriage for economic reasons, prostitution, and celibacy as contributing to the excess of single women in Britain. He launches a particularly virulent attack at female independence as a key contributor to the surplus. In *Self-Help for Young Women* (1863), Langham Place feminist Jessie Boucherett rejects the conservative cultural view (as expressed by Greg) that single middle-class women are at fault for failing to marry. She suggests that the perceived redundancy of these women is a product of the "social system" (46). Boucherett also refers to the FMCES in this tract, supporting the opportunities for female self-reliance and employment abroad. Another feminist associated with the Langham Place Group, Mary Taylor, dismissed W. R. Greg's views on female emigration in *Victoria Magazine* in 1870. Like Boucherett, Taylor suggests that "redundancy" is a label that has been socially ascribed, and promotes active female self-help as a remedy for women's poor conditions: "Those only preach a true morality who urge upon her the duty of looking to herself, and herself only, for subsistence, and the perfect right she has to make her life as 'easy, pleasant, and lucrative' as she can" (61). Although in this article Taylor enforces the necessity of improving working opportunities in England rather than fostering female emigration schemes, in practice she viewed female emigration as an option for young women. She sailed to New Zealand in 1845, and established a successful women's clothing and drapery shop, returning to England in 1859 to pursue her literary ambitions (Hammerton 84).
4. This long-established practice of transporting Britain's superfluous subjects began in the 1760s, with the transportation of British convicts mainly to Australia, but also to South Africa and the Americas. As Grant notes, "the transportation of British convicts to New South Wales ended in 1840; Van Diemen's Land in 1853. The practice finally ceased in 1867, when the last convicts were dispatched to Western

Australia" (184). Pauper emigration began after the Napoleonic Wars and continued for the rest of the century as a result of various social and economic upheavals, such as the Irish famine, forced land evictions in the Scottish highlands, and high unemployment rates during industrialization. For nineteenth-century objections to convict and pauper emigration, see Carter's *Victoria, the British El Dorado* (1870) and Murray's *Ella Norman; Or, a Woman's Perils* (1864). Conversely, for a more supportive view of the potential of convicts and paupers to better themselves and contribute to colonial development, see Chisholm's *Emigration and Transportation Relatively Considered* (1847) and Strickland's *Twenty-Seven Years in Canada West.*

5. Both the article "Another Mail from Miss Rye," printed in the *English Woman's Journal*, and Boucherett's *Hints on Self-Help for Young Women* cite angry colonial objections to the uselessness of educated women and their husband-hunting aspirations. The *English Woman's Journal* and Boucherett dismiss these objections on the grounds that the FMCES emigrants are women of good character who will improve the uneducated colony.
6. The records of the destinations of these emigrants are missing for the years 1873 to 1879. Based on the records available, 129 women emigrated to Australia, 48 to New Zealand, 23 to Canada, 22 to South Africa, 10 to the United States, 1 to India, and 1 to Russia.
7. See Michie's *Sororophobia,* Holmes's *Fictions of Affliction*, and Mahood's *The Magdalenes* for a discussion of female sexual fallenness in British literature and culture. The fallen woman was an extremely contentious figure in Victorian Britain, against which conservative British writers vaunted the domestic ideal of the angelic, self-denying, and moral woman, or conversely, feminists confirmed the capacity for women to rise above feminine weakness and exercise self-help. Many Victorian feminists, most famously, Josephine Butler, blamed masculine immorality for prostitution, and urged both morally-minded men and women to join her crusade to help save women and girls from this industry. See Butler's *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* and *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade.*
8. See Host for a discussion of the ways in which many Victorian aristocrats and conservative parliamentarians attempted to confirm the superiority of the upper and middle classes through the image of the violent masses. He also discusses how Victorian liberals privileged a middle-class model of self-help as the norm towards which the working classes should aspire.
9. Between1862 and 1882, the FMCES transported a total of 302 women to the colonies, a small percentage of the thousands of women who were assisted by emigration societies (Faymonville; Myers, "Performing the Voyage Out"). As these writers suggest, the survival of the FMCES in the face of immense public criticism was a significant cultural achievement.
10. For discussions of how middle-class women workers, in particular, governesses, were associated with working-class women and prostitutes, see Poovey's *Uneven Developments* and Michie's *The Flesh Made Word.*
11. The FMCES installment "Stray Letters on Emigration" contains a table entitled "Emigrants Who Have Started, and the Results" (1861) that provides more detailed information on the difference between wages for women abroad opposed to in England. It indicates that female emigrants could expect to earn higher wages as governesses and servants in the colonies, but still gives no sense of what these numbers mean in terms of costs of living. Rye makes only passing mention to the expensiveness of New Zealand society in her account of Otago: "Provisions are very dear here, and the people have a saying that it costs 1l. if you open your mouth, and 2l. to shut it!" ("Another Mail from Miss Rye 265).
12. According to Herring, male labourers received 2.4 times more wages than female domestic servants. See also Hill's "The Poor Man's Emigration Guide to Canada" (1863) and the Canadian Department of Agriculture's *Emigration to Canada* (1860) for comparable statistics on male and female working-class wages.
13. These female domestic requirements are also referred to in Fyfe's *Canada as a Field for Emigration* (28), Herring's *Letters from Abroad with Hints to Emigrants* (33), *Canada: the Land of Hope* (12), and Hill's *The Poor Man's Emigration Guide to Canada* (40).

14. For other accounts of men who rose up from modest beginnings to become wealthy farmers, magistrates, and government officials, see *Letters from Victorian Pioneers*. Few letters in this 400-page collection admit any sense of failure. See in particular the letters penned by Alfred Taddy Thomson (325–31), a middle-class man, who describes the miseries of squatting in the Central Plains region of Wimmeria, Victoria.
15. See also Carter's *Victoria, the British El Dorado* (1870) and Sayers's *Letters from Victorian Pioneers* for further references to the need to control vices, particularly alcoholism, in the colony.
16. Various twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics discuss philanthropy as a field of non-paid work in which women challenged traditional gender and class boundaries, as well as acted in disciplinary capacities towards other class, sexual, and racial groups. See Nead, Walkowitz, Mahood, Poovey, Caine, Sharpe, Burton, and Prochaska.
17. My interpretation of this passage draws on Butler's *Gender Trouble,* which argues that "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (33).
18. See "Louth" in *London Standard*, 1 Oct. 1868.

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