



HAL
open science

The Undesirable Spinster: The Organised Emigration of British Single Women, 1851-1914

Coralie Canot

► **To cite this version:**

Coralie Canot. The Undesirable Spinster: The Organised Emigration of British Single Women, 1851-1914. Literature. 2013. dumas-00935238

HAL Id: dumas-00935238

<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-00935238v1>

Submitted on 23 Jan 2014

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



The Undesirable Spinster

The Organised Emigration of British Single Women, 1851-1914

CANOT

Coralie

UFR DE LANGUES ETRANGERES (LLCE & LEA)

Mémoire de **Master 1 LLCE Etudes Anglophones**

Spécialité ou Parcours : **Professorat des Lycées et Collèges**

Sous la direction de **Véronique Molinari**

Année universitaire 2012-2013



The Undesirable Spinster

The Organised Emigration of British Single Women, 1851-1914

CANOT

Coralie

UFR DE LANGUES ETRANGERES (LLCE & LEA)

Mémoire de **Master 1 LLCE Etudes Anglophones**

Spécialité ou Parcours : **Professorat des Lycées et Collèges**


Sous la direction de **Véronique Molinari**

Année universitaire 2012-2013

DECLARATION

1. Ce travail est le fruit d'un travail personnel et constitue un document original.
2. Je sais que prétendre être l'auteur d'un travail écrit par une autre personne est une pratique sévèrement sanctionnée par la loi.
3. Personne d'autre que moi n'a le droit de faire valoir ce travail, en totalité ou en partie, comme le sien.
4. Les propos repris mot à mot à d'autres auteurs figurent entre guillemets (citations).
5. Les écrits sur lesquels je m'appuie dans ce mémoire sont systématiquement référencés selon un système de renvoi bibliographique clair et précis.

NOM : CANOT PRENOM : CORALIE

DATE : 27/06/2013 SIGNATURE : 

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Mrs Véronique Molinari, for the support she gave me and the interest she has shown in my work. I would like to thank her for her availability and her help.

I would also like to thank Mrs Christine Vandamme for accepting to be a member of the jury.

Table of Contents

Introduction	7
Part 1: Is There Such a Thing as the Right Number of Women?	9
1.1 Spinsters at Home: “Surplus” Women	10
1.2 British Women in the Colonies: the Right Kind of Women	14
Part 2: Organised Emigration as a Solution: Imperialistic Objectives vs. Feminist Hopes	17
2.1 Patriarchal and Imperialistic Goals	18
2.2 Feminist Hopes and Aspirations	21
2.3 Organising the Emigration of Single Women	23
Part 3: The Mass Emigration of Spinsters: a Success?	28
3.1 British Female Immigrants, a Burden for the Colonies too?	29
3.2 Was the Emigration of Any Benefit for the Mother Country?	31
3.3 What About the Female Emigrants Themselves?	33
Conclusion	36
Bibliography	37
Appendix	39

Introduction

When thinking about Britain's Victorian era, we picture it as a period of stability, wealth, power as well as economic and cultural development, at a time when the industrial revolution was in its heyday and Queen Victoria reigned over an empire upon which the sun never set. But Victorian society was also known for the rigidity of its values, the importance of morality and religion and the prevalence of a strict social code of conduct. Nineteenth century Britain was also a time when poverty and social injustice were the daily lot of many British people, as it was notably reported by Frederick Engels in *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* and well illustrated in literature by Dickens's novels, for instance. The fact is reality was harsh for people who did not enter the strict frame of the Victorians' rigid social values. Spinsters were amongst these people.

These women were denying all that was considered as the natural laws concerning womanhood by neither serving men, through marriage, nor reproducing and raising children, in the respect of family values, so dear to the Victorians and so essential to their society. The 1851 census created an outburst of reactions related to the spinsterhood issue, by revealing that women outnumbered men in the country as well as showing an increasing number of unmarried women. The concern of many Victorians was thus to suppress the inconvenience spinsters represented by sending them to the colonies. The idea was not new: Victorians had sent their "undesirables" to the colonies almost since the beginning of colonisation, from the mother country's unemployed men, through convicts and orphans, to the spinsters.

Although it played for many years a large role in the process of colonisation, the emigration of single women has remained largely absent from works of social history and research concerning the Victorian era, and if the topic has been developed in the past decades, there are still few works focusing on female emigration, its reasons and causes, its results and consequences. One of the main reasons for that silence is probably the scarcity of primary sources. It is indeed difficult to find

figures and reports from this period referring to the emigration of single women, especially reports from the emigrant women themselves. Women's opinion might not have mattered that much, in the eyes of the emigrationists; they were subjected to emigration and it was not so much of a choice. The phrase “they emigrated the women”, commonly used at that time, is a sign. The verb is used transitively, as if it was something that could be done to someone. Jan Gothard writes about them: “[...] they were considered people without agency, whose life and actions could and should be controlled by others.”¹

The main focus of this work will be to try and determine whether emigration was indeed an efficient solution to Britain's surplus of women during that period for both the mother country and the colonies. Rather than focusing only on Britain, this work will also concentrate on the colonies and the women themselves. As far as the home country is concerned, it will mainly refer to England and Wales while the colonies referred to are mainly Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, as these were the destinations for most emigrant women during the time span considered, that is from the 1851 census to 1914, with the beginning of World War One and the overwhelming consequences it would cause on demography.

The Victorian obsession with gender imbalance, not only at home but also in the colonies, as well as the vision of women in Victorian times, are both at the origin of the debate that agitated people at home and in the colonies. That debate led to two main approaches around the surplus women issue: the first one ensuing from a patriarchal and imperialistic vision of society and the second one reflecting feminist hopes and aspirations, common to many women in the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, none of these two approaches denied the necessity of setting up an organised female emigration. Although the expectations relative to the organised emigration of women were high, we can wonder what the actual results and consequences of such a policy were, on the motherland, on the colonies and on the women themselves.

1 GOTHARD, Janice, *Blue China, Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2001, p. 17

PART 1

-

Is There Such a Thing as the Right Number of Women?

Debates went on during most of the Victorian era over the issue of the place and role of women in society both in the mother country and in the colonies. At home, changes in the demographic situation led people, at the time, to believe that there was a “surplus” of women. In the meantime, in the colonies, the opposite tendency, a shortage of women was being observed. The Victorians were looking for an ideal, a form of perfection in every aspect of life; the number of women and their role in society was no exception.

1.1 Spinsters at Home: the “Surplus” Women

The imbalance between the male and female populations started to be a matter of concern to Victorian society in the mid-nineteenth century. It was a time when people realised the number of spinsters around them was increasing and women had more and more difficulties in finding a husband. Statistically, the numeral discrepancy between male and female populations in England started to show clearly in the 1851 census.² Although the imbalance had started before the 1851 census, this census was the first one in which the marital status of the people was inquired into³. The numerical superiority of women over men rapidly became a problem in the context of the rigid and family-centered values of the Victorians. In the following years, debates started to spring around the issue of spinsters and there were many discussions about the solutions that could be found to this “problem”. The debate was extensively relayed in the media and concern rapidly increased. Although many people at the time believed this imbalance to be at the origin of the problem and danger single women represented for Victorian society, it can easily be argued that this situation was mainly caused by Victorian society itself, more precisely by its moral values regarding the Victorian family model and the role of women in society.

2 <<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/index.jsp>> [Consulted on October 16th, 2012]

In 1851, there were 365,821 more women than men.

3 <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/text/chap_page.jsp?t_id=SRC_P&c_id=6&cpub_id=EW1861GEN&show=DB> [Consulted on May 15th, 2013]

The notion of family was at the heart of Victorian society and the role of women was therefore of primary importance. They were valued and respected but almost exclusively for the “mission” which they had to consider as their sole function and their sole purpose in life: marriage and procreation. Queen Victoria herself, with her husband Albert and their children, became a symbol for this ideal of the perfect Victorian family life. The Queen promoted this model through her own image and had family portraits made where she is seen “at home” surrounded with her husband and children, emphasizing the domesticity even of the Queen herself⁴. So as far as middle-class women were concerned, their place was mainly at home, where they were in charge of the care of the children and of domestic tasks, which is also the reason why the problem was even more important with these women. William Rathbone Greg, an English essayist who was an instigator and one of the most fervent supporters of the theory of massive single women emigration that would be implemented during the Victorian era, wrote a famous essay entitled “*Why Are Women Redundant?*”. In the following extract, Greg explains why domestic servants are not concerned by the redundancy issue:

[...] female servants do not constitute any part (or at least only a very small part) of the problem we are endeavouring to solve. They are in no sense redundant; we have not to cudgel our brains to find a niche or an occupation for them; they are fully and usefully employed; they discharge a most important and indispensable function in social life [...] they fulfil both essentials of woman’s being: they are supported by and they minister to, men.⁵

This extract contains most of the major ideas surrounding the role and the perception of women, as well as their utility, in Victorian times: women’s place, especially middle-class women, was at home, taking care of their family, they had to rely on men to support them financially. If they did not fulfil either of these two requirements, then other people needed to “cudgel [their] brains” to draw them out of

4 Appendix 1

For instance, the royal family portrait painted by Franz Xaver Winterhalter, dated 1846, of Queen Victoria with Prince Albert and the first five of their nine children. Consultable online on the website of the Royal Collection: <<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/405413/the-royal-family-in-1846>> [Consulted on April 17th, 2013]

5 GREG, William Rathbone, *Why Are Women Redundant?*, London: N.Trübner & co, 1869, p. 26

their pathological uselessness to society.

These are the reasons why, during the Victorian era, parents' best hopes for their young girls were for them to have a good marriage and many children. They were raised and educated in the sole purpose of their becoming good wives and good mothers. Martha Vicinus writes in her introduction to *Suffer and be Still*, referring to the perfect Victorian lady: "All her education was to bring out her 'natural' submission to authority and innate maternal instincts"⁶. Their education was as limited as their expectations about intellectual growth and fulfilment later in life were supposed to be. As Lynn Abrams mentions in the article *Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain*, "Domesticity and motherhood were considered by society at large to be a sufficient emotional fulfilment for females."⁷ The Victorian woman was a dependent human being. She usually depended on her father in the earlier years of her life and then on her husband, not only for most of the important decisions in her life but also for obvious economic reasons. Middle-class women did not have access to work (unlike working-class women who had to work to help and support their family) so they could not financially support themselves. It was only socially acceptable for middle-class women to be involved in charities, where they could not be remunerated at all, lest they should be accused of no longer being a lady. The Victorian woman was dependent on the men in her family. Her status depended on theirs.

Employment was indeed a major issue for women in the Victorian age, especially for the middle-class woman who was "restrained by Victorian notions of respectability from leaving home or engaging in the trades open to working-class women. She was left dependent and without vocation"⁸, hence the need for women to marry, so as to avoid being a burden for her parents. Women were mostly defined in terms of their usefulness to others and proved their utility by procreating, which

6 VICINUS, Martha, *Suffer and Be Still, Women in the Victorian Age*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973, p. x

7 ABRAMS, Lynn, "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain", *BBC History*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml> [Consulted on February 19th, 2013]

8 JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Spinster and her Enemies, Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930*, Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1997, p. 87

ensued the following question: what about single women?

As a direct consequence to this representation of the ideal Victorian woman, spinsters became a particular object of attention and concern in the second half of the nineteenth century as their number was becoming more and more important. The term spinster is not to be mistaken with the contemporary idea linked to it, that of an “old maid”. Spinsters, at the time, were single women of marriageable, childbearing age. These single women had no place in Victorian society⁹; they did not meet the traditional standards for women at the time and were simply not fitting in the Victorian family model. They became an object of pity because they were unable to fulfil their domestic role, as a wife and a mother. As a result, their situation was often precarious for they either depended on the men in their families for the rest of their life (fathers, brothers, uncles, nephews...) or ended up in a situation of poverty because of the difficulties of employment¹⁰.

This surplus of single women was considered, by many, as utterly “abnormal” and was held responsible for many problems in society as this quote by W.R Greg shows:

[...] there is an enormous and increasing number of single women in the nation, a number quite disproportionate and quite abnormal, a number which, positively and relatively, is indicative of an unwholesome social state, and is both productive and prognostic of much wretchedness and wrong.¹¹

These women who failed to bring anything to society were labelled as “superfluous”; they were considered useless to the others and to Victorian society. Spinsterhood was a failure. As people of the time found it difficult to define the single woman and her place in the hierarchical and rigid Victorian society, spinsters were considered

9 KRANIDIS, Rita S., *The Victorian Spinster and Colonial Emigration: Contested Subjects*, New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1999, p. 20

10 Appendix 2

Article “Britain's Surplus Women”, from the *Examiner*, Launceston, Australia, dated Saturday 27 December 1913. <<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/50739486?searchTerm=surplus%20women&searchLimits=>> [consulted on September 25th, 2012]

11 GREG, William Rathbone, *Op.cit.*, p. 5

marginal.¹² They were in fact voluntarily marginalised, criticised and finger-pointed at because they represented a danger to the Victorian strict order in society and its rigid values. Seen at the time by most people as an abnormality and a failure, spinsterhood was a curse.

As there was substantially no alternative in the rigid Victorian society for single women, spinsters were often depicted as women who were desperate for husbands. Although it may have been true for part of these women, it was not the case for all of them, especially in the later nineteenth century. Christabel Pankhurst for instance, considered spinsterhood to be a “political decision” against the domination of men and the restraints of society. Spinsters indeed formed the major part and the backbone of the feminist movements of the late century, which represented hotbeds of the women’s emancipation movement and an even greater danger to the stability of Victorian society as well as a threat to Victorian values.

But the Victorian Age is an age of contradictions, and if spinsters were despised at home, the Victorians were convinced that the colonies were suffering of a cruel dearth of British women precisely.

1.2 British Women in the Colonies: the Right Kind of Women

The demographic situation in the colonies, as far as the British immigrants were concerned, was quite the opposite of the one in the mother country. For W.R. Greg, that was perfectly logical: “Nature makes no mistakes”, people do. These imbalances that were observed in Britain and in the colonies were due therefore to the human factor. If there was an excess somewhere, that automatically meant a shortage was created elsewhere :

A considerable amount of that excess of women, which we have recorded as prevailing in the mother country, is thus at once accounted for, and is shown to be artificial and not natural, apparent rather than real. Nature

12 Corvisy, Catherine-Emilie and Véronique Molinari, *Les femmes dans l'Angleterre victorienne et édouardienne, Entre sphère privée et sphère publique*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008, p. 231

makes no mistakes; Nature has no redundancies; and, as we shall presently see, the excess here is counterbalanced by a corresponding deficiency elsewhere.¹³

The imbalance in the colonies, that caused so much anxiety among Victorians, concerned only British immigrants, as it was granted that British male immigrants could only marry British women. Marriages with indigenous women were highly frowned upon.

This created a problem insofar as immigration to the colonies, until the mid-nineteenth century, was mostly a matter of male British citizens emigrating in order to settle in the new British territories. Colonists were men, sometimes emigrating with their families, but most of them were single. The colonies were considered hostile territory for women, especially if single. But now that the territories had been colonised and that the initial pioneering phase was over, the colonies sought to have more women in order to re-establish the balance between sexes¹⁴. The need for women was rendered even greater by the fact that, by the 1850s, colonies were lacking women, single women in particular, to marry the British male colonists. According to W.R. Greg, men outnumbered women in every British colony. Greg maintains that in Canada, for instance, there were 55,803 more men than women and 214,141 more in Australia and New Zealand.¹⁵ Even though the numbers used by Greg are now highly controverted and believed to be wrong, they show the state of mind of a large part of Victorian society and its view, not only on women, but also on the colonies. It was thought that men in the colonies were more likely to adopt what was considered as devious behaviour in the absence of British women. It was thought that, because of the deficiency in the number of women, there was more violence, more drinking, more gambling from British male emigrants.¹⁶ But one of the major concerns was the increased risk of relationships between British men and local women. There were reports coming from the colonies that “dozens of men [said] they would gladly marry if they could.” Concerns in the colonies were important around

13 William Rathbone Greg, *Op.cit.*, p. 13

14 DIAMOND, Marion, *Emigration and Empire: The Life of Maria S. Rye*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1999, p. 65

15 W.R. Greg, *op.cit.*, p. 3 and p. 14

16 <<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/alcohol/page-1>> [Consulted on May 22nd, 2013]

“the subject of the dearth of females” and men were ready to “pre-empt a wife” emigrating from the mother country¹⁷.

The idea that the best solution for both these demographic imbalances – the excess of women in Britain on the one hand and the shortage of British women in the colonies on the other hand – was the emigration of Britain’s surplus women mainly came from Britain’s desire to get rid of these women and to acculturate the colonies to the Victorian model. For that reason, it is difficult to find tangible reasons for the shortage of British women in the colonies that are not linked to Britain’s expectations and desires rather than those of the colonial governments. Colonies were indeed seeking women but not the “superfluous” women Britain was intending to get rid of. They were actually looking for domestic servants mostly. They needed women to take care of the colonists’ homes, not genteel women that would neither work nor develop the colony’s economy. But British people at home, in Europe, believed that the colonies would benefit from the presence of more educated women and that it would help re-establish a kind of balance of the sex ratio in the emigrant population¹⁸, and that it was, in addition, expected to allow Britain to reproduce and establish the Victorian model in the colonies. This idea would become the cornerstone of the patriarchal and imperialistic policy that was going to be implemented regarding the emigration of Britain's surplus women to the colonies.

17 DIAMOND, Marion, *Op.cit.*, p. 73

18 LEVITAN, Kathrin, *Redundancy, the 'Surplus Woman' Problem, and the British Census, 1851-1861*, *Women's History Review*, vol.17, N°3, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 366

PART 2

-

Organised Emigration as a Solution: Imperialistic Objectives vs. Feminist Hopes

With spinsters becoming more and more of a problem to the Victorians, the question of what to do with these “superfluous” women became a priority. What was really worrying the Victorians was not so much the situation spinsters were facing as the increasing number of women affected by the “curse” of spinsterhood. The solution that seemed to have emerged naturally was to encourage the emigration of single British women to the colonies, where they were so greatly needed.

2.1 Patriarchal and Imperialistic Goals

Labelled as superfluous, spinsters were the “surplus women” of a system in which women in general were considered as goods, commodities exported from England “like Manchester Cottons or Bermondsey boots”, as Maria Rye, a well-known British emigrationist, put it.¹⁹ According to the law of offer and demand, some Victorians believed that by lowering their number in England, their value would be automatically increased as their relative “scarcity” would make them desirable once again. All of Greg's reflection seems to be based on the very simplistic idea that providing a husband to every woman – and a wife to every man – was the easiest path to social equilibrium and welfare. Therefore, the difficulties in the colonies that were related to gender imbalance, would logically be resolved thanks to the supply of British single women England could provide. They represented a pool of potential “brides-to-be” from which male colonists could pick their future spouse. W.R. Greg, in “*Why are Women Redundant?*”, argues that female emigration, leading to marriage in the colonies, was the best solution for every party involved: Britain, the colonies and single people. But Greg was far from being the only one to consider emigration as a solution. Even before he had published his essay, there were articles pointing to that solution. In *The Times* of the 28th of April 1862, the following lines were written by the editorialist:

The balance of sexes is an ordinance of nature; and, if man has disturbed it, surely man may remedy the wrong he has done, and restore the balance as far

19 GOTHARD, Jan, *op.cit*, p. 35

as he can. There is no work of philanthropy whatever so justifiable as the removal of women from a place where they are greatly in excess to another, under the same laws and social condition, where they are much wanted...²⁰

For Greg and for many of the supporters of female emigration at the time, the issue of redundant women was largely due to the emigration of men to the colonies, “natural celibates” representing, for them, only a very small proportion of the total of single women in England²¹.

Another popular assumption was that these women were emigrating to find a husband. The fact that woman's importance in Victorian Britain lay in her ability to get married and in her reproductive capacity led indeed to the idea that women emigrated exclusively to marry and have a family, thus accomplishing their role and duty as a woman. Emigrant women were subject to much mockery, both in England and in the colonies, and were not well-considered by the rest of society because they were pictured as women who were desperate for a husband. They were taken aboard ships that came to be known as the “bride ships” and it was thought that there were hordes of single British men in the colonial territories, eagerly waiting for them and ready to choose one of them to be his bride. Marion Diamond writes:

The Tynemouth was known in British Columbia as the 'bride ship' and her voyage, with '60 select bundles of crinoline', as the source of much hilarity. On their arrival, the women were landed 'before the admiring glance of some 300 residents'.²²

These women were mocked, most probably, partly because of the incongruity of the situation and partly because of their supposed naivety.

In the eyes of its supporters, not only did this solution allow to solve the problem of surplus women in England and to provide brides to the desperate male British population in the colonies, it was also the ideal way of reproducing the Victorian family and societal model abroad. If the original aim of an assisted mass emigration of single women was to re-establish a balance between male and female population, it was also the opportunity to promote the Victorian model in the colonies.

20 The editorial of *The Times*, 28 April 1862, in DIAMOND, Marion, *op.cit.*, p. 75

21 GREG, William Rathbone, *op. cit.*, p. 10

22 DIAMOND, Marion, *op.cit.*, p. 74

Behind the discrepancy in numbers was the fact that with the shortage of women, emigrants were left without “homemakers”. And the absence of “British homes” meant that the colonisation process was incomplete. The presence of a mainly male British population in the colonised territories seemed to fall under a concept of “occupation” rather than colonisation. Colonisation indeed implies almost automatically the implantation of your own culture in foreign territories. Given that the Victorian model relied so much on family values, this process could not be completed without women. The Victorians realised that, in order to effectively colonise the new territories, they needed to increase the proportion of British women there, so as to avoid inter-racial unions and the children born from such unions. British emigrant women were endowed with a civilising and acculturating mission.²³ The women that would be sent to the colonies were *naturally* expected to fulfil their domestic roles and by doing so would create families, develop the “British population” in the colonies and pass on to their children their Victorian values, helping the implantation of the latter in the colonial territories. Women were providing stability and the assurance that emigrants would settle down in a more definitive manner. The notion of “acculturation” women brought with them was essential to imperialistic ends and represented another step in the colonisation process, while keeping women in the domestic sphere, emphasising their importance and value in this particular role but still keeping them under control. This also meant avoiding any threat, any sort of “rebellion” from women against the control of men and the order of the patriarchal Victorian society.

Given the importance of this project to the Victorians and the consequences at stake, the emigration of single women became the object of much attention and thereby of much propaganda during the second part of the Victorian era. There were articles in the press, pamphlets and posters singing the praises of colonial life for Victorian single women. “*The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad*”²⁴, for instance, establishes a comparison between the difficulties of life for these women in Victorian

23 KRANIDIS, Victoria S., *op. cit.*, p. 61

24 Appendix 3

“The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad”, cartoon in *Punch*, vol.18, 1850.

<<http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=28773&l=en>> [Consulted May 20th, 2013]

Britain: the woman is depicted as poor and is rejected by the man in the picture, while the same women, in the colonies, are enjoying a healthy, satisfying family life, with a husband, children, food hanging from the ceiling... The propagandists relied on the difficult situation some women had to face and on the idea that the colonies were widely seen as a place of hope, a land of opportunities and wealth.

The people who defended this “theory of female emigration” hoped that the single women who were sent to the British colonies, where they had been promised they would find a husband, would in fact be able to apply the Victorian family model to the colonies, thus accomplishing their role as a woman and becoming useful to the Empire. Fitting once again in the Victorian ideology as well as developing the British model and consolidating the Empire through their “civilizing mission” in the colonies, surplus women were given a role, they were finally useful to the British Empire.

This overly simplistic solution was serving governmental and imperialistic ideas, in the context of a patriarchal society, rather than – or even to the detriment of – women themselves who, by that time in the century, were seeking more independence and starting to claim their right to it.

2.2 Feminist Hopes and Aspirations

By recreating the Victorian vision of womanhood in the colonies, some people realised that the conditions of life for women would not improve and that they would make no breakthrough whatsoever regarding their independence from men, even in the colonies. They would still be refused access to most forms of employment and would be maintained in their role at home. However, where some were seeing emigration as a means to perpetuate the patriarchal and imperialistic model, while getting rid of the superfluous women, feminists were seeing in this idea an opportunity to empower women, and allow them to access a better quality of life and more independence than they would be able to gain in Britain on a short term

basis.

For the people that were concerned about women's welfare and independence – feminists above any others – it goes without saying that finding a husband was neither the sole nor the main argument of their discourse. Instead they would rather put an emphasis on the importance of finding employment, which would lead to a new form of independence that was inaccessible to them in England. In this extract from *The English Woman's Journal*, dated October 1, 1862, “by a lady who has resided eleven years in one of the Australian colonies”, the author of these lines, although agreeing with the idea of emigration, stresses the importance of women's independence and of women's work:

It is not disputed that a larger infusion of the feminine element in colonial society would in itself be beneficial. It will *now* scarcely be denied that for women to be respected in that society, it is essential that they be independent. [...] It is therefore not difficult to see that in the colonies as well as in England, to offer a greater variety of occupation to women is the most direct way, economically speaking, of serving the general community.²⁵

Maria Rye was one of the most important and influent architects, and spokepeople, for this alternative way of considering female emigration. Maria Rye was a social reformer who mainly dealt with matters concerning women's rights and female unemployment.²⁶ She was an active promoter of female emigration and she maintained that it was better for English middle-class women to work in the colonies, even as a domestic servant, than to be, to put it in her own words, “starving genteelly” in England.²⁷ Emigration was considered as a means for spinsters to achieve a higher level of independence and seek a better future rather than to merely recreate the model that caused them to be in such a difficult situation. Gaining this much-wanted, and much-needed, independence was tightly linked to the question of employment. The colonies offered an opportunity women would never have in England (until World War One) to be able to support themselves. The main purpose

25 Extract from “XIV. Middle Class Female Emigration Impartially Considered”, in *The English Woman's Journal*, vol.10, n°56, October 1, 1862, p. 84

26 <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/lists/GB-800819-Rye.htm>> [consulted on June 27th, 2013]

27 DIAMOND, Marion, *op. cit.*, p. 81

of this type of emigration was to find work – and not a husband – as many men had done before.

But many women did not see it that way. Many of them feared emigration and, at least as far as middle class women were concerned, had difficulties to accept the idea that they would have to give up on their high station to start working, most of the time as a domestic servant.

2.3 Organising the Emigration of Single Women

As mass emigration of single women was becoming a widely approved solution to the surplus women issue, including by feminists, it became necessary to organise their emigration. For many of the spinsters, emigration would not have been their first choice. It was only through an organised propaganda relying on much advertisement and campaigns in favour of emigration, and for lack of other options, that these women would be convinced to leave everything and everyone they knew for a faraway territory, completely unknown to them. And even then, most of these women could not afford to pay for the travel there and the cost of settling down in a new country. It became urgent to offer solutions to these women, as well as a certain support through the different procedures emigrating implied. This is why female emigration societies were created. The first of these were serving the imperialistic and patriarchal objectives mentioned in part 2.1, only to be soon followed by the creation of societies that put the emphasis on women rather than on the Empire.

Colonies had started to offer assisted passages to British women under certain conditions, based mainly on their willingness to work as domestic servants. As early as 1848, the New Zealand Company issued posters advertising for emigrants willing to work as mechanics and farm labourers, as it had done for several years, but added to that list the domestic servants.²⁸ If these assisted, or sometimes even free, passages solved the economic barrier to emigration, it did not help women with the procedures

²⁸ Appendix 4

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/ephemera/2096/new-zealand-company-poster> [Consulted on May 24th, 2013]

or with their safety. Some women emigrated on their own but their safety on board could not be assured, especially for unaccompanied women. The conditions of travel for those who could not afford the best parts of the ship were very difficult, and most of the time men and women were not separated and women were often the victims of sexual harassment from male passengers or crew members²⁹. From this arose the question of virtue for these emigrant women. And the problems were not limited to the journey of the emigrant ships, they extended to the colonies, where many of them were forced into prostitution after their arrival.³⁰ On top of that, female emigration could not be filtered. There were not any selection processes and colonial governments started to complain about British ladies being unfit for colonial life.

These are the main reasons for the development of female emigration societies. The influence of the societies became significant in the second part of the nineteenth century, particularly from the 1880s. Most of them were managed by women, according to the implicit tradition of “women's emigration kept largely in women's hand”³¹. Between 1851 and 1914, half a dozen of these female emigration societies operated in England, in collaboration with the colonies. Among them were the British Ladies' Female Emigration Society, the Female Middle Class Emigration Society and later the Colonial Emigration Society and the British Women's Emigration Association.

The British Ladies' Female Emigration Society - BLFES (1849-1888)

The BLFES, also known as the Matron's Society, focused mainly on the appointment of matrons on ships carrying single women. An emigration commissioner, quoted in *The English Woman's Journal*, wrote:

The appointment of matrons has formed an essential part of our system since our resumption of the conduct of emigration in 1846. In 1849, the society formed for the assistance of female emigrants, and entitled 'The British Ladies' Female Emigration Society,' offered us their aid in the selection of matrons. Since that time matrons have been appointed to every ship carrying single women [...].³²

29 SWAISLAND, Cecilie, *op.cit.*, p. 16

30 *Ibid.*, p.18

31 GOTHARD, Janice, *op. cit.*, p. 76

32 “III. Emigrant-Ship Matrons” in *The English Woman's Journal*, vol.5, p. 27

In a lesser measure, the BLFES also helped providing assistance to women both before their departure and on their arrival in the colonies. An article in the *New Zealander*, dated March 10th, 1852, describes this society as an organisation whose role was defined as follows:

[...] to establish homes for the instruction and preparation of female emigrants previous to their departure; [...] to secure judicious and efficient matrons for the voyage, and to form corresponding societies in the colonies for the protection and assistance of the female immigrants on their arrival.³³

The BLFES also organised educational activities during the voyage to develop their domestic skills and train them to be domestic servants.

The Society, which benefited of donations from Queen Victoria,³⁴ operated for nearly forty years and in collaboration with the colonial governments to ensure the safety of the female emigrants and therefore to encourage more of them to consider emigration as an option.³⁵ The society ran until the death of Miss Caroline Tipple, who had been the society's secretary since its creation. At that moment, it was arranged for the BLFES to be taken over by another society, the Colonial Emigration Society, created in 1884.

The Female Middle Class Emigration Society (FMCES), 1862-1886

The FMCES, with Maria Rye as one of its key figures, was the first emigration society – and the most influent one – whose main objective was the employment of women, with the underlying aim to help them gain more independence. The FMCES was the first society to truly intend to use emigration as a means to solve some of the issues British single women, and British women in general, were facing. The FMCES distanced itself from the popular discourse regarding emigration at the time and aimed at putting single women, and their interests, at the centre of the emigration process. To that intent, the society's

33 “Female Emigration. British Ladies Female Emigrant Society.” in *The New Zealander*, Volume 8, Issue 616, 10 March 1852, Page 3

34 *Ibid.*

35 SWAISLAND, Cecilie, *op. cit.*, p. 19

emigrationists emphasised the fact that the objective of emigration had to be work, not marriage.³⁶ This was clearly stated by the managers of the FMCES, and publicly known, as another extract from the *English Woman's Journal* shows:

Miss Rye and her coadjutors distinctly and emphatically declare, that they have never, by word or deed, held out to any woman the prospect of marriage as an inducement to emigrate.[...] Hard work with honest independence, have been the only bait held out, and these have been found sufficiently inviting.³⁷

The FMCES's system relied on more developed, and accurate, selection processes, insisting on the importance of the women's physical and mental “fitness” for the colonies.

The essential feature in the Society's plan is, not to attempt to relieve the mother-country by throwing upon the colonies heterogeneous masses of women, but to guarantee on the one hand the fitness of emigrants for the positions they are intended to fill, and on the other, to afford them some safeguard, much needed on their first arrival in a strange country, and some assistance in finding situations.³⁸

The FMCES was also different from the BLFES in the fact that it focused, as indicated in its name, on women from the middle class, preferably well-educated, to fill positions as governesses or teachers. For that reason, the number of women the society help was rather limited: only a few hundreds of women were sent overseas.³⁹

The Women's Emigration Society (WES) ran for four years only, from 1880 to 1884. Among its most important members were Louisa Hubbard, editor of the *Woman's Gazette* notably, and Caroline Blanchard, who had worked with the colonial governments before as a selection agent.⁴⁰ The society put forward domestic service and encouraged women to emigrate to work in that branch but did not hesitate either to use the “husband-findind” argument to motivate women to

36 DIAMOND, Marion, *op.cit.*, p. 83

37 “Middle Class Female Emigration in *The English Woman's Journal*, Vol.10, p. 82

38 *Ibid.*

39 OLSON, James S. & Robert SHADDLE, *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire, A-J*, Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1996, p. 189

40 KOHLI, Marjorie, *The Golden Bridge: Young Emigrants to Canada, 1833-1939*, Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2003, p. 341

emigrate.⁴¹ **The Colonial Emigration Society (CES)**, created in 1884, was the branch of the WES directed by Blanchard. The CES absorbed the functions of both the FMCES and the BLFES, before becoming part of the BWEA in 1892. The last of the major female emigration societies that was influential over the 1851-1914 time period was the **British Women's Emigration Association (BWEA)**, which operated from 1884 to 1919. This is the society which organised most of the emigration for single female until the 1920s. The BWEA inherited all the various interests of the previous emigration societies and put a special emphasis on the protection of women.⁴² The BWEA had an important informative role. It did not try to hide the hardships of colonial life from prospective emigrants and valued training and experience.⁴³ Later in the twentieth century, all the emigration societies were taken over by the Women's Migration and Overseas Appointments Society, which still exists today.

As much as governments and societies tried to organise female emigration, the conditions of emigration were still very difficult and the risks numerous. We can wonder then if this whole concept of female emigration was a good idea in itself and if the outcome was as positive as expected.

41 OLSON, James S. & Robert SHADDLE, *op.cit.*, p.189

42 SWAISLAND, Cecilie, *op.cit.*, p. 23-24

43 GOTHARD, Janice, *op.cot.*, p. 85

PART 3

-

**The “Mass Emigration” of Women to the Colonies:
a Success?**

The reality concerning female emigration was that the discrepancy between expectations and actual results was substantial, as much for the colonies as for Britain or the women themselves. With each party aiming at different objectives and each of them being more or less disappointed by the outcome of their projects, sometimes too ambitious, sometimes not entirely thought-through, it is difficult to make an assessment of the whole emigration process, be it positive or negative.

3.1 British Female Emigrants: a Burden for the Colonies too?

In spite of all the theories, patriarchal or feminist, and no matter how much thought they put into it, the fact was that Britain's most “unwanted women” were not welcome in the colonies either. The colonies were not interested in Britain's “surplus”, especially if that surplus was coming from the middle class. They were suffering, in particular, from a major labour shortage in the domestic service trade and thus wanted women who were willing to work in that field. The colonies had no more use than Britain for “idle women” that would be there merely to seek husbands, and by the end of the century, even promotional articles for emigration maintained that the primacy of work in the colonies, over any desire of finding a husband, was not to be denied. One of these articles, in the *Danville Republican*, dated Thursday 5th, July 1894, stated: “For a girl who relies merely on her feminine attractions, and emigrates in search of a husband, the prospect is the worst that can be imagined.”⁴⁴

Finding a husband had never been an argument for colonial governments, which made it clear that the only British women they truly needed were the domestic servants, as the poster on appendix 5 shows⁴⁵. The husband-hunting argument was purely British. This poster from 1912, although praising the merits of colonial life,

44 In the *Danville Republican*, Thursday, July 5th 1894, p. 7

Consultable online at <<http://newspaperarchive.com/danville-republican/1894-07-05/page-7>> [consulted May 30th, 2013]

45 Appendix 5

<<http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=8216&recordNum=7&t=pictorial&q=domestic+servants&l=en>>

[Consulted on May 20th, 2013]

depicted here in a rather idyllic drawing, clearly puts forward the “work” dimension of the advertisement. The colonies were not campaigning for women in general but for domestic servants in particular. This was also translated in the fact that only the women ready to work as domestic servants were given assisted passages by the colonial governments, which explicitly indicated that they did not want Britain's superfluous women.⁴⁶ Colonial governments actually went to great lengths to attract emigrants, especially domestic servants. They launched campaigns to promote their emigration and organised lectures to inform them. A promotional poster for emigration to Canterbury, New Zealand, in 1874, shows that, in addition to “tradesmen” and “farm servants”, domestic servants were “in very great demand”. The poster even precised that “from 70 to 100 by each Ship, would find good situations”.⁴⁷ In fact, it was thought that domestic servants were in such demand that they were almost in a position to set their own terms, as it was humoristically depicted in a cartoon in *Punch*.⁴⁸

Not only did they want domestic servants but they wanted them, as much as possible, to be qualified, to be trained and to have at least some domestic service experience. And yet Britain kept on sending its surplus women. In spite of the colonial governments' demands, the mother country went on anyway with their theory that their surplus women would solve all problems. The main problem concerning female emigration in the second part of the nineteenth century, at the origin of the inconsistency of the system, was that, for many years, societies did not recruit women according to the colonies' needs but with reference to the needs of Britain's women themselves.⁴⁹ Many British female emigration societies omitted almost completely the colonies' interests, and their needs. Queensland's immigration agent in Australia, said, talking about the kind of women sent by the British emigration societies:

46 GOTHARD, Janice, *op.cit.*, p. 12

47 Appendix 6

<<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/zoomify/35478/immigration-promotion-canterbury-1874>>
[Consulted on May 15th, 2013]

48 Appendix 7

><http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=43856&recordNum=0&t=items&q=colonial+servant-galism&s=a&l=en> > [Consulted on May 15th, 2013]

49 GOTHARD, Janice, *op.cit.*, p. 53

I would respectfully suggest more care in London as regards the references of single women sent up by the 'Ladies' Emigration Society' and other philanthropically inclined persons, for there can be no doubt that their anxiety to give 'ne'er do weels' a fresh start in the new country, where they hope the people may turn from their erring ways, these well-intentioned but not-well informed societies quite lose sight to what is due to the people in the Colony, by whom they desire their proteges shall be received and treated as respectable.⁵⁰

But the mother country kept on sending the “wrong” type of women: Britain's surplus women were mostly middle class women, who had never worked, or unqualified working class women. The fact was Britain wanted to keep the women that the colonies most wanted, for Britain was facing the same shortage regarding domestic service. Therefore the system was bound to have disappointing results. The women that were already a burden to Victorians in England would be one for the colonies too. Women who wanted to emigrate “successfully” had to be willing to accept changes, especially in social status. Independence came at a price. What is more, these changes might have been the key to independence for some of them, but for some of them only.

Victorians did not take into account the fact that “being a single woman” was not the only criterion for a “successful emigration”; they only took into account their own criteria, blinded by their fear of spinsters and refusing female employment as an alternative solution .

3.2 Was the Emigration of Women of Any Benefit to the Mother Country?

All the efforts put into female emigration led to a series of different reactions in Britain. Some, as soon as 1850 started fearing a shortage of British women in England, if the female emigration system was pushed to its limit. George Cruikshank satirised both that idea and the absurdity of the very idea of “female relocation” in a

⁵⁰ GOTHARD, Janice, op.cit, p. 60.

cartoon⁵¹, kept at the People's History Museum in Manchester. This dockside scene shows the arrival of a group of women, native of the colonies and depicted in caricatures with very racist traits, who are greeted by a crowd of Englishmen, obviously shocked and disappointed.

But in spite of these fears and the government's best efforts, the number of women kept on increasing throughout the Victorian and Edwardian eras. If in 1851 the excess of women over men was around 350,000; by the 1911 census, this number had more than tripled⁵². As a result, the issues and debates over female employment – or rather the lack of it – and women's position in society had worsened. It is safe to say that the mid-century's hope that a diminution in the number of spinsters, thanks to an appropriate emigration scheme, would solve the issue of single women's role in society and make them more valuable, was a serious failure. The number of single women who emigrated to the colonies was indeed too small to be of any real demographic significance.

Victorian fears regarding womanhood increased during that period, especially fears concerning women's independence. When in the 1850s, they hoped to be able to eradicate the surplus of women Britain did not need, they did not foresee that their efforts would in fact reinforce the debate over female employment. They mostly feared the changes that independent women could bring to society; giving women a role outside of the domestic sphere was against all the principles of a paternalistic Victorian society. They especially feared that if women were granted independence from men, they would not marry anymore. The following extract from *The English Woman's Journal* mentions this underlying fear, in an article summarising the statistics and opposing theories concerning female emigration:

It is further represented that women, if placed in a position of independence as to means of livelihood, will not be so disposed to

51 Appendix 8

CRUIKSHANK, George, *Probable Effects of Over Female Emigration*, 1851
<<http://revealinghistories.org.uk/legacies-stereotypes-racism-and-the-civil-rights-movement/objects/probable-effects-of-over-female-emigration/images.html>> [Consulted on May 15th, 2013]

52 <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/index.jsp> [Consulted on October 16th, 2012]

In 1851, there were 365,821 more women than men., in 1871; 628,302; in 1891; 896,723 and in 1911, there were 1,179,276 more.

marriage (which is a public benefit) as if they were compelled to regard that contingency as their only source of support.⁵³

This argument actually tells us a lot about the Victorian vision of marriage: even people defending it recognised that if women did not have to get married, they simply would not.

If the Victorians already had concerns about women in the mid-century, those were mainly centered on terms of utility to society. But in the second part of the century, concerns evolved to culminate in the fear that the new force women might represent in society if they were freed from the overbearing influence of men, would overwhelm the entire order of things in society. Those apprehensions were only intensifying at the turn of the century, with feminist movements blossoming, notably for the right to vote, and becoming more and more virulent, suffragettes being the most vibrant example.

3.3 What About the Female Emigrants Themselves?

Emigration societies as well as governments wanted women to be convinced that emigration was a “reward for good conduct”⁵⁴, as opposed to “punishment for bad behaviour”. For some, amongst whom was Maria Rye, emigration was indeed considered as an opportunity to make some women's lives better – but only for women that deserved it. Morality was a central notion in the “pre-emigration” procedures aiming at selecting “the right kind of women”. The selection processes were tedious and demanding. Women were asked thoroughly personal questions, had to justify their pasts and prove their general moral virtues and good behaviour by obtaining, for instance, letters from their previous employers, from doctors or priests to approve of them as good emigration material.

If emigration had to be taken as a reward, that reward did not include

53 EWJ, vol. 5, p. 2

54 Title of a chapter from Blue China + quote from an article in the Times

insurance of safety either on the journey or on arrival. For many years, and although it improved with the presence of matrons and surgeons on board, the ships carrying single women to the colonies were considered as unsafe for them. The conditions on board for women who could not afford to travel in the best parts of the ships could be appalling, the journey was uncomfortable and the risks numerous. Single women, travelling “unprotected” by the presence of men that they knew, were subject to sexual harassment. Rumour grew around safety issues on board of the emigrant ships and it could make finding work that much harder for these emigrant women. For many of them, if they did not find work immediately, the situation would quickly worsen. Some of them would even be forced into prostitution.

Although the problem was almost entirely remedied with matrons, and assisted emigration, doubts lingered on. By trying to escape the question of Value at home, emigrant women ran directly into the question of Virtue in the colonies. Because of the conditions on board and on arrival, these women's virtue was indeed questioned. This questioning of their virtue had far-reaching consequences as the unvirtuous woman was lost: she could not qualify for domestic service anymore and was “damaged goods” for marriage. She was rejected once again. Women, just like in almost every other aspect of their lives, had to face even more difficulties in emigration than men, as they were not only judged by what they were actually doing, but by their environment, the people around them and the vision the others had of them.⁵⁵

Even “virtuous women” were not spared bad surprises on their arrival. Some of them, for instance, chose colonies because they knew people there, but were surprised to discover that Adelaide was not that close to Melbourne in Australia, contrary to what they had been told. Women were separated from the people they knew, sisters emigrating together were sent to opposite places of the country, uprooted once again and left without any comfort and, sometimes, without the insurance of a job. Most of the time, living conditions in the colonies were more difficult than they had anticipated. Emigrant women had to face many hardships,

55 CHILTON, Lisa, *Agents of Empire, British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s-1930*, Canada: University of Toronto Press, p. 120

particularly regarding employment, especially for untrained, unqualified women⁵⁶. Even though there was a massive shortage in domestic servants, colonial families were not inclined to employ just anyone as their servant.

Emigrants were actually often confronted to the same difficulties they had had to face at home. Emigration was subject to social class conditions, in addition to gender conditions. Florence Hill wrote, in 1873, to the *English Woman's Review*:

I much fear ... that women above the hard-working servant class are practically as "redundant" here as at home. I am amazed by the number of unmarried women of the middle class, many of whom have a hard struggle to maintain themselves.⁵⁷

Working women's status would hardly improve and there were not many opportunities of employment for middle class women – no more than in England – unless they were prepared to go down the social ladder and accept to work as servants.

Although some women did improve their condition in the colonies, especially through employment, eventually marrying and truly settling down in the colonies, for many of them, their life was not much better than it was in England.

56 SWAISLAND, Cecilie, *op.cit.*, p. 59

57 In GOTHARD, Jan, *op.cit.*, p.55

Conclusion

For many single emigrant women, the colonies were not the “promised land” they might have been expecting. They were merely an alternative to their lives in England. They provided them with an opportunity to start again from scratch, the opportunity to hope for a few moments, rather than a real opportunity to make their lives better. It was risky, it was a chance to take, but emigration often is. And most of the time, the women that chose to emigrate did not have much left to lose in Great Britain. Emigration probably was an opportunity but most certainly was not the perfect solution Victorians had dreamed of, either for demographical balance or for women's independence.

Emigration was not a solution to the Victorian excess of women, mainly because that “surplus” of women was not the problem. On a pragmatic level, the surplus could not be balanced by emigration as the number of single women emigrating was not of great significance on the scale of the country. On a more “ideological” level, the problem was deeper and concerned the Victorian vision of womanhood. But Victorians were not ready to face such changes as they would have caused to reconsider the Victorian family model altogether as well as the place of women in British society and in the colonies. This concept of “superfluous” women would only become obsolete when single women would not be considered as a burden to society anymore, which unfortunately would not happen before a long time: the “surplus” phenomenon increased after World War I, the numerical discrepancy being worsened by male losses on the battlefield.

As for the Victorian representation of womanhood, it would unfortunately linger on for decades before slowly receding, women winning one battle at a time, from the right to vote to the right to abortion, earning their liberation until finally their new place in society was recognised.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- **Primary Sources**

- **Book:**

GREG, William Rathbone, *Why Are Women Redundant?*, London: N.Trübner & co, 1869

- **Newspapers:**

The English Woman's Journal, vol.10, n°56, October 1, 1862

The English Woman's Journal, vol.5

“*Female Emigration. British Ladies Female Emigrant Society.*” in *The New Zealander*, Volume 8, Issue 616, 10 March 1852

Examiner (Launceston, Tas. : 1900 – 1954), Saturday 27 December 1913, p. 2
Edition: DAILY. Web. 25 Sep 2012 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page3112140>>
[consulted on September 25th, 2012]

Danville Republican, Thursday, July 5th 1894, p. 7. Can be found on the Internet at:
<<http://newspaperarchive.com/danville-republican/1894-07-05/page-7>>
[consulted May 30th, 2013]

- **Visual Documents:**

See Appendix

- **Secondary Sources**

- **Books:**

CHILTON, Lisa, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s-1930*, Canada: University of Toronto Press

CORVISY, Catherine-Emilie and Véronique MOLINARI, *Les femmes dans l'Angleterre victorienne et édouardienne: Entre sphère privée et sphère publique*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008

DIAMOND, Marion, *Emigration and Empire: The Life of Maria S. Rye*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1999

GOTHARD, Janice, *Blue China: Single Female Migration to Colonial Australia*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2001

JEFFREYS, Sheila, *The Spinster and her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality, 1880-1930*, Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1997

KOHLI, Marjorie, *The Golden Bridge: Young Emigrants to Canada, 1833-1939*, Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2003

KRANIDIS, Rita S., *The Victorian Spinster and Colonial Emigration: Contested Subjects*, New York: Saint Martin's Press

OLSON, James S. & Robert SHADDLE, *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire, A-J*, Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1996

SWAISLAND, Cecilie, *Servants and Gentlewomen to the Golden Land, The Emigration of Single Women from Britain to Southern Africa, 1820-1939*, Oxford: Berg, 1993

VICINUS, Martha, *Suffer and Be Still, Women in the Victorian Age*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973

– **Articles:**

ABRAMS, Lynn, "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain", *BBC History*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml> [Consulted on February 19th, 2013]

LEVITAN, Kathrin, Redundancy, the 'Surplus Woman' Problem, and the British Census, 1851-1861, *Women's History Review*, vol.17, N°3, London: Routledge, 2008

• **Webliography**

A vision of Britain between 1801 and 2001. Including maps, statistical trends and historical descriptions, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/index.jsp>> [Last consulted on May 15th, 2013]

Royal Collection Trust, <<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/405413/the-royal-family-in-1846>> [Consulted on April 17th, 2013]

The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/alcohol/page-1>> [consulted on May 29th, 2013]

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

WINTERHALTER, Franz Xaver, *The Royal Family in 1846*, Royal Collection, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, The Bridgeman Art Library, United Kingdom
<<http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/405413/the-royal-family-in-1846>> [Consulted on April 17th, 2013]

Appendix 2

Extracts from the *Examiner* (Launceston, Tas. : 1900 – 1954), Saturday 27 December 1913, p. 2, Edition: DAILY. Web. 25 Sep 2012
Full page 7 and extract “Britain's Surplus Women”
<<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page3112140>> [consulted on September 25th, 2012]

Appendix 3

“The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad”, cartoon in *Punch*, vol.18, 1850.
Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, New Zealand
<<http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=28773&l=en>> [Consulted May 20th, 2013]

Appendix 4

New Zealand Company Poster, Hocken Library, University of Otago, New Zealand
<<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/ephemera/2096/new-zealand-company-poster>> [Consulted on May 20th, 2013]

Appendix 5

“New Zealand wants domestic servants; good homes, good wages”
Poster issued by the High Commissioner for New Zealand in Britain, London, circa 1912.
Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, New Zealand
<<http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=8216&recordNum=7&t=pictorial&q=domestic+servants&l=en>> [Consulted on May 20th, 2013]

Appendix 6

“Immigration Promotion, Canterbury, 1874”
<<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/zoomify/35478/immigration-promotion-canterbury-1874>> [Consulted on May 15th, 2013]

Appendix 7

“Colonial Servant-Galism”, cartoon in *Punch*, 1868.
Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, New Zealand
<<http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/detail/?id=43856&recordNum=0&t=items&q=colonial+servant-galism&s=a&l=en>> [Consulted on May 20th, 2013]

Appendix 8

CRUIKSHANK, George, *Probable effects of over female emigration, or, Importing the fair sex from the savage islands in consequence of exporting all our own to Australia*, 1851. The People's History Museum, Manchester, United Kingdom.
<<http://revealinghistories.org.uk/legacies-stereotypes-racism-and-the-civil-rights-movement/objects/probable-effects-of-over-female-emigration/images.html>> [Consulted on May 15th, 2013]

Appendix 1



WINTERHALTER, Franz Xaver, *The Royal Family in 1846*, Royal Collection, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, The Bridgeman Art Library, United Kingdom

BRITAIN'S SURPLUS WOMEN.

The last census returns establish the fact that in Britain women outnumber men in overwhelming numbers, and this phase of the social problem is causing much concern to national thinkers. At the present moment there are over 2,000,000 unmarried women in the old country, and over 1,250,000 more women than men. Of the young people on the threshold of adult life and responsibility, roughly 65 per cent. are women. Only 30 per cent. of these young women marry and settle down in homes of their own, while another 20 per cent. have private means or are living at home with prospect of private means. Altogether, about 80 per cent. of Great Britain's unmarried women are obliged to face life in a very practical way. And the prospect of the average woman at home is not a very rosy one. Ignoring entirely the social disadvantages she is subject to, on the economic side her radius of activity is circumscribed by the very multiplicity of her sex. In shop, factory, workshop, or domestic service she has to work long hours for scanty wages, and should she fall out of employment she is uncertain of finding a situation. A Royal Commission tells us that the average wage of the woman worker in Britain is seven shillings per week.

Appendix 3



“The Needlewoman at Home and Abroad”, cartoon in *Punch*, vol.18, 1850.
Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, New Zealand

Appendix 4

**NEW ZEALAND
COMPANY,
EMIGRATION.**

**THE COURT OF DIRECTORS
NEW ZEALAND COMPANY**
Are prepared to assist in Emigrating to their Settlements in New Zealand.

**AGRICULTURAL
MECHANICS,
FARM LABORERS,
Domestic Servants**

Of good character, who will assist themselves by defraying a portion of the cost of their passage.
The Directors will receive Applications accordingly, until

WEDNESDAY, the 9th AUGUST,
From persons of the above description desirous of proceeding on their terms by the Ship

A J A X

Appointed to Sail from the London Docks on
Monday, the 4th September next.

Further Particulars and Forms of Application may be obtained at New Zealand House,
By Order of the Court.

Thomas Cudbert Harington.
New Zealand House, 9, Broad Street Buildings, London,
24th July, 1845.

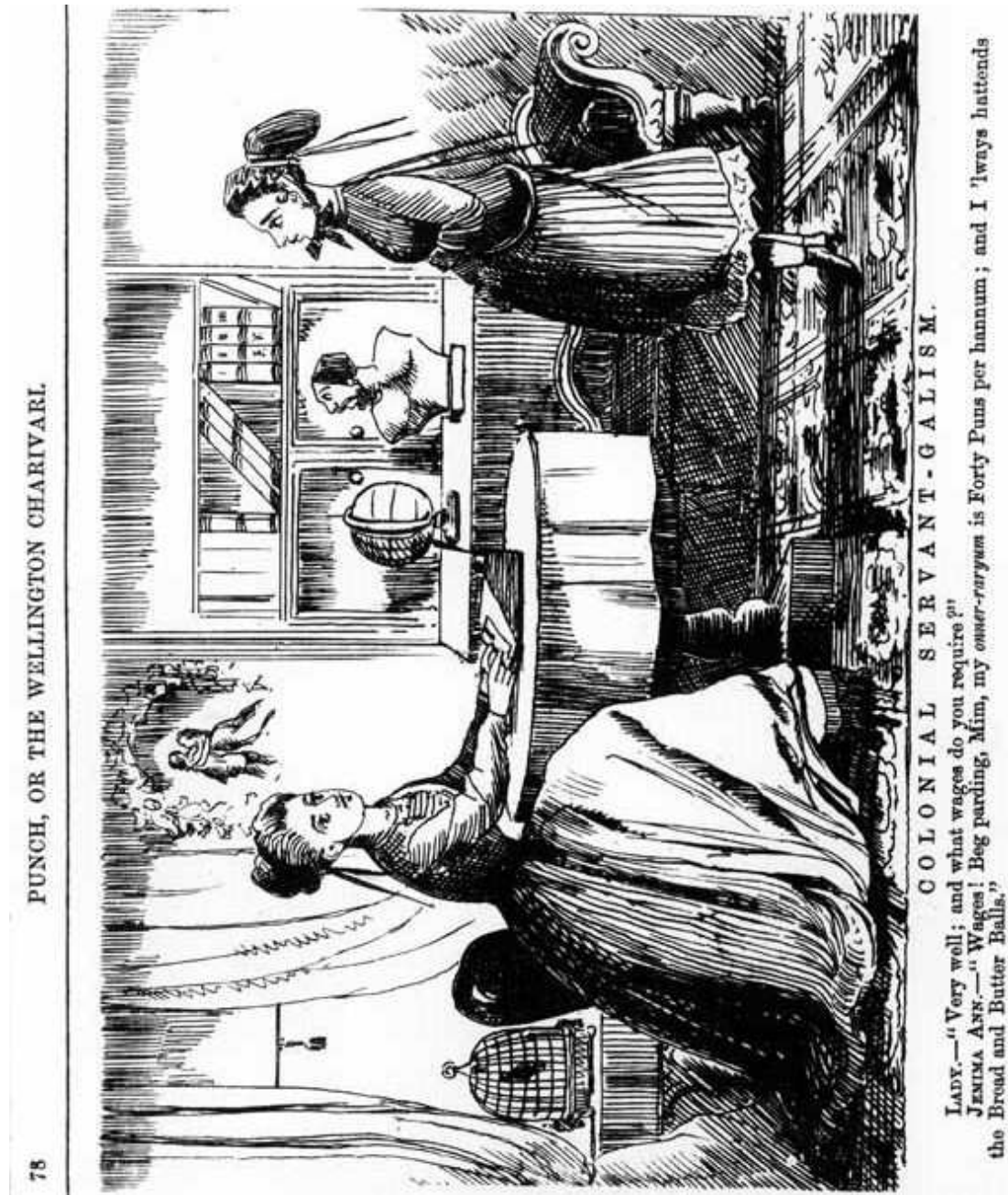
A. SCULLS, Printer, 38, Fleetwood Street, LONDON.

New Zealand Company Poster, Hocken Library, University of Otago, New Zealand

Appendix 5



“New Zealand wants domestic servants; good homes, good wages”. Poster issued by the High Commissioner for New Zealand in Britain, London, circa 1912. Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, New Zealand.



“Colonial Servant-Galism”, cartoon in *Punch*, 1868.

Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, New Zealand

Appendix 8



CRUIKSHANK, George, *Probable effects of over female emigration, or, Importing the fair sex from the savage islands in consequence of exporting all our own to Australia*, 1851. The People's History Museum, Manchester, United Kingdom.

Résumé

Tout au long de l'époque victorienne, l'émigration des femmes britanniques fut un sujet d'inquiétude majeur tant en Grande-Bretagne que dans ses colonies. A la suite d'un recensement publié en 1851 révélant une inégalité démographique entre les populations masculines et féminines en Grande-Bretagne, les femmes célibataires vinrent à être considérées comme un fardeau dans une Grande-Bretagne victorienne aux valeurs familiales très rigides. Elles étaient considérées "en surplus", ou pire encore "superflues". De ce constat, les Victoriens déduirent qu'il était d'une urgence absolue de trouver un rôle, une place à ces femmes au sein de la société. Alors qu'au même moment, les colonies subissaient un manque cruel de femmes britanniques sur leur territoire, opposant ainsi une barrière au réel développement des valeurs victorienne, l'émigration apparut comme la solution idéale.

Ce mémoire a pour objectif de donner une vue d'ensemble de la vision de la femme et de son rôle dans la société à l'époque, ainsi que d'explorer le fonctionnement et les effets des différents types d'émigration organisée mis en place pour ces femmes en réponse tant au surplus britannique qu'à la pénurie dans les colonies.

Summary

During the Victorian Era, the emigration of British women was a major topic of concern both in Great Britain and in the British Colonies. Due to a gender imbalance between male and female populations showing in a mid-nineteenth century British census, single women came to be considered in Victorian Britain as a burden and were labelled as "surplus", even "superfluous" women. From there, Victorians took it as an emergency to find a role, a place in society for these women. At the exact same time, the British colonies were experiencing a cruel shortage of British women emigrants to their lands, preventing the proper expansion of Victorian values. Emigration started to emerge as the ideal solution.

This dissertation intends to give an overview of the common view on women and their role in society at the time as well as to explore the nature and the effects of the different types of organised emigration to the colonies that were put in place for them as a solution to both their surplus in Great Britain and their shortage in the colonies.

Mots-Clé

Femmes – Emigration – Grande-Bretagne – Colonies – Epoque Victorienne

Key Words

Women – Emigration – Great Britain – Colonies – Victorian Era