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Emigration Literature Keeping Social Roles By Different People's Relation To Labour

Backwoods of Canada by Traill, *Plea for Emigration* by Shadd and *Roughing it in the Bush* by Moodie all agree on the existence of hardships in establishing permanent settlement in Canada, each work is directed towards a certain group of people and whether it shows emigrating in a positive or negative light, the settlement literatures being considered still see people not doing any work outside what is expected of them, either because they cannot or because they should not. The groups of people the three works focus on are previously upper-class people, women and black people. Moodie views the hard works involved in settling in untamed lands for the upper class is seen as negative. Similar hardships apply to everyone who emigrates to Canada, including women. Traill disagrees with Moodie to the extent of gentlewomen being capable enough of learning new skills to contribute just as much, but even the new skills are of a nature already considered feminine. Canada is presented as less prejudiced and safer for black emigrants, though all information presented in *Plea for Emigration* is about black people in manual labour or as learners of Christianity, which are already their set roles. Women and black people are encouraged to emigrate, but the rich are discouraged, they are the only ones who would be unable to continue their role in society in Canada.

The introduction to *Backwoods of Canada* states it focuses on helping women since the “hardships and difficulties of settlement life [are felt] peculiarly by the female [members of families]” because men have “hunting, fishing and boating,” all necessary activities to survive in Canada, to keep them busy (Traill, 198). The purpose it is written pities women because of the the assumption they cannot contribute to settlement the same way through the same

employments. One of the main arguments presented in becoming a bush-settler is “bush-settlers are more independent [and have] shaken off the [tyranny of social opinion],” (Traill, 203). This shows one of the book’s argument is Canada offers freedom from social roles, yet the examples given do not show changes in role of women. Throughout the book, examples of work women do and instructions on how is given. Traill “gave [the readers] [her] recipes” and says women in Canada “are not tempted [] to forget the duties of a mother” (Traill, 201-202). Hardships of manual labour and similar duties which would be considered foreign, at least to gentlemen, are mentioned but only as applying to men. Cooking and motherly duties are expressed in a different way in Canada, botany is a newer skill more applicable to living in Canada, but none of these duties are beyond what a woman’s role was already defined as. “[Traill] prides [the settlers] on conforming to circumstance,” but despite the methodology conforming to new circumstances, the gender roles of which the methodology is confined in remains the same (Traill, 204). The freedom from societal pressure mentioned in the book is true if it applies only to exact European societal pressure. However, it does not appear the women freed from European societal pressure are freed from Canadian societal pressure, which is shown to differ only in application.

Unlike *Backwoods of Canada*, which steer its directed audience away from manual and industrial duties, a *Plea for Emigration* steers its directed audience directly into it. As Traill advocates emigration by telling of different ways for women emigrants to continue their feminine duties, Shadd advocates emigration by telling of different conditions under which the subjugated black peoples to continue their roles in manual labour and cultural education. “It will suffice, that coloured men prosecute all the different trades [] are not only unmolested, but sustained and encouraged” (Shadd, 33). The line was meant to show there is no racial prejudice in the Canadian workplace, but all examples of opportunity, in terms of profession, are “timber[,]

agriculture [and] mining” (Shadd, 32). A similarity in *Backwoods of Canada* not considering women working in these fields and *A Plea for Emigration* only considering black people working in these fields is women were already prevented from these fields and the black people of the United States were already restricted to them. Another aspect consider positive is “[enjoyment of] superior religious opportunities,” which was referred to as “churches, originally built by the whites” (Shadd, 34-35). Even if all of what the book claims is true and there is no presence of racial prejudice in Canada, if trades in agriculture and collecting recourses and education in white Christianity are all expected from the black emigrants to Canada, is it even different at all from the labour and assimilation forced on the enslaved black people of the United States?

Unlike both how Traill approaches women emigrants and how Shadd approaches black emigrants, Moodie warns, instead of encourages, her targeted audience of the English gentry (Moodie, 208-209). She refers to the higher class as “a class perfectly unfitted by their habits and education [for] emigrant life” because they are “too accustomed to receive [] obedience to [use the] spade and plough [nor will they] submit [to] servants who think themselves” (Moodie, 213). If this is why Moodie sees emigration as an act “at the expense of personal enjoy [and] a sacrifice,” then what would be lost by emigration is their societal role as an idle leader and the way society views them (211). As the book acts a warning, these changes were considered severe enough to be a reason for people not emigrating to Canada at all. How servants are expected to view the gentry in Canada represents social pressure, which is also referred to by Traill. However, Traill claimed the pressure being alleviated in Canada as a good thing while, according to Moodie, it is enough reason to not emigrate. Traill and Moodie both wrote of upper-class emigrants. However, gentlewomen, which Traill focused on, did not have how they were viewed

and their role in society changed. They were still responsible for domestic and motherly duties and was viewed by others as such. The gentleman, which Moodie focused on, did not only have how they go about completing their duties changed, but what their role is and how others saw them was changed as well. These two genders of the same class either had their roles changed or unchanged, which also changed whether they were encouraged to emigrate to Canada.

Of the emigrants to Canada, either their place in society and how they were viewed remained the same or was forced to change by difficult conditioned. Within the roles not changing, women changed the exact work they did while black people did the same work but was treated differently. They were both seen as improvements and encourage to emigrate. The gentleman's role would have been changed and was discouraged from emigrating. In taking part manual labours required for settling in Canada, women were viewed as they cannot, black people were viewed as they must and gentlemen were viewed as they should not. However, Moodie's emigration was "a matter of necessity" (Moodie, 211). As she thinks servants should treat the gentry the same and their matters are of leadership only, it would be of interest whether she views the gentry as better off elsewhere or Canadian society should change to allow the gentry to remain in their original role. While women and black people were showed to have remained in their roles in society, it was claimed Canada allowed women more freedom in their actions and black people more freedom from prejudice. Was there even any way or possibility Canada was truly have offered complete freedom from societal expectation?

Works Cited

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