

‘A Good Idea of Colonial Life’

PERSONAL LETTERS AND IRISH MIGRATION TO NEW ZEALAND



IN 1876 Canterbury farmer James McIlrath wrote to his family in County Down advising them of the return of his brother-in-law Robert Matthews to Ireland. He said, Robert ‘will be able to tell you all about New Zealand. . . . Hoping you may all enjoy a good chat with one so nearly connected and qualified to give you a good idea of colonial life’.¹ Although return migrants played an important role in disseminating information about New Zealand, personal letters were an even more vital and regular source of knowledge. For instance, the McIlrath series contains 37 letters, spans the years 1860–1907, and covers topics as diverse as the outward voyage, farming, kin and community relationships, the climate and politics. That many of these subjects feature reflections on the contrasts between life in New Zealand and Ireland further enhances the significance of letters as a source for exploring New Zealand history.

Despite the arresting insights contained in personal correspondence, letters have attracted surprisingly little interest among New Zealand’s historians. Rollo Arnold made a limited use of letters in his investigation of the country’s assisted rural English settlers but he chose to incorporate published rather than private correspondence.² As most commentators recognize, published letters are untrustworthy for they were often manipulated for propaganda purposes to promote or dissuade emigration. On the other hand, Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald compiled a selection of extracts from the personal letters of nineteenth-century women correspondents in New Zealand to argue that migration was an ‘inherently destabilising’ experience.³ Without a wider context within which to analyse letters, however, such conclusions remain tentative.

The same objection can be raised against Kerby Miller’s *Emigrants and Exiles*, a monumental study of Irish migration to North America. Miller incorporated extracts from letters to advance his argument that the Irish ‘approached their departure and their experiences in North America with an outlook which characterized emigration as exile’.⁴ He also contended that ‘Acute homesickness pervaded the letters and journals of most post-Famine emigrants’ in North America.⁵

Patrick O’Farrell provided a broader family context in his study of Irish-Australian letters but also relied on extracts to make his claim that the Irish ‘brought their kinship mentality to Australia, where it gradually crumbled and fell apart, declining into a residual social atomism marked by separation, isolation, loneliness and eventual alienation of society’s individual parts’.⁶

More reliable are edited collections of correspondence sent by English and Scottish, German, and Dutch settlers in North America,⁷ analysed in concert with genealogical and local history sources. These editions focused largely on the motives for migration and adjustment to American society. Once again, however, such collections were confined to extracts rather than including unabridged transcriptions.

The most recent innovation in the use of personal letters is David Fitzpatrick's *Oceans of Consolation*. By reproducing full transcripts of letters sent to and from Irish migrants in Australia, and exploring each correspondent's local context, Fitzpatrick has emphasized the consolatory, manipulative, and functional significance of personal correspondence. Moreover, by including letters sent to migrants from family and friends in Ireland, Fitzpatrick has shown the impact of migration on the immobile as well as the mobile. As he rightly observes, 'The process of migration affected those who stayed as well as those who left'.⁸ His examination of 111 letters exchanged between Ireland and Australia provides insight into life in Australia, life in Ireland, and the process of migration.

Apart from these broad areas of interest, we can utilize personal testimony in conjunction with the tools and sources of family historians to illuminate current issues of concern, generate new fields of enquiry, and bring fresh insight to older historiographical debates. This article, which draws upon letters sent by Irish migrants in New Zealand,⁹ offers a preliminary overview of a myriad of topics for which personal letters can be mined. These include motives for migration and the voyage out, kinship and community, marriage and family life, loneliness and homesickness, faith and reunion, responses to living conditions in New Zealand, leisure and employment, and the physical and political climate. My main purpose is to highlight the critical importance of kin and neighbourhood connections and to document some of the comparisons between New Zealand and Ireland which fascinated Irish correspondents.

Though Irish correspondents in New Zealand rarely provided reasons for their migration, some explanations can be gleaned by careful analysis of the letters. For example, 17 years after her departure from Ireland, Agnes Lambert forlornly reflected, 'I have Been an outcaste from you all But I forgive him that was the cause of it all as my father ought to have forgiven me'.¹⁰ Genealogical data reveals that Agnes was pregnant when she arrived in Auckland in 1860 and her father's disapproval seemingly spurred her migration.

Such troubled family relations also appear in a letter exchanged between the O'Neill brothers in Auckland and Limerick. When James O'Neill received a letter from home which documented his brother's dissatisfaction with their father, James disparagingly recalled similar feelings: 'He complains how he is treated by his father but I dont wonder at it from the treatment I got after spending my whole life I might say, in doing everything that I possibly could for the ruffian. I hope this winter will send him where he can light his pipe with the top of his finger'.¹¹

The letters exchanged between Ireland and New Zealand reveal significant personal strains, particularly between migrants and non-migrants, and suggest that discordant family relationships may have been a factor in triggering migration. In this sense they provide support for Miller and O'Farrell who have

depicted migration from Ireland as an escape from 'parental repression' and 'the tyranny of the old place'.¹²

That Irish migration to New Zealand was a collective enterprise involving migrants and non-migrants is evident when examining the organization of migration. Several letters, for instance, document the demands that correspondents in Ireland placed on their migrant kinsfolk in arranging migration. In 1886 Maurice Keane of County Waterford forcefully instructed his sister to 'send James his passage at once if you can as he is too willing to go out there for there is no work for him here and it would be a charity for you to send for him & bring him out of this place'.¹³

In response to demands and queries from home, correspondents either offered advice, encouragement, or discouragement to intending migrants. Perhaps the most fervent correspondent seeking family reunification was Andrew Gilmore, who had already been joined by two of his three siblings. In March 1881 Andrew wrote from Tauranga to his brother Robert, a blacksmith at Echlinville on the Ards Peninsula in County Down: 'Now Robert if you can come with your Mrs & family to Auckland you do not Require to be afraid of getting along Better than ever you will where you are. With the family you have got & coming to a new cuntry you [*erased: W*] need not Expect to make a fortune But the family would get more civilised & I Believe Better connected'.¹⁴ Andrew's energetic pleas were met with resistance and Robert Gilmore remained in Ireland.

James McIlrath, however, was more successful following an enquiry to his parents in 1875 wondering if they knew 'of any young Woeman or girl that would like to come here Willing to milk & so. There is no rough work here like at home. I would pay all expences from she left home and make this a home for Her too'.¹⁵ In response to James's request, Maggie Auld joined the McIlrath family in Canterbury. Such accounts emphasize the significant role letters played in the chain migration process.

The collective element of Irish migration to New Zealand is borne out further by analysis of the voyage. David McCullough, a 24-year-old farmer's son from Ballycreely, County Down, made his voyage to Otago in 1875 with his friend Alexander Young. A year later John and Alice Gilmore left their home on the Ards Peninsula to join their brother Andrew, who had settled at Tauranga in 1874. Despite voyaging together on the SS *Bebington* the Gilmore siblings had little opportunity to communicate during the journey. As John informed home readers, 'Alice and I do not get speaking much as the young women are not allowed with anybody else'.¹⁶

The Gilmore and other sequences of correspondence are particularly illuminating for the information they contain about the voyage. Penetrating summaries of storms, shipmates, crew, regulations, tedium and entertainment feature in many letters. We are indeed fortunate that so many letters documenting the voyage to New Zealand survive. In contrast, the absence of lengthy voyage accounts in Irish-Australian letters has prompted David Fitzpatrick to conclude, 'that the voyage was more exciting and alarming in imagination than in personal experience'.¹⁷ The descriptions of correspondents such as Belfast-born Bessie Macready suggest otherwise. As she vividly recollected of her voyage on the *Pleiades* in 1878, 'the roaring of the wind, the rattling of things all around us the creaking of the timbers and dashing of the sea against the ships side was

enough to strike terror into a stout heart'.¹⁸ Such comments remind us of the perilous sea voyage and the distress that this inevitably generated. Discomfort was also a factor that most migrants had to contend with. As Alice Gilmore complained of her ship's passage through the Tropics: 'We could not bear any cloths on us. I & a few other never slept any during that six weeks'.¹⁹



Figure 1: 'A woman of strong personality': Alice Gilmore arrived in Auckland in 1876 on the SS *Bebington*. She married James Fenton and lived at Te Puke (courtesy of Alice Gemming).

The presence of family and friends during the voyage helped counteract feelings of loss and homesickness among many correspondents. Indeed, the absence of these expressions among Irish migrants in New Zealand is striking and stands in stark contrast with the 'mutual grief'²⁰ contained in Irish–American correspondence. Though Irish migrants in New Zealand remained silent on the emotional impact of their migration, their non-migrant counterparts frequently penned searing accounts of grief. Elizabeth McClelland, a widow from Dunronan, County Londonderry, was particularly downcast following the departure of her daughter in 1840: 'I suffered after you went away grieving night & day about you'.²¹ That such anguished accounts emerged from Ireland suggests that the immobile were more inclined to voice their loss, while migrants visualized emigration as a temporary undertaking in order to alleviate the pain of separation. 'I can not turn back now but I hope soon to return', David McCullough revealed on the eve of his departure.²² The extent of return migration is considered later in this article.

After arrival in New Zealand, correspondents were often reunited with pioneering kin and acquaintances and their ongoing contact with kinsfolk and friends featured regularly in the letters exchanged between the two countries. Upon her arrival at Lyttelton in 1878, for instance, Bessie Macready wrote to advise home readers that 'I found my Aunts well and hearty'.²³ And the year of his arrival at Tauranga, John Gilmore proudly reported the progress of his siblings: 'Andy is doing well here better than I expected and is Likely as this is a rising place'. John also noted that his sister 'Alice has a good chance at her trade'.²⁴ The presence of kinsfolk in the colony undoubtedly eased the adjustment of Irish migrants to New Zealand and alleviated feelings of loneliness and loss.



Figure 2: 'One of the finest pioneers': John Gilmore travelled to New Zealand in 1876 with his sister and settled at Tauranga. He was a prominent councillor and Freemason (courtesy of Alice Gemming).

Affiliations based on parish networks in Ireland were also crucial for newly arrived migrants, and the letters provide extensive evidence of these connections. As the brother of goldminers Patrick and Michael Flanagan warmly remarked in 1870, 'I am glad you have made an acquaintance with Peter Greene. He is a very decent fellow and I am sure it must be very pleasant to have one near you from your own neighbourhood at home'.²⁵ Even solitary mining males moved within ethnic networks as a letter from David McCullough, a goldminer at

Cascade Creek, reveals: 'There are a good many County Down people here'.²⁶ Likewise, during the McIlraths' goldmining venture in 1862, Hamilton cheerfully pronounced, 'We saw almost all the boys from Killinchy'.²⁷

These extensive, enduring, expatriate networks, based on Irish birth, provide an alternative depiction to Miles Fairburn's claim that the colony's social organization was 'gravely deficient' and that scanty kin ties 'deprived colonists of a base for the development of community ties'.²⁸ Porter and Macdonald's argument that there was a 'lack of society' and that 'family ties were to be shrugged off, or were no longer there. . . . It was a place to establish new connections'²⁹ is also unsubstantiated in the correspondence of Irish migrants in New Zealand. Instead, the letters exchanged between New Zealand and Ireland endorse the findings of scholars who have stressed the strong kin and community links in the colony. Investigations of particular regions in New Zealand, such as Raewyn Dalziel's essay on migrants in New Plymouth and Caroline Daley's gendered exploration of Taradale, show the importance of these connections.³⁰ More recently, Lyndon Fraser has examined the Irish Catholic experience in nineteenth-century Christchurch and concluded that acquaintance and kinship ties 'played a vital adaptive role in the immigrant experience'.³¹

Most migrants' letters back to Ireland mentioned meeting acquaintances from home in order to reassure their recipients that the colony was civil and familiar. 'Do not suppose for a moment that we are in a wild uncivilised place', James McIlrath exuberantly explained from Canterbury in 1872. 'No. Only for the look of the Contry when we go to a cattle show or any other gathering one almost forgets but that he is in Ireland. I was at one on Thursday last and there was any amount of people we all know'.³² Given that more than half of Canterbury's assisted Irish immigrants between 1855 and 1876 were from Ulster, with County Down providing 13.5%,³³ it was not surprising that James and Hamilton McIlrath frequently encountered familiar faces from their home neighbourhood. 'You would be surprised to find how many of the Killinchy people was there', James attested after attending Leeston's inaugural horse racing event in 1866. 'Sometimes I forget where we were. The only thing that is the great difference is the want of Ladies. The are very scarce but increacing fast'.³⁴

The strength of these kin and neighbourhood connections in the colony facilitated marriage opportunities, with many letters attesting to the frequency of unions between Irish-born partners. After James McIlrath grew 'tired living on a Farm by myself' in 1869, he informed home readers of his marriage to 'Agness Mathews from near Comber. James Anderson publican of Comber is her uncle'.³⁵ Catherine Sullivan, meanwhile, eagerly reported to her brother-in-law at Ballingarry, County Limerick, that her daughters 'Maggie and Bridge married two brothers named Spelman. They are Irishmen. Katie is married to an Irishman from Limerick'.³⁶ Details of a spouse's lineage were vital to home correspondents who often possessed no knowledge of the spouse's background. Consequently, elucidation was both expected and sought, as Maurice Keane's letter from Waterford in 1886 following his sister's marriage reveals: 'I hope you'll give us all particulars about her & where her husband is from for there are many heartys around here. We would like to know where he is from'.³⁷

Probably the most welcome announcement of a colonial marriage combined genealogical credentials, a matching of Irish birth and denominational affiliation,

and favourable economic details. The Gilmore parents must therefore have been delighted to receive the following report concerning their daughter's union:

Alice has shifted from us and left John and I to cook for ourselves. She prefers the Company of a strange man. She got married in January last to a Mr James Fenton. He is a carrier. He came here from Sydney New South Wales, Australia about 5 years ago. Him and I have been intimate friends since we knew one another. He left County Antrim about the year 1859 near Randalstown — only a boy then. He holds an ordinary position. He has 8 draught horses, 2 saddle horses, keeps 5 horse waggons and three horse drays on the road. Has a store and butcher shop 45 miles up Country — small block.³⁸



Figure 3: Alice Gilmore of County Down married Antrim-born James Fenton on 14 January 1878 at Trinity Church, Tauranga. They are pictured here in 1910 with their children: (L to R) Back: Anthony, John, Alice, Robert. Middle: Rachel, Martha, James, Alice, Eliza. Front: Rubina (courtesy of Alice Gemming).

Letters not only highlight the extent of endogamous matches but also provide evidence of particularly warm relationships between husbands and wives. Waimea hotelkeeper Ellen Piezzi, for example, animatedly wrote to her sister-in-law in 1878 offering marital advice: 'Love yor husband as you love yor one flesh. Respect him tentimes beter than yorself. Obey him in [?every] thing he tell you to doo No mater What he tell you too doo it for he Nose best What is the bes to bdone and he Never Will tell yto doo rong. Be kind to him and regoice At his fut step coming home to you for it sweet voice is Like [?a] bell too yor Ere'.³⁹

The most revealing letters concerning male–female relationships, however, were the lengthy meditations of Philip Carroll sent from Tipperary in 1925 to his wife Nina in Auckland. His affection shines through in such quips as 'The fact of Mr & Mrs Wilson being a honeymoon couple is quite interesting. Do they do much spooning? Do you ever feel jealous dearest? Wait on you and I will have a honeymoon next Xmas . . . Yes Mother I do miss your good night kiss. Never mind we will soon make up for lost time'.⁴⁰

Children, too, were valued rather than considered as 'encumbrances',⁴¹ with letters revealing that they provided practical and emotional support to their mothers, particularly during times of immense distress. Following the death of Annie O'Brien's husband in 1891, the grieving widow reassured her kinsfolk at Carlow, 'The children is great company for me and little Frances is the very Pictur of the Father. Mary Ann is Grown very big is abel to do Plenty of little turns for me'.⁴² Given the support and companionship provided by children, their absence from home was keenly felt and provoked admissions of loneliness. As Annie O'Brien disclosed 12 years after her husband's death, 'I feele very lonely when the Children is at school'.⁴³

Most editions of correspondence from various migrant groups in America attribute the homesickness endured by letter writers to what Erickson has termed 'a sense of loss of family and friends, familiar places and particular pleasures'. Indeed, Erickson concluded that for English and Scottish correspondents 'loneliness was sometimes quite intense'.⁴⁴ By contrast, the majority of confessions of loneliness in Irish–New Zealand letters arose from the death of a loved one rather than an atomized society. As Ellen Piezzi rued 'i am very lonley after my poor Dead husband and i soo yong'.⁴⁵ Likewise, 40-year-old widow Annie O'Brien dejectedly explained to her mother, 'I feel very lonley for Poor Frances as there never was a better nor a kinder Husband not onely since I was married to him but since first I seen his face'.⁴⁶

Death also produced extensive discussion of faith, for faith was a major source of comfort among Irish correspondents at home and abroad. Unlike the references to death in Irish–Australian correspondence, which were brief and unadorned,⁴⁷ reflections on death in the letters exchanged between Ireland and New Zealand were often lengthy and replete with religious images. Such a contrast may reflect divergences between individual writers but is probably more attributable to the fact that the letters that have survived from New Zealand emanated from a later period. Among those correspondents for whom faith was a vital source of comfort at the time of death was Annie O'Brien: 'I nerly went wild the day he was taken out onely the nuns come to me and concoled me and only I had the prayers of the Pries I was shure I could have never stud it'.⁴⁸ Indeed, the affection and respect migrants directed towards religious personnel is a major theme in the letters.

Despite the importance of faith, facilities for colonial worship were often unavailable,⁴⁹ and migrants could not or did not always wish to attend to their religious duties in the colony: 'I have not been to Church Mass or Meeting but twice since I left Home and that was in Australia. There is not a House of worship within 25 miles of me', James McIlrath noted from Canterbury in 1862.⁵⁰ The perceived threat to religious faith caused by emigration concerned those in Ireland and James McIlrath's family would perhaps have suspected that his non-attendance at a Unitarian service implied his defection to another faith. James therefore emphasized his absence from all forms of religious service. A similar situation confronted John Gilmore at Tauranga in 1876. As he informed home readers on the Ards Peninsula, 'We have no such thing as Unitarian service here. Only Church is Catholic and a few weeks ago a Presbyterian came here to preach in hall'.⁵¹ Meagre facilities for formal worship, brought about by limited church finances and a dispersed population, created movement between

denominations for Protestant migrants. As Hamilton McIlrath indicated from Canterbury in 1873: 'By the bye there is no uniterians here leastways no churchs or clergeyman so when I do go I go to the presbyterian'.⁵²

Facilities gradually improved but while there was general religious tolerance among adherents of the major creeds, some denominations encountered disapproval. As James McIlrath confided to his family in County Down, 'Now this Southbridge is a Nice little Town with one English Church and one Scotch or Presbeterian but by the way there is no Unitarian (Hush) it is a thing never mentioned here'.⁵³ Despite colonial condemnation of certain creeds, James McIlrath maintained, 'You may think perhaps that I have turned Methodist. No I am as sound a Unitarian as when I left Killinchy altho I never heard a unitarian Sermon since'.⁵⁴

Besides providing comfort during times of immense distress, faith also offered the possibility of spiritual union for separated kinsfolk. As Hamilton McIlrath admitted in 1882, 'as it is likely we shall never meet again in this world I have a certain hope we shall all meet in a better where there is no parting'.⁵⁵

Temporal rather than spiritual reunion, however, remains one of the most striking features of Irish–New Zealand correspondence, with letters from Ireland containing constant requests for migrants to return. In response to such petitions Irish correspondents in New Zealand supplied numerous rebuffs and refusals. Although some correspondents did return to Ireland they soon found themselves back in New Zealand. Such strategies indicate that Irish correspondents were satisfied with colonial life. Indeed, Irish reaction to New Zealand resembled that of their counterparts in Australia, where 'grievance and disappointment played little part'.⁵⁶ Conversely, the Irish in America found society there 'startlingly different', which resulted in 'pervasive dissatisfaction'.⁵⁷ If family and neighbourhood networks, endogamous marriages and religious faith provided a degree of familiarity for migrants, other aspects of colonial life proved dissimilar. The remainder of this article outlines the range of impressions about New Zealand that appear in the letters and highlights the contrasts that correspondents observed between the two countries.

When Bessie Macready caught her breath after her stormy voyage to Canterbury in 1878, she wrote from Governor's Bay surrounded by 'beds of magnificent flowers roses fuchsias geraniums &c with the sea a little beyond and mountains rising up on either side. The prospect is beautiful'.⁵⁸ The previous decade Gordon McClure outlined his surroundings in Southland: 'I can hardly describe this country to you but it is beautifully wooded with streams of large rivers running in all directions, snowy mountains in the distance with small ranges close at hand, plenty of Parrotts, pigeons & ducks of the most beautiful colours. Wild pigs abound close at hand'.⁵⁹ Such impressions reinforced the image of New Zealand as a land of natural abundance. But descriptions of the natural environment were not confined to initial impressions; correspondents also documented alterations to the landscape over time with the most striking accounts appearing in the extensive McIlrath sequence. When James McIlrath first settled in Canterbury in the early 1860s he remarked, 'There is not a House in view but one solitary Shepherds Hut and that is on the other side of the river.' By the next decade he eagerly noted that 'the Railway is formed now right up to

Southbridge and the Talegraph is finished'.⁶⁰ James McIlrath's brother, Hamilton, also contemplated the changes taking place in his vicinity. Sixteen years after his arrival he admiringly reminisced, 'When I settled here first it was as much as I could see a house in any direction but now every inch of government land is bought up and the railroad runing past and coal mines and batterys within about a mile of us'.⁶¹ Such progress prompted James to gratifyingly remark, 'I feel a certin amount of pride to watch the progress of this once waste spot'. James McIlrath also outlined developments at Southbridge town where, apart from a blacksmith, there was 'A carpenters shop, a Bakery, a saddler shop, a shoemakers Three large stores and a fourth in course of erection, one Hotel, one Boarding House, Milliners shop, besides a Nursery, and coaching establishment, and a large Town Hall for public Meetings and amusements. There is a Ball there this Night and I suppose by this time 10 oclock they are Heel and Toeing pretty freely'.⁶²



Figure 4: 'I don't think there is any better country than N. Zealand': Hamilton McIlrath farmed with his brother at Springfield, Canterbury, before relocating to Kowai Pass (courtesy of Jenny Langford).



Figure 5: 'New Zealand is as near Heaven as any Country': James McIlrath, a successful farmer at Springfield, Canterbury, shared his brother's favourable opinion of New Zealand (courtesy of Jenny Langford).

Miles Fairburn has argued that there was 'little leisure' in nineteenth-century New Zealand,⁶³ but the accounts contained in Irish–New Zealand correspondence reveal a diverse range of recreational activities. From Southland in the mid-1860s Gordon McClure commented on 'a small dance here the other night the opening of the newspaper office, so we are not so bad after all'.⁶⁴ Musical pursuits and reading interests occupied some correspondents but conversation was the most frequent leisure activity pursued by migrants. As James McIlrath in Canterbury divulged, he and his companions 'can enjoy a good chat and the Discourse is generally about scenes at Home'.⁶⁵ More physical pursuits such as riding and hunting were also reported. 'As for myself it is not uncommon for me and some others to have 20 miles of a ride after dinner of Sunday', John Gilmore specified from Tauranga in 1877. He also mentioned, 'There is plenty of game here to shoot. The licence is only £2'.⁶⁶

For most correspondents, however, work took precedence over relaxation. As such, employment opportunities, conditions, wages and hours feature prominently in the letters exchanged between Ireland and New Zealand. The contrasts between work in Ireland and New Zealand were particularly fascinating for correspondents. Hugh Rea, for instance, told his brother in County Down, 'You Have Know knowledg of How Some people are Situated Here. The labouring class in porticklar you would think Strange in Ireland to See working men traveling on the roads in half dozens carr[y]ing thire Blankats and a little can in thire Hand to make thire tea together with a little Bread in a bag Slung on thire Shoulder. If you were Here you could see this every day in the year'. Hugh Rea also remarked favourably on colonial wages but expressed concern about the impermanence of labour: 'The wages in this country is good but in a great many cases you cannot get Steady Employment So that when you calculate your earnings for the year it comes to be a verry Small avrage'.⁶⁷ As with English and Scottish correspondents in America, then, letters from the Irish in New Zealand expressed dissatisfaction with the irregularity of employment.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, conditions varied throughout New Zealand, for, in the same year, 1905, Catherine Sullivan, a farmer's wife, announced from Manawatu that 'this is a good country for working men as some men have from ten to twelve shillings per day. It is not like at home. The worst men here won't come to work for less than 7/- per day; and only work from 8 to 5 pm'.⁶⁹

Colonial farming conditions also generated comment from Irish correspondents in New Zealand. Initial reports focused on the novelty of encountering contrasting conditions and learning new skills: 'You people at home would think it strange to begin on land where there was not a fence whatever nor one sod turned since it was land and this is land of the richest quality', James McIlrath declared in 1863, two years after his arrival in New Zealand.⁷⁰ Developing land in the colony proved costly in money and time while traditional skills were either adapted or abandoned in the new environment, and new techniques frequently adopted. As Hamilton McIlrath divulged in 1874, 'we do not go to the trouble of draining and manuring just ploughs and harrows and rolls and leaves it there untill fit for cuting. No weeding [*erased*: of] or thistle pulling here. Thrashes the grain in the paddocks and burns the straw. Makes no manure except what the horses makes. In the winter never houses cattle'.⁷¹ Two years later from Tauranga, John Gilmore also told County Down

readers that 'There is no trouble about wreek or dung no such thing spoken of. Plough and sow is all'.⁷²

Contrasts continued to preoccupy correspondents in the early twentieth century when, in response to contemporary accounts from Ireland, advances in New Zealand were stressed. In 1906, for instance, Hamilton McIlrath reported:

people here have far more up to date implements to work the land than at home. We have from a one furrow to a four furrow plough, disc harrows and cultivator grain & manure drill and two reapers and binders and one man works from four to six horses in a team but they dont work near so long hours here as at home only eight hours a day and a half holiday a week. We never house the cattle here so there is no trouble with manure.⁷³

Comparisons between New Zealand and Ireland also appear in Catherine Sullivan's letter from Manawatu in 1905. She told her brother-in-law: 'They don't churn the cream out here like we did at home. They take it to the factory.' The flax also differed: 'Dear Tom the flax here is not like the flax at home. One blade would tie the strongest horse. It is about 6ft long more or less'.⁷⁴

The scale of land holdings in New Zealand also struck many correspondents as did the manner in which land was held and the unpredictability of land prices. Apart from their preoccupation with land values, farmers were also fixated on the prices of their crops, which were frequently precarious. As Hamilton McIlrath lamented in 1874, 'If we got the same prices for our grain and stock here as you [get] at Home we could live like [the] sons of an irish King'.⁷⁵ Inevitably, impressions of New Zealand varied according to the time and place from which the migrant was writing.

Non-farming migrants also filled their letters with details about prices, particularly in relation to food, housing and clothing. From Auckland in 1862, Margaret Kilpatrick acknowledged that 'Every thing is a little dearer here but then we cant complain of that'.⁷⁶ Almost two decades later from Canterbury, Bessie Macready enthusiastically chronicled the quality and cost of food: 'Mutton we are now buying at 2d per lb for fore quartis and in the summer @ 1 half pr lb splendid. We have got good & cheap butchers meat good flour our baker's bread is equal if not better than the best home bread & as cheap 3^d for 2lb loaf. Butter very nice & cheaper than home'. Despite her favourable account of these items, Bessie complained, 'house rent very dear. A small 4 roomed domicile will be 10/- or 12/- per week'.⁷⁷

Many correspondents echoed Bessie's dissatisfaction with housing costs, but were impressed with the style of colonial accommodation. Margaret Anne Kilpatrick, for instance, lived 'rent free' in her son's 'comfortable house' in Newton Road, Auckland.⁷⁸ Further south at Ryal Bush, Southland, James McClure proudly informed his sisters in Belfast that 'Our house is comfortable & is the best in the neighborhood. It is in [*erased: the*] a cottage in the old English style, 3 Gables thus [*drawing of house*] an Oriel window in one end & front Gable, verandah &c. I shall send you a scetch next time. Large parlor, dining room, & best bed room. Hall on ground floor & 2 bed rooms in attics. Kitchen is behind, Casements to open 7 feet by 3 feet. Comfortably furnished'.⁷⁹ Annie Dempsey also described the décor of her lodging and in 1884 drew attention to the wooden aspect of Waimate's accommodation: 'The Houses Here Are All Cottage Houses Almost Build of Wood and Beautifull Painted'.⁸⁰



Figure 6: 'It is such a comfortable house': Armagh natives David and Margaret Anne Kilpatrick outside their Newton Road cottage, Auckland, c.1900 (courtesy of Alan Kilpatrick).

The predominance of wooden buildings in New Zealand, however, made them more susceptible to fire. From Christchurch in 1879, William Cardwell wryly observed, 'There is a great many failures here and any amount of fire's nearly one every week and sometimes two, so that the Insurance offices are getting in pretty hot just now. There scarcely happens a fire when the house or store is not insured which seems very strange. I suppose houses that are not insured will not burn?'⁸¹ John Armstrong also reported on a fire which burned a house rented by the Provincial Government in New Plymouth in 1859. Again, the house was 'insured so that the loss is not as heavy as it might have been'. The fire resulted when 'one of the ladies left a candle burning in a house to which parties from the country were in the habit of repairing to dress & undress'.⁸²

Participation in public events, such as the ball in New Plymouth, required stylish clothing but personal letters rarely mention the type of attire worn. Most writers instead voiced their concern about the cost of female apparel. Wellington hotelkeeper Samuel Gilmer, for example, was suitably unimpressed with his cousin whom he considered 'far extravagant as regarding her clothing'.⁸³ Andrew Gilmore, meanwhile, complained that females 'are very hard to keep in Colonial stile & Fashion'.⁸⁴

New Zealand's climate, on the other hand, generated extensive discussion in the letters sent to Ireland. From Canterbury in 1881, Bessie Macready noted that 'our summers are very long and sometimes very dry then the grass is scarce'.⁸⁵ Writing from the province more than a quarter of a century later Hamilton McIlrath revealed: 'We have had the hottest and dryest spring and summer here that I ever remember. Grass clean burnt off not a green blade to be

seen'.⁸⁶ The absence of green fields was possibly the most telling example that both these Canterbury-based commentators could provide home readers to convey the fine, dry climate of the region. Yet their references to the warm colonial climate did not resemble the reports emanating from their counterparts across the Tasman Sea about Australia's oppressive heat. There, the weather was 'construed as a menace to good health, and therefore a deterrent to migration'.⁸⁷ New Zealand, by contrast, was acclaimed for a climate deemed beneficial to the well-being of many migrants. Bessie Macready certainly celebrated the climate's favourable contribution to her health: 'We have here nine months of splendid summer weather most of it a great deal warmer than the warmest summer day you experience at home & I believe my health has been greatly benefitted by the change'.⁸⁸

Subjected to a range of weather patterns, James and Hamilton McIlrath provided several comparisons between the colonial and Irish climates. Shortly after their arrival in Canterbury, Hamilton conceded, 'We Like this place very much only we have had A very severe winter. It was every bit as cold as home. The snow does not Lie as Long but we have far more rain. The sun rises in the east and goes Left about insted of right as at home which I thought rather curious at first'.⁸⁹ Hamilton also observed later that 'we have far more hevvy hot winds here than you have got at home and this harvest has been rather more than usual stormy'.⁹⁰

Correspondents based in the North Island also remarked on the colony's weather patterns. Diverse conditions meant that some migrants relocated within the colony to improve their well-being. William Quinn, for instance, 'had som[e] land in Taranaki but I sold it as the place was too cold for me'.⁹¹ James O'Neill, on the other hand, reported in 1863 on changes in Auckland's climate from the previous year: 'The weather here is not so hot as it was this time last year. It was very blust[er]y and wet since begining of Augst last with a few days excepted and them are pretty hot now'.⁹²

That same year James O'Neill provided detailed coverage of the conflict that had erupted at Meremere and Rangiriri. Similar reports featured regularly in the correspondence exchanged between New Zealand and Ireland and were among the most striking contrasts that correspondents encountered. According to James O'Neill, the Rangiriri engagement resulted in 'only 50 Maories killed. 200 gave themselves up prisoners and more escaped. The prisoners was brought to Auckland'.⁹³ James Belich has indicated that only 41 Maori corpses were found, and that the campaign 'cost both sides more than any other engagement'.⁹⁴ Though the conflict caused no disruption to settlers in the South Island, the McIlraths were aware of the events unfolding in the North Island, including attempts to enlist soldiers by offering land as bait. The information distributed throughout the colony and abroad was, however, sometimes inaccurate. In contrast to O'Neill, Hamilton McIlrath's account of the conflict at Rangiriri in 1863 greatly exaggerated the death toll of Maori:

The Moris In the North Island has Been very troublesom Lately. The More the are civelized the *the* worse the get Burning Houses and killing the settlers But I think the will be forced to give over soon. The government gave grants of Land to all the young Men that would volenter and has raised A force of about three thousand Men Besides 2 thousands from

England. They took one of their Pa's last week and killed 400 natives and took 500 prisoners. They intend to give them a dressing before they have done with them that they shall remember. The very men that the instructed most and thought they had made saints of were the leaders of the rebellion.⁹⁵

In their reports of the conflict, the McIlrath brothers drew comparisons between Fenian and Maori rebels. From Canterbury in 1867, upon learning of disruptive tactics on his brother's County Down farm, Hamilton McIlrath wryly observed: 'The Fenians seem to be keeping Ireland in a small fever of excitement. They don't show even as much pluck as the Maories'.⁹⁶ Hamilton's brother, James, meanwhile, assessed that the Irish rebels would make worthy opponents of the Maori warriors: 'I hear it is in a disturbed state up the country. They have not forgot their old tricks. They will be useful here to fight the Moories'.⁹⁷

For William Lysaght, a Catholic farmer at Doon in County Limerick, it was the perceived similarities between Irish and Maori that struck him. He therefore vigorously advised his brother Edward to support Maori objectives: 'I wish the Maories every success. Take care. Join no party [*erased: to*] to fight against them. They are the same as Irish men fighting for their own land. 'Twas a regular humbug the way their land were confiscated. Again I say to you do not fight against [*st*] them - help them if you wish. I have it on good authority that they are assisted by many Irishmen'.⁹⁸

Such clear examples of Irish-Maori solidarity are rare. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Fenians occasionally supplied Maori with ammunition and that some men fighting with Maori were likely to be Fenian sympathizers.⁹⁹ One commentator has gone so far as to suggest that 'Perhaps because they share a history of oppression and land loss, and have both been the butt of racist jokes, the Maori and Irish in New Zealand have long identified with one another'.¹⁰⁰ Despite some Irish support for Maori claims, many more Irish enlisted in contingents of the colonial and imperial forces to fight against the Maori. As Irish diaspora historian Donald Akenson has indicated, the Irish were active participants in the British Empire as soldiers, administrators and clergy, as well as settlers seeking land.¹⁰¹

The most substantial migrant commentary concerning the conflict appeared in the correspondence of Roscommon native John Armstrong, a captain in the Taranaki Militia. Three letters provide lengthy and articulate accounts of the views he held towards the Maori population of New Zealand. Such impressions were inevitably influenced by his upbringing as a Church of Ireland minister's son and the family's long military tradition. Armstrong ominously concluded in 1861, at the beginning of the wars: 'The more I think on the subject the more I am convinced that the perfect subjection of the Maori race to our rule is the only means humanly speaking of effecting a permanent peace with them. Let them find out the uselessness of prolonging the struggle with us and they will be more careful in future in taking up arms against us and more anxious to submit to our terms of peace'.¹⁰²

Inevitably, accounts of hostile relations in the colony generated concern in Ireland and several letters were sent home throughout the 1860s to reassure home readers of the migrant's safety. In 1863, for instance, James McIlrath in Canterbury explained that 'There is great talk of the Mowrie war but we have

nothing of it here'.¹⁰³ And from Southland, Gordon McClure informed his sisters in Belfast that 'We have no connection with the War in this Island whatever as the Maoris here are too poor & never were warlike. There are several villages close at hand but they don't come much among the white men'.¹⁰⁴

Commentators also remarked on the novelty of the Maori population. Hamilton McIlrath, for example, presumed that 'Mother would like to see one of them with there face tattoed and all the Devices you could Imagine painted on then and A Boars Tusk strung to there ear'.¹⁰⁵ To satisfy home curiosity, the McIlraths sent back photographs including one of 'an old tatoeed Moria Chief and a rather well dressed Moria woman'.¹⁰⁶ A photograph of a Maori woman sent home seven years earlier prompted James McIlrath's explanation that 'You will see by the want of the finger the woman is a widow. I should not wonder if you would see her a Daughter in law yet. She very likely is welthy and money does many things'.¹⁰⁷



Figure 7: 'You will see by the want of the finger the woman is a widow': Photograph sent by James McIlrath from Canterbury in 1866 to his family at Killinchy, County Down (courtesy of Jenny Langford).

By the turn of the century attitudes had hardened somewhat, though the physical prowess of the Maori and perceived resemblances between Maori and Irish continued to preoccupy some correspondents. As County Cork-born John O'Regan reported from the West Coast in 1899: 'The aboriginal race is nearly black with long and coarse hair stout and prone to obesity great warriors with their own weapons. Cannibals in the truest sense but have good sense and are hospitable particularly to Irishmen more than to others. If they were a million

strong England could never conquer them. They have a war dance which is disgusting to look at'.¹⁰⁸

Quite possibly the content of these letters, responding to the curiosity that home readers had about the Maori population, ensured their survival. That warfare offered a sensational topic for inclusion in the correspondence may also have guaranteed the survival of some letters. Nonetheless, it seems likely that the impact of the disturbances in New Zealand contributed to greater domestic political concern among the Irish who settled there as opposed to Australia, where Irish correspondents 'seldom touched on public events or expressed political opinions'.¹⁰⁹

The letters sent by Irish migrants in New Zealand, then, offer penetrating and diverse impressions on a range of topics. Elements of continuity such as kin and neighbourhood connections, marriages based on Irish birth, and religious affirmation reassured home readers, while contrasts concerning everyday life appeared in response to letters from curious non-migrants. The impressions contained in the letters of other migrant groups also offer historians pathways to explore New Zealand's past. Regional and urban historians, for instance, can draw upon personal testimony to invoke the fabric and texture of life as perceived by rural and town inhabitants. Religious historians will find much of interest concerning the beliefs and practices of migrants affiliated to various Christian denominations. Family historians, too, may find references to their antecedents. Given the recent surge of interest in gender studies,¹¹⁰ historians may well wish to challenge David Fitzpatrick's assertion that 'The great questions and challenges posed by emigration, and the responses of those involved, typically transcended gender'.¹¹¹ Cultural historians may also wish to probe the letters of other ethnic groups to discover how the responses and experiences of non-Irish settlers in New Zealand compared with the reactions of Irish correspondents outlined in this article. These and other directions await the historian willing to engage with migrant responses to their New Zealand environment.

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NOTES

1 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 11 January 1876. The McIlrath letters are the most voluminous sequence of letters sent from New Zealand to Ireland so far unearthed. I am grateful to Jenny Langford who kindly supplied copies of the original letters. Her transcripts of the letters are in MS-Papers-5061, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Extracts from the letters have been reproduced with minimal editorial excisions, but editing adheres to the following conventions: italicized letters in parentheses are editorial additions; non-italicized letters in parentheses are letters or words that probably appeared in the original document but are missing due to rips or stains; italicized letters without parentheses are an original slip of the pen. I have retained the widespread use of 'the' for 'they' without comment.

2 Rollo Arnold, *The Farthest Promised Land: English Villagers, New Zealand Immigrants of the 1870s*, Wellington, 1981.

3 Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, eds, *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates': The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand as Revealed to Sisters, Family, and Friends*, Auckland, 1996, p.3.

4 Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*, New York, 1985, p.8.

5 *ibid.*, p.512.

6 Patrick O'Farrell, *Letters from Irish Australia, 1825–1929*, Kensington, 1984, p.6.

7 Charlotte Erickson, *Invisible Immigrants: The Adaptation of English and Scottish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century America*, London, 1972; Walter D. Kamphoefner, Wolfgang Helbich, and Ulrike Sommer, eds, *News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, Ithaca, NY, 1991; Herbert J. Brinks, *Dutch American Voices: Letters from the United States, 1850–1930*, Ithaca, NY, 1995.

8 David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia*, Cork, 1995, p.26.

9 Many of these letters can be found in Angela McCarthy, "'Seas May Divide': Irish Migration to New Zealand as Portrayed in Personal Correspondence, 1840–1937", PhD thesis, 2 vols, Trinity College, Dublin, 2000. Personal letters exchanged between Ireland and New Zealand have also been utilized in exploratory essays by Donald Harman Akenson and Trevor Parkhill. See D. H. Akenson, 'Reading the Texts of Rural Immigrants: Letters from the Irish in Australia, New Zealand, and North America', in Donald H. Akenson, ed., *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, Vol.7, Ontario, 1990, pp.387–406; Trevor Parkhill, "'Prospects of this New Colony': Letters of Ulster Emigrants to New Zealand, 1840–1900", in *Familia*, 2, 5 (1989), pp.38–42. Patrick O'Farrell, meanwhile, has made use of the letters sent to and from his family members in *Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand, a Personal Excursion*, Kensington, 1990.

10 Agnes Lambert (Auckland) to her sister Susan Jenkins (Antrim), 16 January 1877. The Lambert letters were kindly supplied by Beverley Baird, Antrim.

11 James O'Neill (Auckland) to his brother Thomas O'Neill (Limerick), 30 November 1863. The original letter was kindly supplied by Peter O'Sullivan, Belfast, and is now in my possession.

12 Miller, p. 483; O'Farrell, p.8.

13 Maurice Keane (Waterford) to his sister Mary Anne Keane (Wellington), 24 February 1886. The Keane letters were kindly supplied by Gary Walsh, Germany.

14 Andrew Gilmore (Tauranga) to his family (Down), 24 March 1881, PRONI T1611/5. All extracts that follow from collections held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) are reproduced by permission of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, PRONI.

15 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 26 August 1875.

16 John Gilmore (Gravesend) to his parents (Down), 11 February 1876. All letters in the Gilmore sequence not attributed to PRONI were kindly supplied by Alice Gemming, Te Puke.

17 Fitzpatrick, p.526.

18 Bessie Macready (Canterbury) to her cousins (Down), 27 March 1878, PRONI D1757/2/4.

19 Alice Gilmore (Auckland) to her brother and sister (Down), 1876.

20 Miller, p.483.

21 Elizabeth McClelland (Londonderry) to her daughter Ann McClelland (Wellington), 1 October 1840, PRONI T3034/1.

22 David McCullough (London) to his aunt (Down), 12 January 1875. The McCullough letters were kindly supplied by Sandra Gilpin, Down.

- 23 Bessie Macready (Canterbury) to her cousins (Down), 27 March 1878, PRONI, D1757/2/4.
- 24 John Gilmore (Tauranga) to his parents (Down), 16 September 1876, PRONI, T1611/2.
- 25 Richard Flanagan (London) to his brother Michael Flanagan (West Coast), 28 January 1870. The Flanagan series was kindly supplied by Donald Murphy, Louth. I am grateful to Professor David Fitzpatrick for bringing this collection to my attention.
- 26 David McCullough (Cascade Creek) to his parents (Down), 1 June 1898.
- 27 Hamilton McIlrath (Rangiora) to his family (Down), 12 August 1862.
- 28 Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850–1900*, Auckland, 1989, pp.11, 192–3.
- 29 Porter and Macdonald, pp.6, 386–7.
- 30 Raewyn Dalziel, 'Emigration and Kinship: Migrants to New Plymouth, 1840–1843', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 25, 2 (1991), pp.112–28; Caroline Daley, *Girls and Women, Men and Boys: Gender in Taradale, 1886–1930*, Auckland, 1999.
- 31 Lyndon Fraser, *To Tara Via Holyhead: Irish Catholic Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Christchurch*, Auckland, 1997, p.49.
- 32 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 21 December 1872.
- 33 Calculated from Tables 7 and 8 in R. H. Silcock, 'Immigration into Canterbury under the Provincial Government', MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1963, p.191.
- 34 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 12 March 1866.
- 35 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 5 September 1869.
- 36 Catherine Sullivan (Manawatu) to her brother-in-law Tom Sullivan (Limerick), 7 March 1905. The Sullivan letter was kindly supplied by Catherine Habes, Ohio, America.
- 37 Maurice Keane (Waterford) to his sister Mary Anne Keane (Wellington), 2 June 1886.
- 38 Andrew Gilmore (Tauranga) to his brother Robert Gilmore (Down), 1878.
- 39 Ellen Piezzi (Waimea) to her sister-in-law Mrs Victor Piezzi (California), 12 August 1878. The Piezzi letters were kindly supplied by Theresa O'Connor, Nelson.
- 40 Philip Carroll (Tipperary) to his wife Nina Carroll (Auckland), 20 June 1925. The Carroll letters were kindly supplied by Br. Philip Carroll, Auckland.
- 41 Porter and Macdonald, p.9.
- 42 Annie O'Brien (Waimate) to her mother Margaret Dempsey (Carlow), 8 January 1892. The O'Brien letters were kindly supplied by Noeline Lavin, Cambridge, and Michael O'Brien, Upper Hutt.
- 43 Annie O'Brien (Waimate) to her sister Eliza Burke (Kildare), 24 March 1903.
- 44 Erickson, p.69, 64.
- 45 Ellen Piezzi (Waimea) to her brother-in-law Victor Piezzi (California), 3 June 1879.
- 46 Annie O'Brien (Waimea) to her mother Margaret Dempsey (Carlow), 8 January 1892.
- 47 Fitzpatrick, p.506.
- 48 Annie O'Brien (Waimate) to her mother Margaret Dempsey (Carlow), 8 January 1892.
- 49 Hugh Jackson has claimed that 'The churchgoing of New Zealanders was mediocre by the standards of the British at home' and attributed low attendance to a lack of facilities. See Hugh Jackson, 'Churchgoing in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *NZJH*, 17, 1 (1983), pp.51, 53.
- 50 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 8 September 1862.
- 51 John Gilmore (Tauranga) to his brother (Down), 3 April 1877.
- 52 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 13 July 1873.
- 53 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 27 June 1873.
- 54 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 31 January 1875.
- 55 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 8 May 1882.
- 56 Fitzpatrick, p.608.
- 57 Miller, pp.516, 502.
- 58 Bessie Macready (Canterbury) to her cousins (Down), 27 March 1878, PRONI D1757/2/4.
- 59 Gordon McClure (Otago) to his sisters (Belfast), 28 May [mid-1860s], PRONI D1746/3/1.
- 60 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 8 September 1862, 6 September 1874.
- 61 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 15 July 1878.
- 62 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 27 June 1873.
- 63 Fairburn, p.192.
- 64 Gordon McClure (Otago) to his sisters (Belfast), 28 May [1860s], PRONI D1746/3/1.
- 65 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 8 September 1862.
- 66 John Gilmore (Tauranga) to his brother Robert Gilmore (Down), 3 April 1877.
- 67 Hugh Rea (Otago) to his brother William Rea (Down), 6 November 1905, PRONI D 965/1.

- 68 Erickson, p.250.
- 69 Catherine Sullivan (Manawatu) to her brother-in-law Tom Sullivan (Limerick), 7 March 1905.
- 70 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 1 December 1863.
- 71 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 15 February 1874.
- 72 John Gilmore (Tauranga) to his parents (Down), 16 September 1876, PRONI T1611/2.
- 73 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 22 October 1906.
- 74 Catherine Sullivan (Manawatu) to her brother-in-law Tom Sullivan (Limerick), 7 March 1905.
- 75 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 15 February 1874.
- 76 Margaret Anne Kilpatrick (Auckland) to her brother Thomas Reid (Armagh), 25 November 1862, PRONI D3014/3/3/1.
- 77 Bessie Macready (Canterbury) to her cousin William (Down), 14 July 1881, PRONI D1757/2/5.
- 78 Margaret Anne Kilpatrick (Auckland) to her brother Thomas Reid (Armagh), 22 November 1903, PRONI D3014/3/3/2.
- 79 James McClure (Otago) to his sister Emily McClure (Belfast), 17 September 1865, PRONI D1756/5/2.
- 80 Annie Dempsey (Waimate) to her mother Margaret Dempsey (Carlow), 8 November 1884.
- 81 William Cardwell (Canterbury) to his siblings (Down), 24 April 1879, PRONI T1698/1.
- 82 John Henry Armstrong (New Plymouth) to his sister Marian Armstrong (Dublin), 25 August 1859, PRONI T1978/1.
- 83 Samuel Gilmer (Wellington) to his brother William Gilmer (Monaghan) 29 June 1886. The Gilmer letter was kindly supplied by Juann Ryan, Auckland.
- 84 Andrew Gilmore (Tauranga) to his family (Down), 24 March 1881, PRONI T1611/5.
- 85 Bessie Macready (Canterbury) to her cousin William (Down), 14 July 1881, PRONI D1757/2/5.
- 86 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 27 February 1907.
- 87 Fitzpatrick, p.588.
- 88 Bessie Macready (Canterbury) to her cousins M. and Jane (Down), 14 July 1881, PRONI D1757/2/6. Regrettably, Bessie's cousins have yet to be conclusively identified.
- 89 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 12 August 1862.
- 90 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 15 February 1874.
- 91 William Quinn (Auckland) to his brother John Quinn (Belfast), 13 August 1905, PRONI T1552/11.
- 92 James O'Neill (Auckland) to his brother Thomas O'Neill (Limerick), 30 November 1863.
- 93 *ibid.*
- 94 James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*, Auckland, 1998; 1st ed.1986, pp.142, 155.
- 95 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 5 December 1863.
- 96 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his parents (Down), 9 June 1867.
- 97 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 8 September 1862.
- 98 William Lysaght (Limerick) to his brother Edward Lysaght (Auckland), 19 December 1869. The McIlrath letters were kindly supplied by Reg Brown, Australia. I am grateful to Professor David Fitzpatrick for bringing this collection to my attention.
- 99 James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, Auckland, 1996, p.243.
- 100 Anna Rogers, *A Lucky Landing: The Story of the Irish in New Zealand*, Auckland, 1996, p.92.
- 101 See especially Chapter 6 in Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*, Belfast, 1993.
- 102 John Henry Armstrong (New Plymouth) to his sister Marian Armstrong (Dublin), 3 December 1861, PRONI T1978/2.
- 103 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 1 December 1863.
- 104 Gordon McClure (Otago) to his sisters (Belfast), 28 May [mid-1860s], PRONI D1746/3/1.
- 105 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 5 December 1863.
- 106 Hamilton McIlrath (Canterbury) to his brother William McIlrath (Down), 13 July 1873.
- 107 James McIlrath (Canterbury) to his family (Down), 12 March 1866.

108 John O’Regan (West Coast) to his grand-niece Ellen O’Regan (Montana), 26 January 1899. The O’Regan letter was kindly supplied by Dennis Regan, Washington.

109 Fitzpatrick, p.557.

110 See especially Daley, *Girls and Women*, and Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie, eds, *The Gendered Kiwi*, Auckland, 1999.

111 David Fitzpatrick, “‘This is the place that foolish girls are knowing’”: Reading the Letters of Emigrant Irish Women in Colonial Australia’, in Trevor McClaughlin, ed., *Irish Women in Colonial Australia*, St Leonards, 1998, p.163.