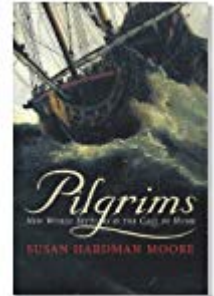


Susan Hardman Moore. *Pilgrims: New World Settlers and the Call of Home.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. xv + 316 pp. \$35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-300-11718-9.



Reviewed by Mark Peterson

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Gracing one wall of the history department office at Berkeley is one of the many large maps made by Herbert Eugene Bolton in the 1930s for his popular lecture courses on the "History of the Americas." This map, entitled "The Swarming of the English," graphically depicts the volume of English migration to various regions of North America and the Caribbean in the seventeenth century by attaching a neat round number of colonists (say, 14,000 for Massachusetts) to a broad black line pointing from England to their transatlantic destination. Even though Bolton was famously devoted to combating myths of American exceptionalism and inevitable U.S. dominance of the history of the Americas, this particular Bolton map actually contributes to another kind of myth-making. As Susan Hardman Moore rightly claims in her elegant and "gently subversive" new book, iconic maps like this one help to create the "common assumption that migrants only ever took a one-way passage to America ... with not a trace to show that a single settler went back" (p. 148).

Pilgrims aims to tell the missing part of this story by focusing on the colonists, perhaps as many as 1,500 of the roughly 18,000 English migrants to early New England, who did return home in the 1640s and '50s. It succeeds admirably, although the reader should be warned: the book's title alludes to "New World" settlers and their return migration, but Moore's new world is strictly confined to New England. In that sense, Moore's new world, and its relationship to the English Puritan movement, is quite old-fashioned and conventional.

However, in other ways, Moore's work is refreshingly unconventional, especially in its fundamental assumption that, for English godly Protestants, the thorny question of whether to migrate from England to America, and whether, once in New England, to return to the home country, was usually determined through situational reasoning. A complex array of motives and circumstances played a part in determining individual and family decisions. In other words, Moore's "pilgrims" were more exiles than visionary founders. These were people whose religious commitments

put them in difficult political positions, and whose movements were therefore guided by ongoing calculations about where their religion could best flourish, where their services could do the most good for their cause, and the meaning of current events with respect to their inscrutable god's purposes for them.

Moore's transatlantic approach to migration in the Puritan movement is not without precedent. She builds on the work of numerous authors, including Theodore Dwight Bozeman, Francis Bremer, David Cressy, Andrew Delbanco, Stephen Foster, and Alison Games, among many others, who realized that return migration was an important aspect of the formation of Puritan society in New England. Indeed, as long ago as the 1940s, William Sachse published a series of articles on New England colonists who returned to England during the English Civil Wars and Cromwell's interregnum--the subject is not a new one. Yet most of these earlier studies of return migration were undertaken for a specific purpose that usually had to do with evaluating the larger New England enterprise. Did the return migration demonstrate New England's success (i.e., its influence on English religion) or its failure (was it an errand without a purpose)? Did it confirm or undermine the notion that millennialism was central to the Puritan migration? Moore's interests are different. At base, she is committed to recovering and describing the experiences of the migrants themselves, and not just famous leaders in church and state like Henry Vane, George Downing, or Hugh Peter, but ordinary folks. This explains why her prologue is devoted to "The Story of Susanna Bell," a hitherto unknown woman whose deathbed advice to her children, published in an obscure London pamphlet in 1673, reveals a life marked by not one but two experiences of migration to New England and return to the home country.

The context Moore favors for understanding and explaining these decisions surrounding mi-

gration remains the Puritan movement and the politics it engendered. In other words, this is not a study of variable and shifting economic opportunities in England and America as an incentive for mobility. But within the world of transatlantic Puritan studies, Moore's work is far removed from questions about the "meaning of America," the "errand into the wilderness," or the construction of a distinctively "New England" religious culture. Instead, Moore's work is in many ways closest to the spirit of David Hall's approach to "lived religion," with its fine-grained understanding of the many factors involved in the making of religious experience and its manifestation in the course of ordinary lives. In addition, the fact that Moore lives and works in the British Isles (she teaches at Edinburgh University) perhaps gives her an advantage in escaping the prevalent discourse in American studies of Puritanism.

The eight chapters that comprise this brief book (with only 147 pages of text before the lengthy appendices and back matter begin) are organized in a roughly chronological order, designed to follow the historical trajectory of the lives of Puritan migrants who eventually returned to England. The opening two chapters detail the reasons and means behind the "Exodus from England" and the subsequent "Creation of the New England Way." These chapters have the least innovative material to offer the reader, especially the student of New England Puritanism. They are essentially background matter--competent but unremarkable summaries of the current state of scholarship on the reasons for migration and the construction of church and state politics in New England, told with an eye toward framing the causes that will lead some migrants to return home.

The strength of the book begins with chapter 3, "Unsettled Spirits," which addresses the ways in which the turbulent religious and political events of the 1640s, both in New England and Britain, raised doubts in the minds of many New England migrants over whether their decision had been

wise, and initiated the return migration. Chapter 4, "A Fresh Gale towards Europe," moves the reader into the 1650s, after Parliament's victories in the Civil Wars made Britain seem the more stable and propitious place for Puritans to be. Chapter 5, "Parting from America," takes a close look at providential thinking as an essential element in making the difficult decision to abandon New England, arguing that providence was not, as much American scholarship would have it, a one-way street with the arrow always pointing west across the Atlantic.

The next two chapters return with the migrants to the Atlantic's eastern shores. Chapter 6, "A Tale of Three Nations," follows closely the careers of migrants who did return, and makes a previously unknown point. Moore demonstrates that many of these return migrants had influential careers on the periphery of the English world, finding their niche in preaching or government in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, or the "dark corners" of England, serving as chaplains or administrators in the navy (rather than the more popular and radical army), taking the positions that Cromwell and his closest allies had trouble filling with Puritan followers who had stayed at home. Chapter 7, "The New England Way in England," assesses the influence of New England's innovations in church polity on the religious culture of England, and concludes that printed works--the publication in England of pamphlets that described New England religion--were actually more influential than the service of New England clergymen who returned to the home country. For the returning clergymen, Moore argues that the need to adapt to specific local conditions in the parish churches to which they returned far outweighed any desire they might have had to impose a "New England Way" of church organization and worship on their English congregations. Finally, chapter 8, "Journey's End," attends to the small group of clergymen who returned to New England after the

Restoration of Charles II in 1660, but mainly offers a brief summary of the work's main points.

The appendices to this work deserve mention, especially appendix 2, which provides a detailed list of "New England Settlers Who Returned Home, 1640-1660," and appendix 3, "New England's Ministers: The First Generation," organized by English diocese of origin. This material will be highly useful for future scholars pursuing this subject, as well as to scholars of New England and transatlantic Puritanism more generally. Yet useful as they are, these appendices also indicate some of the limitations of Moore's work, especially when considered in the context of Atlantic history. As appendix 2 notes, the list of returning settlers is not exhaustive, and confines itself to those "who left from the colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut and New Haven" (p. 152). In other words, even within the greater New England region, the colonies of Plymouth, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and perhaps even the parts of Maine and Long Island that were affiliated with other New England colonies, are not clearly part of the population surveyed here. There are reasons to believe that the population of these relatively unstable colonial ventures might have been even more mobile than the more settled and orderly Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies, so it seems a pity not to try to follow individuals from these regions with the same care and diligence. In addition, the movement of "pilgrims" to and from other parts of the English Atlantic--Bermuda, Virginia, the Caribbean--plays a relatively limited part in Moore's narrative, despite the fact that recent works by Alison Games, Karen Kupperman, and Carla Pestana have greatly expanded our appreciation of the significance of these other colonial projects, especially for English social and political history of the mid-seventeenth century.

As a result, Moore's somewhat narrow and conventional definition of "New England" means that the "New England Way" she describes in

chapter 7, when she assesses its influence on English religious polity and practice, is a rather limited, even caricatured, version of the actual New England Way, far less subtle and varied than the one recent generations of scholars have described. For example, Moore finds it "surprising" (p. 127) that New England clergymen who returned to England should find employment in traditional English parish pulpits, rather than in gathered or separatist congregations, since Massachusetts, New Haven, and Connecticut all established a congregational system which distinguished full members in the church from the population at large. But this argument overlooks the fact that, in reality, New England churches were parishes as well as gathered congregations. Although formal membership and communion was limited in most cases to professing "saints," the towns nonetheless supported their preachers through taxes on all families, and all town residents, members or not, were expected to attend services and hear the word, just as in an English parish. In that sense, I would argue, it would have been much more surprising had New England clergy who returned to England confined themselves to gathered or separate congregations. The New England experience had made them accustomed to sustaining godly preaching and discipline with the full support of the state and the ears of the entire community--why would they give that up when presented with plentiful opportunities to continue it in England?

Another minor problem with *Pilgrims* involves its rather loose approach to enumerating and evaluating the scale of these migrations. Admittedly, this is difficult work--after nearly four centuries, estimates of the total migration to New England are still being debated and refined, and most record-keepers, particularly on the American side of the Atlantic, were far less interested in keeping track of those who went back than of those who stayed. Nonetheless, when Moore makes claims such as "The years from 1650 to 1656 ... saw the highest concentration of settlers

travelling home" (p. 76), it would be helpful to the reader to have a more precise explanation of what this means. Were these the years with the largest raw numbers of returning migrants? The highest percentage of returnees among the New England population? Just how many were there in these years? Similarly, even for the most devout and zealous Puritan, the expense of migration and the economic prospects on either side of the ocean were factors that had to be considered and accommodated in the decision to move. Although Moore mentions these concerns in an anecdotal way, it might have been useful to calculate, even for an example or two, the costs of migration and return for specific individuals. This information might help to develop Moore's argument that returning New Englanders, both lay and clerical, found career opportunities on the fringes rather than the center of English public life.

In the end, these minor quibbles are merely to suggest that this is not an exhaustive book, nor was it meant to be. Moore's work raises as many questions as it answers, and gracefully takes its part as an engaging and delightful entry in the burgeoning scholarly literature that does more to integrate America into a larger Atlantic history than to segregate it in a world of its own. We now have a more detailed understanding of one strand of the "swarm" back across the Atlantic. There remains a great deal more to be said about "New World Settlers and the Call of Home," but *Pilgrims* is a good place to start.

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