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‘Large letter’d as with thundering shout’
An Analysis of Typographic Posters Advertising Emigration to New Zealand 1839 – 1875

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Visual and Material Culture
Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of ephemeral, typographic material in the promotion of emigration to New Zealand in the nineteenth century. It focuses on the advertising posters produced by the New Zealand Company, the Otago and Canterbury Associations, the provincial governments and Government of New Zealand. It aims to identify how advertising and typography contributed to the transfer of the promotion message from the producer to the audience in this specific historical context.

For the first time a comprehensive data set of emigration posters of this period has been gathered together and examined. The posters are analysed in the context of their contemporary visual, material and print cultures, with particular reference to ephemeral printing. To account for all the historical, textual and graphic properties of the posters, the thesis develops and applies a novel, multilayered system of analysis, drawing on communication theory, social semiotic principles and Gestalt principles of composition.

The posters afforded emigration promoters a visual medium for distributing audience-appropriate messages through typographic strategies. They provided promoters with the facility for fast and inexpensive messaging that was otherwise unavailable in nineteenth century communication. The thesis concludes that posters were a significant part of an early, coherent and systematic advertising campaign which utilised processes and persuasive tools that have traditionally been seen as emergent only in the late nineteenth century.

This thesis establishes the value of ephemeral material and the study of graphic language when applied to the examination of historical phenomena. As well as shedding new light on these particular forms of historical design and modes of communication, it also adds a further valuable dimension to the more well-known story of nineteenth century emigration promotion by focussing on its graphic and advertising languages rather than its pictorial aspects. The investigation undertaken provides a new analytical system through which a combination of historical, ephemeral, typographic and advertising material can be examined in the future.
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ABBREVIATIONS AND USAGES

Abbreviations

AJHR  Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives, New Zealand
ANZ  Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o Kāwananga
ATL  Alexander Turnbull Library
CA  Canterbury Association
HL  Hocken Library/Uare Taoka Hakena
NA  National Archives, London
NLS  National Library of Scotland/Leabharlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba
NLNZ  National Library of New Zealand/Te Puna Mātāuranga O Aotearoa
NZC  New Zealand Company
NZCS  New Zealand Company Scrapbook
NZG  New Zealand Government
OA  Otago Association
PGA  Provincial Government of Auckland
PGC  Provincial Government of Canterbury
PGO  Provincial Government of Otago
PGT  Provincial Government of Taranaki
RCI  Royal Cornwall Institute
RCSL  Royal Commonwealth Society Library

Usages

An issue that arises in using historical documents concerns grammar and spelling. Throughout the posters, the related material and the contemporary writings, words such as ‘colonization’ are invariably spelled with a ‘z’. I have kept this spelling when using quoted material, but reverted to present-day conventional New Zealand usage of the ‘s’ for such words.

The word ‘labourer’ is spelled on the posters both as ‘labourer’ and ‘laborer’. In quoting the text, I have retained the original spelling in all cases.
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