

## Exploring issues of age and gender in the letters of Irish emigrants 1750-1950

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### ABSTRACT

The Mellon Centre for Migration Studies has been collecting and digitising emigrant correspondence since the 1960s and the Irish Emigration Database ([www.dippam.ac.uk](http://www.dippam.ac.uk)) currently houses over 3000 such documents. This paper will seek to review this collection and present extracts which shed light upon the impact of both age and gender upon the migrant experience. Irish trans-Atlantic migration was characterised by an even gender balance with women actually becoming a majority of the emigrant outflow by the close of the nineteenth century. The early nineteenth century emigrants often went as family groups and the post-Famine diaspora was largely composed of young, single adults. Generally, migration was a young person's game but when older migrants uprooted it could prove difficult to integrate into the host society. The paper will seek to interrogate the difference gender and age made to the experience of migrants who recorded their reflections in correspondence.

### CV

**Patrick Fitzgerald** is Head of Research & Development with the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park, Omagh, Northern Ireland. In 1994 he was awarded a PhD in History from Queen's University Belfast. His thesis was entitled *Poverty and Vagrancy in Early-Modern Ireland (1540-1770)*. He is a former curator of Emigration History at the Folk Park (1990-98) and in 1994 curated a major indoor gallery exhibition charting the course of Ulster-American emigration 1700-1900 and entitled *Emigrants*. Between 1996 and 2012 he was responsible for the delivery of an MSc. in Irish Migration Studies accredited by Queen's University Belfast. From 2012 he has contributed to the Public History MA at Queen's University and in 2013 was awarded a certificate by the university for the quality of his teaching. He has acted as both supervisor and external examiner of PhD theses. He has co-authored with Dr. Brian Lambkin *Migration in Irish History, 1607-2007* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008). He has also acted as editor or joint editor of three collections of essays and numerous essays and articles on a wide variety of aspects of Irish migration history. In 1999 and 2003 respectively he acted as consultant to television documentary series such as *The Irish Empire* and *On Eagle's Wing*. He has sat on the Editorial Board of *History Ireland* for the past 20 years. In 2021 he completed a three year term as vice-chairperson of the Association of European Migration Institutions.