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FEMININITY AND COMMUNITY AT HOME AND AWAY: SHIPBOARD DIARIES BY SINGLE WOMEN EMIGRANTS TO NEW ZEALAND

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NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCED A MASSIVE INFLUX of European immigrants in the 1870s and early 1880s after the introduction of Julius Vogel's assisted immigration programme. Single women under the age of thirty-five were a significant target group of recruitment schemes. They were expected to contribute to the colony's labour force as domestic servants and balance New Zealand's surplus of male settlers by becoming wives and mothers. Many of these young women had never been away from home until they embarked on their hazardous journey halfway around the world. Elizabeth Fairbairn, a single woman emigrant herself, was the matron in charge of the young women travelling to New Zealand on board the *Oamaru* in 1877–78. She narrates in her shipboard diary that Christmas Day made many of the single women homesick: "A great many of the girls grew downhearted last night and had such a good cry, poor things I was sorry for them, for the heart does feel things at a time like this and it is the first time a good many of them have been from home" (25 Dec. 1877). Jane Finlayson was one of these homesick "girls" on the same ship a year earlier. On 22 September 1876 she writes in her diary: "After parting with our friends at Greenock and thinking that 'Whatever be our earthly lot, Wherever we may roam, Still to our heart the brightest spot, Is round the hearth at home' we came with the tug on board this ship." Having left their old home, the women emigrants spent three months crammed into an uncomfortable steerage compartment, honing domestic skills such as sewing and knitting. The ship became a temporary home in which the emigrants prepared for their future life in New Zealand. Metropolitan notions of femininity which located women in the private, domestic sphere had to be questioned and modified on board. While the single women's compartment was supposed both to become a home away from home and to represent a domestic setting, the transitional and public nature of shipboard space complicated both of these projects. This ambiguity relates to an image of single women which was similarly contradictory. The single woman emigrant was a figure at the centre of discourses of femininity and community: on her centred hope but also anxiety. Like in other settler colonies, it was imagined in New Zealand that women would exert beneficial moral and religious influence upon male-dominated colonial society. Women were thus expected to act as creators of community, both ideologically through their moral influence and physically by bearing children. However, until they got married, single women also represented a threat: they were often held responsible for the increase in prostitution in

New Zealand (Macdonald 180). This illustrates the danger women could embody: again, both ideologically, since prostitution was seen as contaminating the moral character of society, and physically, since deviant sexual activity was often seen as undermining the biological purity of the community. How did such notions of femininity and community travel from Britain to New Zealand? How were they constructed and redefined during the transitional period of the voyage? In order to explore these questions this essay discusses two texts that also travelled, and narrate travelling: the two shipboard diaries by Elizabeth Fairbairn and Jane Finlayson referenced above, which look at single women's experience of emigration from the slightly different perspectives of a matron and a young woman under the care of a matron. The figure of the matron is an ambiguous one within the notion of women as representing both hope and anxiety: she is not married but nevertheless in a position of relative authority compared to the other single women on board. Elizabeth Fairbairn's diary represents her efforts to create unity among the women under her charge by submitting all of them to the same ideology of femininity. However, her text also has to deal with her own complicated status within the social structure of the ship. Jane Finlayson's text aims to contain anxiety and ambiguity by framing subversive and frightening events within the generic conventions of a shipboard diary. It negotiates the position of the single women on board while simultaneously reaffirming this position.

Fairbairn and Finlayson travelled from Scotland to New Zealand on the same ship, the *Oamaru*, Finlayson in 1876 and Fairbairn in 1877–78. This spatial coincidence provides the starting point for my analysis of their texts. How does the space of the ship on which Fairbairn's and Finlayson's texts were written structure and enforce social divisions and notions of femininity? The structuring of physical space for single women emigrants was characterised by oppositions: protection from dangers versus confinement to an assigned, limited space; the ship's traversing of distance versus the single women's location in enforced proximity with each other. Charlotte Macdonald argues that young single women travelling without male family members were "a relatively powerless and usually minority group" (74) seen as in need of protection from "the sexual predations of crew and passengers" (73–74) Measures taken to ensure their protection focused on the segregation of steerage passengers into three sections: one for single women and girls aged twelve years or older, one for single men, and one for married couples and children. The sections were designed so as to keep single women as far away as possible from the crew and single male passengers. Further regulations regarding the parts of the ship that the women were allowed to use and their communication with other passengers made them "the most regulated group on any ship" (Macdonald 74). There was thus a tension between the perceived need for their protection and the physical confinement that came with the measures taken to ensure that protection. Shipboard diarists in the steerage frequently describe living in crammed conditions, being plagued by rats and fleas, and being highly uncomfortable due to insufficient ventilation, particularly in the tropics, when it became hot and suffocating below deck. Sarah Stephens, who travelled on the Cardigan Castle from Gravesend to Lyttleton in 1876, writes: "Just imagine 68 in one place without a breath of air. Not a port hole open" (18 Nov.). M. T. Binks, visiting from first class, narrates sarcastically: "we went down into the steerage to see what it must be like to spend 7 weeks in those regions, & we decided we would rather be excused." (4 Oct. 1887) The young women were further regulated in their movements about the ship by being divided each week into messes with allocated chores. This months-long enforced proximity is in tension with the vast distance and open space traversed by the ship

over a long period of time. The ambiguous experience of physical space on board mirrors the ideological contradiction between single women immigrants as potentially beneficial and simultaneously detrimental to the diasporic community.

Elizabeth Fairbairn's role as matron is an inherently ambiguous one in this construct of segregation and regulation. According to an instruction sheet "to matrons of emigrant ships" from 1874 (inserted into the shipboard diary of another matron, Margaret Baxter Salmon), it was the matron's duty "to maintain order and propriety of conduct among the Single Women" and to instruct them in sewing, writing, and other subjects. The matron held the key to the single women's compartment and acted as mediator between the young women and the ship's crew, in particular the surgeon. However, since she was also a single woman, she had to enforce rules that largely applied to herself as well. While the surgeon and the captain could "support her authority," she also had to obey them. Holding the key did not mean that she had the power to change the rules of segregation that dictated how she was to use it. The contradictory nature of the matron's position emerges in a somewhat paradoxical rule on the instruction sheet: "All communication with the Officers and the Crew is strictly prohibited. If in any instance this Rule should be infringed in any particular, the Matron shall immediately report it to the Surgeon or the Captain." A diary entry by Sarah Stephens illustrates that it was not always easy for the matron to enforce these rules: "Some of the girls have been breaking the rules by writing notes to the sailors. The Matron came up unexpectedly and tried to take the letter from them. There was a scuffle in which the Matron's hat (a new one) fell overboard and some knitting that she had in her hand. She is very angry" (16 Oct. 1876). Macdonald notes that the matron was "the only woman invested with formal authority on board" (82). However, the matron was still on the inside of the highly regulated spatial experience of women on board, largely unable to transcend the regulations. This inclusion and the vastly greater power of the male authorities on board become clear in Fairbairn's entry from 24 December 1877, where she describes her own submission to the surgeon and her "imprisonment" together with the young women supposedly subordinate to her ("we"):

> They were threatened with the hose to wash them out of bed but it was of no avail so I was ordered to lock up the door at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I made them go early to bed. I obliged of course. It was rather hard as it was a lovely night, however after suffering an imprisonment for about one hour and a half the Dr came and opened one door again and we were all so glad.

Fairbairn's shipboard diary is evidence of this inclusion and submission. Its production and contents are regulated by the "Instructions to Matrons":

> The Matron must keep a Diary, in which must be recorded any instances of insubordination or misbehavior, and other occurrences which she might see reason to object to or complain of, with any other observations which she may consider it right to make. . . . The Diary will be handed to the Immigration Officer at the end of the voyage.

It is not certain whether this diary by Fairbairn is the official one that was submitted to the immigration officer, but it seems likely that she at least intended it for this purpose. The text frequently reports "instances of insubordination or misbehavior" and "other observations" regarding Fairbairn's duties as matron, recording the names of individual women who behaved well or badly. The diary includes a list of names, the weekly messes and their

duties. An entry from 24 December 1877 implies that the text was intended to be read by officials: "I don't know whether all this writing of mine may be thought worth reading by any of those in power but if it is it will give them some idea of what I have had to bear from some of these girls." This entry also illustrates that Fairbairn did not think that she herself had much "power" or authority: she was expected to write a text but did not think it likely that it would be read. The diary's structure and content are thus also a product of the regulatory machinery on board and Fairbairn's ambiguous role in it.

The group of young women under Fairbairn's care was comprised of various ethnic identities: Scottish (including herself), English, and Irish. This entailed a number of different religious identities, with Protestant and Roman Catholic as a significant opposition. In her diary Fairbairn draws dividing ethnic lines between the single women, who, as her text implies, constitute a microcosm of diasporic society: "How many different natures are here portrayed, just a world in miniature. I must say the Irish as a rule are far behind my Scotch girls in many things" (5 Nov. 1877). The realisation that "many different natures" are present immediately entails a value judgement. Of course, ethnic issues were significant. It is Fairbairn's task as matron to help shape a community comprising these various "natures" and cultural identities. The word "portrayed" makes clear that this task takes place on two levels: the "different natures" are physically present on board ship, and as matron Fairbairn is expected to act as mediator and regulatory force. At the same time her text "portrays" the single women, producing a collective identity through textual representation. This function of the text becomes directly visible in the lists of messes and their heads at the end of the diary, which mirrors the locations of the young women and the groups in which they were organised to perform daily chores. Fairbairn's text thus narratively and even visually reproduces the spatial and social organisation of the single women's compartment. Fairbairn's diary confirms Andrew Hassam's argument that whereas first- and second-class passengers were anxious to delineate their class status, steerage passengers identified themselves more by way of their nationality and with the mess in which they were placed. While the more affluent passengers could assert their class status by claiming access to, for example, the Captain's table or the poop deck, for steerage passengers "the possibility of class definition through rivalry for space with passengers from another class was severely restricted." (Hassam 128) However, Hassam's conclusion that steerage passengers had "no need to invest in a common social identity since they had no privileges to maintain" (132) needs to be treated with caution. Fairbairn's text does engage in community-building and attempts to unite different ethnic and religious identities.

The text's production of a collective identity is linked to notions of femininity and women's role. Differences among the women were bridged by subjecting them all to the same regimen of acquiring and perfecting skills relevant to their future life as domestic servants, and potential wives and mothers, in New Zealand. For many of the single women their emigration to New Zealand represented the opportunity of a better standard of living: New Zealand was in dire need of domestic servants, and wages were higher than in Britain (Hastings 237). "Diligence" and "obedience" are the two terms that appear the most often in Fairbairn's diary in this context. They relate to the notorious Victorian cliché of the Angel in the House, which has been explored in many feminist texts: woman as "enveloped in family life and seeking no identity beyond the roles of daughter, wife and mother" (Auerbach 67). The Angel in the House was imagined as domestic, passive, gentle, submissive, self-renunciating, and located in the private sphere. Whereas this ideal was a middle-class one,

New Zealand society prided itself on being egalitarian and indeed offered working-class migrants an improved chance to rise in social status: as James Belich points out, until at least 1880 class in New Zealand "was mostly 'loose' rather than 'tight'" (20). Fairbairn's text suggests that working-class women could at least aspire to the Angel ideal. The opposites of diligence and obedience, namely laziness and impertinence, are represented in Fairbairn's diary as constituting unfeminine and subversive behaviour. On 3 November 1877 she records initial impressions of the "girls": "Margaret Boyle, I have always found willing and obedient," but the impertinent behaviour of two others is reproachable:

> It is a pity that she who was appointed to help me should be the one that I have first to record an offence against. When I considered I had good cause to reprove her, as shewing a bad example to the girls, she spoke very rudely to me. . . . One other I must mention. Bridget Dillon, twice refused to do what I asked her.

On 5 November Fairbairn criticises the girls for their laziness: "Everything as yet has gone on very well today with the exception of a few who are persuaded that they are unable to do anything but lie in bed and grumble and will not exert themselves even so much as to dress themselves to get out to enjoy this precious air of Heaven." On 8 November she again praises diligence and obedience and condemns laziness: "Eliza Jane Fitzpatrick has finished her chemise too and got another. She is very diligent and obedient, a nice tidy girl too. Five times today I had to come and make Norah O'Corkey go upstairs. Kate Walsh finished her chemise but very rough work." While domestic skills such as making chemises are expected of domestic servants, the text also makes clear that all women should have them, just because they are women: "Oh! Sad sad were so many women grown who cannot knit or sew anything like anything. I will do my best among them poor things to teach them to be of some use to themselves in this world" (9 Nov. 1877). After all, it was expected that the single women emigrants would marry; as wives in colonial society, they would need the same domestic skills they needed as servants. The regulations which state that the single women emigrants have to learn domestic skills imply that the *Oamaru* is a training ground for the domestic settings where they will work in New Zealand. The matron assumes a leading role in this training and thus makes the women into useful members of colonial society. Fairbairn identifies with this role when she notes that she will do her best to teach the emigrants "to be of some use to themselves." As Fairbairn's pleased diary entries about the improvement of the single women illustrate, the results of Fairbairn's teaching relate to the virtues of diligence and obedience more than to skills such as sewing and handwriting: "The girls are improving for I have very very seldom a case of disobedience" (16 Nov.); "I never seem to have any complaints to record now, really the girls are improving. They are so obedient as a rule well behaved" (14 Dec.); "I consider the girls have improved a good deal, some of those who did really wish to better themselves have made considerable progress and I am glad of it" (3 Jan. 1878).

This honing of domestic skills is part of a notion of femininity that is transported from Britain to its colonies, creating connections and, ultimately, community within the settler empire. The single women thus become agents of what Janet Myers terms "portable domesticity" – their ability to export British conceptions of home and domesticity is improved in the temporary home constituted by the ship. These notions of femininity and community are necessarily transformed and adapted on the way to New Zealand, about which the women

learn from books: "This morning . . . I got one of the books the Dr gave us to read about N.Z. and read to them a while. They were much pleased and interested by the accounts given of the new country" (28 Dec. 1877). The anticipation of life in the colony is always present: "I think they are a little subdued under the thought of what may be before them yet one would not think so when they are speaking of it. Everyone is in high hopes. I do hope none will be disappointed" (28 Dec.). When she complains about Mary Welsh, Fairbairn assumes that the women's behaviour on the ship foreshadows what will happen to them once they have arrived in New Zealand, again illustrating that she sees herself as the teacher of feminine skills within the domestic training ground of the *Oamaru*:

> She has given me more impertinence and rudeness than all the others put together. . . . I fear if she don't try to control her temper a little she won't get many mistresses to keep her in their house long especially if there were children for I don't think they would be safe . . . but Mary will no more, those who employ her will find it out soon enough for themselves. (24 Dec.)

Fairbairn's text thus engages with discourses that are redefined in the transition between the ship's departure and arrival rather than exported unchanged from Britain to the outposts of the empire. The transitional home of the *Oamaru* prepares the emigrants for life in their new home.

The diary also produces community through the concept of whiteness, which, Dyer argues, is powerful in "uniting people across national cultural differences" (19). The notions of domestic femininity constructed in the diary are part of the ideology of heterosexuality, which, as Dyer emphasises, is perceived as central to the reproduction of the white race (25). The new generation that the women were supposed to produce as wives in New Zealand was expected to be white New Zealand-born – not Irish, Scottish, or English. However, the Victorian Angel in the House ideal is complicated when the angels are on board ship, travelling towards a new home. Fairbairn writes: "Yes home is the old country to our hearts yet and will be for some time at any rate" (24 Dec.). But if "the old country" is home, what is the *Oamaru*, and what is New Zealand? Even though the segregation of steerage space seeks to make the single women's compartment into a domestic space, appropriate for women within an ideology that places them in the private sphere, it actually appears more public than private: as Macdonald argues, "[t]here was a sense in which single women who were prepared to travel 'alone' to the colony were regarded as morally suspect, almost as if they were 'public' women" (17). Moreover, the voyage of the ship means that the women are in the process of leaving the "home" that, as Fairbairn states, signifies Britain. In another instance of ambiguity and contradiction, it is precisely their homemaking skills that enable them to leave that home. The ambiguous meaning of the term "home" thus further complicates the travelling of femininity from Britain to New Zealand.

Finally, if the text produces a collective identity and engages in (re)defining discourses of femininity, who participates in this production? Arguably it is a collective production. I discussed earlier the ambiguous status of Fairbairn as the author of a text that was in fact authorised and structured by official instructions and guidelines, mirroring her ambiguous position on board. Moreover, while the narrative was written by Fairbairn, it is permeated by the actions and enunciations of many of the single women emigrants on board the *Oamaru*. Fairbairn records their names, describes their actions, and often paraphrases their words in indirect speech, such as in this entry from 21 December:

> This day Ann McKinnon told me that I had favourites and that I was unfair to some in this ship. Well I allow that I do like some better than others but as God is my witness I have tried to the best of my ability to be fair to all. And I do really think that if it were put to all the girls if they spoke truly that they would not say otherwise, however whether or not I don't mind that because I feel that I am innocent. Truly if the roman [sic] Catholics wanted me to be favourable [sic] impressed with regard to their religion they would have needed to behave a little better. They are not all the same for among those I call my favourites are those of that persuasion. It is all the same to me to what denomination they belong if they behave themselves. However I hope they will behave better in New Zealand than the most of them have done on board this vessel.

This entry brings together a number of aspects I have addressed in my discussion of Fairbairn's text: the proximity of various ethnic and religious identities and Fairbairn's (reluctant) efforts to create unity between them both in person and in her text, the anticipation of the women's future in New Zealand foreshadowed "on board this vessel," and Fairbairn's own inclusion in the inferior and powerless community of the single women on the ship – evidenced in the self-doubts occupying most of this entry and illustrating that she did not fully believe in her authority. The diary not only produces collective identity but is itself partly a collective production. The creation of the text parallels the production of community.

How did the voyage appear to a single woman who had even less authority and freedom of movement on board than the matron? Jane Finlayson's diary from her 1876 voyage on the *Oamaru* is particularly intriguing because her text records several incidents that epitomise subversion and anxiety: the "confinement" of a young single woman who was pregnant when she boarded the ship, the mental breakdown of another young woman (who was then also confined – to the hospital), and the passengers' detention in quarantine for three weeks before the ship was permitted to land at Port Chalmers. Finlayson's text is a generic shipboard diary which conforms to the conventions outlined by Hassam in *Sailing to Australia*. It is a text intended for an audience at "home," rather than as private notes, features regular entries, and describes all the typical events that accompanied the ship's itinerary, such as meals, religious services, and the weather. The voyage and the narrative run parallel to each other, marked by the beginning and end of the narrative which coincide with the departure and arrival of the ship, situating the writer in time and space: "After parting with our friends at Greenock . . . [w]e came with the tug on board this ship" (22 Sep. 1876); "We landed safely in Dunedin glad to get our freedom once more, we had a very good voyage of 83 days" (2 Jan. 1877). However, between these two stable points both the community of single women and the generic structure of the text encounter a number of potential destabilisations.

From the beginning the text engages with Finlayson's and the other single women's highly regulated spatial position on the ship. In her first entry she notes: "I was much disappointed at being far away from my friend Agnes but we will try our best to exchange with someone" (22 Sep. 1876). A later entry illustrates that the physical segregation of the passengers is designed to restrict communication between the single women and the male passengers:

> Agnes and I were thinking that we had often heard of young women getting acquainted with young men on board ship and afterwards getting married after landing but that sort of work is utterly impossible here, we only see them at a distance, and those who have brothers on board have to get permission from the Doctor to meet half way along the deck and have a chat, if we had male friends on board we would have thought this rather hard but as it is we don't care although we don't see a

> single man. A girl or two has their beaus here and we are greatly amused at them, they have recourse to letter, the same as on lands, its capital fun to see it going on. (4 Oct.)

Finlayson's position on board ship is less ambiguous than Fairbairn's: there are clear rules on how to move about the ship, and even though these rules may be "rather hard" to accept for some passengers, they are unambiguous and non-negotiable. Her diary represents the spatial segregation as efficient. Even though the situation on board is exceptional, interactions with men are not: they have to be "the same as on lands."

The group of single women who share with Finlayson their allocated space on board is comprised of various ethnic identities, like Fairbairn's "girls." Like Fairbairn, Finlayson draws lines of identification along nationality and messes: "we are all into separate messes, there are eight in our mess, four Scotch, three Irish, one English" (3 Oct.). Finlayson, who is Scottish, represents those who are of different cultural or religious identity from herself with irony, stressing that she is different from them and considers herself superior. She writes about "some of the English girls": "we laugh at how they are put to a stand about their meals, they grumble sadly we ourselves manage nicely but of course we don't eat like them" (25 Nov.). She makes fun of the Roman Catholic manner of worship: "There are a lot of Roman Catholics beside us, we are amused and astonished at their mode of prayers, they are on their knees for nearly an hour saying their rosary and counting their beads they are truly like the Pharasies [sic] of old making much ado about their prayers" (8 Oct.), and comments on the Catholics not participating in the Protestant services on board: "No one but those who have seen it can imagine what a beautiful effect the singing had, there were over three hundred present of course some of the staunch Roman Catholics will not come with in [sic] sight of it" (15 Oct.). Thus the text draws dividing lines between the various ethnic groups of single women as clearly as Fairbairn does when she writes that "the Irish as a rule are far behind my Scotch girls in many things" and emphasises the opposition between Protestants and Catholics (5 Nov. 1877). However, whereas Finlayson writes about the other groups with irony she also emphasises that there is peaceful coexistence. On 19 October 1876 she narrates that she "wrote letters for some Irish girls who could not write, poor girls. I was sorry for them and they had parents alive as well as any of them." This entry implies that helpfulness and solidarity transcend boundaries, and that fundamental similarities (the love for their parents) create a sense of community – even though internal divisions within the group and Finlayson's sense of her own faction's superiority remain important.

Furthermore, as with Fairbairn's diary, a common ideal of femininity creates unity within the group. Finlayson has no objection to conforming to the behaviour expected of her – unlike some other women, she willingly submits to the male authority and surveillance of the doctor: "we have disinfecting powder all over our place, it is a disagreeable smell. The doctor is very strict with us and has his eyes in every corner, he is very sharp, some do not like him but we see he is doing everything for our own good" (28 Nov.). In addition to the domestic skills of sewing, cleaning and the like, there are "reading, writing, arithmetic" classes with a clergyman (27 Sep.). Mr Bannerman is not only an authority on the self-improvement of young women but also on life in New Zealand: "he is a clergyman in Dunedin and has been there for twenty three years, he was telling he slept in a tent in Invercargill before there were any houses at all" (1 Oct.). Mr Bannerman's areas of expertise illustrate the adaptation that discourses of femininity undergo as the *Oamaru* draws closer to the colony: the clergyman's anecdotes from New Zealand form part of his lessons, situating the skills taught to the

single women within the colonial context. Similarly to Elizabeth Fairbairn, he prepares the emigrants for their new home.

However, the discourses of community and femininity established in the text are endangered by the incidents outlined above, which illustrate deviant sexuality, mental illness and physical illness. The first of these incidents is a young woman having a baby in the single women's compartment:

> I am ashamed to tell you that one of our girls was confined of a daughter last night at ½ past 9, the doctor sent us all off from where he was . . . just fancy 28 girls put out of our place. . . . This has caused a lot of talk all over the ship when any of us goes out the men will pass remarks such as "Who is likely to be laid up among the single girls". The girl is from Ireland, a farmers [sic] daughter and had she not come away her father would have shot her, it was unfeeling of them to banish her away among strangers. . . . God knows what will become of her when she's well and landed. (7 Dec.)

It is not surprising that an unmarried woman giving birth would cause "a lot of talk," even though according to Macdonald this was actually "a common occurrence on emigrant ships" as medical examinations upon embarkation were largely inefficient (93). The supposed control established by the physical segregation on board ship is destabilised by the birth Finlayson records – the other young women are "put out of [their] place." The unnamed young mother's "confinement" is an instance of the ideological and physical threat that women's deviant sexual activities could mean for diasporic society. Two days later, Finlayson narrates a sad sequel to the incident: "We were wakened out of our first sleep by a commotion which was on an account of the young infant being found dead beside its mother it supposed [sic] she overlaid it. She is a young girl not 19 without much sense, she appeared to be in a sad state about it, poor thing, its [sic] best away" (9 Dec.). In an emphasis of solidarity and compassion similar to the entry on letter-writing quoted above, Finlayson expresses sympathy for the young woman's situation and the "unfeeling" behaviour of her family. However, she is "ashamed" to record the incident in her text, indicating that she shares the opinion that it indicates inexcusable behaviour. Moreover, the phrase "I am ashamed to tell you" conveys that the "telling" of the scandal disrupts the diary no less than it disrupts life on board the *Oamaru*. The event is subversive not only to the microcosmic community on board and to the machinery of segregation designed to regulate it but also to the structure of the text as a generic shipboard diary. When Finlayson writes that "its best away" this can be associated not only with the baby but also with the disruption that narrating the birth caused to the text.

A similar disruption happens when another young girl suffers a mental breakdown not long after the departure of the *Oamaru*: "There is a young Irish girl went wrong in her mind beside us, we did not get any sleep for 4 nights she talked on, so we complained to the doctor and she has been tonight taken to hospital. We are all sorry for her brother who is waiting on her till the Doctor arranges other plans for her" (16 Oct.). While the other single women can only feel sorry and complain, the surgeon as the male authority takes action by restoring the efficiency of the spatial regulations on board, relocating the sick woman to the hospital and arranging "other plans for her." Part of her illness appears to consist in trying to break free of the spaces to which she is confined on the ship, thus attempting to change the spatial organisation of the single women's temporary home: "she is quite near us here and keeps pelting at the door with her hands and feet" (23 Oct.); "Lizzie has broken up the door of the

hospital twice" (7 Nov.). Moreover, her behaviour transgresses against the feminine rules of diligence and obedience emphasised by Fairbairn. She is noisy, causing the other women many a "restless night" (23 Oct.): "she has spoken and sung continually for nearly a week" (20 Oct.). Instead of being submissive she is aggressive and destructive: she "tries to belt anyone who goes near her" (23 Oct.) and "has torn up her bed cloths with her teeth and a dresser of her own she had beside her" (7 Nov.). The fact that "she does not know any of us now her eyes are quite vacant" (20 Oct.) indicates that Lizzie no longer forms part of the group of emigrant women united by a common conception of femininity and community. Her anorexia and suicide attempts seem like attempts to disappear completely from that community: "she is worn to a shadow and eats nothing scarcely" (23 Oct.); "she does all she can to commit suicide and many a fright she gives us" (28 Oct.). Lizzie's behaviour is frightening not only because the other single women fear for her health and life but also because it is destabilising their community, both by transgressing against the rules which create unity in this community and by rebelling against the social and spatial structure of shipboard life.

The final disruptive element in the text and on the journey is the quarantine: for three weeks the emigrants are detained on two islands in sight of Port Chalmers because there are cases of measles on board. This incident breaks up the voyage as much as the narrative structure of the text, which parallels the voyage. Anxiety about physical illness, while significant in itself, can also be seen as a metonymy of larger elements of threat embodied by immigrants, who could represent the potential intrusion of detrimental elements into settler society. This threat is contained at a physical distance from the mainland. A further attempt at regulation and the restoration of order and stability is made by replicating on the islands the physical segregation on board ship: "the married folks are on one end of it and we are on another and what is most laughable is the young men are put on an island opposite us with the water between" (16 Dec.). Even though Finlayson finds this arrangement "laughable," much as she thought it "capital fun" to watch the flirtations on board (4 Oct.), she has to submit to being detained both on the island and in the even more limited space assigned there to the single women. The image of the islands also literalises Tölölyan's argument in "Rethinking Diaspora(s)" that "quite loosely related populations possessed of many different, locally circumscribed identities in their homelands, but regarded as 'one' in the hostland, can be turned into a diaspora by the gaze of that hostland" (13). Just as the concrete physical illness of measles can be described as symbolising the anxiety that surrounds new arrivals in the diaspora, the emigrants in quarantine are literally under the gaze of the people at the hostland's coast, detained and regarded as a community of emigrants despite internal divisions. Even though the quarantine disrupts the process of community creation through femininity, the emigrants' shared exposure to the gaze of the established settlers thus also contains an element of community-building.

While these three incidents are all destabilising to the community and disruptive to the structure of the text, Finlayson's diary endeavours to re-establish stability. Despite her professed sympathy for the young mother, Finlayson draws a line between herself and the Irish girl's transgression when she writes about another birth on the ship, two days after the Irish child's death. Here her narrative is reminiscent of the "remarks" she quoted earlier made by male passengers, who are joking about the scandal, when she writes: "I forgot to say there was a birth yesterday morning in the married quarters. (not here)" (11 Dec.). Finlayson thus claims a place with the community of those who condemn and ridicule the transgression,

rather than with the transgressor. Similarly, even though the structure of the text is disrupted by the incidents it always returns to the conventions of shipboard diaries outlined above. Eventually, Finlayson arrives safely not only at Dunedin but also at the generic ending of her text. The voyage has been safely framed in a generic narrative that bridges the transitional time between the old and the new home. Moreover, Finlayson's diary situates itself within an entire discourse concerned with emigration and shipboard travel: "We have got the first night over and quite a novelty it is we have heard of shipboard life often but the reality is scarcely so pleasant" (23 Sep.); "I have often heard of sea-sickness but this is indeed" (25 Sep.); "We have often heard of a storm in the Bay of Biscay but we saw it in reality last night" (30 Sept.); "We have often heard of Equatorial heat but this is it in reality" (16 Oct.). Her diary constructs Finlayson as travelling along an itinerary already established in her mind by "hearing" about the voyage to New Zealand. These features situate the text within a web of shared settler literature and information circulating within the empire, similarly to the shared ideals of portable domesticity emphasised in Fairbairn's text. The diary thus produces community not only within the British diasporic community in New Zealand but also within a network of relations encompassing the empire: "home" here means not only Scotland, New Zealand, or the ship, but the entire empire.

Finlayson's text contains the disruption and subversion it narrates. Both Finlayson's and Fairbairn's diaries produce community and identity across internal ethnic and religious boundaries and situate themselves within an imperial network in which Britain is the homeland but the settler colonies become new homes. This production of a collective settler identity serves to alleviate fears about the figure of the single woman emigrant and emphasises her potential to create community and exert positive moral influence. In doing so, both texts negotiate the highly regulated and ambiguous space of the transitional home on board ship. To varying degrees, both the matron on the *Oamaru* and the single women under her care are confined to their allocated spaces on board not unlike Lizzie after her nervous breakdown is confined to the hospital. However, from this spatial confinement their texts participate in the production of a collective identity that was not simply imposed on them from above. Rather, it was constructed within a network of relationships comprising different ethnic and religious backgrounds and situated within the wider context of the settler empire. If the single women emigrant was seen as embodying both a hope and a threat to colonial society, her text engaged with these notions by negotiating conceptions of femininity within a transitional space as well as containing subversion and potential destabilisations of a shared sense of community.

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