

Becoming ‘Completely One’

LOVE LETTERS AND NEW ZEALAND’S INTERWAR ROMANTIC CULTURE



BETWEEN 1852 AND 1932 life in New Zealand changed in many ways: European migration transformed the social landscape, the New Zealand wars were fought and the colony’s fortunes ebbed and flowed. A century turned and a global war took thousands of men away, some never to return; others came home to precarious employment and continuing uncertainty. Through all this, young men and women wanted to say things about love, often using the same words as their forbears. In 1852 newly married Donald McLean and Susan Strang sensed the hand of God in their romance; the almighty, Susan wrote, had ‘blessed us by making us one’.¹ The McLeans worked to deepen their connection by penning empathic letters that entwined their hearts. Donald invited Susan to share her feelings ‘without formality or restraint’; Susan was confident that she was party to all her lover’s ‘troubles and trials’.² Eighty years later, Ray Hansen and Olivia (known as Olive) Smith used similar language to celebrate being ‘completely one’ in ‘spirit, soul and body’.³ Ray told Olive that ‘God meant you to come into my life’ and the couple discerned a divine ‘purpose’ for their love.⁴ They, too, married, after a correspondence in which Ray could ‘not help but think we share everything’.⁵ Despite the richness of these sources, love letters have been comparatively understudied, even as women’s history, the history of the body, family history and gender history have increased historians’ interest in the history of emotions.

The tenderness within the two relationships, and its ready disclosure in their letters, is startling. Most New Zealand histories of gender, sex, courtship and marriage have not prepared us for such intimacy. It is more common to present lovers as emotionally constrained than as sensitive to each other’s needs. For Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, a nineteenth-century wedding brought only hardships: separate spheres, ‘[d]angerous liaisons and untying the knot’, deserted wives and widows.⁶ According to Jock Phillips, by the twentieth century men and women remained divided by two ‘cultures and two value systems’, and men perceived marriage as a ‘thoroughly unpleasant duty, an unwilling necessity’ that was ‘full of danger and uncertainty’.⁷ War-weary Cupid faced the interwar years with a satchel empty of arrows (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The apparently bruised and battle-scarred cupid of 1919; behind him, couples rushed to the divorce courts. *Truth*, 7 June 1919, p.1.

Yet, throughout the decades separating the McLeans' colonial courtship and the Hansens' interwar love affair, couples invested in the ideal of 'mutuality, commonality, and sympathy between man and woman'.⁸ By comparing the words of colonial couples with those of interwar men and women we see great continuities of feeling and behaviour. The letters exchanged between interwar New Zealanders evidence their eager engagement with new technologies and global trends in entertainment and popular culture, but they are underpinned with an older romantic sensibility. Twentieth-century goings-on frequently served pre-existing emotional priorities, most often by establishing affective connections between physically distant lovers. Just as nineteenth-century sweethearts believed that 'free and open communication of the self to another' was the 'essential act of romantic love', early-twentieth-century couples used epistolary self-revelation to interleave their lives and identities.⁹ If late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century New Zealand marriages were the unequal, unhappy and divided partnerships that historians have described, the same was not true for wooing. The co-operation and emotional closeness of courting men and women casts doubt on their ostensible marital indifferences and raises questions about what caused attitudes to change during marriage.

In her history of interracial marriage Angela Wanhalla has made a parallel point about marriage as an institution, and interracial relationships as the subjects of public scrutiny.¹⁰ The chronology of the book, which covers the years 1770 to 1970, supports Wanhalla's point that interracial marriage has

been a feature of New Zealand society from first contact down to the twentieth century. The extended chronology also allowed her to trace changing forms of marriage over time. Wanhalla concluded, however, that the emotional experience of interracial marriages remained difficult to historicize because the couples involved committed no 'rich cache of personal writings' to the archives, with Māori women leaving 'the faintest trace' of all.¹¹ This essay turns to love letters, a set of highly personal sources, in order to examine the expression of emotions by young New Zealanders, including between one interracial couple.

Writing a love letter is an act of self-exposure. The recipient who opens such a letter unfolds a private and interior world; the historian who lifts it out of a manuscript box does so too. Personal correspondence, the American historian Karen Lystra judged, is the reader's only entrance into the 'hidden world' of Victorian romance.¹² Likewise, Ellen K. Rothman employed love letters to write a history of the 'life cycle' of romantic relationships in nineteenth-century America.¹³ Claire Langhamer has examined change and continuity in British romantic culture using an alternative set of sources: the writing that was submitted to social research organization Mass Observation.¹⁴ This autobiographical material allowed Langhamer to show that sex and love became 'tightly bound together' during the interwar period as part of a new formulation of 'modern marriage'.

Nonetheless there are some historiographical precedents for the study of New Zealanders' *billets doux*. In 1986, in an essay about Donald and Susan's courtship and brief marriage, Raewyn Dalziel began the process of understanding what New Zealand 'women and men have meant when they have written and talked of love'.¹⁵ Dalziel used love letters to offer a 'glimpse into the minds and hearts of one very Victorian couple'.¹⁶ Since then, Margot Fry has further expanded understandings of colonial courtship, marriage and masculinity through letters written by Thomas King to Mary Chilman, and Deborah Montgomerie has explored the emotional survival tactics that New Zealanders used in their letters during World War Two.¹⁷ New Zealand historians writing on sex and gender relations have often relied on easily accessible public sources — court records, parliamentary debates and the documents of social purity organizations — and have constructed criminal and prescriptive histories as a result.¹⁸ Dalziel's, Fry's and Montgomerie's work indicates how letters and diaries can tell the stories of some of the 'pleasure seekers' who have populated our history and balance our lovelorn historiography.¹⁹

Neither identifying nor cataloguing love letters is straightforward.²⁰ As Hsu-Ming Teo has pointed out, a piece of correspondence is archived

as a love letter because it uses familiar conventions of romantic love and discusses expected topics such as affection, marriage, intimacy and sexual behaviour.²¹ However, historians have sometimes been surprised by the form and content of romantic correspondence. For instance, after reading a decade of correspondence between William Hall and Elizabeth Clare Lambert, Sara Maroske came to a letter of proposal and ‘realised for the first time that I had been reading love letters’.²² Maroske did not understand Hall’s instruction on morality and literature as ‘Evangelical love’ until his proposal.²³ Other courtships — for example, Barnes Wallis’s wooing of Molly Bloxam in whimsical, written mathematics lessons — were also conducted outside established tropes of love.²⁴ Perhaps, because of cataloguing conventions, the letters used in this essay illuminate common customs of love rather than exceptions.

The reason for the relative lack of historical interest in love letters also lies partly in their historical opacity. Correspondence reveals the dynamics of individual relationships and patterns of romance, but love letters do not always yield their secrets easily. Even when a letter is obviously a love letter, its content may not be easy to historicize or interpret. As Martyn Lyons has observed, letters are ‘highly coded forms’ that obey ‘unspoken formulas’.²⁵ When young lovers penned letters that attempted to kindle the desire of touch and the immediacy of whispered secrets, they committed their formula for romance to paper. They often presented a model self as well as idealizing their love object. Dalziel also felt that her subjects were ‘people of their time’ who expressed sensibilities that were bound to their culture and its gendered roles.²⁶ What the McLeans ‘perceived to be love’ revealed such ‘established historical patterns’, but in other ways their relationship was ‘unique’ and unconventional.²⁷ Through ‘its very detail’ the lovers’ correspondence allowed Dalziel to explore how one nineteenth-century couple loved, both within and beyond their culture’s framework for courtship and marriage.

Historians’ over-attention to consumerism and social change has further obscured the value of love letters to studies of twentieth-century courtship. Rothman celebrated the ‘candor and openness’ of nineteenth-century romantic exchanges but suggested that subsequently the writing of love letters languished as a popular pursuit. According to Rothman, as early as the 1880s young men and women were too busy to write and were more likely to visit each other via improved transport systems.²⁸ The new milieu of the dancehall and nickelodeon fostered a different style of courtship that ‘invited new physical freedom’ but discouraged ‘the heart-to-heart talking’ of previous generations.²⁹ Flair and physical attractiveness became more important than checking the good character of a suitor, and personal disclosure was out-of-

date. Thus, when sweethearts did write to one another, their correspondence was 'superficial' and a 'matter of good manners', in stark contrast to the 'joint venture in self-discovery' undertaken through letters in earlier decades.³⁰ Close communication between couples resumed only after the Second World War, it seems, when popular forms of psychology encouraged men and women to expect psychological satisfaction as well as sexual intimacy from their romantic relationships.³¹

Historians have not often located love letters in everyday twentieth-century life. Frequently the early decades of the twentieth century are skipped over like a transitional page between the deeper 'morally uplifting' epistles of the nineteenth century and the sexualized banter of the 1940s.³² Dalziel's and Fry's studies conform to the pattern established in the international literature in their focus on mid-nineteenth-century love letters, while Montgomerie's work examines letter-writing during the dislocation of war. However, throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, lovers indulged in lengthy correspondence to catalogue and bring pleasure to their everyday lives.³³ Wartime forced lovers to continue their 'intimacies by other means', but peacetime sweethearts also felt themselves caught up in exceptional events. Love itself was an extraordinary enough circumstance to motivate putting pen to paper and pouring out one's heart.³⁴ Absence explains only some of their dispatches. Couples wrote when they were apart for long periods of time, but also on the road home from visits, on the morning after a long telephone conversation, and while together. Furthermore, letter-writing persisted despite the advent of new forms of communication, and not just because of the cost of the telephone. Although sweethearts got 'quite a kick' out of hearing each other's voice down the phone line, the telephone was not always an ideal way to bridge the distance between them.³⁵ Sometimes a 'whole house' could hear a telephone exchange; lovers complained about eavesdroppers laughing and even 'chipping in' occasionally.³⁶ New technology could offer greater immediacy, but real privacy was available only through the post.

This article interrupts the seclusion of seven letter-writing couples to explore the collective expectations that structured romantic experiences in interwar New Zealand. As Rothman and Teo have observed, letters bare the histories of 'the kind of people who produced and whose descendants preserved, personal documents'.³⁷ In this case, most of the couples were European and middle class.³⁸ The lovers were not completely homogenous, however. Their letters and lives span two decades, many occupations, rural and urban communities, financial struggle and relative ease. Andrew Taylor (who daydreamed of Jessie Farnworth as he laboured on the family farm) was

Scottish, while Frederick Baker (who wrote to Edna Carrie when he should have been studying for his accountancy exams) was Māori. Maurice Nolan and Iris Dickens shared creative and academic interests (he was an artist and she had a double honours degree in English and French) but made ends meet by sign writing and selling 'Art Union' tickets respectively. Nell Blair longed to visit Peter Field on his family's farm in Waikanae, a far remove from the urban world of Jeanie Stewart and Cyril Thomas, who revelled in the delights of Wellington and Auckland. Like James Robertson and Mary Frances Smithson, Jeanie and Cyril could afford to travel, enjoying leisurely trips to Rotorua, Hawke's Bay and Raumati beach. Nor did they face financial obstacles as they planned their wedding. More commonly, couples like Edna and Fred, Andrew and Jessie, and Ray Hansen and Olive Smith worried about money persistently and spent years saving enough for a wedding and a home.

Scholars have observed that love letters speak a gendered language.³⁹ Teo found a 'ritual' of feminine anxiety and male reassurance in Australian love letters, while Lyons called for a closer look at the gendered nature of epistolary expression and narrative structure.⁴⁰ New Zealand writers who have explored love letters have considered the differences between men and women. Dalziel and Fry interpreted romantic correspondence in the context of the social world of a 'Victorian gentleman' and his sweetheart or wife, and Montgomerie enlarged the 'stock romantic picture of the soldier and his sweetheart' to include the emotional experiences of sons, husbands and fathers at war, and of their loved ones at home.⁴¹ Yet despite their gendered behaviour, these men and women, like the young people of this essay, shared so much that they saw themselves as single unit; they were 'completely one'.⁴² The central purpose of their love letters was to strengthen the connections and understanding between the lovers. To avoid the twin menaces of misinterpretation — uncertainty and suffering — couples had to understand what letters meant to each other and form what Maroske has called 'epistolary pacts'.⁴³ These pacts governed the style, frequency, length and content of each couple's love letters. Such frameworks furnished each author with epistolary tools to continually prove love and commitment.⁴⁴ In accordance with their pact, young men and women wrote of their love and described their lives in similar ways so that they could create connections with their heart's desire.

Couples were often physically separated for gendered reasons, but different experiences did not necessarily lead to divided lives. Young men were bound to the place of their work (Andrew could not be spared from the farm and Fred could not leave his place of study), while women were

required in the family home or business (because of Jessie's delicate health and Edna's indispensable labour). However, couples often had shared interests, as is evidenced by one couple's spirited exchange about cars. Jeanie and Cyril were equally at home in conversations centred on the open road and the garage — the latter surely the prime example of the 'exclusively male' areas that Jock Phillips suggested were 'cordoned off from the domestic environment'.⁴⁵ Gendered domains were also appropriate topics for discussion: Andrew and Fred both heeded the advice of their sweethearts about savings and the workplace.⁴⁶ Lovers wished to align their 'thoughts, feelings and aspirations'.⁴⁷ Shared interests and detailed knowledge of each other's lives united them across gender lines to this end. Interwar couples' correspondence reveals a shared romantic culture and the deep continuities of meaning that contributed to its strength and resilience.

Nineteenth-century New Zealand love letters conform to Lystra's description of intimate relationships in Victorian America being concerned with self-disclosure, self-expression and the development of a shared identity.⁴⁸ The writing of letters fulfilled an epistolary pact between separated lovers. For the Victorian gentlemen Thomas King and Douglas McLean, openness and emotional intimacy defined romantic love.⁴⁹ As Dalziel observed, Susan and Donald's courtship was 'no whirlwind affair'. Susan judged this wise as 'it enabled us to know each other's tempers and dispositions'.⁵⁰ Likewise, interwar lovers used a shared language of love to divulge their feelings and understand their loved one's thoughts and feelings. In both centuries, young men and women sometimes struggled to meet this ideal of romantic behaviour. Tom's wife Mary found it difficult to render her emotional state into words and (even while recording his 'extreme happiness' privately) Donald acknowledged that he sometimes appeared 'cold' towards his new wife.⁵¹ Seventy years later, Edna Carrie also worried that she expressed her feelings to Frederick Baker too seldom and wished he could 'open and look into' her heart to see 'such a lot' that she could not tell.⁵²

Interwar couples' overwhelming desire to speak of their feelings shaped their letters into a constant 'reiteration of that one little fact, I love you'.⁵³ Edna took 'over two pages to say I love you'; Maurice Nolan longed to 'fill a page with only the words "I love you"'; and Andrew Taylor fleetingly suggested that Jessie Farnworth might find it 'a bit monotonous getting the same thing in every letter' but quickly betrayed his true confidence, 'I don't think you mind very much, you see, I love you'.⁵⁴ (Figures 2 and 3.)

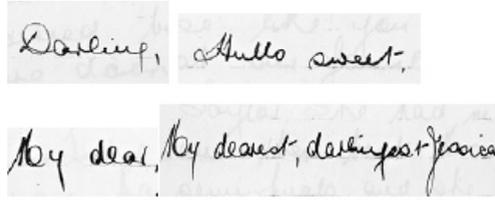


Figure 2: Andrew Taylor used a variety of pet names to ensure that Jessie Farnworth understood how he felt about her. Clockwise from top left: Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 9 December 1938, 10 August 1938, 31 July 1938, 24 May 1938, Taylor Family: Correspondence and Papers relating to Andrew James Taylor, MS-Papers-7966-02, -03, -04 and -07, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL).

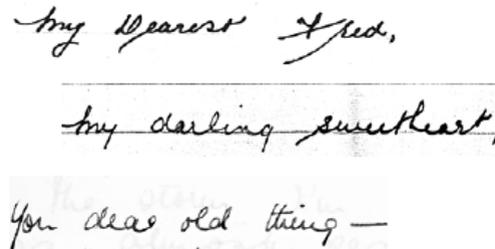


Figure 3: Young women also proclaimed their affection from the first line of a letter. From top: Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, n.d. October 1933, 9 March 1930, Inward correspondence from his wife, Frederick Baker and Edna Mavis Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01 and -12, ATL.

In 1860 Tom King had felt the same urge to repeatedly tell Mary how he felt: if ‘I was to tell you how I love you fifty thousand times over I should still leave something to say’.⁵⁵ Couples showed no sign of thematic fatigue. Fred reiterated his love for Edna often ‘enough goodness knows’, but she could not hear it too frequently: ‘I am never and shall never be tired of listening’.⁵⁶ Lovers often sat down to write despite the fact that there was ‘really nothing to write about’: making a virtue of their letters’ lack of news. Andrew’s letters often became a ‘discourse on nothing’ other than his feelings for Jessie.⁵⁷ After a ‘nice long’ letter, which fulfilled a couple’s epistolary pact and was savoured as evidence of a sweetheart’s devotion, any shorter effort that lacked due explanation risked being read as rejection.⁵⁸ Writers drew attention to their prodigious efforts through underlined page numbers and self-directed (ironic) exhortations: ‘far too much’, ‘definitely I must stop’.⁵⁹

Although they believed the love they confessed to at such length to be intensely individual, writers used similar metaphors to articulate the nature of their love. The notion of love as an overwhelming force that mattered above all else was a persistent theme. Tom King evoked love's conquering power when he promised to give up politics for his wife, and interwar films continued to idealize immense sacrifice in its name.⁶⁰ Couples wrote of their love as vast and virtually indescribable. Ray loved Olive 'as life itself', and her responding affection was 'inexpressibly wonderful'.⁶¹ Edna sent Fred 'love by the mile and kisses by the ton' or (much less quantifiably) an 'ocean of love' with 'a kiss on every wave'.⁶² Through this passionate language, sweethearts assured each other that their love would last and that it was not transferable; Jessie was 'the' (only) girl for Andrew.⁶³ Nineteenth-century couples would have recognized these metaphors; Susan Strang had also sent her Donald 'a thousand kisses', and he had responded with love as 'constant and durable as the sun that shines'.⁶⁴

The letters Nell Blair wrote to Peter Hughes at a troubled point in their relationship (and against the background of Nell's indiscretions with another young man) confirm the centrality of open communication and ardent expression to successful romantic relationships. Nell asserted that the couple needed to create 'sympathy' and a 'perfect understanding' between them, but empathy alone was not enough.⁶⁵ Nell constantly claimed that Peter no longer felt for her because he had ceased to speak the expansive language of boundless and everlasting love. Nell compared this 'new' Peter, 'a dear old material farmer', unfavourably with his 'old' passionate persona — a Peter whose adoration was so fervent he 'would have killed' himself to visit his sweetheart.⁶⁶ As he no longer declared or demonstrated his love appropriately (for instance, through regular visits), Peter was 'second best' to the 'fading memory' of an ideal romance.⁶⁷ Perhaps from watching Hollywood movies, Nell knew 'enough about love' to tell Peter that he should come to see her regardless of the difficulties because real love was 'all or nothing'.⁶⁸

Lovers also proclaimed their love through pages of day-to-day news. This habit has confounded historians' expectations. For instance, Sally Newman eagerly read the letters between Vernon Lee (the pseudonym Violet Page used for publication from 1875) and Clementina Amstruther-Thomson for evidence of eroticism. Dissatisfied with the 'everydayness' of their exchange, she discounted them as love letters. On reflection, though, she understood the detail and volume of this correspondence as evidence of emotional intensity: 'A letter was a token, *the* token of true affection, proof that the other was ready to set aside valuable time to visualising, and addressing, the loved one.'⁶⁹ For young New Zealanders, too, chatter about friends, family

and community preserved emotional ties and built ‘bonds of sympathy and confidence’.⁷⁰ Familiar names emphasized a couple’s common past, while knowing about new people and places linked their lives in the present. Just as Tom King wanted his wife to ‘know his world now they were apart’, interwar couples’ detailed accounts of their days and their surroundings made them feel connected.⁷¹ Moreover, sweethearts needed little excuse to return to their favourite topic: each other. Andrew blamed bad games of golf on missing Jessie; he attributed impressive golf scores to the good luck her gifted tee brought him; he named his tennis racquet after her (it was ‘rather pretty’ and a ‘lightweight’ like its namesake); and he used the tennis club’s lack of female players to entreat her to move to Ongarue.⁷² Chit-chat — and even sporting results — reaffirmed romance.

The cultural authority of Phillips’s unemotional New Zealand male has been restated by historians who agree that two ‘cultures and two value systems’ divided the sexes.⁷³ The title of Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald’s collection of nineteenth-century women’s letters — *My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates* — reinforces the link between femininity and emotionality. Porter and Macdonald argue that young women found men remote, ‘virtual aliens in a distant land’.⁷⁴ Interwar love letters, on the contrary, were shaped by a shared romantic culture, not by ‘distinct emotional worlds’, and young men were just as emotional as their sweethearts.⁷⁵ Andrew encouraged Jessie to tell him all her troubles and responded to his beloved’s feelings with empathy, commenting ‘I feel like that myself’.⁷⁶ He penned many a ‘sentimental’, ‘sloppy’ letter and employed romantic, sometimes melodramatic, rhetoric to describe his emotions: he was ‘aching to have you in my arms’, ‘starving for a little love’ and ‘dying to see you’.⁷⁷ In some romances, a young man was more likely to dramatize his emotions than a young woman. Ray wrote that ‘tears started to my eyes and a pain gripped my throat as I thought of the heroic way you steeled yourself to the time of parting’. Describing the same leave-taking, Olive said she ‘did not find it hard’ and blithely proclaimed ‘you had left a wonderful joy in my heart and I just beamed on everyone’.⁷⁸ Contrary to Phillips’s suggestion that mid-twentieth-century men were poorly equipped for the expression of feelings, both Andrew and Ray were comfortable portraying themselves as helpless in the face of emotion and hopelessly in love.⁷⁹

New Zealand lovers drew on conventional imagery to express their longings, and repetition did not denude these ideas of meaning. Their interwar love letters show that passionate words need not be original to create intimacy or fulfil deeply ingrained romantic fantasies. Well-worn clichés about beating hearts, floods of tears and death by love allowed young men and women

eloquence and clarity of expression. They revealed their desires in a range of ways, from poetic phrases, through stories about everyday events, to casual quips. These tactics aimed to foster the mutual understanding and trust that were necessary for a relationship's survival. Interwar couples' success in achieving these goals alters our perception of past gender relations and love affairs. Doubtless there were also troubled pairings, but love emerges from the letters of courting couples as a triumphant force: unifying, life-defining and ardent.

Gender commonalities are clearly evident in the ways young men and women waited for, received and read each other's letters. For long-separated couples, letters constituted an entire relationship, a challenging situation that bothered both men and women. It was, Jeanie Stewart wrote, 'hell' being far away from each other but, as Andrew Taylor told Jessie Farnworth, the hardship was eased by the 'weekly tonic' of a letter.⁸⁰ Some sweethearts even found the time and money to write daily: Cyril's epistles landed in the mail box at Jeanie's office so regularly that it was suggested she should pay half the rental.⁸¹ Regardless, the wait could be agonizing. As Andrew recorded: 'I come to Monday and think, "If I'm lucky I may get a letter on Wednesday"'. Then on Tuesday, "No there won't be any today but possibly tomorrow". And then on Wednesday if there's one then all's well, if not I think "Oh well I know there'll be one on Saturday anyway" and I begin to count to Saturday.'⁸²

Improvements in the mail service meant that interwar couples were able to timetable their communication to better control this emotional cycle of anticipation and relief (nineteenth-century couples had had to endure 'haphazard' delivery of their missives).⁸³ Edna and Fred each received post on two set days a week but, despite this predictability, continued to suffer in the intervening silences.⁸⁴ Any delay of Jessie's correspondence made Andrew a 'nervous wreck' counting the minutes until the post office opened.⁸⁵ Andrew's ever-present awareness of the length of time he had waited for a letter from Jessie — and, worse still, of the time they had been parted — meant that days took 'so long to pass' and a letter-less week seemed to take months to go by (Figure 4).⁸⁶

bit of a tie however the time comes close every day, the only trouble is that the days take so long to pass. [doodles]

Figure 4: The days dragged while farm work kept Andrew away from Jessie. Hours taken up with writing and receiving letters were perhaps the fastest to go by, even if he had to resort to doodling to fill the pages. Letter from Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 11 April 1938, Taylor Family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01, ATL.

After an anxious wait for a new letter sweethearts were overjoyed to see the ‘old familiar scrawl’ that marked a love letter.⁸⁷ (Figure 5.) The emotional ebb and flow did not necessarily end with the arrival of mail. Some letters were received with elation and others with trepidation. Ray was particularly nervous after his letter of proposal. When Olive’s reply was placed on his desk he instantly dropped his pen and ‘tore it open trembling visibly with excitement’.⁸⁸ Even when a relationship was not at such an important crossroads, letters were opened with racing pulses and treasured through private reading rituals. Cyril waited until he was alone and read Jeanie’s letters through twice; James intercepted his mail from Mary in the early hours of the morning then returned to the letter later in the day, making sure he had ‘read it, learnt it and inwardly digested it’ before he went to sleep; Andrew saved his letters from Jessie until he got home from the post office then read them four or five times; Edna memorized Fred’s letters on the day they arrived.⁸⁹

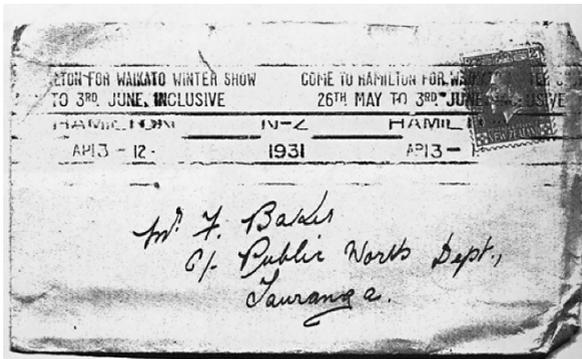


Figure 5: Edna began virtually every one of her letters by noting how pleased she had been to see Fred’s ‘old familiar scrawl’; similarly, Fred would have known that the enclosed letter was from her the moment he saw this envelope. Envelope addressed to Fred Baker by Edna Carrie, 12 April 1931, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-04, ATL.

Letters carried lovers' thoughts and touch across distance and were imagined as shared moments. Just as three decades earlier Arthur Henry Gibson had personalized his letter headings with precise information about the time and circumstances in which they were written — '4 April 1891 (9pm) (raining heavily)' — Jeanie encouraged Cyril to picture her writing as he read.⁹⁰ Instead of heading her letters with a street address, Jeanie recorded her location within the familiar landscape of her home: she was in bed, 'flat out' on the bed in her sister's room, or 'lying full length on my tummy before the fire'.⁹¹ To similar effect, other writers specified the time to the minute.⁹² James imagined his letters as private conversations that allowed him to inhabit the same moment as Mary, drawing a clock on one of his letters to remind her (Figure 6). He wrote, '[d]on't forget to have a look at the clock and you will note that it is about 6.45P.M.'⁹³

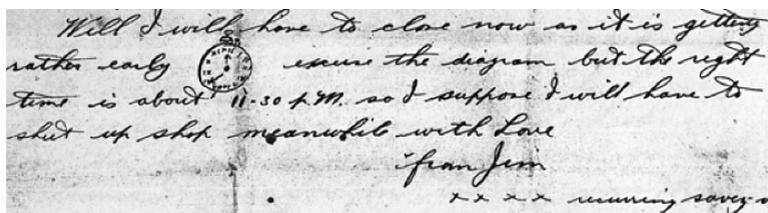


Figure 6: James even drew a clock for Mary to help her imagine the time when he was writing, although he was quick to note that he had got the hands wrong and the pictured clock was one hour and ten minutes fast. James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 7 June 1927, Robertson family papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL.

Through epistolary rituals couples created a private, romantic space outside the bustle or tedium of everyday life. Anticipation and enjoyment of these special times set aside for reading and writing were woven into their days. Many relied on letters to restore emotional equilibrium and replenish happiness — their receipt was welcomed as the highpoint of the week. All this reveals the huge emotional investment of young New Zealand men and women in their romantic relationships and their deft communication as flirtation deepened into love, and courtship turned into a shared future.

Interwar and colonial couples used letters to retain a sense of closeness despite distance. Just as Donald McLean thought of Susan 'at all hours morning noon and night', exchanging detailed schedules allowed interwar lovers to visualize the other 'at different hours of the day, just what you might be doing and where you may be'.⁹⁴ Separated sweethearts did 'a great deal' of their 'dreaming in the day time', a habit that made Andrew miss a dance and,

on two consecutive days, rendered him unable to navigate his way home.⁹⁵ Such thoughts of an absent loved one were part of the texture of letter writers' everyday lives. Longing for his wife's 'quiet society and house' coloured Tom King's descriptions of life in Auckland (the political 'anxieties' of his days and the equally tiresome 'gaiety' that followed).⁹⁶ Years later, Edna assured Fred that even when her letters implied she had been social and carefree, 'dozens' of memories of 'some one on some certain night, some time danced in a certain someone's arms' had been with her at every moment.⁹⁷ On special occasions and significant dates young men and women were able to do their reminiscing together. In Fred's birthday letter of 1930, Edna looked back a year, to when they 'were so happy together', but also imagined a time when Fred would come home from the office to 'a nice tea', a birthday cake and a seat 'beside a cheery fire with someone in your arms'.⁹⁸ (Figure 7.) A reflective refrain was constant as other couples asked: do you remember ... that dance, that band, the last time we stood on that station, that night twelve months ago?⁹⁹



Figure 7: Portrait of Frederick Baker, ca 1940, PaColl-1753-3-3-01, ATL.

In a whimsical version of this shared imagining, Nell Blair constructed detailed scenes that she and Peter Field could picture simultaneously. Peter was to open each of three folded pages, all narrating an evening's shared activity, on a certain day and time, and at the same moment that Nell was also imagining them.¹⁰⁰ Nell used all the senses to heighten the immediacy of her visions: she wrote of a tasty dinner; of birds calling; of the smell of honeysuckle; and of the stillness, heat and darkness of the night air. According to Nell, the intensity of her thoughts imprinted her in Peter's space: 'I am thinking of you very hard tonight, if you sit very still you will be able to feel my arms around your neck — can you darling?' Nell and Peter's three invented evenings highlight the strength of couples' desire for a sense of immediacy and connectedness, even when they were far apart.

Such daydreaming became sexually charged as couples remembered or anticipated bodily contact. Edna vowed that when Fred visited they would live in each other's arms for a fortnight.¹⁰¹ Initially, Andrew wanted 'just' Jessie's presence beside him and her voice in his ear, but this desire quickly raised thoughts of kissing her and shifted to emphatically physical expressions of love: 'I'd just like to lie here on my bed with you beside me and talk to you about nothing in particular and — perhaps — to kiss you in fact I should just like to have you here to put my arms around and love. Darling you don't know how much I'd like to have you here to love and to love me.'¹⁰²

Couples were particularly preoccupied with kissing and wrote with panache about this favoured pastime. Andrew complained that he was getting out of practice and needed to visit Jessie to 'touch up' his technique.¹⁰³ Kisses were declared owing in exchange for pretty compliments and were stored up to be passed on from others.¹⁰⁴ Edna promised hers with ink crosses at the bottom of every letter (Figure 8). James so fatigued his arm drawing kisses on the bottom of his letters to Mary that he had to use 'xxx recurring' instead (he also suggested that he could save them up to deliver them in person; apparently he did not mind worn-out lips as much as he minded tired limbs).¹⁰⁵ Eventually he devised a pictorial system that showed his and Mary's locations as peaks in the landscape, between these points endless kisses travelled through the air — eventually becoming dittos and dots that continued down the page (Figures 9 and 10). Like many lovers, Maurice relived memories at bedtime, hugging his pillow, and thus slept with Iris in his arms, 'even though it is only make believe there is considerable comfort in it'.¹⁰⁶

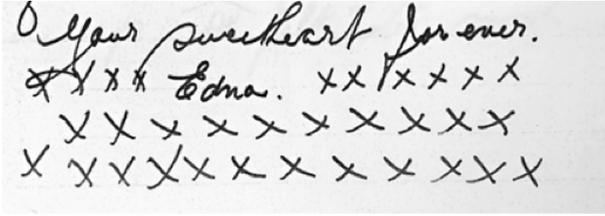


Figure 8: Edna signed off each of her letters with lines of kisses; in this letter they surrounded her name. Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 22 February 1931, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-03, ATL.

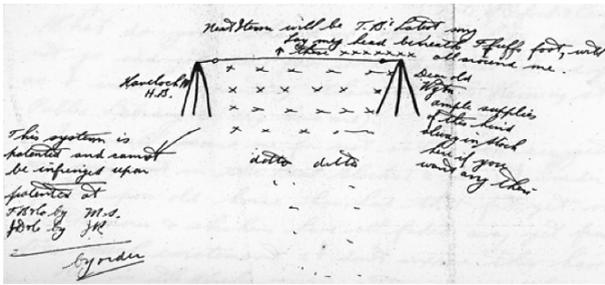


Figure 9: Although James's pictures were highly original many couples experimented with ways of sending imagined kisses through the mail. James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 6 June 1927, Robertson papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL.

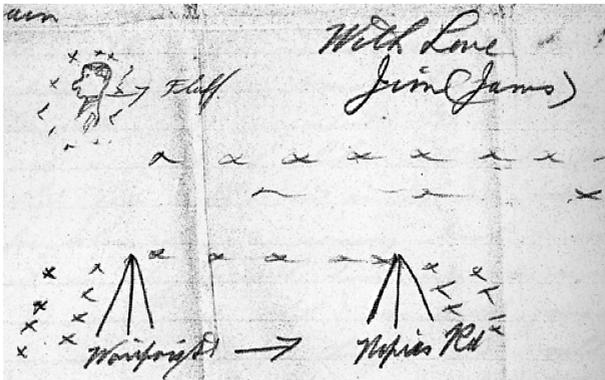


Figure 10: James continued to include simplified versions of this diagram at the close of his letters. In one he also surrounded a sketch of Mary (Fluff) with his kisses. James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 9 June 1927, Robertson papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL.

In another effort to feel close, couples translated flirtatious in-person rituals into print. Cyril and Jeanie continued their teasing and point-scoring ('Ha, Ha, one up!!!!') despite the impossibility of writing 'a mischievous smile on paper'.¹⁰⁷ The couple used exclamation marks and underscoring to convey humour and create a conversational tone in their correspondence. Both Cyril and Jeanie also enjoyed playing on the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable sexual behaviour. They often made suggestive comments — for instance, Cyril was blessed with a 'large $\frac{3}{4}$ bed and much more left than at Easdale St. (remember?)' — but equally quickly retreated from what they implied: 'looks incriminating does it not?'¹⁰⁸ Jeanie referred to her friends as 'les virgins' (adding 'no I'm not lunching solo as you probably visualise!!!') and anticipated that Cyril would choose to misunderstand her intention to walk through windy Wellington as an invitation to bed: 'I'll finish this off now and go out for a blow before bed. Coming — (I mean for a blow!!) (you hound!!!)'.¹⁰⁹ Jeanie's remarks indicate that while the couple had not had sexual intercourse she found joy and humour in teetering on the borders of respectability.

Teo has noted the way Australian love letters have been 'fetichised as a physical extension of the lover — leaves of paper transformed into lips to be kissed'.¹¹⁰ In the same way, when words were not enough, gifts and keepsakes could act as substitutes for physical intimacy. Edna knitted Fred a jumper and wore it before she gave it to him; Jeanie played the record Cyril sent her 'all and every time I come up to my room' because every note brought back 'all sorts of wonderful memories'; and whenever Cyril opened the cigarette case Jeanie had given him — with her handwriting inside for that 'little touch of intimacy' — his thoughts 'travelled over 400 miles' away.¹¹¹ Photographs also brought many pleasures, both public and private. Andrew displayed Jessie's photograph in the sitting room 'where everyone can see it', to publicly confirm her status as 'Andy's girl'. He also kept a copy by his bedside where he could exchange private smiles with her (Tom King kept an image of his wife in the same spot).¹¹² Maurice told Iris's image 'I love you' every night, an act that allowed him to 'go to bed pleasantly and think of you closer to me than Wellington'.¹¹³

In reality, though, couples' prolonged separation tested affection and loyalty. Jealousy often became a problem. Open expressions of distrust were unacceptable for both men and women; as Teo observed, young lovers had to deal with this 'ugly' emotion 'circuitously'; for example, through embellished professions of trust.¹¹⁴ Andrew playfully and acceptably alluded to his 'extreme' protectiveness in order to compliment Jessie on her attractiveness: he recommended that her family hire 'a nice young chap of

about 50 or 60 winters' because he would be 'infernally jealous' of anyone younger.¹¹⁵ Similarly, James hoped that Mary was concerning herself 'with only one or two charming boys' and reported that he had not 'been snared so far as regards the feminine line'.¹¹⁶ For Edna, too, jealousy was unromantic and objectionable — it was the antithesis of her romantic ideal of trust.¹¹⁷ However, Fred could not control his worry over Edna's friendship with another young man; he tried to subdue his feelings by talking of his faith in her but ultimately disappointed by insisting that Edna no longer socialize with her male friend.¹¹⁸ Although they coped with romantic expectations differently — and some failed to live up to them — all these couples navigated emotional difficulties according to the same set of rules, a shared code for both genders.

Lystra has argued that Victorian women generated 'dramatic emotional' crises to 'measure the depth and intensity' of another's love.¹¹⁹ In interwar New Zealand such 'testing' was another feature of a shared romantic culture, not a gendered ritual. Just as Andrew's, James's and Fred's expressions of jealousy tested their beloved in disparate ways (though they all invited reassurance), Jessie and Edna did not behave in a uniformly feminine way. Jessie's tests necessitated a 'severe reprimand' from Andrew, but Edna resisted questioning Fred in this way, even when he offered her clear openings, and calmly assured him, 'I have never wondered as to your feelings'.¹²⁰ Neither young men nor young women were well equipped to deal with doubts or granted exemption from romantic ideals.

Fortunately for the young men and women who struggled to subdue the doubts born of passion and separation, emotional crises could be useful. Lystra found that difficulty 'intensified the emotions and solidified the identification' of nineteenth-century couples entering marriage.¹²¹ In the New Zealand context, Tom King argued that his separation from Mary would strengthen their love, and Susan Strang declared there were no 'trials or suffering' she would not undergo for Donald because of her 'sincere' affection.¹²² Interwar lovers agreed that surmounting the challenges of distance proved the strength and resilience of their love. Edna viewed overcoming Fred's jealousy and other 'obstacles' the couple faced as validation of their feelings: 'if our love had not been true and pure we would both have tired long ago'.¹²³ Which partner dramatized a problem depended on the inner dynamics of each relationship, but defying it was likely to reassure both.

Planning for a shared future was a calmer path to emotional affinity. Although they took on clearly gendered tasks to prepare for engagement and marriage, young men and women aligned their hopes and concerns and worked towards the same dream. Young men had the responsibility of buying a ring and proposing, but their sweethearts were seldom oblivious to

these intentions. Andrew kept Jessie updated on the progress of his savings and ensured that she would not 'have to guess very hard' to discover his goal.¹²⁴ Similarly, Fred probed Edna's feelings about the timing of a proposal and carefully took note of her disapproval of long engagements.¹²⁵ Young women's behaviour changed especially dramatically on engagement: Jeanie went from socialite to domestic apprentice almost overnight, and Edna spent every spare moment knitting, until she could no longer 'get my fingers to work'.¹²⁶ However, there was open exchange about these gendered duties in which each gave his or her loved one full updates, whether on the amount they had saved for a future home or on the progress of cooking lessons.

Wedding plans were also made and carried out with a sense of joint enterprise. Jeanie and Cyril had detailed, almost daily, conversations about their marriage ceremony.¹²⁷ Likewise, Edna and Fred's letters became 'not very much' like love letters with all the wedding 'business' in them.¹²⁸ The lover who lived in the location of the wedding — for these couples, Jeanie, Edna and Andrew — put plans into action, but the absent partner was involved at every step. For example, in a single letter Andrew informed Jessie that he had met with the officiating priest, shopped for Jessie's ring and for compacts for the bridesmaids, organized a bed for her parents, heard that the wedding bell had been hung in the church, and was all prepared to procure the wedding licence as soon as she sent the papers he needed.¹²⁹ Regardless of who visited the florist or met the priest in the lead-up to a wedding, engaged couples continued to choose cross-gender communication over separate spheres as they planned their wedding days and nights together.

Mutual understanding and shared epistolary pacts helped couples navigate the difficulties of their time apart up until their wedding day, although this was not always the end of their letter-writing. Edna and Fred were married at Christmas 1933; they remained deeply in love and enjoyed a marriage of concord (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Edna and Frederick Baker on their wedding day in 1933, PAColl-1753-2-001, ATL.

In 1938, Fred was lonely after two days away from his wife and looked forward to being ‘on my way to my own little darling once more’.¹³⁰ He offered Edna ‘all the love in my heart and kisses galore’ and signed his letters from ‘your sweetheart and husband/ Fred’.¹³¹ In return, Edna wrote more openly and passionately than she had during their courtship:

Oh my beloved,

Your letter this morning oh how thankful I was to see it. Oh my darling how I have longed for it. Yes I did look for my usual letter perhaps I was foolish but even just a tiny note any thing. Dearest one the days are so long and I am so alone. Please forgive me. Oh I do love you so so much. I cannot live with out you and to think I have to wait another ten days. It is too awful. You need not think you are going up to AK to the rest and have me here. I am not invited to the wedding. How can you talk of leaving me again so soon. Oh darling I love you so I cannot live with out you. If only I could see you, hear you, anything but this dreadful silence. Never never again what ever happens this will never happen again.

I am only writing this tiny note beloved and will write my real letter for you to get Friday. Darling if only you can read between the lines of this you will never finish reading my love for you. I want you near me dearest one. I love you, I love you beloved.
 Your own wife
 Edna x x x x x x x x x
 Oh my beloved — x x x¹³²

Domestic life did not lessen Edna and Fred's ardour.

Andrew and Jessie married in October 1939. Four years later, she was separated from him once again while he served in 24 Auckland Battalion on the battlefields of the Second World War. A year on Andrew was reported missing and Jessie did not know if he would ever read her letters. Still, she updated him on the well-being of their young daughter, Barbara, and on her latest mischief (the destruction of the wallpaper above her cot). Jessie had not given up hope, but on the day she heard he was missing she had 'felt I would never see your face, never feel the touch of your hand — and the aisle of years stretching out ahead seemed more than I could bear'. She wondered 'if what you were fighting for — the things you were willing to give your life for were worth your sacrifice and mine'.¹³³ Sadly, Andrew had been killed on 16 March 1944 in Italy.

The sharp distinction some historians have made between nineteenth- and twentieth-century courtships has ill-served the lovers of both periods.¹³⁴ The colonial and interwar lovers in this essay reveal a constancy of ideals that indicates why understandings of emotion and behaviour were deeply embedded in romantic culture. Romantic love was understood as an age-old and 'natural' experience; it did not change with the seasons. Lovers did not try to invent a new language of love in their letters; they drew on established formulae to express their deepest, most private emotions. The 'outpouring of a loving heart' on to the page reinforced the notion that love was elemental and timeless.¹³⁵ Young men's and women's letters were also playful and erotic. Recipients could not forget that a warm body lay beyond their letter's pages, and neither should we.

Nor have lovers been best served by historians' emphasis on gender as a social category that divided the sexes. Interwar men and women had parallel ideas about love and, despite their gendered lives, often experienced courtship in similar ways. A shared romantic culture was vital to keep couples secure and happy and to protect their emotional connections.

Courtship was not always a charmed experience. Fred felt jealous, Nell lost interest in Peter, and physical separation was a trial for each of the seven couples that have featured in this essay. However, it is possible that courtship

marked a period of life when gendered expectations, such as the requirement that New Zealand men appeared to be emotionally tough and spoke only with reticence, were loosened, making younger New Zealanders particularly likely to ignore them. If this was so, the exception was common enough to be taken for granted (not one of the couples discussed here made excuses for their feelings) and deserves further attention within New Zealand's gender history. More likely, interwar love letters recorded widely shared feelings that accompanied 'becoming one'; an idealized merging of two lives that couples hoped to maintain in marriage. Frequently laboured and unsuccessful, such efforts have nonetheless been described as a definitive experience of young adulthood, in memory as well as by the letter-writers of the time. Thus courtship described a short period of the life cycle but continued to be significant; for example, in reminiscence and storytelling during adulthood, parenthood and old age. We should not interpret New Zealanders' later lives according to their behaviour during courtship, but we should take note of their hopes and dreams and afford the affective lives of married New Zealanders the same careful analysis we granted them when they were young and in love. In asking what difference the context of marriage made to these expectations, we will travel further along the scholarly road first signposted by Raewyn Dalziel.

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NOTES

- 1 Raewyn Dalziel, "'Making Us One": Courtship and Marriage in Colonial New Zealand', *Turnbull Library Record*, 19, 1 (1986), p.21.
- 2 Dalziel, "'Making Us One'", p.18; Sophie Jerram, *Posted Love: New Zealand Love Letters*, Penguin, Auckland, 1999, p.66. McLean and Strang had married on 28 August 1851.
- 3 Olivia Smith to Ray Hansen, 5 April 1932; Ray Hansen to Olivia Smith, 30 March 1932, 9 April 1932, Raymond Ernest Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL).
- 4 Ray Hansen to Olivia Smith, 5 April 1932, 9 April 1932, Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, ATL.
- 5 Ray Hansen to Olivia Smith, 7 April 1932, Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, ATL.
- 6 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 University Press, Auckland, 1996, pp.185, 263-336.
- 7 Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male—A History*, revised edn, Penguin, Auckland, 1996, pp.245, 259.
- 8 Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America*, Basic Books, New York, 1984, p.107.
- 9 Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989, p.7.
- 10 Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Interracial Marriage in New Zealand*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2013. See also Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887-1937*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2006; Ann McGrath, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex and Marriage in the United States and Australia*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2015.
- 11 Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart*, p.14.
- 12 Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, p.3.
- 13 Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, p.7; Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, p.5.
- 14 Claire Langhamer, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013.
- 15 Dalziel, "'Making Us One'", p.7.
- 16 Dalziel, "'Making Us One'", p.11.
- 17 Dalziel, "'Making Us One'", p.11; Margot Fry, *Tom's Letters: The Private World of Thomas King, Victorian Gentleman*, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2001; Deborah Montgomerie, *Love in Time of War: Letter Writing in the Second World War*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2005. Letters have also been published as memoirs or in edited collections. See, for example, Michael Burton, ed., *Your Soldier Boy: A Courtship: The Letters of Harold Bell to Gertrude Kenderdine, 1915-1918*, M. Burton, Bath, 1995; Jerram, *Posted Love*; Louise Lawrence, ed., *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Letters*, Penguin, Auckland, 2003; Porter and Macdonald, *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates'*; Robert Clive Tuke, *Letters to Trixie: A Collection of Letters Written 1914-1919 predominantly penned by Robert Clive Tuke*, BJ Gordon, Gisborne, 1997; Chrissie Ward, ed., *Dear Lizzie: A Kiwi Soldier Writes from the Battlefields of World War One*, HarperCollins, Auckland, 2000.
- 18 Caroline Daley, 'Puritans and Pleasure Seekers', in Allison Kirkman and Pat Maloney, eds, *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*, Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2005, p.50.
- 19 Daley, 'Puritans and Pleasure Seekers', pp.47-62.

- 20 Daley, 'Puritans and Pleasure Seekers', pp.50–51; Bronwyn Dalley, 'Creeping in Sideways: Reading Sexuality in the Archives', *Archifacts*, October 2001, pp.35–41; Karen Lutzen, 'La mise en discours and Silences in Research on the History of Sexuality', in Richard G. Parker and John H. Gagnon, eds, *Conceiving Sexuality: Approaches to Sex Research in a Postmodern World*, Routledge, New York, 1995, p.23; John D. Wrathall, 'Provenance as Text: Reading the Silences around Sexuality in Manuscript Collections', *Journal of American History*, 79, 1 (1992), pp.165–78.
- 21 Hsu-Ming Teo, 'Love Writes: Gender and Romantic Love in Australian Love Letters, 1860–1960', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 20, 48 (2005), p.344.
- 22 Sara Maroske, 'Evangelical Love Letters', *Melbourne Historical Journal*, 17 (1985), p.19.
- 23 Maroske, 'Evangelical Love Letters', p.25.
- 24 Mary Stopes-Roe, *Mathematics with Love: The Courtship Correspondence of Barnes Wallis, Inventor of the Bouncing Bomb*, Palgrave, New York, 2005.
- 25 Martyn Lyons, 'Love Letters and Writing Practices: On *Ecritures Intimes* in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Family History*, 24, 2 (1999), p.233.
- 26 Dalziel, "'Making Us One"', p.24.
- 27 For instance, Dalziel suggested that Donald subscribed to an autocratic role and 'believed that his wife should be subject to his authority, follow him wherever he wished to go, and obey his instructions'. Susan was emotionally dependent on her husband and 'would have been prepared eventually to sacrifice her independence and identity' in the relationship. However, Dalziel also showed that neither husband nor wife were at ease in their socially prescribed roles. Donald was 'surprised' by the emotional impact of marriage and, despite her devotion, Susan 'was not submissive' and struggled to 'sit at home sewing while her husband went about his business'. Dalziel, "'Making Us One"', p.24.
- 28 Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, p.12.
- 29 Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, p.225.
- 30 Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, pp.12–13.
- 31 Claire Langhamer, 'Love, Selfhood and Authenticity in Post-War Britain', *Cultural and Social History*, 9, 2 (2012) p.283. Wanhalla describes the influence of psychology in post-war New Zealand and the ways that psychological research on urbanization and social stigma shaped public concern about interracial marriages: Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart*, ch.7.
- 32 Teo, 'Love Writes', pp.351–2, 356.
- 33 Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, p.11.
- 34 Montgomerie, *Love in Time of War*, p.19.
- 35 Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, Tuesday 6.45 p.m. 4 September 1935, Collection of Love Letters, MS-2438/153, Hocken Collections, Dunedin (HC). These names are pseudonyms.
- 36 Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 10 December 1935, MS-2438/153, Collection of Love Letters, HC.
- 37 Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, p.6; Teo, 'Love Writes', p.343.
- 38 For information on early interracial relationships and Māori marriage see: Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart*; Sandra Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since they Won the Vote*, Viking, Auckland, 1993, pp.180–9. For accounts of more recent mixed-race romances see Deborah Shepard, 'Shadow Play: The film-making partnership of Rudall & Ramai Hayward', in Deborah Shepard, ed., *Between the Lives: Partners in Art*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2005, pp.113–35; Manying Ip, *Being Māori-Chinese: Mixed Identities*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2008; Angela Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand*, Bridget Williams Books, Wellington 2009.
- 39 Shirley Neuman, ed., *Autobiography and Questions of Gender*, Frank Cass, London, 1991, p.2; Gwen Etter-Lewis, 'Black Women's Life Stories: Reclaiming Self in Narrative Texts',

in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, Routledge, New York, 1991, p.48; Caroline Daley, "'He Would Know But I Just Have a Feeling": Gender and Oral History', *Women's History Review*, 7, 3 (1998), pp.346, 355–6.

40 Teo, 'Love Writes', pp.352–3; Lyons, 'Love Letters and Writing Practices', p.238.

41 Montgomerie, *Love in a Time of War*, pp.1, 5.

42 Olivia Smith to Ray Hansen, 5 April 1932, Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, ATL.

43 Maroske, 'Evangelical Love Letters', pp.18–26.

44 Lyons, 'Love Letters and Writing Practices', p.235.

45 Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, p.243; Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 4 March 1936, 7 March 1936; Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 9 December 1935, 13 December 1935, MS-2438/153 and MS-2438/154, HC.

46 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 12 July 1938, 5 October 1928, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-03 and MS-Papers-7966-05, ATL; Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 17 February 1930, 20 May 1931, Inward correspondence from his wife, Frederick Baker and Edna Mavis Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01 and MS-Papers-4299-04, ATL.

47 Ray Hansen to Olivia Smith, 9 April 1932, Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, ATL.

48 Fry, *Tom's Letters*, p.157.

49 Fry, *Tom's Letters*, pp.170–1; Dalziel, "'Making Us One"', pp.18, 24.

50 Dalziel, "'Making Us One"', p.10.

51 Dalziel, "'Making Us One"', p.13; Fry, *Tom's Letters*, p.62. See also Jerram, *Posted Love*, p.31.

52 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 18 June 1930, 1 March 1931, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-03 and MS-Papers-4299-04, ATL.

53 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 2 November 1938, Taylor papers, MS-Papers-7966-06, ATL.

54 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 18 September 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-02, ATL; Maurice Nolan to Iris Dickens, Wednesday n.d. [?1940], Iris Evelyn Nolan papers, MS-Papers-7301-06, ATL; Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 24 October 1937, Taylor papers, MS-Papers-7966-01, ATL. Emphasis in original.

55 Fry, *Tom's Letters*, p.217.

56 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 27 June 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01, ATL.

57 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 12 July 1938, 5 October 1938, 23 October 1938, Taylor papers, MS-Papers-7966-03 and MS-Papers-7966-05, ATL.

58 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 1 November 1937, Taylor papers MS-Papers-7966-01, ATL; Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 4 September 1935, MS-2438/153, HC.

59 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 12 November 1935, 27 November 1935, 27 November 1935, MS-2438/153 and MS-2438/155, HC.

60 Silent films such as *The Conquering Power* (1921) and *The Primitive Lover* (1922) portrayed the compulsions of passionate lovers, while 1930s movies as disparate as the 1934 screwball comedy *The Gay Divorcee* and the 1935 weepie *The Dark Angel* continued the theme (in the former, Fred Astaire was tireless in his search for Ginger Rogers amid the 'three million women of London' while the latter celebrated heroic sacrifices for the happiness of a loved one). Fry, *Tom's Letters*, p.183; Robert K. Keppler, *Silent Films, 1877–1996: A Critical Guide to 646 Movies*, McFarland & Company, Jefferson, 1999, pp.199–201.

61 Ray Hansen to Olivia Smith, 30 March 1932, Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, ATL.

62 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 9 March 1930, 20 October 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01 and MS-Papers-4299-02, ATL.

63 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 9 October 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-02, ATL; Andrew Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 4 July 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-03, ATL.

- 64 Dalziel, “‘Making Us One’”, p.14. See also: Fry, *Tom’s Letters*, p.181.
- 65 Nell Blair to George Alexander Hughes (Peter) Field, Monday n.d., Field and Hodgkins family papers, MS-Papers-0113-03/21, ATL.
- 66 Nell Blair to Peter Field, Wednesday n.d., Field and Hodgkins family papers, MS-Papers-0113-03/21, ATL.
- 67 Nell Blair to Peter Field, Friday, Saturday, Wednesday, Sunday, n.d., Field and Hodgkins family papers, MS-Papers-0113-03/20 and /21, ATL.
- 68 Nell Blair to Peter Field, Saturday, n.d., Field and Hodgkins family papers, MS-Papers-0113-03/21, ATL.
- 69 The quotation is from Peter Gay, cited in Sally Newman, ‘The Archival Traces of Desire: Vernon Lee’s Failed Sexuality and the Interpretation of Letters in Lesbian History’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 14, 1/2 (2005), p.74. Emphasis in the original.
- 70 Sweethearts were particularly concerned to be involved with each other’s family: Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, p.108. Olive and Ray were unusual in sharing their own letters with brothers, sisters and aunts, but all the couples regularly exchanged messages or letters with their loved one’s parents or siblings.
- 71 Fry, *Tom’s Letters*, pp.12, 57.
- 72 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 1 November 1937, 11 July 1938, 22 August 1938, 8 October 1938, 16 October 1938, Taylor family paper, MS-Papers-7966-01, MS-Papers-7966-04 and MS-Papers-7966-05, ATL.
- 73 Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, pp.177, 190–1; Phillips, *A Man’s Country?*, pp.258–9. Geoffrey M. Troughton has shown that there were alternate heroes to the unemotional soldiers and rugby players discussed by Phillips. After World War One, church leaders presented Jesus as a masculine role model, particularly to young people. However, this ‘heroic, manly’ Jesus was no more likely to express his feelings. One Reverend noted approvingly that ‘He had the dignity that comes from a quiet reserve. He neither paraded His emotions nor asked others to parade theirs.’ Geoffrey M. Troughton, ‘Jesus and the Ideal of the Manly Man in New Zealand after World War One’, *Journal of Religious History*, 30, 1 (2006), p.50.
- 74 Porter and Macdonald, ‘*My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates*’, p.186.
- 75 Porter and Macdonald, ‘*My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates*’, p.185.
- 76 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 11 April 1938, 24 April 1938, 29 May 1938, 13 November 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01 and MS-Papers-7966-06, ATL.
- 77 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 19 June 1938, 4 July 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-02 and MS-Papers-7966-03, ATL.
- 78 Ray Hansen to Olivia Smith, 30 March 1932; Olivia Smith to Ray Hansen, 5 April 1932, Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, ATL.
- 79 Phillips, *A Man’s Country?*, p.258.
- 80 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 13 November 1935, 18 February 1936, 3 March 1936, MS-2438/153 and /154, HC; Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 14 August 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-04, ATL.
- 81 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, Wednesday 9.30 am, n.d., MS-2438/155, HC.
- 82 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 2 November 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-05, ATL.
- 83 Dalziel, “‘Making Us One’”, p.11; Fry, *Tom’s Letters*, pp.156–7.
- 84 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 11 December 1930, 15 February 1931, 6 May 1931, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-02, MS-Papers-4299-03 and MS-Papers-4299-04, ATL.
- 85 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 2 October 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-05, ATL.
- 86 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 23 November 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-06, ATL.

- 87 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 20 May 1931, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-04, ATL.
- 88 Ray Hansen to Olivia Smith, 5 April 1932, Hansen papers, Papers 84-204-80, ATL.
- 89 The letters had also been penned in solitude or at least in the enclosed space created by a shielding arm. Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 4 September 1935, MS-2438/153, HC; James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 4 May 1927, 12 May 1927, Robertson family papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL; Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 29 May 1938, 6 November 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-02 and MS-Papers-7966-06, ATL; Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 11 July 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01, ATL; Dalziel, "Making Us One", p.11.
- 90 Jerram, *Posted Love*, p.51.
- 91 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 27 November 1935, 10 December 1935, 11 December 1935, MS-2438/153, HC.
- 92 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 1 November 1937, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01, ATL; Maurice Nolan to Iris Dickens, Sunday n.d. [1940], Nolan papers, MS-Papers-7301-06, ATL.
- 93 James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 27 February 1927, Robertson family papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL.
- 94 Dalziel, "Making Us One", pp.13-14; Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 9 December 1935, 13 December 1935; Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 27 November 1935, MS-2438/153, HC; Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 1 November 1933, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-12, ATL.
- 95 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 15 February 1931, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-03, ATL; Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 1 November 1937, 23 November 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01 and MS-Papers-7966-06, ATL.
- 96 Fry, *Tom's Letters*, pp.166, 189, 194.
- 97 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 9 October 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-02, ATL.
- 98 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 18 June 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01, ATL.
- 99 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 4 March 1936, n.d., MS-2438/153 and MS-2438/154, HC; Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 11 July 1937, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01, ATL; Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 18 June 1930, 20 October 1930, 6 November 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01 and MS-Papers-4299-02, ATL.
- 100 Nell Blair to Peter Field, Monday n.d., Field papers, MS-Papers-0113-03/20, ATL.
- 101 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 8 December 1930, 11 December 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-02, ATL.
- 102 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 4 December 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-06, ATL.
- 103 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 24 October 1937, 29 May 1938, 4 July 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01 and MS-Papers-7966-03, ATL.
- 104 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 12 June 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-02, ATL; James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 7 June 1927, Robertson family papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL.
- 105 James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 12 May 1927, 6 June 1927, Robertson family papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL.
- 106 Maurice Nolan to Iris Dickens, Monday, Thursday, Friday, Nolan papers, MS-Papers-7301-06, ATL.
- 107 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 24 September 1935, 13 November 1935, 27 November 1935, 27 February 1936; Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 4 September 1935, MS-2438/153 and MS-2438/154, HC.

108 Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 4 September 1935, 9 December 1935, MS-2438/153, HC.

109 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 4 March 1936, 7 March 1936, 11.30 Thursday n.d. [?1936], MS-2438/154 and MS-2438/155, HC. See also Nell Blair to Peter Field, Monday n.d., Field and Hodgkins family papers, MS-Papers-0113-03/20, ATL.

110 Teo, 'Love Writes', pp.346-7.

111 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 16 May 1933, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-09, ATL; Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 27 February 1936, 1 March 1936; Cyril Thomas to Jeanie Stewart, 4 September 1935, 11 September 1935, MS-2438/153, MS-2438/154 and MS-2438/155, HC.

112 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 24 October 1937, 25 September 1938, 27 October 1938, 28 October 1938, 23 November 1938, 10 December 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01, MS-Papers-7966-04, MS-Papers-7966-05, and MS-Papers-7966-06, ATL. See also Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 27 June 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-09, ATL; Maurice Nolan to Iris Dickens, Sunday, n.d., Nolan papers, MS-Papers-7301-06, ATL; Fry, *Tom's Letters*, pp.212-13.

113 Maurice Nolan to Iris Dickens, Wednesday, Thursday, n.d., Nolan papers, MS-Papers-7301-06, ATL.

114 Teo, 'Love Writes', pp.349-50. See also Peter N. Stearns, 'Girls, Boys and Emotions: Redefinitions and Historical Change', *Journal of American History*, 80, 1 (1993), pp.49-50, 56-58.

115 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 1 November 1937, 27 June 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-01 and MS-Papers-7966-02, ATL.

116 James Robertson to Mary Frances Smithson, 4 May 1927, Robertson family papers, MS-Papers-7220-1, ATL.

117 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 11 December 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-02, ATL.

118 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 27 June 1930, 9 August 1930, 12 April 1931, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01 and MS-Papers-4299-04, ATL.

119 Lystra notes that men 'tested' too but with 'less intensity and less resolutely than women'. Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, p.157.

120 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 31 July 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-03, ATL; Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 27 June 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01, ATL.

121 Lystra, *Searching the Heart*, p.190.

122 Fry, *Tom's Letters*, pp.168, 172, 193; Dalziel, "'Making Us One'", p.12.

123 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 9 March 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01, ATL. See also Jerram, *Posted Love*, p.55.

124 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 5 June 1938, 27 June 1938, 4 July 1938, 10 August 1938, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-02, MS-Papers-7966-03 and MS-Papers-7966-04, ATL.

125 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 27 June 1930, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-01, ATL.

126 Jeanie's twenty-first birthday celebrations, for example, stretched from Thursday night to Sunday and featured a whirlwind of activities that privileged frivolity and fun. Over the weekend she enjoyed a dance at Kirkcaldie & Stains, cocktails, billiards, 'tons' of champagne (then 'tons more champagne') and even a 'wild party' at a haunted house on Wainuimata hill. In contrast, the first letter after Jeanie's engagement announced that she had 'no more social life'. From this time, instead of attending wild parties, Jeanie organized dressmakers, timetables and invitations for her wedding day, and her letters provided regular updates of her progress

in sewing and cooking. Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 24 September 1935, 18 February 1936, 27 February 1936, 1 March 1936, 3 March 1936, 4 March 1936, MS-2438/153 and MS-2438/154, HC; Edna Carrie to Fred Baker, 2 August 1933, 16 August 1933, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-11, ATL.

127 Jeanie Stewart to Cyril Thomas, 27 February 1936, 3 March 1936, 4 March 1936, 7 March 1936, MS-Papers-2438/154, HC.

128 Edna Carrie to Fred Baker, 1 November 1933, 13 November 1933, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-12, ATL.

129 Andrew James Taylor to Jessie Farnworth, 23 September 1939, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-07, ATL.

130 Frederick Baker to Edna Baker, 17 December 1938, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-34, ATL.

131 Frederick Baker to Edna Baker, 1 April 1937, 17 January 1938, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4299-09, ATL.

132 Edna Carrie to Frederick Baker, 1937, Baker papers, MS-Papers-4229-12, ATL.

133 Jessie Taylor to Andrew James Taylor, 2 April 1944, Taylor family papers, MS-Papers-7966-11, ATL.

134 For example, Marcus Collins characterized Victorian gender relations according to Edward Carpenter's (1896) perception of 'maximum divergence and absolute misunderstanding' between the sexes and argued that twentieth-century love was remade according to 'mutuality'. Other histories associate 'sexualized' love solely with the twentieth century (in contradistinction to the spiritual love of the nineteenth century). The intimacy and playfulness of the letters between Tom King and Mary Chilman, and Donald McLean and Susan Strang challenge these arguments. Marcus Collins, *Modern Love: An Intimate History of Men and Women in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Atlantic, London, 2003, pp.1, 4; Steven Seidman, *Romantic Longings: Love in America 1830-1980*, Routledge, New York, 1991, pp.1-2, 12; Coney, *Standing in the Sunshine*, pp.176-7; Fry, *Tom's Letters*, pp.157, 170-1, 174-6, 188; Dalziel, "'Making Us One'", pp.14, 18, 24; Porter and Macdonald, *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates'*, p.204; Jerram, *Posted Love*, p.94.

135 Fry, *Tom's Letters*, p.187.