



The Antipodes of Victorian Fiction: Mapping “Down Under”

Tamara S. Wagner

Abstract

Victorian settler fiction produced in colonial Australia and New Zealand increasingly expressed a search for settler identity, and yet it partly remained targeted at readers “at home,” at the centre of the British Empire. Nineteenth-century novels of daily life in the colonial settlements, therefore, also functioned as fictional maps for readers in Victorian Britain and elsewhere in the expanding empire. While some of these publications explicitly addressed potential emigrants, others endeavoured to reshape Britain’s antipodes in the popular imagination more generally. Australian and New Zealand women writers dismantled clichés involving bush-rangers, gold-diggers, as well as escaped convicts and resented returnees. By drawing on a variety of settler novels by female authors, I aim to track how their fictional maps for readers overseas worked and how these maps shifted in the course of the century. In particular, I focus on the motif of the homecoming and how its reworking in nineteenth-century settler fiction reveals shifting attitudes towards emigration and empire, homemaking and homecoming, old and new homes.

Key words

nineteenth-century settler writing; Victorian literature; Australia in nineteenth-century fiction; New Zealand in nineteenth-century fiction; literary maps; returnees in nineteenth-century fiction; Tichborne Claimant.

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The Antipodes of Victorian Fiction: Mapping “Down Under”

Tamara S. Wagner

Victorian settler narratives of colonial Australia and New Zealand increasingly expressed a search for settler identity, and yet they partly remained targeted at readers “at home,” at the centre of the British Empire. Nineteenth-century novels of daily life in colonial settlements, therefore, also functioned as fictional maps for readers in Victorian Britain or elsewhere in the expanding empire. All the novels I discuss below were published in London with formats and prices that suggest a solid middle-class readership. While some of these publications explicitly addressed potential emigrants, others endeavoured to reshape Britain’s antipodes in the popular imagination more generally. “Down under,” in fact, was invested with a particular fascination in Victorian Britain. Although penal transportation to Australia had ceased by the mid-century,¹ in the second half of the century the antipodal colonies were newly sensationalised through dynamic interchanges in the book market – interchanges that a detailed mapping can let us parse. Australian and New Zealand women writers in particular sought to dismantle clichés involving bush-rangers, gold-diggers, as well as escaped convicts. Some writers of popular fiction – predominantly male authors of adventure stories – without doubt capitalised on and thereby perpetuated these images.² In deliberate contrast, domestic fiction of everyday settler life engendered alternative fictional maps of the terrain and society of the antipodes. By drawing on a variety of settler novels by nineteenth-century women writers, I aim to track how their fictional maps for readers overseas worked and how these maps shifted in the course of the century. Settler authors clearly continued to take the readership at the imperial centre into consideration. How they addressed these readers – conceived as largely ignorant of settler life – reveals shifting attitudes towards emigration and empire, homemaking and homecoming, old and new homes. Rather than reading the fictional worlds of female settler writing as “a falsification because mediated by the literatures of the time” (Evans 1990: 2) or as an uncritical adoption of imported genres, we can trace how the authors transposed and transformed popular paradigms to produce new fictional maps.

Women writers often self-consciously upended readers’ expectations to make a specific point about settler domesticity or colonial society. Catherine Spence, for example, wrote *Clara Morison: A Tale of South Australia during the Gold Fever* (1854) in direct response to an article by Thackeray in *Punch*, in which he joked about female emigrants. Spence’s novel deliberately disappoints expectations of a glorified, adventurous tale of gold-digging and instead asserts the respectability of female emigrants by detailing their mundane, even humdrum daily lives. Likewise skirting the possibility of adventure or easy success, Elizabeth Murray’s *Ella Norman; Or, a Woman’s Perils* (1864) rewrites emigration propaganda to operate as a cautionary tale directed at readers in the British Isles who might be considering

¹ Protests against the convict system arose in the 1840s. The last convict ship arrived in Western Australia in 1868.

² Examples include the adventure novels of Rolf Boldrewood (Thomas Alexander Browne), such as *Robbery Under Arms* (1888) and *The Miner’s Right: A Tale of the Australian Goldfields* (1890), Percy Clarke’s *The Three Diggers* (1889), or also Henry Kingsley’s influential *Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1859), published after Kingsley’s sojourn in Australia between 1853 and 1857.

emigration. By contrast, the New Zealand writer Charlotte Evans features practical advice about how to succeed in an emergent colonial settlement within a sensational plot of false identities. Ironically perhaps, at the end of Evans's *A Strange Friendship: A Story of New Zealand* (1874), the heroine moves back to England after all. Her new home is a landed estate in the English countryside, and even though marriage to a fellow emigrant has raised her social status, this is because he turns out to be – somewhat improbably – an aristocrat in disguise. Such a sudden and somewhat incongruous move to an inherited English estate expresses a sustained ambiguity about what exactly constituted home for colonial settlers, while it indisputably also testifies to shifting demands of genre. But women writers also self-consciously redeployed expected formulae, often to counter standardisations of settler writing that might reinforce the clichés they were writing against. In *A Rolling Stone* (1886), for example, Clara Cheeseman adapts the late-nineteenth-century New Zealand “rolling stone” novel, a variant of the colonial adventure narrative, to undercut the sensationalisation of the so-called Tichborne Claimant, perhaps the most notorious Australian imposter in Victorian Britain. Simultaneously, her novel rejects the rescue and removal of deserving colonial protagonists to England – a recurring motif that marks the resolution of several mid-century settler novels that are otherwise as different as Murray's *Ella Norman* (where homecoming is the result of failure) and Evans's *A Strange Friendship* (where it forms a reward for work overseas).

This motif of the homecoming continued to fissure fictional maps of colonial settlement. In part, its appearance at the end of settler narratives catered for readers' expectations at the imperial centre – a readership that was used to what Raymond Williams terms the contrast between “an idea of rural England,” often encompassed by an inherited estate, on the one hand, and hardship undergone in “the tropical or arid places of actual work” on the other (Williams 1973: 282). In *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900*, Franco Moretti further highlights that, in numerous nineteenth-century narratives, this wealth appears to be derived from the colonial spaces themselves, which adds an important dimension to their shifting ideological significance in fiction at the time. Moretti speaks of “the mythic geography – *pecunia ex machina* – of a wealth that is not really produced (nothing is ever said of work in the colonies), but magically ‘found’ overseas whenever a novel needs it” (Moretti 1998: 27). Critically rethinking Edward Said's suggestion that the ideal estates of nineteenth-century fiction “could not have been possible without the slave trade, sugar, and the colonial planter class” (Said 1993: 94) – which might reasonably be extended to wealth accumulated through gold-digging adventures in the antipodes –, Moretti, however, also alerts us to the fact that “these fictional fortunes are so out of proportion to economic history” as to make it impossible to read them as a “‘realistic’ feature of nineteenth-century narrative” (Moretti 1998: 27). Moretti instead emphasises their symbolic significance (Moretti 1998: 27). In settler fiction set at Britain's antipodal colonies, I seek to suggest, this concept is flipped around, and whilst authors often do so very self-consciously (to subvert a repetitive fictional cliché, if not to articulate a colonial critique), they thereby ironically reinforce the motif of the homecoming to a desirable estate in rural England. In the course of the century, authors redeploy this motif more and more deliberately, and as we trace these shifts, we can map out an important reconceptualisation both of home and of imperial connections in settler writing. Drawing on Moretti's methodology of mapping fictional references to spaces and the connections between them, I take up several nineteenth-century settler narratives, all by women writers who wrote domestic fiction in Australia and New Zealand, to explore how they replicated, adapted, shifted, and often consciously flipped expected movements between the imperial centre and its geographically most remote, but culturally closest, settler colonies at the time.

For colonial settlers in these antipodal colonies, in fact, the motif of the homecoming demonstrated and thereby helped to explore the fluid concept of home and homelands within the empire. In domestic settler fiction of the antipodes in particular, a homecoming to the imperial centre threatens to undermine colonial homemaking, which in itself occupied a fraught position within the formation of settler identity at the time. In the second half of the nineteenth century, nationalist movements within colonial settlements sought to elevate a lack of domesticity to a sign of freedom, conceptualising it as a mark of having escaped the “tyranny of five-o’clock tea,” as John Tosh has pointedly put it in his discussion of masculinity and emigration (Tosh 1999: 7). In late-nineteenth-century debates on a national literature, women’s writing was consequently often “violently rejected and ridiculed as trivial, conservative, Imperial, anti-nationalistic and un-Australian” (Martin 1993: 56). But if ambiguous representations of homecoming already offered a way to renegotiate changing attitudes, settler authors also increasingly mapped out multiple migrations, including returns to the settler homes that they had temporarily left.

This emerging concept of return to a settler home counterpoised the imperial homecoming motif. At the end of Cheeseman’s *A Rolling Stone*, a self-reflexive double-twist to convenient narrative endings involving emigration (in British-based fiction) or homecoming (in several mid-century settler novels) undermines the mythologisation of the imperial centre in colonial culture. The renegotiation of the homecoming as a motif could thus play a central role in fictional maps of settler spaces and their changing position vis-à-vis the imperial centre. At the end of the century, several women writers sought to enact returns to this “home” across the seas and to dramatise them in their narratives. They produced a range of ambiguous engagements with this shifting idea of homecoming or what Angela Woollacott has termed the “colonial pilgrimage ‘home,’” which was often undertaken by aspiring musicians, artists, and writers, as well as by a new type of tourist (Woollacott 2001: 8). Focusing on Australian expatriate writers and their representation of London, Peter Morton similarly speaks of “the haemorrhage of [Australia’s] literary brainpower” before analysing “the behavior of those who expatriated themselves to the British Isles permanently or for a long time, on a quest to discover their authorial talents, or to develop them, or to try to make a better living, or simply to escape from a birthplace that they regarded as stultifying” (Morton 2011: 1). Yet Woollacott’s focus is on women writers, and as she discusses several real-life returnees and their works, she traces a recurrent pattern: “The common formulation of a woman artist, professional, or performer’s decision to embark was that she had decided ‘to try her fortune in London’” (Woollacott 2001: 6). This secular, cultural “pilgrimage” engendered new, different maps: of the growing settler civilisations as colonial characters seek connections to an expanding world; of the imperial centre as viewed by visiting settlers; of colonial homes critically reconsidered by settlers returning from these pilgrimages. In describing the return of a child-star to her barely remembered home in Australia, Ethel Turner’s *The Wonder-Child: An Australian Story* (1901) repackages the problems of continued, or repeated, migrations for a young readership: a new generation of settlers. In fact, as these otherwise markedly different domestic narratives generate maps for readers at home in Victorian Britain as well as elsewhere in the empire, home itself keeps shifting radically within their fictional worlds. In unpacking their various, self-conscious engagements with genre paradigms and geopolitical developments, I retrace how their twofold target readership and in particular their strategies as they explain settler life to a British reading public affected the representation of home and, ultimately, of settler identity.

Mapping Out Settler Domesticity in *Clara Morison* (1854) and *Ella Norman* (1864)

Recent research has drawn attention to the hitherto underestimated diversity of literary production in colonial Australia and New Zealand.³ Book history and a new look at portable culture have helped to chart reading habits, starting with accounts of what was both written and read on the voyage out.⁴ Books about emigration and the recommended destinations for would-be settlers were plentiful at the middle of the nineteenth century. Historians speak of an “Anglo exodus” and a resulting “Anglo diaspora” or “Anglo-world,” even of “settler ‘neo-Britains’ such as the United States and Australia,” that were being fuelled by an expanding publishing industry that produced emigration manuals as well as pro-emigration fiction (Belich 2009: 126, 5). Charles Dilke’s vision of the world was of a *Greater Britain* (the title also of his 1869 book); in 1883 John Robert Seeley similarly welcomed *The Expansion of England*. Emigration could also provide a “way out,” as the early sociologist William Booth plainly put it in *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890). In turn, cautionary tales addressed both those longing to be reassured that venturing away from home might be a bad idea altogether and potential emigrants seeking practical advice. Although such anti-emigration writing could be vituperative or sarcastic, exposing particular attitudes or methods, it also helped to upend the popular concept of emigration as a pat ending.⁵ In British-based fiction of the time, emigration either means that unfortunate or unwanted characters can be conveniently exported overseas, often at the end of a novel (such as the Micawbers in Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850)), or conversely, that colonial settlements might harbour potentially awkward or dangerous returnees (such as Magwitch in *Great Expectations* (1861)). References to characters leaving or returning indisputably by far outweigh detailed descriptions of settler life, often for the simple reason that few British-based authors had first-hand experience of the places they evoked in their writing. As Rita Kranidis has already remarked, exporting problematic characters to the antipodes repeatedly presents a “solution to domestic conflict” and hence “an ‘out’ of sorts” (Kranidis 1999: 102), and Janet Myers adds that “[i]n sub-plot after sub-plot, fictional emigrants disappear into or arrive from the colonies in ways that facilitate plot development but display a reticence on the part of novelists to represent the conditions of colonial life” (Myers 2009: 3). There was, however, a steadily growing interest in accounts of settler life, and colonial writers contributed to a changing market, seizing the opportunity to correct prevailing clichés or to counter misleading representations.

Considered in the global context of settler writing, domestic narratives by women writers had a symptomatic rather than a culturally incisive role. Deliberately marginalised in early assessments of emergent literary developments in the settler colonies – dismissed as “un-Australian” in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century nationalist canon formation (Martin 1993: 56), for example – they offer insightful material for a remapping of the dynamic interchanges on the book market and how this shaped as well as reflected the representation of “the antipodes” in popular culture. Important work has been done on the defining characteristics of settler fiction, often in a comparison of texts produced in Britain’s main settler colonies, including Canada, Rhodesia, and South Africa as well as Australia and

³ Recent studies include Archibald (2002), Myers (2009), Blythe (2014), Piesse (2016), Wagner (2016a), and Shaikh (2018). See the bibliography for details.

⁴ See Frost (2016: 35). Compare Strong (2017: 40).

⁵ For a discussion of such pat endings and their reversal in narratives of failed emigration see Wagner (2016a: ch. 5).

New Zealand. These settler colonies, in the British context, not only “have a number of features in common in terms of their colonial histories,” as Annie Coombes argues in *Rethinking Settler Colonialism*, but they also share an “ambivalent relationship to the imperial metropolitan centre” (Coombes 2006: 1). While it is helpful to read the literary productions of the divergent settler colonies – as well as their contemporaneous publications at the imperial centre – in tandem with each other, as I have done myself in a study of failed emigration (Wagner 2016a), the self-conscious re-presentation of “the antipodes” in particular sought to expose and yet additionally galvanised a dynamic intertextual mapping of a peculiarly sensationalised space. What does a closer look at the domestic fiction produced in a double contradiction of mainstream metropolitan narratives and (predominantly male-authored) colonial adventure tales reveal about this dynamic mapping and remapping through literary representation? In *British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832–1877*, Jude Piesse stresses the importance that we pay more attention to “countercurrents” that, instead of “fitting the adventure-story format most often associated with the Victorian empire,” produced texts that “combine overlapping models of home, nation, and settlement with variously nuanced temporalities of a similarly cohesive character in order to absorb the mobility of settlerism” (Piesse 2016: 4). Piesse concentrates on metropolitan periodical emigration literature, although she also emphasises the periodicals’ distribution throughout the empire, reminding us that “British periodicals circulated widely across the British empire” (Piesse 2016: 25).

Settler writing circulated in an uneven globalism in which the empire funnelled both people and books. Recent work on portable culture has pinpointed print media as an active force in exporting and recreating imperial culture. Novels, both as sizeable triple-deckers and in serialised form, constituted portable property with a practically symbolic significance that could help to transport a familiar world (Plotz 2008: 72). While books themselves were transportable objects, narratives encoded values and ways of life in their representational form and thereby transported a familiar world (Wagner 2016a: 16). In his work on portable culture, John Plotz points out that Victorian novels were very tangible and as such well qualified as “the logical breeding ground for reflections on cultural portability” (Plotz 2008: 72). Susan Martin and Kylie Mirmohamadi have more specifically traced how novels “steamed their way towards the antipodes, often to be received, assessed, and distributed by the proprietors of the circulating libraries which had become important ports of call in the literary landscapes of colonial cities, and welcome depositories of literature from ‘Home’” (Martin and Mirmohamadi 2011: 37), and Lydia Wevers takes a historic library at Brancepeth Station, New Zealand, as a starting point for an exploration of colonial reading habits (Wevers 2010: *passim*). Although there were exceptions, especially later in the century, novels by settler writers were chiefly published in London, joining this circulation of literary works. These authors were keenly aware of their readership in the imperial centre and with varying success managed reader expectations from diverse audiences.⁶ Their prefaces often explicitly articulate their own expectations – or hopes – of how their works would be received by readers unfamiliar with the places they describe.⁷ Reviews and advertisements further provide some evidence that settler fiction was available throughout the empire, and were often explicitly targeted at metropolitan readers, promising them, for example, “an

⁶ An important exception is Fergus Humes’s *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, which was first published in Australia in 1886 before it was released in Britain and in the United States, selling over 500,000 copies worldwide.

⁷ Consider, for example, Spence’s reactions to Thackeray. The main purpose of her novel is to contradict Thackeray’s representations, just as Murray’s purpose is to warn readers not to emigrate. These authors clearly addressed a readership “back home.”

exceptionally fine account of life in Australia, [whereas] readers of every country will enjoy following their difficulties and triumphs” (Turner [1910] n.d: n.p.).⁸ Specific terms or different social developments are often elucidated with an ignorant reader in mind, while the detailed explanation of everyday life in the narratives also helped to redefine colonial and putatively exotic spaces as acceptable locations for domestic narratives.

Adapting the popular genre of the governess novel to express concerns about emigration, Catherine Spence and Elizabeth Murray produced diametrically opposed fictional maps of nineteenth-century Australia. Both authors tackled two specific aspects of colonial settlement that were garnering some controversy at the time: organised female emigration and the problem of unskilled, often insufficiently prepared, middle-class settlers. Both novels provide practical advice as well as realist descriptions as they reject clichés circulating about idealised destinations or typical emigrants. Both form part of what Marion Amies has termed the Australian governess novel, a subgenre of domestic settler fiction that offers patterns “to legitimate and reinforce the behaviour of colonial readers and to influence the expectations of intending immigrants” (Amies 1988: 538–9). Down-to-earth descriptions of the heroine’s domestic labour could prepare future settlers, while also ratifying such labour as ladylike (Amies 1988: 538). In *Clara Morison*, Spence consequently attempts to redefine rather than simply claim gentility, domesticity, and respectability for the colony. While acknowledging the limited opportunities for educated but impractical middle-class emigrants, she signposts a domestic heroism that asserts the necessary adaptability as an improved version of the imported domestic values. By contrast, Murray’s *Ella Norman* is a cautionary narrative that condemns emigration propaganda. Taking a particular stance on controversial issues pertaining to colonial settlement, these novels operate as contrasting guides for readers in Victorian Britain.

The detailed descriptions of domestic work that inform so much of *Clara Morison* are driven by Spence’s acknowledged intention to provide an accurate account of the domestic and genteel aspects of settler life in order to dispel preconceptions among the British reading public. Spence, in fact, reacted to a particular satirical piece by Thackeray. “Waiting at the Station,” published in *Punch* in 1850, is an anecdotal sketch in which Thackeray pokes fun at single female emigrants as they are about to be gathered together by their “patrons” in “the Female Emigration Scheme” just before being shipped off (Thackeray 1850: 92). After satirising their appearance and behaviour, he sarcastically comments that these women might be considered unsuitable as wives for gentlemen in England, but that perhaps “a sun-burnt settler out of the Bush ... will take [such an emigrant] back to his farm, where she will nurse his children, bake his dough, milk his cows, and cook his kangaroo for him” (Thackeray 1850: 92). Offended by the blatant misrepresentation of Australian settler life in general and of female emigrants in particular, Spence accused Thackeray of implying that “anything wearing petticoats” could get married in the colonies: “as if there was such a scarcity of educated women there” (Spence 2005: 52). Evidence of a widespread stereotyping,

⁸ Compare my discussion of Lilian Turner’s *Three New Chum Girls* (1910) as an example of how domestic settler novels helped to engender an early form of “writing back” by critically engaging with persistent stereotypes and plotlines in metropolitan representations of Australia and New Zealand (Wagner 2016b: 45). Both Lilian and Ethel Turner wrote for an expanding market of girl readers throughout the empire. Ethel Turner’s novels, moreover, were advertised in Britain as Australian versions of Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868). The “Publisher’s Note” of the sixteenth edition of *Seven Little Australians* states that the novel “was pronounced by press and public alike to be comparable to that world-famous book ‘Little Women,’ and Miss Turner became known everywhere as Miss Alcott’s true successor” (Turner 1912: 6). Conversely, Murray’s *Ella Norman*, as we shall see, was not only reviewed, but criticised in the British press for attacking specific philanthropists.

Thackeray's sketch further prompted Spence to write a realist account that simultaneously depicts settler spaces as respectable domestic places and portrays a genteel heroine who, like the protagonists of English governess fiction, is forced by reduced financial circumstances to go out into the world to seek a living.

The transposed genre of the governess novel offers a suitable framework for Spence's renegotiation of domestic work and gentility. Clara's attempts to obtain a position facilitate a social panorama of colonial Adelaide, its suburbs, and briefly, a remote farmstead. As the subtitle announces, the novel is a tale of South Australia during the mid-century gold fever, yet it foregrounds the domestic lives of everyday characters and primarily of women, left behind in settler homes when brothers, husbands, or fiancés temporarily disappear into offstage goldfields. Embedded letters from the diggings dwell on their newly found appreciation of the importance of domestic work: "when we sit down to sew on a button, or set about our miserable washings, we remember whose hands were always ready to work for us, and whose goodnature never complained of the trouble we gave" (Spence 1854: vol. 2, 49–50). What is conspicuously absent from the narrative are exciting or exotic adventures. Eschewing readers' expectations, Spence offers an alternative map of Australia in contradistinction to adventure stories. The goldfields become remapped from a domestic perspective, while attention is given to hitherto seldom detailed interior spaces, showcasing the practicalities of running a household in a growing settlement. Temporarily working as a housemaid, Clara initially finds her tasks "dreadfully hard, and by no means fascinating" (Spence 1854: vol. 1, 90). In her first weeks as a domestic servant, this middle-class heroine is "very awkward" and makes "a considerable smashing of crockery" (Spence 1854: vol. 1, 90). Yet her stint as a maid also teaches her skills that middle-class emigrants notoriously lacked, and which often rendered colonial homemaking difficult. Exemplary middle-class settlers (including Clara's newly found cousins) do their own housework without forfeiting their gentility. Domestic work, Spence demonstrates, neither proclaims nor affects class status. While foiling readers' expectations of either exotic adventures or easy successes, Spence redefines gentility in order to develop – and advertise – a workable settler domesticity.

By contrast, as a colonial governess novel that likewise cautions against exaggerated expectations, *Ella Norman* ends in failure. Murray's novel has been read as an anti-emigration narrative, or narrative of failed emigration (Wagner 2015), and as a deliberate rejection of the pro-emigration rhetoric within contemporaneous self-help literature, as it "offers up an antithetical nightmare to the colonial story of female independence and domesticity" that emigration societies advertised (Walker 2015: 293). Targeted at potential emigrants, this remapping indicts misleading emigration propaganda, in particular the promotional material produced by the Female Middle-Class Emigration Society (FMCES), which Maria Rye and Jane Lewin established in 1862. With their main intention to promote emigration as a way to guarantee employment for educated single women, such societies ironically already strove to counteract the controversial practices of so-called matrimonial colonisation. This organised exportation of single women to the colonies was intended to balance a surplus of male settlers. "Matrimonial colonisation" formed "the new catch-cry of the British emigrationists ... with interest groups in Britain increasingly conscious of the need to spread British homes through the empire" (Jupp 2001: 56). This exportation of future brides is precisely what Thackeray ridiculed in his 1850 article. By contrast, the FMCES promised respectable employment, primarily as governesses, despite the fact that there were very few opportunities for genteel emigrants in the settler colonies while there was a demand for domestic servants. Several studies have picked apart how the promotional material of the FMCES exaggerated the need for governesses, what they could hope to earn, and also "the

protection that would be offered to them through the FMCES colonial committees” (Myers 2009: 120; cf. Walker 2015: 293). Settler narratives enable us to trace shifting attitudes not only to such policies, but also to their various repercussions in the colonies. In *Ella Norman*, Murray condemns the operations of such societies, dramatising how “with the best intentions these poor girls were deluded into emigrating” (Murray 1864: vol. 1, 308).

In explicit contradistinction to pro-emigration material, Murray’s narrative highlights disappointments and difficulties. Although the main target of Murray’s indictment is the FMCES, the novel juxtaposes the emigration experience of four middle-class would-be settlers: the eponymous heroine, Ella Norman, a former schoolfriend called Mary (also known as “Bella,” an alias that further accentuates her function as Ella’s double), as well as two men, Francis Pierrepont, a poor relation of a well-established English family, whose fruitless search for a clerkship parallels that of the two would-be governesses, and St Vincent de Vismes, a missing heir, who works as a stockman, using the alias Jock. Their intertwined narratives are supported by several additional references to failed middle-class settlers as well as to the contrasting successes of working-class emigrants. At Pierrepont’s arrival, bystanders remark that a “dozen of them sort shipped off third-class ... last week, I can tell you,” whereas a fraudulent upstart called Bill “goes home first-class” – a symptomatic incongruity that is explained with a pun on Britain’s antipodal colonies: “Well! this is the anti-podes, you know, every body is up-side down!” (Murray 1864: vol. 1, 89–91). A cautionary tale directed at bourgeois would-be settlers, *Ella Norman* does not – unlike Spence’s *Clara Morison* – recommend that they adapt, but that they should not have come to the colony at all. When Murray shows working-class characters succeed, she simultaneously condemns them and the settler society that allows their rise in the world.

As Murray produces an alternative map of colonial Australia at the mid-century, she step by step refutes the procedures as well as the promotional publications of emigration societies. Mary/Bella features as the victim of self-important, otherwise woefully misinformed patrons of charitable societies. The framework of this exposure alerts the reader to the invidious workings of propaganda material by sketching tragic results. When Ella takes up a particularly uncomfortable position as the governess to newly rich emigrants (who snub her) in the outback, she recognises in the barmaid Bella Dyce her former schoolfriend Mary Hawley. The interpolated narrative of “Bella Dyce’s Tale of Woe” maps out the workings of fashionable philanthropic organisations that take up the emigration of supposedly superfluous members of society – orphans, the poor, the shabby-genteel, single women – as the latest craze: “You know how those things are. People get a sort of mania for some new thing, until something newer takes its place” (Murray 1864: vol. 2, 1–3). Their activities, their publications, the public talks they organise, and altogether the promises they make are presented as signposts on the road to ruin. The warning is twofold, directed both at those considering emigration themselves and at those who might uncritically support any such fashionable organisations. Thus, Murray complements an earlier denunciation of these philanthropic patrons as “cruel, cruel cheats” with a more general caution to “well-meaning ladies”: “Colonization and Emigration Societies ... decoyed and sent out more unfortunate and innocent girls to irretrievable ruin than any similar number of the most depraved women in England could possibly have destroyed,” rendering them “victim to the folly of these very good and well-meaning ladies,” who are “in their turn the victims of some crafty speculator or designing impostor” (Murray 1864: vol. 1, 307; vol. 3, 113–14). Several reviewers accused Murray of an “attempt at wholesale slander in the guise of fiction,” identifying both Rye and philanthropist Caroline Chisholm as the most likely targets (*Ella Norman*: 38). While Murray never named particular philanthropists in the narrative, *Ella Norman* participated in controversial debates both on the emigration question and on charitable organisations more

generally. Murray dramatised worst-case scenarios to subvert the concept of emigration as a panacea to a range of social problems.

In a deliberate reversal of such resolutions – both in political rhetoric and in popular fiction – all deserving protagonists return to England at the end of the novel. Mary's new beginnings upend a well-known trope in British-based fiction of the time. Like Martha or Little Em'ly in Australia at the end of *David Copperfield*, in *Ella Norman*, a bar-keeper's mistress from the Australian outback is given another chance, in this case in a respectable shop in rural England. In Dickens's novel, emigration presents a solution to problems at home, as it does in so many Victorian novels; in Murray's version, the homecoming to England saves Mary, reversing the expected trajectory. Ella herself, meanwhile, somewhat suddenly and incongruously reunited with a long-lost lover, likewise moves back to England, as do her male counterparts. As the stockman Jock transforms into an aristocrat, the lost heir motif infuses mystery and romance into Murray's otherwise self-consciously prosaic account of life down under. But it does so by glorifying an aristocratic English culture, while his return further underscores the failure of emigration. In the wake of the Tichborne trials, however, lost heirs and sensational impostors from overseas were to become a flexible narrative device to remap antipodal spaces in the Victorian imagination.

Retracing Antipodal Impostors in *A Strange Friendship* (1874) and *A Rolling Stone* (1886)

In colonial settler fiction, the sudden revelation of an heir in disguise frequently forms part of a homecoming to the imperial centre, adding to the heroine's reward or rescue. This homecoming reverses the concept of emigration as a pat ending. However, in the 1870s, this recurrent motif became complicated by the most notorious real-life antipodal impostor of the nineteenth century: the Tichborne Claimant. In British-based fiction, the antipodes were becoming clichéd as offstage sensational spaces, and the Tichborne Claimant capitalised on – and thereby consolidated – a pervasive association of the settler colonies with spurious heirs to England's landed estates. As settler authors tapped into a new market, they seized the opportunity to counter clichés and to reorder ideas of home and belonging. Evans's *A Strange Friendship* and Cheeseman's *A Rolling Stone* redeploy sensational clichés involving antipodal impostors in order to provide alternative accounts of emigration to and return from colonial settlements.

The Claimant (as he came to be called) firmly set the antipodes on a sensational world map in Victorian popular culture. Settler writers responded self-consciously to this development, producing counter-narratives to this expanding cultural myth of the time. The Claimant himself, however, had already traded on sensational plotlines, and this added a further dimension to the complex dynamics between popular representation, stereotyping, and critical remapping. In 1866, Arthur Orton, a butcher from Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, declared that he was the missing Sir Roger Tichborne, lost in a shipwreck more than a decade earlier. Orton was eventually convicted of perjury in 1874, but the protracted trials and several campaigns, supported by Tichborne's mother (who believed the supposed returnee), inspired popular ballads, public performances, and contrasting reworkings in metropolitan and settler literature. The daring imposture of a butcher and the exotic locale were compounded by Sir Roger's tattoo and deformed penis. Their absence helped to indict Orton. In addition, his notebooks showed that he had planned the scheme by resorting to Mary Elizabeth Braddon's novels, in particular *Aurora Floyd* (1863). Literary sensationalism thus set the parameters for the popular consumption of his trials, climaxing in the judge's

recounting of Orton's excerpts from Braddon's novel. The Claimant, it was suggested, had "compounded his fraudulent appropriation of the name of 'Tichborne' by plagiarising the words of Braddon" (Martin and Mirmohamadi 2011: 34–5).⁹ This appropriation of imported narrative structures further inspired a remarkable and self-reflexive spectrum of popular fiction about the settler colonies that tested out alternative outcomes.

Yet if the imposture catalysed anxieties about returnees at the imperial centre, in the settler colonies, the false Sir Roger's sensationalisation exacerbated concerns about possible returns. In *Famous Trials of the Century* (1899), J. B. Atlay pointed out that the Claimant utilised a familiar framework of sentimental return: he "had gone away from home for a dozen years, and had been immensely surprised and pained to find on his return that his identity was disputed, and that difficulties were thrown in the way of his resuming his old position" (Atlay 1899: 269). Carrie Dawson has pointed out that the trials "underscored the instability of English and Anglo-Australian identities" (Dawson 2004: 7), and Rohan McWilliam has added that it was also a "story rooted in homesickness": the "pathos of Tichborne was based on homecoming," although we might now more commonly "see the claimant as a kind of blackmailer, a stock character in Victorian fiction" (McWilliam 2007: 261–2). In Victorian Britain, Tichborne-inspired novels included Braddon's *Fenton's Quest* (1871), Charles Reade's *The Wandering Heir* (1875), and the anti-sensational blackmail-plot of Anthony Trollope's *John Caldigate* (1879). These novels dramatise the effects of colonial importations or experiences at home in England.¹⁰ In sharp contrast, Australian and New Zealand novels focus on misunderstood and mistreated heirs. Thus, Marcus Clarke's Australian convict novel *For the Term of his Natural Life* (1874) depicts the tragic fate of a wrongfully sentenced convict, whereas one of his sinister doubles temporarily succeeds in taking over his identity, replicating Tichborne's imposture. Indeed, even as Clarke offers a corrective to standard depictions of transported convicts, he creates an adventurous convict novel that also depicts several successful criminals, and which thereby ironically further sensationalises the antipodes in the Victorian imagination (McCann 1996). Conversely, Evans and Cheeseman undercut the sensationalisation itself. Instead, they push for a more nuanced understanding of divergent settler experiences within the empire. Both simultaneously expand on or experiment with genre developments. Evans's *A Strange Friendship* redeploys the literary device of false identities, while asserting the superiority of practical settler domesticity; Cheeseman's *A Rolling Stone* adapts the adventure format of the New Zealand "rolling stone" novel to rewrite both the plot of the spurious heir and the representation of the colony as a space of adventure. Both novels renegotiate the changing connections between the former homeland and the new homes in spaces that commonly appeared on sensationalised fictional maps, and from which settler authors attempted to retrieve them.

Evans's *A Strange Friendship* rearranges sensational narrative strategies to call into question stereotypes about emigrants and returnees in British-based fiction. Yet the double inversions of the expected representations – of supposedly undomestic settler spaces and of spurious claimants – curiously run counter to each other. Evans articulates this split by employing the popular device of two contrasting sisters, the practical Dolly and the spoilt beauty Violet. Dolly describes her family's emigration, passing over the voyage swiftly to detail their difficulties with "hard work, to which we were all utterly unaccustomed, and very

⁹ Myers speaks of "an instance of life imitating art" (Myers 2009: 78).

¹⁰ On Braddon's representation of Australia and return, especially in *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), see Myers (2009: 8). For a discussion of *Fenton's Quest* see Wagner (2016a: 125). Archibald (2002) and Myers (2009) both explore Trollope's Australian novels.

often hard fare to match it” (Evans 1874: 20). Still, the text glorifies domestic work when a mysterious neighbour called Alan Ainsleigh falls in love with Dolly’s most domestic attributes, deliberately walking in on her while she is baking in the kitchen: “She had on the neatest little Holland apron, with a square bib in front, that I ever saw; and her sleeves were rolled up high on her pretty arms, which were well dusted with flour” (Evans 1874: 53). Evans alternately suggests that such practical domesticity renders New Zealand homes superior and asserts their claims to English gentility. In mapping out the domestic interior, she stresses that the Somersets’ home “had actually a piano ...; and it had a bay-window, with a flower-stand” (Evans 1874: 22–3).

The reworked impostor-plot threatens to rupture this relocated domestic idyll. Nevertheless, English middle-class standards of femininity work as clues – even, as Evans stresses, in the putative wilderness of an emergent settlement. Thus, Alan’s supposed sister, Madelaine, appears curiously unfeminine, and their home is characterised by “an utter absence of the small feminine knick-knacks and embroideries which made ours look so home-like” (Evans 1874: 35). The implied association of female settlers with a lack of femininity is notably a red herring; Madelaine is really a man in disguise, Alan’s stepbrother Richard, who is guilty of forgery, and who runs away with Violet when the police track him down. Unlike in numerous British-based novels, the colonies do not offer an escape for criminals, despite the most elaborate disguise. In addition, New Zealand’s very nature helps to rid the settlement of such characters. During a heavy storm, the river sweeps away the Somersets’ house at the precise moment when Richard is looking for Violet, who has come home only to die. In the midst of this already heavily sensational scene, Alan heroically carries off Dolly. He stands revealed as the aristocratic Carewe of Curtis Knowle, and his exportation of the perfect domestic settler heroine to his English estate works as an acceptable reward for (domestic) work in the colonies. Although Dolly’s brother and his growing family rebuild a better, more practically situated home in New Zealand, her own return indisputably undermines the text’s commitment to settler domesticity. The plot of the heir-in-disguise and the detailing of practical colonial homemaking work at cross purposes.

Cheeseman goes further in altogether subverting the motif of the homecoming. *A Rolling Stone* experiments with several expected plot-developments at once: the format of the “rolling stone” novel; the impostor-plot; and the homecoming to England as a possible or even desirable end. Joan Stevens describes the “rolling stone” novel as a subgenre of colonial New Zealand fiction, in which a “new chum” – a recent arrival – has several adventures and ultimately achieves success. Such narratives usually exhibit a picaresque structure, but according to Stevens, display “a more serious moral tone” than most adventure fiction (Stevens 1961: n.p.).¹¹ Cheeseman takes up this format, yet due to her focus on interiority and in particular the domestic, her novel has been dismissed as “Victorian domestic melodrama” (Jones 1998: 125), “a fascinating picture of colonial households” (Neale and Wattie 1998: 102), and “only a three-volume library love story” that fails to measure up to the genre expectations of “the ‘rolling stone’ novel, essentially a man’s book” (Stevens 1961: n.p.). In Cheeseman’s novel, the titular rolling stone is the anti-hero Henry Randall, guilty of embezzlement in England: an “accomplished vagrant” and “a gentleman scapegrace” (Cheeseman 1886: vol. 1, 69, 110). The picaresque is expanded through a complex doubling with worse scapegraces. Several of them are likewise redeemed in the course of the novel, often through the influence of an angelic woman; others realise the worst-case scenarios of

¹¹ Stevens describes a “type of recording novel” that “might be christened the ‘rolling stone’ novel,” mentioning W. M. B.’s *The Narrative of Edward Crewe* (1874) and Thomas Cottle’s *Frank Melton’s Luck* (1891) as examples: “A subtitle for most of them might well be ‘The New Chum Makes Good’” (Stevens 1961: n.p.).

failed emigration. As part of this doubling, Randall as well as a young child are both searched for as missing heirs to great wealth in England, and both are at least once suspected (like the Claimant) of having drowned in a shipwreck.

The most intriguing aspect of Cheeseman's rewriting of the cultural myths surrounding the Claimant, however, is the focus on Randall's mother. She believes in her son's return, envisioning a dreamlike homecoming. Like Sir Roger Tichborne's mother, who was declared to be in her dotage for supporting the Claimant, she is ridiculed for holding on to "a hope that to every other mind seemed a fond delusion" (Cheeseman 1886: vol. 3, 104). Cheeseman thus tackles the sensationalisation of returnees as impostors by concentrating on the homecoming motif. Inverting Tichborne-inspired novels published in England that negotiate anxieties about reverse migration, she instead expresses concern about the perception of settlers – potential returnees in particular – in the imperial centre. *A Rolling Stone* hence sentimentalises homecoming in order to counteract impostor-plots. In a final twist, Cheeseman altogether upends such a return as desirable. Randall rejects English suburbia as home and instead exports his mother to New Zealand. This relocates the triumphant return to the colonial home. Cheeseman reverses the expected trajectory, asserting a settler identity that sees a return to New Zealand as the real homecoming.

Reversing Returns for the Next Generation in *The Wonder-Child* (1901)

Turner's *The Wonder-Child* complicates the homecoming motif by tackling repeated migrations. Now chiefly remembered for her still popular children's book *Seven Little Australians* (1894) and its sequels, Turner's fiction contributed to a growing market of colonial girls' literature that developed a shared imperial identity as book publishers "took advantage of the networks established throughout the British Empire to develop their global reach and attract buyers around the world" (Moruzi 2014: 166).¹² At a time when male adventure writers continued to produce tales of exotic adventure in the wild and New Woman writers yearned for more freedom overseas, often highlighting the grim realities of inconvenient settler domesticity, Turner's characters were shown to feel at home in mundane settler spaces. In particular, a growing exodus of talent to cosmopolitan metropolises such as London and Paris began to feature in colonial New Woman fiction – driving novels as different as Catherine Martin's *An Australian Girl* (1890), Rosa Campbell Praed's *Mrs Tregaskiss* (1895), and Louise Mack's *An Australian Girl in London* (1902) – but Turner struck out an alternative route.¹³ Her fiction dwells on and often celebrates settler childhood and especially girlhood. Its focus is on everyday lives, especially in the developing suburbs of Australia's big cities. Several of her novels – including her most autobiographical novel, *Three Little Maids* (1899) – depict emigrant children settling down, yet if migration, even repeated relocation across the globe, forms part of their everyday experience, Turner highlights the importance of a settled home.¹⁴

In *The Wonder-Child*, Turner gives the fullest treatment to the secular pilgrimage (to adopt Woollacott's term) of colonial talent to Europe (Woollacott 2001: 8), reassessing

¹² Often compared to Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), Turner's writing further inspired narratives that employ a similar format, such as Esther Glen's *Six Little New Zealanders* (1917).

¹³ Compare Woollacott (2001: *passim*). For a recent discussion of these female settler novels see Smith (2014) and Purdue (2014).

¹⁴ For a discussion of Turner's representation of emigrant children see Wagner (2014).

global migration from the perspective of an everyday family. In remapping the exoticisation of Europe as the centre of culture and as a tourist attraction for the colonial visitor by tracing the experiences of the eponymous wonder-child, Turner negotiates the shifting dynamics for changing generations and their homes in the settler world. Exhibiting unusual talent as a pianist, Challis Cameron is funded by an enthusiastic Australia “with its peculiar distrust for the things of its own” to ensure that this child is not “to be confined to Sydney teachers,” but “must have the best to be had in the world” (Turner 1901: 33–4), and so she leaves for several years, accompanied by her mother: “behind them the plain little home, before, the Palaces of Music” (Turner 1901: 36). Yet her successes are offstage, evoked in retrospect. The narrative instead opens up with a stark picture of a failing farm, on which the remaining children and their would-be artist father lead an uncomfortable life, in patched clothes, and often hungry, not daring to reveal their situation to the absent mother. The switch to Mrs Cameron and Challis on the voyage home, envisioning a happy reunion, is thus steeped in irony.

The juxtaposition of contrasting scenes – imaginary and real-life; idealised and disappointing – upend common misrepresentations, including inflated expectations both of antipodal settlements and of fortunes to be gained elsewhere. But Turner eschews a straightforward dichotomy. Upon leaving Sydney for a farm, the Cameron children, for instance, are disappointed by the dirty, brown, meagre sheep, which do not correspond to their picture-book idea of the pastoral. Similarly, Challis may have been successful overseas, but her sojourn there is hard work, from which she returns in need of rest. Further, if the motif of the homeland abroad is drawn into question, coming home to settler spaces seems a failure, too. Several female settler authors of the time expressed their frustrations with such a return. Most notably, in Praed’s *Mrs Tregaskiss* the eponymous heroine feels stifled by settler domesticity after a lengthy sojourn abroad (Purdue 2014). Turner, however, offers a particularly insightful conclusion to a discussion of such fictional remapping. She writes for a new generation of largely locally born settlers, addressing them at a malleable age. *The Wonder-Child* dismantles misleading expectations on three counts: of a pastoral countryside populated by fluffy white sheep; of returns to a putative homeland overseas; and of easy returns to the abandoned settler home. In addition, Turner demonstrates the effect of multiple migrations on family life. The solution in *The Wonder-Child* is curiously ambiguous. Ultimately, Challis’s career needs to be continued in Europe, but in order to keep the family together and to minimise travel, they all relocate to “a pleasant countrified suburb just out of London” (Turner 1901: 312) – with the important exception of the eldest sister. She marries a successful Australian farmer, who thereby finally achieves his dream household, “furnished ... with deep chairs and wide sofas and delicious hammocks, all for the little light-haired girl who worked so hard on that wretched selection to nestle into and rest” (Turner 1901: 153). England remains a place of work, while Australia can offer rest through exemplary settler domesticity. Unlike Spence or Murray, Turner had no particular agenda in writing about emigration or return. Primarily addressing young settlers, she mapped out their experience of the everyday while eschewing prevailing fantasies of elsewhere. Repeated migrations formed part of this everyday for many of them, and yet Turner concentrated on the importance of settling down.

Nineteenth-century fiction by colonial women writers in Australia and New Zealand offers alternative narratives of settler life that self-consciously and often critically remap the antipodes of the Victorian imagination. For readers in Britain, these different narratives offered at times contradictory views of colonial settlement within an expanding, but increasingly fragmented, empire. From targeting the potential emigrant or also those “well-meaning ladies” discoursing on or assisting in organised emigration schemes (Murray 1864:

vol. 1, 307), moreover, settler authors increasingly guided colonial readers. While still addressing a twofold market of fellow settlers and the larger reading public in the expanding Anglo-world of the time, they mapped out divergent settler identities. Women writers not only endeavoured to reflect, but also to shape colonial domesticity through alternative forms of representation. Their detailed depictions of urban and in particular interior spaces countered clichéd images of the bush, redirected emigrants' expectations, ratified settler domesticity, and now still prompt us to delve further into hitherto uncharted settler writing to get a fuller picture of the Victorians' antipodes and how antipodal Victorians saw themselves and their shifting place in a changing world.

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