



PROJECT MUSE®

---

*British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832–1877* by Jude  
Piesse (review)

Richa Dwor

Victorian Review, Volume 43, Number 1, Spring 2017, pp. 150–152 (Review)



Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/vcr.2017.0017>

➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/685912>

respect for oral testimony on the one hand with the upsurge in field expeditions using side-sonar scanning equipment to search for the ships in the 1990s and 2000s on the other. Although Woodman did not locate the ships himself, his work, along with the consultation of the Inuk historian Louie Kamookak, were crucial in allowing Parks Canada to successfully narrow their multi-vessel searches to particular areas.

Like Woodman, Potter believes Inuit testimony about the expedition to be “the single most important body of evidence we have” (106). Potter is a careful historian whose analyses about the oral and material evidence are detailed without being obscure. However, he is also canny enough to know that not all testimony is equal. He recalls an episode in a speakeasy in Gjoa Haven when the proprietor told him a story of Franklin survivors that Potter excitedly believed to be close to nineteenth-century accounts. Potter writes, “Where had he heard these stories? Could he take me to some of the elders who still remembered them? He shook his head, laughing, then reached behind the counter and pulled out a battered copy of Woodman’s *Unravelling*” (203).

Potter brings our knowledge of the Franklin disaster up to date by highlighting the role of the Internet, the digitization of primary sources, and social media in assisting researchers and connecting communities in the Canadian north. The book is a paean to the efforts of the Franklin searchers—from the endurance and obsession of Victorian explorers like Hall and Frederick Schwatka to the work of archaeologists, forensic scientists, Inuit, and assorted amateur investigators in more recent years. It is unfortunate that *Finding Franklin* was published just as the *Terror* was located in September 2016, but it is consistent with Potter’s fine study that it was a tip-off from an Inuk crewman that led to its discovery.

SHANE MCCORRISTINE

Research Associate

Lecturer in Modern British History, Newcastle University, UK



*British Settler Emigration in Print, 1832–1877*

by Jude Piesse; pp. 228. Oxford:

Oxford UP, 2016. \$115.50 cloth.

**I**N HER persuasively lucid monograph *Settler Emigration in Print, 1832–1877*, Jude Piesse quotes from George A. Sala’s sprightly account of emigrant embarkation: “They are all pressed for time, they are all going, cheerily, cheerily; they are all, if you will pardon me the expression, in such a devil of a hurry” (38). Amid the chaos of departure, journey, and settlement experienced by

large numbers during this period, the periodical press, Piesse argues, worked both to galvanize and mediate the spatial and temporal dislocations of emigration. Piesse builds on considerable scholarly interest in periodical print culture to rightly assert that such publications are essential to engaging the cultural dimensions of Victorian emigration. Unlike novels, personal letters, and “booster” literature, periodical emigration literature worked to imagine and contain a “potentially incendiary mass movement” by drawing upon the form’s own capacities for liberal circulation and editorial balance (39).

Emigration-themed Christmas stories shouldered considerable affective weight in working to create synchronicity between Britain and its colonies and, by emphasizing the domesticity of settlements abroad, contain anxieties about national depletion and emigrant mobility. Stories of Christmas in Australia were especially popular, and Piesse explores how titles such as “Christmas in Tropical Australia” (1876), “Christmas on the Australian Gold-Fields” (1870), and Anthony Trollope’s novella “Harry Heathcote of Gangoil: A Tale of Australian Bush Life” (1874) challenged but also affirmed an idea of English national coherence. Accompanying illustrations, reproduced here, reinforced the imaginary space of “home” shared by metropolitan and settler readers alike. Alongside the seasonal specificity of Christmas, serialized novels offered competing temporalities of “advance trajectory” and “continual and oscillating retrograde movement” as readers recalled earlier issues while awaiting a new one (91). Piesse argues that, as with the Christmas stories, serialized novels of emigration sought for composure and containment to counter the sense of longing and dislocation that threatened to destabilize settler narratives. Piesse’s analysis of *Great Expectations* (1861), in this context, offers an important new reading of the novel’s spatiotemporal disorientation and nostalgia.

Countercurrents to such mainstream narratives also flowed through the heterogeneous world of periodicals. Piesse traces feminist and radical imaginings of emigration to show the ungovernable possibilities afforded by the experience and its representation. Many women’s presses presented emigrant mobility as an entirely positive opportunity for transformation. Given the relatively small number of single middle-class women who experienced emigration, the significance of these writings, Piesse argues, lies in their formation of an imaginative space and the ways in which they overlap with the history of liberal feminism. Interesting, too, is the protofeminism underpinning the New Zealand-set novella “Lucy Dean: The Noble Needlewoman” (1850) by Eliza Meteyar, in which female power is realized through colonial motherhood. Such stories are “radically domestic” in investing traditional gender models with newly imagined possibilities (126).

More radical still was the description in other works of actual transatlantic journeys and arrivals that deployed none of the formal conventions of serialized settler narratives, thus offering a critique of the containment strategies of these dominant modes and restoring to the experience some

of its destabilizing chaos. Chartist newspapers such as the *Northern Star*, which typically opposed emigration as a form of coerced removal that did little to ameliorate unequal conditions in England, looked to America rather than the British colonies to project an “uneasy utopianism” that had none of the sentimental domesticity of other settler narratives (143). Piesse makes the novel claim that American westerns—which depicted heroic men in conflict with wild animals, catastrophic weather, and violent natives—published in British periodicals were embedded within broader settler debates, and so may be viewed within the genre of emigration literature, a repositioning which displays this genre’s considerable mobility, particularly in destabilizing England as the imagined centre of this literary form.

Piesse deftly establishes a dominant model of emigrant periodical literature and then investigates important ways in which that model is resisted. As with any body of literature concerned with Britain’s colonial past, these texts often depict settler violence and racism, and Piesse is quick to declare such occurrences “now highly unpalatable” (139), even as the book maintains its focus on the emigrants and not the populations they encountered. *British Settler Emigration in Print* is a valuable contribution to the study of periodical print cultures, the history of feminist thought, emigration studies, and post-colonial studies more broadly. Piesse declares her hope that the book will be “part of a new wave of humanities scholarship” (14). She works to show how digital technologies can operate in conjunction with the traditional methodologies of literary studies. This book paves the way for future work to deploy similar methods and to build on the coherent theoretical model of containment and destabilization in emigrant literature established here.

RICHA DWOR

Douglas College



*Healthy Boundaries: Property, Law, and Public Health  
in England and Wales, 1815–1872*

by James G. Hanley; pp. 270. Rochester:  
U of Rochester P, 2016. \$148.46 cloth.

**H** EALTHY BOUNDARIES brings to the fore the complexities of public health legislation and governance in nineteenth-century Britain. James Hanley rightly criticizes historians for paying little or no heed to the legal context of the delay of urban health improvements (e.g., sewers and drainage) in the nineteenth century (112). He therefore provides compelling