Social Science History (2025), page 1 of 29
doi:10.1017/ssh.2025.2

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Finding home in Irish and German migrant letters: A comparative analysis

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(Received 17 October 2023; revised 7 August 2024; accepted 17 October 2024)

Abstract

How migrants navigate their sense of home between the place left behind and the new place of destination is a crucial question. The social scientific perspective has increasingly come to emphasize the multiplicity of home and appreciates that home provides a bridge between "here" and "there." In this article we explore how notions of home compare between migrants who arrived in the US throughout the 19th and 20th century. We can draw on a uniquely rich comparative set of letters written by people who left German-speaking Europe or Ireland. Our analysis of more than 12,000 letters uses methods of linguistic analysis to navigate between a macro-perspective, focused on term frequencies, a meso-perspective focused on the contextual meaning of the terms *home* and *Heimat*, and a micro-perspective providing in-depth details of two sets of letter collections. We find that the emotional words used to express an affective link with home reveal a deeper process of socio-cultural integration among the two groups. Indeed, we find that home is being talked about a lot more frequently in the Irish compared to the German letters, pointing to a profound divergence in the integration process. In the German letters, America quickly became home, which occurred at a much slower rate among the Irish. Moreover, the Irish maintained a desire to return home to Ireland for longer, an idea that the German writers contemplated only rarely.

Introduction

Finding home has been a pivotal question throughout the history of migration.[1] But how migrants negotiate their belonging to different locations and a sense of "being home" remains underexplored in at least two regards: First, how do feelings of home

[1]We would like to acknowledge the very helpful feedback received by two reviewers. We are also grateful for the extensive access we were granted to the German and Irish migrant letters. Wolfgang Helbich and Walter Kamphoefner started the German collection, which Ursula Lehmkuhl now administers and which is stored at the Forschungsbibliothek Gotha. Thanks to the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies in Omagh, Northern Ireland, for their support and the access we were given to the database. The Irish corpus contains letters stored in the Irish Emigration Database (IED).

differ between migrant groups in one host society? And second, what ideas about home do migrants send back to those friends and family members that have not migrated? A deeper understanding of the question about where migrants locate and how they make sense of home seems crucial to understand processes of integration and emotional belonging (Ralph and Staeheli 2011: 522; Boccagni and Kusenbach 2020: 597), which complement statistical indicators related to labor market achievement or intermarriage rates. Where migrants find home links with their sense of belonging and the relationship between "here" and "there" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). And as home has many meanings, expressing home enables migrants to articulate their multiple and fluid identities (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018: 1047–48, 1053).

The words used to locate and express a link with home, reveal deeper processes of socio-cultural integration, a present assessment of past experiences and future expectations that bridge between the place of residence and origin. In that sense, ideas of home are important to grasp how migrants assess the relationship between their two potential places of belonging, doing justice to the fact that migrants are immigrants and emigrants simultaneously (Waldinger and Green 2016: 17). A language about home is therefore an emotional expression of belonging that synthesizes past memories and future aspirations.

Our article speaks to this set of questions by analyzing how migrants express home over a long period of time. This perspective proves essential for understanding narratives of being at and leaving a given place and illuminates the ways in which households, from which individuals emerge (Atkinson and Jacobs 2016: 5), assess their identity in the process of migration.[2] We rely on a uniquely large set of letters from Irish and German-speaking migrant families who arrived in the US in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century. In the letters, migrants talk about their experiences of daily life in the US, enquire about news from Ireland and Germany, discuss political issues, questions of education, and ask for updates from friends and family members. Many of these topics implicitly convey ideas about home, but we focus our analysis on the explicit moments during which belonging is expressed – namely, when the writers use *home* or *Heimat* respectively.

A comparison of Irish and German migrants is intriguing for several reasons. These groups were the two most important migrant communities in the US throughout the nineteenth and the early phase of the twentieth century.[3] How members of these two communities experienced their own integration, and how they wrote about this to family members and friends who had not migrated, is critical also for understanding the prevailing notions of assimilation and integration that developed in the US (Alba and Nee 1997: 863). At the same time, both migrant groups share in an experience of deprivation and oppression in their respective places of origin, providing a shared experience of migration. Moreover, both groups

[2]Emotional ties to places of residence and origin may also accompany internal migration, see DuCros (2019: 683).

[3]For statistics on the region of origin see "Region and Country or Area of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population, With Geographic Detail Shown in Decennial Census Publications of 1930 or Earlier: 1850 to 1930 and 1960 to 1990" https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab04.html

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

frequently relate to one another and ideas of community took shape in relation to the other (Schwend 2014).

The article follows in the footsteps of earlier comparative studies that privileged, however, specific localities (Dolan 1975; Akenson 2011). Moreover, it addresses the concern that we misunderstand the Irish migration experience and favor monocausal explanations, if we shun comparative analyses (Donlon 2018: 8). Campbell, furthermore, highlights the risk of reifying migrant communities if scholarship is restricted to specific locations and their respective communities (2008: 183–4). The limited understanding of the Irish and German historical experience has also been underlined as setting up wrong expectations in contemporary integration debates (Waters and Jiménez 2005: 119).

Our collections of Irish and German letters allows expanding on the existing comparisons of one group across different locations (Kenny 2003) and provides a rare multi-sited multi-group approach (FitzGerald 2012; Waldinger 2017). Letters enable us to understand how migrants reasoned about their integration and phrased this for the recipient, rather than defining one measure of integration that should then explain variation in belonging over two centuries. To explore the letters in this inductive way, we use qualitative and quantitative corpus linguistic methods. Our study is concerned with how language constructs meanings of home in situational and cultural contexts for which historic letters are a privileged source that is of unparalleled emotional value to senders and recipients (Oesterhelt 2021: 297).

The article begins with a review of the literature on German and Irish transatlantic migration with a focus on questions of integration. We then discuss the use of letters for our analysis, briefly present our methods, and then discuss our findings. We find significant differences in the frequency that home is being talked about, being a much more prominent theme in the Irish letters. While this reflects differences in the meaning of the terms *home* and *Heimat,* it also speaks to a deeper point about integration into the US. Indeed, the German letters highlight that the US quickly turned into Heimat, whereas for the Irish, home remained for much longer located in Ireland. The different use in language speaks to contrasting experiences of integration that we will explore in greater depth through two case studies in the final section.

Irish and German migration to the US

The migration experience of those traveling to America from Ireland and German-speaking Europe resembled one another in many ways. During the large nineteenth century wave of migration, newcomers initially settled in cities alongside the coast, their first point of arrival in the United States.[4] In cities such as Philadelphia and Milwaukee or Boston and Baltimore, German and Irish migrants could rely on networks made of family members or friends (Bommes 2011).

People taking on the journey across the Atlantic were similar in age and socio-economic profiles irrespective of their region of origin. Migrants tended to be significantly younger than the national average back home, but also poorer and more

[4]For an overview of outmigration from German-speaking Europe and Ireland during the eighteenth century, including demographic and regional information related to arrival in the US, see Wokeck (1999).

likely to be single (Wegge 2002: 386; Van Vugt 1999: 114). Migration became increasingly affordable and by the late nineteenth century it had become possible to raise the money required for the journey as the relatively young age of migrants illustrated (Guinnane 1998: 22, 183). Gender composition varied between the Irish- and German-speaking migrants as Irish migrants tended to be more frequently female, taking on the journey to seek employment in domestic service (Donato et al. 2011: 499),[5] whereas more young men left German-speaking Europe (Ette and Erlinghagen 2021: 44-45). Among the Irish, manufacturing, trade, and transportation dominated, alongside domestic and personal service – these migrants generally had lower professional skills and were from poorer communities, particularly after the Irish famine (Connor 2019: 142–3; Collins and Zimran 2019). Among the Germans one finds a higher share of artisans and thus a positive selection on skills (Wegge 2002). In terms of geography, Irish migrants and their descendants tended to stay for much longer in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, whereas the German-speaking ones clustered increasingly in the Midwestern states (Archdeacon 1984: 45–8).

The economic integration trajectories differ in significant ways between the two communities. Donlon (2018: 236–43) identifies contrasting modes of settlement as a key explanation. Whereas German migrants tended to live in "ethnic communities," including churches and schools within their settlements alongside a vivid associational life, Irish migrants tended to primarily occupy "ethnic ghettos," cheap housing characterized by congestion, frequent social problems, and high rates of unemployment with economic ascent lacking across generations (Meyer 2015: 34).[6]

For social integration the varying role of the church between the two communities is important. For the Irish, the church building was usually outside of the individual community and its mission focused on maintaining the Catholic faith. In the case of the German-speaking migrants, the emphasis was often on maintaining language and culture (Costello 2002: 85). Moreover, the Irish church contributed to unity among the migrants, whereas the confessional divisions alongside atheist migrants meant that the church caused schisms among the German-speaking migrants. The grip of the church on Irish migrants was clearly much stronger.[7]

In terms of cultural integration, it took much longer for the German-speakers to become "American," although they naturalized at a higher rate than the Irish with positive implications for labor market participation (Catron 2019: 1007–8). The political pressure on integration created in the context of World War I ultimately changed the condition of German migrants' culture in America: "The pressure imposed on German Americans to forsake their ethnic identity was extreme in both nature and duration. No other ethnic group saw its 'adoptive fatherland' twice enter a world war against its country of origin" [(Kazal 2004: 273), see also (Krawatzek and Sasse 2018: 1041, 1052; Capozzola 2008; Wüstenbecker 2007: 448)].[8]

[5]This trend accelerated after the Irish famine (1845–1849) and after 1880, when young women constituted the majority of the departing Irish (Miller 1985: 392).

[6]For nuance on the question of economic mobility, see Anbinder (2024).

[7]Leaders of the Catholic Church often opposed the settlement of remote rural areas during the late nineteenth century due to concerns that settlers were out of the reach of priest and parish (Holmes 2013: 28).

[8]A study drawing on letters written by Saxon migrants illustrates how German-speakers dealt with their double identification by redefining Germanness in moments of crisis so as to reconcile it with the prevailing American way of life (Wilbers 2016: 301).

Moreover, Irish and German sense of nationhood emerged only in the latter part of the nineteenth century and aimed at emancipating their nation, advancing its unity over regional factions.[9] Across the two communities one encounters a sense of exile and oppression and the same essential considerations of liberating their people against oppression fueled the rising nationalism in Ireland and Germany (Nagle 2016: 10–11). In the case of the German migrants, the fragmentation of German-speaking Europe added to this impression, whereas the national unity created in the aftermath of the 1870–71 Franco-Prussian war augmented the feeling of nationhood among migrants and their children.[10] In the Irish case, a feeling of being under the British empire's tutelage persisted and informed the ways in which migrants identified home notably after 1882. These political changes and considerations that followed provided a salient context for how migrants related to their place of origin.

Both migrant groups retained an active interest in the politics of their place of origin, though Donlon finds that Irish migrants granted higher attention to the nationalist cause than the Germans (2018: 199). One explanation for this difference is the persistent fragmentation of German identity, which stood in the way of promoting a unified idea of nationhood in America, unlike the Irish community, which shared a more cohesive religious, economic, and political identity, and a united collective memory structured around victimization (Miller 1985: 556). Although the media and politicians at the time referred to "the Germans" and "the Irish" as homogenous groups, this does not match how its members thought about themselves. Cultural-political and regional factions in the homeland are reproduced in migration and migration was not necessarily a unifying experience.

In the Irish and German cases, interests of migrants in the political affairs of their countries of origin spiked during critical moments. The letters written in these moments allow insights into changing practices – such as collecting money for political causes in the homeland or the circulation of programmatic newspaper articles or pamphlets. We therefore link the political interests of migrants and their potential engagement with their homeland with political events back home (Meseguer and Burgess 2014: 4–6), paying attention to the dialectic relationship between incorporation and transnational political engagement (Guarnizo et al. 2019: 284). Critical events have the power to reactivate links back home even if the transnational connections have come to pause on the surface.

However, beyond rare comparative projects (see Akenson 2011; Donlon 2018), most research into migrant integration in a comparative historical perspective remains focused on single groups (Fitzpatrick 1994; Gerber 2006; Miller 1985; Kazal 2004). This contrasts with the bourgeoning comparative social science literature on migrant integration (Alba 2010; Catron 2019; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Guarnizo and Chaudhary 2014). Our comparative long-term research project therefore addresses this important gap in the literature.

[9]Tellingly, a distinct sense of Irish identity only emerged in Europe following the three-year Land War from 1879 to 1882, which facilitated the expression of a unified national identity centered around the opposition to British domination (Kane 2011: 224–5).

[10]The German-speaking territories were politically fragmented without one socio-political center at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A step towards integration resulted from the first German elections taking place in 1848 when a constitution for the entire territory of the "Deutsche Bund" was adopted. The unification of Germany accelerated following the victory in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 (Hein 2016).

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

After having conceptually positioned our analysis in the literature on migrant belonging and home, we shall explore notions of home in the two communities.

Defining home in migration and notions of belonging

The multiplicity of home, alongside its changes over time, has increasingly arrived at the center of scholarship on cultural and social integration, emphasizing that home transcends public and private spheres and expresses the social and political relations individuals and families maintain (Boccagni and Willem Duyvendak 2020: 206–7; Fathi and Ní Laoire 2024). Whereas integration, and by implication notions of home, was traditionally analyzed as a transition from one place to another (Vertovec Vertovec 2009: 77), other scholarship with a focus on transnationalism appreciates the continuous attachment of migrants to two or more places and the dynamics relationship between these places (Appadurai 1990: 592; Basch et al. 1994: 8). Over 20 years ago, Ahmed (1999: 330) underlined the ambivalence of home as a norm, as leaving home multiplies the potential homes.

Ralph and Staeheli have pointed to the importance of understanding home as simultaneously "sedentarist and mobile" (2011: 518). The strength of such a conceptualization is the focus on how migrants themselves perceive home. Moreover, this angle acknowledges that places of origin and destination continuously affect migrants' daily routines, and that migrants are only very rarely located in one specific home (Al-Ali and Koser 2003: 8–10; Basch et al. 1994). Migrants continue to ground their lives in numerous places and their sense of belonging is shaped in the way they negotiate the relationship between them. Nowicka emphasized that mobility leads to an understanding of home as simultaneously located, without being limited to a specific location, instead revolving around mobile markers of identification (2006: 149).

A multiplicity of notions of home may persist across generations and inform hybrid identities (Levitt and Waters 2002; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Waters 2014; Wessendorf 2016). Second and subsequent generations may remain involved in transnational fields (Dahinden 2017: 1478), especially if we do not restrict notions of transnationalism to "ways of being" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Such a broadened conceptualization is fruitful in a long-term comparative historical perspective and illuminates how transnationalism was an everyday reality for individuals, correcting claims about the unique "fluidity of the present" (Green 2019: 43).

We contend that transnationalism is moreover not unique to our present era and that the historical lens helps to better understand the ambiguity of locating home in processes of migration, which may persist across generations. A comparative long-term approach is missing in scholarship and limits how we understand the cultural underpinnings of integration.

Migrant correspondence: The words that build bridges

Migrant letters provide unparalleled access to the perception of migrants' lives, including their daily encounters and routines, comments on social and political affairs, and insights into private issues such as questions of education or health care. The intimacy of letters is an important corrective to statistical aggregates (Fitzpatrick 1994: 25). Letters also are an authentic and potentially more

trustworthy source of information for recipients (Serra 2009: 138–9), contrasting with the biased material produced by state-sponsored guidebooks about life abroad or romanticized travel accounts (Mikoletzky 1988: 135–43).

Through letters, people maintained emotional bonds (Cancian 2010: 143) and affirmed their identity. Letters are a social practice and they may circulate among family members and friends, some were even printed in local newspapers, emphasizing the significance recipients attached to news from abroad. Letters contributed to preserving a sense of identity, notably among smaller migrant communities (Attebery 2007; Krabbendam 2009).

The intensity of the transatlantic letter exchange is staggering, even more in light of the low social strata that many migrants came from. Nevertheless, any letter collection has its pitfalls and limitations. No historical letter collection is the result of a truly random selection process of the underlying migrant population. For one, literacy was required for writing letters,[11] but what is more, it remains impossible to establish which letters were eventually archived through a combination of chance, censorship, family history, and the perceived value of the letters.

Given these limitations, we are cautious with generalizations about the migrant population at large and rather suggest to understand these findings as speaking to the processes that occurred among the migrant communities and shaped their transnationalism. Nevertheless, the two letter collections stand out in terms of their size and the amount of detail. The migrants' socio-economic profiles in the two corpora vary, and at least for the German corpus it has been shown that the writers do not significantly diverge in socio-economic terms from the overall migrant population (Helbich and Kamphoefner 2006: 49).

Insights into the corpora

Irish migrant letters are mostly in English owing to the fact that Gaelic was primarily a spoken language and many Gaelic speakers (around a quarter of Irish migrants) were "illiterate in their own language" (Nilsen 2002: 58–9). Irish (Gaelic) thus had a marginal presence in America, even among older migrants who lived in cities such as Boston or Portland but only picked up passive knowledge (Nilsen 1990). Letters from German-speaking Europe cover the different regions of migration which have shifted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, roughly moving from the South-West to the North-East of the territory. Local varieties of German tended to disappear in migration, certainly in the urban areas, given that they were in many cases mutually unintelligible (Costello 2002: 76).

The German letters exist as transcripts and we have made this corpus machine-readable and then transferred the letters into one database and collected the available metadata, including information about writers' profession, marital status, date of birth, financial situation, and reasons for emigrating.[12] The Irish letters

[11]In Ireland and German-speaking Europe, literacy though developed quickly during the nineteenth century, with a reduction in the share of the Irish population that could not read or write from 1841 to 1891 from 53 percent to 19 percent, respectively (Walsh 2016: 11). For developments in Germany, see Elspass (2005).

[12]For a first important publication of the letters, see Helbich et al. (1988) as well as Fitzgerald and Lambkin (2008).

typically exist as digital transcriptions of the original manuscripts, the majority of which were sourced from the Public Records Office Northern Ireland. While all 32 Irish counties are represented in the collection, migrant correspondents from the nine counties of Ulster are over-represented. Although precise information regarding the religious affiliations of the writers is unavailable, this would suggest a disproportionate number of Protestant writers. Presbyterians are particularly well-represented in the collection.

The corpora are roughly similar in their temporal composition (Fig. 1). The Irish corpus first peaks at the end of the eighteenth century, but the most sizeable share of letters is from the middle of the nineteenth century. After the turn of the century the number of letters remains at a constant low throughout the twentieth century. The number of Irish letters peaks during the Irish Famine and at the turn of the century. The German-language corpus is also centered on the nineteenth century with a peak around the years of mass migration in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Civil War, and another peak at around the turn of the century.[13] Unlike in the Irish corpus, there is also an important number of letters covering the interwar period.

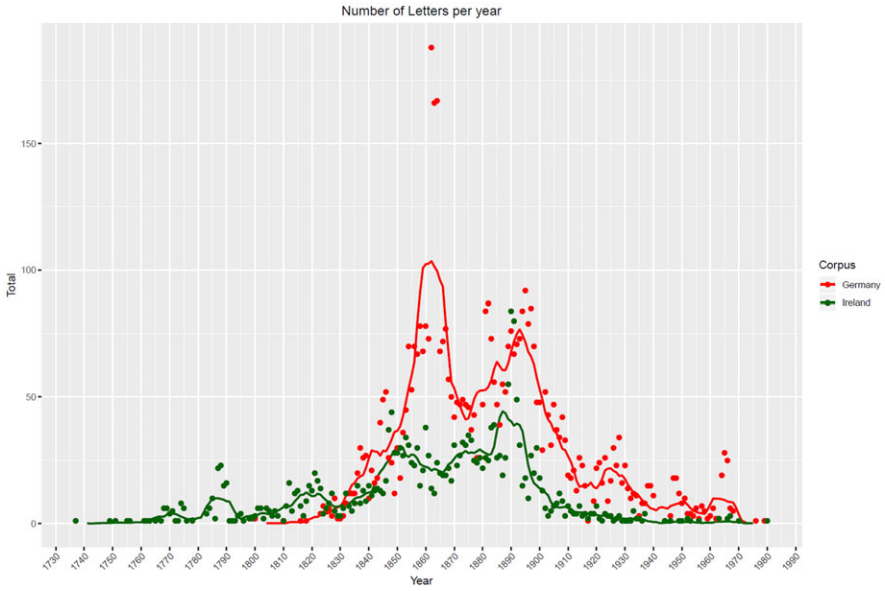

Figure 1. Dates moving average German-language and Irish corpus.

An average letter in the Irish corpus is 690 words long, and in the German-language corpus, 613 words. But there is no one typical migrant letter as the high standard deviations underline (665 in the Irish corpus, 604 in the German one). The Irish corpus contains overall 2 million (2,314,707) and the German one 3.3 million (3,194,906) tokens – that is, the frequency of all words. The average type-token ratio

[13]In the early 1860s German migrants write frequently about the Civil War, see also Kamphoefner and Helbich (2006).

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

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(TTR) across all letters in the German corpus is 0.6, and in the Irish corpus it is 0.48.[14] The lexical diversity tends to decrease in longer letters due to repetition. However, the on average much higher TTR in the German-language corpus is not due to longer letters, as letters with the same length tend to show a constantly higher lexical diversity (Fig. 2). German-speaking migrants thus employed a less formulaic language than the Irish.

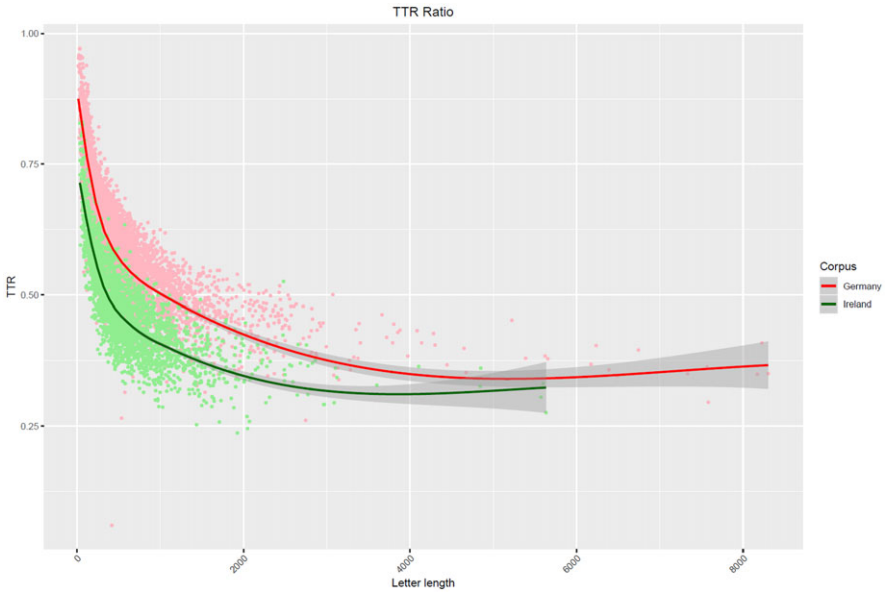

Figure 2. Type token ratio German-language and Irish corpus.

Methods

We approached the letters on three levels, combining qualitative and corpus methods to explore representations of home. We studied the macro-perspective and compared term frequencies, the meso-perspective to investigate the contextual meaning of the terms *home* and *Heimat*, and lastly, the micro-perspective for an in-depth analysis of two sets of letters. Corpus analysis enables researchers to see patterns in the data that would be difficult to notice through a close reading of individual texts. Using computational methods, the process involves taking language out of its specific context and reorganizing it to identify linguistic patterns that shed new light on how language is used across contexts (Hunston 2002: 3). The corpus analysis is complemented with a close reading of the letters for understanding the contextual richness. We illustrate the importance of close analysis to understand social processes, the significance of networks, and the role of political and other events. This combined approach makes it possible to

[14]The type-token ratio (TTR) measures the complexity of language, expressing the ratio of unique words (types) over the total number of words (tokens). The closer the TTR is to 1, the greater the lexical richness.

systematically compare the language choices and how these choices contribute to a wider discourse of belonging.

For the quantitative corpus analysis, we used the statistical software R to assess frequencies and for extracting the concordance lines (instances of the search word in context) of all occurrences of *home* and *Heimat*. Word frequencies, collocations, and semantic analyses were undertaken within R to explore how *home* and *Heimat* are represented and evaluated.[15] Through a qualitative analysis of the concordance lines we identified recurring themes, providing the structure of the language about home (Table 1). Each concordance line was then annotated for place (Ireland, Germany, America, Heaven, Other), its theme, and its linguistic pattern (lexical items or grammatical categories that come before or after the node word).

Table 1. Themes relating to home in the corpora

Theme	Description
Arriving, leaving and returning home	Migrants write about leaving or returning home (typically realized through a verb of movement + home/Heimat)
Remembering home	Migrants remember a person, place or event, or they express feelings of nostalgia or homesickness
Home versus New World	Migrants compare Ireland/Germany with America (topics include lifestyle, people, weather, work)
News from home	Migrant enquire about letters, packages or newspapers that have been, or will be, sent

Annotating the concordance lines manually allowed us to investigate relationships between language meaning, use, and function. For example, is the collocation "old home" (evident in both the Irish and German letters) always used to refer to Ireland or Germany, respectively? Does this pattern tend to occur when remembering home, or is it used in other themes? Following the combined analysis it was then possible to make comparisons between the two corpora.

Analysis and interpretation

Home can mean many things, encompassing the country where one lives or has family, the city of residence, a building one inhabits, or a sense of being with certain people or objects that may be unbound geographically (Boccagni 2016: 62). Home is thus a dynamic and relational concept expressing a link between "here" and "there." First, we demonstrate how prominent home is in the Irish compared to the German-language corpus and identify differences in meaning.

[15]Collocation refers to the co-occurrence of certain words. It is a term used to describe the possibility and probability of two words occurring together in specific contexts or in language more generally. Our semantic analysis involves examining certain words in their wider context to explore the various meanings and connotations and how these contribute to themes of belonging.

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

How much language about home? A macro-perspective

The English *home* and the German *Heimat* are used at very different frequencies. The term has always been present in the Irish corpus (green) (Fig. 3). Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, writers used the term, and it increased over the decades to peak at the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was used more than 30 times per 10,000 words. The use then slightly decreased during the twentieth century. The German letters (red) use *Heimat* at an altogether lower rate. The term, as we will discuss below, has a more narrow meaning, although this does not completely explain its overall less frequent use.[16] Throughout the second part of the nineteenth century its use is more frequent but remains between 1.5 and 2 times per 10,000 words. In particular, during World War II its use nearly vanishes. In the Irish corpus, 14 of the 100 most frequent collocates include *home*, whereas in the German corpus only 4 out of the 100 most frequent collocates contain *Heimat*.

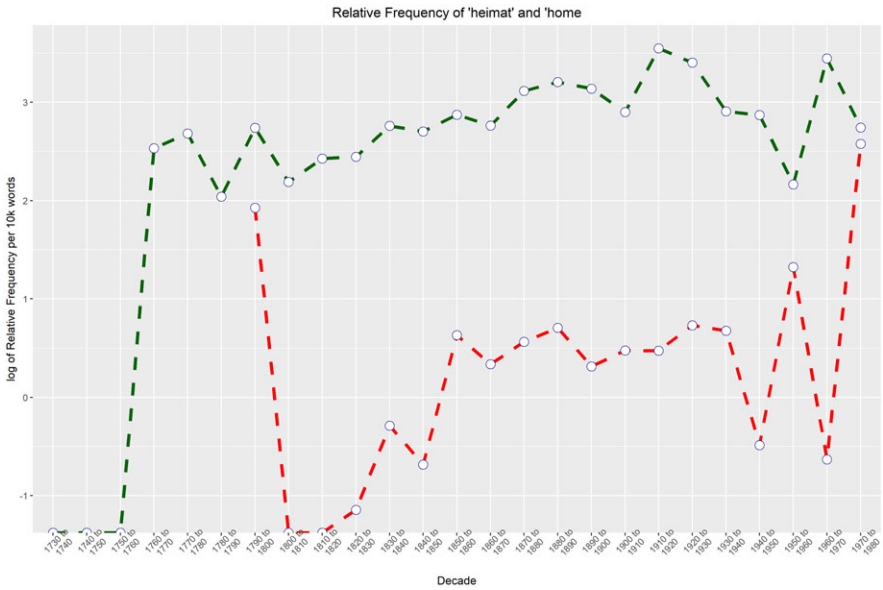

Figure 3. Relative frequency of Heimat and home in German and Irish corpus.

Whereas *home* is a structuring element of the Irish, this is not the case for the German-speaking letters. Despite the fact that German-speaking migrants reportedly had more difficulties integrating into American society, their letters do not convey the frequent use of the language of belonging. Instead, it is the Irish who regularly talk about belonging, even if home, in everyday English, seems like a potentially less emotionally charged term depending on the context in which it is used. The next section will therefore explore the different meanings writers associate with home and *Heimat* to illustrate that these different frequencies actually convey a deeper and diverging relationship to the places people left behind and moved to.

[16]The high value for the late eighteenth century is an artefact of the low numbers of letters.

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There are 894 instances of *Heimat* in the German-language corpus. In almost all of them the term conveys a rather strong emotional attachment to the place that is referenced and it can refer to the prospect of hoping to establish one's home, the retrospective having left home, or encouraging other friends and family members to leave their home.

While there are significantly more instances of *home* in the Irish corpus (3,007 occurrences), not all of these are used in the strong sense of *Heimat*. A qualitative analysis of a random sample of half of these occurrences showed that 927 out of 1,504 instances of *home* are used in an emotional sense, something akin to the word *Heimat* in German, while just under a third (461 occurrences) are used in a more neutral sense to signify house, as in "I have been teaching the children at home or I leave home at 7 every day."

Given that the German corpus is significantly larger than its Irish counterpart, this suggests that even when discounting for semantic differences, the emotional sense of *home* is used significantly more among the Irish. For comparative purposes, we discounted instances of home meaning house and focused only on those instances where home suggests an emotional connection. We also discounted those instances where home is being used to signify other concepts such as *home rule*, *home guard*, *religious home training*.

An analysis of the concordance lines showed that the language about home may define the place as being in America, back in Ireland or Germany, or somewhere else. In the German-language corpus there is an overall greater likelihood that writers speak about home being America. In two-thirds of the roughly 900 occurrences of *Heimat*, writers refer to America, whereas in only one-third they speak about Germany. In the Irish corpus, of the 927 occurrences of *home* being used in a similar sense to *Heimat*, 868 refer to Ireland and only 51 to America. These differences provide a staggering contrast between the Irish and German language of belonging – whereas German writers are more likely to conceptualize *home* as America, for the Irish, home is nearly always Ireland, conveying a deeper sense of emotional "here" and "there."

These findings also raise the question about the extent to which the relatively less frequent language about home in the German-speaking corpus is a way to compensate for the more difficult integration, or even a way to navigate the more hostile environment that migrants experienced in the US. This hostility, notably around and after World War I, indeed functioned as a driver for migrant attachment to places of origin – attachments that were re-created in the place of residence, but without a corresponding spike in the use of language about home (Kazal 2004; Wilkerson and Salmons 2008).

What means home? A meso-perspective

In a second section we demonstrate the ways in which the four main themes relating to home differ – and share similarities – in both corpora. Across both corpora moving from and arriving home are the most prominent topics, with Irish writers referring mostly to having left home, that is Ireland, and German writers referring to having arrived home, that is America. Nevertheless, the nostalgic remembering of home is similarly prominent across both corpora, whereas the Irish more frequently

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compare the place left behind with their new life in America. Enquiring about news from home and providing news is of similar importance in both corpora.

Theme 1: Arriving, leaving, and returning home

The prevailing theme in both letter collections combines verbs of motion ("go," "leave," "arrive," etc.) and *home* as the analysis of collocations demonstrates. In the Irish letters, the writers discuss their desire to return to their original home and speak about having left home. In both instances, home refers to Ireland. This occurs, albeit to a lesser extent, in the German-language corpus. Here, writers mention predominantly that they found or arrived at a new home. The frequent use of verbs of motion illustrates the mobility of home and the extent to which it is not engraved in one place. However, in the Irish corpus the preoccupation with the idea of returning home stands out and underlines an essential link that persists over time, unlike in the German-language letters, even though Irish migrants were the least likely to return compared to other European migrants (Baines 1995: 47).

Of the 927 occurrences of *home* being used in the sense of *Heimat* in the Irish corpus, 281 are directly preceded by a verb of movement, most frequently *go* (142 occurrences), followed by *leave* (57 occurrences) (Table 2). In the German-language corpus we find a total of 894 instance of *Heimat* with a rather dispersed use of verbs of motions (Table 3). This diversity of movement verbs indicates that writers arrived, found, and wanted to explore their new home in America.

There are relatively few references to "arriving" or "getting" home in the Irish corpus (17 occurrences). In these instances, the writer typically speaks about the difficulty of returning to Ireland (such as "if people could get home again easily as they can come here there would not be so many people in America.") or they enquire about the safe arrival of friends and relatives (such as "let me know if he has got home yet."). However, references to "going" or "returning" home are much more common (165 instances). In all these occurrences home refers to Ireland and in the majority of cases the writer describes their strong desire to one day return. In the remaining 161 occurrences, "going" or "returning" home is a future event ("we have all made up our minds to go home again."), a possibility ("I think I will go home next winter.") or an imagined return ("if I were to go home now I suppose I would not know more than one half of the people.").

The German corpus differs significantly in that regard. Overall there are 133 instances where writers speak about the "arrival" home or *to* "arrive" home, but they use a great variety of verbs of movement to that effect (Table 3). Only five use *Heimat* to refer to Germany, though not to speak about their own arrival to Germany but of someone else from Germany arriving in America (such as in "It gave me great pleasure to see and speak to someone from my old home once again."[17]). The 32 instances of "leaving" home are mostly about leaving Germany, primarily to discuss the painful separation from friends and family or the difficult departure (such as "Half a year has now passed since I left my home in tears and pain. Those days were the most painful of my life."). Lastly, the 82 instances of *returning* home all refer to Germany as *Heimat*. In those instances, writers confirm

[17]We translated the quotations, trying to maintain their original style whenever possible.

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

Table 2. Verbs of movement around home, Irish corpus

Verb	Raw	Normalized per 100 instances of home	Examples
go	142	15.32	you talk of me not being able go home now annie I would be as willing to go **home** as you are but I am placed in a position now were I ever so willing that I could not comply with it
leave	57	6.15	a great number of those who came this year will wish they never had left **home** as they will be terribly disappointed, indeed several who have come round the Cape have gone home
come	36	3.88	Now Engaged in it untill the tenth of February ensuing. Again which time if God permits Me days I intend to come **home**. Not with any other view than through the regard I have to see you all once More
return	23	2.48	she wishes you to let her friends know that she is well and she talks some of returning **home** but i presume she will get married and so prevent her
get	14	1.51	this is not the country that it is represented to be at all. If people could get **home** again easily as they can come here there would not be so many people in America today
arrive	3	0.32	he i received A letter from him a short time Ago informing me that he had arived **home** in 16 days after leaving here the mentioned to me that some of their friends was glad to see them
bring	2	0.21	to work in either England or Scotland I might not have a bit better fortune their nor that would – never bring me **home** I would like to see my friends once more The way things look now I will not see them for sometime

their emotional link to those left behind. This is similar to instances of "go home" and "return home" in the Irish letters, but occurs less frequently in the German letters (a relative frequency of 9 per hundred words in the German-language corpus versus 18 in the Irish).

Although it is unlikely that writers of letters during the nineteenth century will ever return (Gmelch 1980: 135), the notion of a reunion is cultivated through the Irish letters, with phrases such as "if I go home" and "when I go home" to describe a hypothetical future in which family and friends are again reunited in Ireland. Expressing an intention to return demonstrates a commitment to familial roles and reinforces family bonds. Only 20 occurrences of "go home" in the Irish letters explicitly state that returning home is not possible, usually because of health or financial reasons. These instances are insightful because they express something that is presumably already known between writer and recipient, but is rarely said. In contrast, while the German writers discuss their desire to once again see Germany, they are eager to emphasize that this is merely for short-term visits and to see family. Overwhelmingly, they reject the idea of returning for real, speaking to the fundamentally different migration experience of those who have left from German-speaking Europe.

Table 3. Verbs of movement around home, German-language corpus

Verb	Raw	Normalized per 100 instances of Heimat	Examples	
besuchen (to visit)	14	1.56	Sollte uns dann das Glück hold sein, so werden mir in einigen Jahren als reiche Leute unsere **Heimat** wieder besuchen können Während der letzten Jahre, habe ich lange die stille Hoffnung gehegt, die liebe Entschlafene, sowie Euch Alle einmal in Eurer Heimat zu besuchen, und persönlich kennen zu lernen, doch es hat wohl nicht so sollen sein, denn mit meinem Besuch bei Euch steht es jetzt schlecht	If luck favors us then, we will be able to visit our **home** once again in a few years as rich people Over the last few years, I have long harbored the silent hope of visiting the departed lady and all of you in your **home** and getting to know you personally, but it was not meant to be, because my visit to you is now at an en
ankommen (to arrive)	8	0.89	Glücklich und wohlbehalten bin ich wieder in meiner **Heimat** angekommen. Wenn euch daher mein Schreiben so gesund antrifft, wie es mich verlassen, soll es mich herzlich freuen Am 25. Oktober sind wir übergesiedelt und gesund und wohlbehalten in unserer neuen Heimat angekommen, wo wir, so Gott will, auch unser Leben beschließen werden	I have arrived back **home** happy and safe and sound. So if my letter finds you as healthy as it left me, I will be delighted We moved on 25 October and arrived safe and sound in our new **home**, where, God willing, we will end our lives
aufschlagen (to arrive)	5	0.56	von einer Stadt zur anderen habe aber noch keine bessere und gesündere Stadt gefunden als Louisville und so habe ich mich jetzt entschlossen meine **Heimat** hier aufzuschlagen, und so denke ich wenn es euch recht ist unseren Briefwechsel ungestört fortzusetzen	from one city to another, but I have not yet found a better and healthier city than Louisville, and so I have now decided to make my **home** here, and so I think, if it is all right with you, to continue our correspondence undisturbed
finden (to find)	10	1.12	So hast Du in Deutschland Dein Amerika, ich in Amerika meine **Heimat** gefunden ich habe hier eine neue **Heimat** gefunden wo ich geliebt und geachtet werde, selbst die Nähe der Wildnis der rohen Indianer wo sich selten Deutsche mit vertragen können reicht mir als Zeichen	So you have found your America in Germany, I have found my **home** in America I have found a new **home** here where I am loved and respected, even the proximity of the wilderness of the raw Indians where Germans can rarely get along is enough for me as a sign
gehen (to go)	6	0.67	ganz ohne Schmerzen, ohne irgend eine Krankheit, und, ja die gute Mutter war bereit zum sterben, sie ging gerne zu ihrer **Heimat**, zum Vater, zu der ewigen Wonne	without any pain, without any illness, and, yes, the good mother was ready to die, she gladly went to her **home**, to her father, to eternal bliss

(*Continued*)

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

Table 3. (*Continued*)

Verb	Raw	Normalized per 100 instances of Heimat	Examples	
gründen (to found)	8	0.89	auf dem bekannten Schiff Ana Elise, welches bestimmt uns über die Wellen des großen Ozeans schleudern nach den Landen wo wir unsere **Heimat** gründen wollen Dass ich nicht mehr in Newport bin das hat Dir der Schwager schon geschrieben, ich habe mir jetzt wieder eine neue **Heimat** gegründet am Saginaw Fluss ich denke Du wirst auch schon von den reichen Salzquellen welche man vor einigen Jahren entdeckt hat gelesen haben	on the well-known ship Ana Elise, which will surely carry us over the waves of the great ocean to the lands where we want to found our **home** The brother-in-law has already written to you that I am no longer in Newport, I have now founded a new **home** on the Saginaw River, I think you will also have read about the rich salt springs that were discovered a few years ago
suchen (to search)	8	0.89	Viele Leute, die früher dort sehr reich und wohlhabend waren, kamen jetzt arm nach Oregon und suchten sich da eine neue **Heimat** ich Euer Schreiben erwartet habe, könnt Ihr Euch nicht denken, denn ehe ich weiter wanderte in die weite Welt, um uns eine neue **Heimat** ein neues Vaterland zu suchen, wollte ich doch gern erst Nachricht von Euch haben	Many people who used to be very rich and prosperous there now came to Oregon poor and looked for a new **home** there You can't imagine that I was expecting your letter, because before I traveled on into the wide world to look for a new **home**, a new fatherland, I wanted to hear from you first
verlassen (to leave)	10	1.12	Wie mir in Texas weiter gefällt, ganz gut, ich habe in Deutschland Glück gehabt, in meiner neuen **Heimat** hat er mir nicht verlassen, durch die ganze Zeit bin ich gottlob gesund Wer in Deutschland einmal das Glück hat in Deutschland mit dem vollen Geldsack geboren zu sein, braucht seine **Heimat** nicht verlassen oder sein Herz müßte durch den dort herrschenden politischen Druck nach Freiheit schnappen	As I continue to like it in Texas, quite well, I have been lucky in Germany, in my new **home** he has not left me, through all this time I am thank God healthy Once you are lucky enough to be born in Germany with a full purse, you don't need to leave your **home** or your heart will have to gasp for freedom due to the political pressure there

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

Theme 2: Remembering home

The theme of remembering home is apparent in both corpora and it is nearly equally prominent. In the Irish letters there are 99 occurrences (a relative frequency of 11 per hundred instances of "home") where the writer explicitly remembers a person, place, event, or experience from Ireland. In the German-language corpus there are 115 instances (a relative frequency of 13 per hundred) that qualify as remembering home.

There are different ways in which the Irish writers remember home (Table 4). Most typically, the verbs "remember" or "remind" are used to introduce a specific memory (47 occurrences). In these instances, the writers explicitly state that they are, or have been, reflecting on their previous life in Ireland. Remembering unites writer and recipient through shared experiences and helps to reassure the recipient both that the writer has not changed and that the recipient has not been forgotten.

Table 4. Typical patterns for expressing a longing for home, Irish corpus

Phrase	Raw	Normalized per 100 instances of home	Example
Remembering home	47	5.07	In fact it caused me to shed tears I can hardly say of joy or sorrow it reminded me so much of **home** I thought I just saw you all even the very trees & shrubs were brought up before me
Imagining home	14	1.51	I am always glad to See beautiful Spring, how I would enjoy being **home** and see how grand everything looks there but I can hope. I was very much surprised to hear Some of the News you sent me
Desire for home	13	1.40	i wish i never came to new york it is a hell upon erth i wish i was **home** once more i am Dreaming all the time of home i think there is some thing rong with My mother or mebey my famely or
Thinking of home	12	1.29	I hope you will try and be very happy and enjoy yourself do not worry about us here. I am always lonely and thinking of **home** at xmas you have Maggies home and you will not mind so much
Homesick-ness	7	0.75	I dont know whether I can answer them all at present or not you wanted to know if I was **home** sick I can only say that I am and has been ever since I have been out here
Dreaming of home	2	0.21	I should go home and see all of my old friends but I reckon the best I can do is to dream of **home** and sometimes take a quick trip to that place about the hours of midnight and return in time

In 14 occurrences the writer "imagines" being back home in Ireland again. This typically involves recalling and describing specific experiences such as "the landscape in Springtime" or "the prayers we used to say." In a further 13 occurrences, the writer states a "desire" to be home (such as "I wish I was home."). In other occurrences, the writer "thinks" of home (12 instances) or dreams of home (2 instances) – specifically people, places, and nature. Finally, there are seven instances where the writer describes

Table 5. Typical patterns for expressing a longing for home, German-language corpus

Phrase	Raw	Normalized per 100 instances of Heimat	Example	
denken (to think)	16	1.79	die Zeit vergeht zwar schnell aber was man einmal im Gedächtnis vergisst man nicht so leicht wieder ich habe gar oft an die Alte **Heimat** gedacht, es vergeht keine Woche wo ich nicht einmal zurück dachte an euch, wäre auch schon einmal auf Besuch nach Deutschland gekommen Obschon ich schon 23 Jahre in Amerika bin so denke ich doch gerne der lieben **Heimath**, wo meine Wiege gestanden und wo ich trotz mancher Entbehrungen eine fröhliche Jugend verlebte	Time passes quickly but what you remember once you don't forget so easily I have often thought of the old **home**, not a week goes by where I don't think back to you, I would have come to Germany for a visit once too Although I have been in America for 23 years, I still like to think of my dear **home**, where my cradle was and where I spent a happy youth despite many hardships
vergessen (to forget)	8	0.89	Ihr werdet Euch wundern von mir zu hören, aber ich bin so schreibfaul geworden, dass ich sogar meine liebe **Heimat** vergesse Die alte **Heimat** mit ihren frohen und traurigen Erinnerungen, Eurer Liebe, nie werde ich es vergessen	You will be surprised to hear from me, but I have become so lazy about writing that I even forget my dear **home** The old **home** with its happy and sad memories, your love, I will never forget it
erzählen (to tell)	5	0.56	wenn wir des Abends zu Hause kommen erzählen wir uns Was von der alten guten **Heimat**, denn wir sind beide bei C. Hecht in Logis Kulenbrock, die hat uns den Brief gleich gebracht und hat uns etwas von unsere alte **Heimat** erzählt. Wir haben Schuld, daß wir Euch nicht eher geschrieben haben	When we get **home** in the evening, we tell each other about the old good home, because we are both at C. Hecht in Logis Kulenbrock, who brought us the letter straight away and told us something about our old **home**. It's our fault that we didn't write to you sooner

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

missing or longing for home. A change in season often seems to trigger feelings of nostalgia and homesickness for the Irish. Overwhelmingly, home is regarded in positive, nostalgic, and sentimental terms. The imagery is often an idealized snapshot of life in Ireland before migration, captured and instilled in the writer's imagination.

Looking at the German-language letters it is striking that the writers tend to be on average much less nostalgic. The most frequent verb used in the context of *Heimat*, "to think", expresses a cognitive link, but not an emotional stance (Table 5). The examples illustrate that the writers acknowledge regularly thinking about the place left behind, occasionally in the context of nostalgic reference to one's childhood, especially as the time spent in America grows. References to *beloved Heimat* become more frequent in older age, as family members back home fall ill and the migrants feel the distance and difficulty to travel back.

A second frequent theme relating to memories of home is expressed through the term "forget," which conveys fears of being forgotten or mentioning how fellow Germans in America have forgotten about their *Heimat*. In some rare instances writers themselves acknowledge that they are in the process of forgetting family and friends back home, whereas the most frequent purpose is to reassure the recipients that they are not forgotten. The practice of preserving memories about Germany is conveyed through the term "to tell." This verb either signifies the request to talk about home or the letters contain instances where migrants have gathered and talked about home. It is especially common for those who live with fellow German-speakers from their village of origin to mention that they preserve their memories of home.

The emotional stance to articulate memories of home take different forms between the Irish and the German-language collections. Whereas the Irish, in the memory of the places left behind underline their desire to return, this is largely absent in the German letters. Even if home is an emotional memory for the German writers, they tend to be clear about the fact that they do not strive for a return.

Theme 3: Comparing home, Heimat*, and the New World*

In both corpora, comparisons between home and the New World provide a common point of reference for writer and recipient. While explicit comparisons are relatively frequent in the Irish letters (139 occurrences, normalized frequency of 15), they tend to occur less often in the German letters (29 occurrences/3). Such comparisons allow the writers to speak about American life and culture without alienating the recipient. Typical points of comparison include weather, daily life, work conditions, and food. Comparisons bridge the distance between writer and recipient, providing a topic of conversation that both participants can relate to, though they sometimes emphasize differences in experience or perception that must surely have created tension. One such recurring theme is the "American work ethics." Embedded within this is the notion that life in America is tough and that people work much harder when compared with their Irish or German counterparts. In a letter to his brother, Edward Hanlon writes, "for every cent you make, here in a store is not like home you have got to work hard from 8 oc in the morng until six oc at night, & there is no laying around the counter or sitting on chair"[18] (18.02.1876

[18]Quotations from the Irish letters are given in their original, including the historic spelling.

Hanlon-Hanlon). Here, work life in America directly contrasts to similar work in Ireland, which the writer perceives to be much easier.

A second recurring theme in the Irish letters relates to social mobility and the notion that America is an equalizer with social hierarchies of home carrying less weight. Rather, a person is judged not by their profession or social status, but by their work ethic and character. Social mobility is possible in America in ways unimaginable in Ireland. In a letter to his brother, Andrew Greenlees writes, "customs are entirely different here from what they are at home you would not find so many grades in society for instance clergymen at home are respected and looked upon as superior or a grade higher in society than farmers & so also physicans, lawers &c but here character makes the man not the profession he follows" (30.03.1857 Greenlees-Greenlees). America, then, represents progress, fairness, and possibility, while Ireland represents tradition, inequality, and lack of choice.

In the German-language corpus, comparisons are often implicit in the first theme of "moving" home, when an assumption is that the home in America is more desirable. But there are also direct comparisons, most strikingly when writers emphasize the greater openness associated with American society, similar to the Irish: "A person, if healthy, can make himself a home here in America easily and quicker than outside" (28.03.1869 Birkner-Sydow). Others contrast the abundance in American society with the scarcity they had experienced before migration: "Believe me it's much better to live here than in my old home we have no food worries good food and enough work, although everything is expensive" (10.12.1855 Nübling-Nübling).

Reflecting on the migrant's individual trajectory, other comparisons underline how difficult it is to arrive in the US, warning about the fact that "only 1 out of 99" are successful (27.07.1859 Reulecke-Welcker). Developing on the increased possibility for economic ascent, migrants stressed that there was no need to leave Germany, if only one was wealthy enough and could cope with the political oppression: "Anyone who is lucky enough to have been born in Germany with a full purse does not need to leave their home unless his heart would have to gasp for freedom due to the political pressure prevailing there" (without date, Arndt-Schipper).

Theme 4: News from and for home

The final theme relates to the exchange of information. Here, *home* is typically used in formulaic expressions such as "I am happy/anxious/glad" + "to hear/receive" + "news from home" or "I received/got" + "news/a letter" + "from home." There are 70 occurrences of *home* being used in this way in the Irish corpus (a normalized frequency of 7). In these instances, the writers typically speak about news they have already received, such as "he was telling all the news from home" or, significantly, news they have not received, such as "I have not got a paper from home for months." We also see instances where the writer expresses anxiety about not receiving letters: "I am always anxious to hear from home" (29.04.1836 Carson-Carson). While formulaic in nature, these references to, and requests for, news from home are crucial in maintaining transatlantic family relationships. Often large chunks of the letter are taken up with detailed accounts of mostly social, but also

political, events taking place in America and Ireland and letters typically close with a request for papers, letters, or news from home.

Enquiring about the situation back in Germany is a similarly frequent theme within the German-language letters (70 occurrences, normalized frequency of 8). There are also three major themes in relation to news – namely, receiving news, waiting for it, and being worried about news.

Discussing how they felt when receiving news provides an occasion for the writers to reconnect with the people left behind. It is by and large the letters that are the vehicle for the relationship between the two worlds, which underlines the authenticity of a statement such as "I am happy every time I receive a letter from my dear home, as I was able to be with you once again, my dear brothers" (19.09.1886 Kunz-Preuß). But receiving news had a potentially disturbing component – for instance, when the death of family members back home was announced or the economic difficulties that those who have not migrated suffered.

Waiting for and requesting news is frequent. With letters sometimes taking weeks to arrive or getting lost, the writers in America request to hear from "the distant sweet home." It is not uncommon for letters to start with a statement about the long time that writers have not heard anything from home – such statements provide insights into the social practice associated with the letters when writers mention their discussion with German-speaking neighbors to get to know whether these had received any news or their attempts to locate missing letters.

The last theme, worries about home, comes up most strongly in times of war and crisis. Being cut off from immediate access to events in Europe, writers refer to information that circulated within the German-speaking communities, either its newspapers or other letters. The uncertainty comes across strongly in those moments and sometimes along with very detailed information about local circumstances.

The role of networks in the experiences of migration: Two micro-perspectives

In the following we examine references to home in two letter collections that are particularly rich in detail and contextual information. Across both we identify the critical role that migrant networks such as religious groups, family and friends, or social organizations play in the trajectory of the newcomers, their economic success as well as their social integration. One of the most decisive networks relates to the church, which underlines divergence in migration trajectories. In their experience of the contrast between the "old" and the "new" world, both sets of writers express their concerns about the risks that are part of life in America and the materialism, but appreciate the opportunities that make them feel at home. Political activism, moreover, strongly relates to naturalization as well as pre-migration political involvement.

Hall and Black: Making a home in America

There are 37 letters in the Hall and Black collection (25,353 words), the majority of which are by John Hall (12 letters), his sister Maggie (10 letters), and his brother-in-law, Maggie's husband, Lytle Black (11 letters). The letters date from November 1888 to March 1891. John Hall, a qualified solicitor from a middle-class Presbyterian family, migrated from Dungannon, County Tyrone, Ireland to McDonald, Washington

County, Pennsylvania, around 1888. His brother-in-law, Lytle Black, migrated to Chicago soon after and was eventually followed by his wife Maggie and their children.

There are 67 occurrences of *home* across the Hall and Black letters (an average normalized frequency of 0.26 occurrences – similar to the corpus average). John Hall uses the term most prominently (normalized frequency of 0.39), followed by Maggie (0.24), and then Lytle (0.19). The first letter in the Hall/Black collection is from John to his sister Maggie, then still in Ireland. John's experience of America is not positive. Unable to find work as a solicitor until he obtains American citizenship, he does short-term manual labor in the mines. Rarely able to cover his expenses, he warns

> my impression is that the ideas of people at home about America are all a mistake – you ask me how I like this country and for my candid opinion as to your coming out here Well to the first I answer that I do not like it at all and to the second I say that any person who can live at home at all had better stay there (27.11.1888).

Of the 25 instances of *home* in John's letters, 10 are used to compare Ireland with America. Typically, John describes a very challenging life compared to Ireland: "if I worked half as hard at home (if it was only gathering rags) as I have to do here it would be a good deal better for me – but of course if people writing home won't tell the truth but will give glowing accounts of everything" (27.11.1888).

John's qualifications appear to be worthless without American citizenship and no capital: "a man coming to this country without capital can only earn a salary the same as he can in the old country and counter hands are not very well paid here and it doesn't make any difference who you are" (8.11.1889). What is unusual about John, compared to other migrants, is that he appears to have very few friends from Ireland in McDonald. Additionally, issues around alcohol are a continuing theme in the correspondence, presenting a young disillusioned and isolated man. Receiving news from home and remembering home helps John to maintain a connection with his previous life. On 24th June 1889 he writes, "I wrote two or three letters home a good while ago ... I am anxiously waiting every day but expect some of them will soon take a notion to drop me a line."

Despite John's advice not to migrate, Lytle Black (John's brother-in-law) is settled in Chicago by mid-September 1889. Lytle's experience of America is altogether different. A groceries salesman by trade, he immediately finds work for 10 dollars per week. Lytle embeds himself into the Presbyterian Church community and is regularly "dining with the Paster and spending manny pleasent evenings with members of the congregation." Importantly, unlike John's correspondence, in Lytle's letters there are no references to remembering home and there are no references to returning. Lytle fully embraces his new life in Chicago and speaks of America only in positive ways: "this country seems to agree very well with me I never had better health in my life I feel a new man" (12.9.1889).

By May 1890, Lytle has saved enough money to bring Maggie and their three children to Chicago. Like Lytle, Maggie's first impressions of Chicago are very positive and she frequently compares life in Ireland and America throughout her correspondence: "rent is as reasonable as at home dress materials are much the same but it is the making up that is expensive" (16.5.1890). However, as with her husband, there is little in her letters in terms of remembering or returning home, and in the

https://doi.org/10.1017/ssh.2025.2

two instances where Maggie mentions returning to Ireland, she deviates from the norm and emphasizes that this is not possible: "I still feel interested in home and think of you all a great deal & often wish I could take a run out to see you all, but cannot" (11.9.1890). John and Lytle's letters reveal very different experiences of, and relationships to, home. John's letters are typical of the corpus findings insofar as he is preoccupied with thoughts of returning home and is anxious to receive news from home. Lytle's letters, in contrast, are somewhat atypical in that there are no instances of remembering home or thoughts of one day returning home. Although Maggie shares her husband's view that a return to Ireland will not happen, her letters at least show a desire to do so.

Treutlein-Treutlein: A politically engaged migrant in America and Germany

There are 83 letters in the Treutlein-Treutlein collection, mainly sent from Eduard Treutlein back to his family. On average, these are 920 words long, when the average length in the corpus is 590. Eduard left via Hamburg or Bremen around 1863 at the age of 25. As a Catholic, he eventually found a stable job at a Catholic school after several years of economic difficulties. Members of the family settle in the Midwest and the letters in the collection are from across Illinois and Wisconsin.

For his arrival in America, Eduard's network of German family members proves critical. When he arrives in *Pennsylvanien* he is hosted by them and starts his butchery with a fellow German (21.06.1868). Despite this promising departure, he lacks economic success. This observation is an opportunity to talk about the cultural differences between America and Germany: the relevance of luck and the speed at which a situation might change, much unlike back home. Financial ruin, in his early years in America, is always around the corner and when he rents a *Dampfmühle* with a German friend, this investment also fails (16.11.1872). Eventually he settles for nearly a decade as a teacher with a decent salary at a Catholic school at the age of 35, with many of the students being of Irish descent (16.11.1872). His letters nevertheless underline that economic loss in America is always a risk, no matter how stable a position seems, as during the economic crisis of 1893, when his brother Theodor Treutlein loses his highly qualified job and nearly all savings (28.9.1893, 25.9.1893). At the same time, all members of the Treutlein family admire the economic possibilities, marvel about the size of stores, and the speed at which one integrates the labor market, unlike in Germany (6.11.1893).

Across his letters, German gatherings are mentioned, a practice that keeps alive the imagined link back home and establishes horizontal networks (22.10.1868). The proximity of German family members around his own place of residence transplants his understandings of home from Germany to the US. Meanwhile, the practical importance of the German networks persists, notably with German acquaintances being lodged at his house (4.1.1871). But also in cultural terms the German identity is cultivated through music, brewing, by going to the *Biergarten* and the church (26.05.1871). Even after 15 years in America, Eduard continues to underline the role of other German families to assess important decisions such as a change of jobs but also for prayer (1.3.1877). Throughout his life, he remains deeply integrated in German Catholic networks. Also his children continue to benefit from their German ancestry. Elise Treutlein, for instance, trains as a German teacher and speaks with great satisfaction about her opportunities (13.3.1894).

Eduard is also an active political commentator. This illustrates how quickly he integrates his new home, while he stays updated on developments in Germany. He provides a long commentary on the presidential elections 1868, which saw the Republican Ulysses S. Grant win against Horatio Seymour:

> For the First Party [Republican] are, on average, all the educated property owners, for the other party [Democrats] are all the muckers and religious fanatics and most of the Germans, all the stupid farmers and few educated tradesmen, the bigoted Irishmen of Catholic religion and almost the whole South. How it is that the Catholic element always goes hand in hand with conservatism, just here in America, that I do not know (22.10.1868).

As he comments on American politics, he remains interested to hear about events in Germany alongside international politics more general such as the role of Tsarist Russia in Eastern Europe or the Spanish-American War (21.05.1869). A key political event intensifies his emotional ties to Germany is the German victory over France in 1871, which leads him to claim, "The Latin race has played out and Germanism is now the main factor in Europe and will be in America in 2 to 3 generations also." Events in Europe are directly transposed on to American conditions (5.1.1871), and he underlines hopes for solidarity among fellow Germans (26.5.1871).

Despite all participation in American life and the unquestionable belonging to America, he underlines his emotional ties to Germany, in particular his family (2.3.1877). Most striking occasions in that regard are weddings, funerals, and anniversaries, when we find detailed affirmations of how in America his family celebrated, for instance, his brother's wedding (21.05.1869). Occasional episodes trigger his memory, and he would then write in greater detail about how he remembers his German childhood (1.3.1877).

He furthermore cultivates a profound dislike for what he perceives being the American greed, as every action seems purely motivated by money. He complains that this *materialism* leads to a society full of lies, to the point that Eduard wonders how the term "honor" could even make its way into the English language (26.05.1871). But he is aware that he himself increasingly turns into an American and describes him accepting jobs that he barely feels qualified for ("only an American can do that") (21.12.1873). Moreover, the economic reality in America is one of constant insecurity, unlike the perceived stability in Germany (31.12.1894).

The long road to finding home in the New World

When people move, they take notions of home to their new place of residence. The language about home then provides one indication for the integration that migrants experienced and a rare perspective from the inside, an important complement to analyses focused on statistical data. Migrants, when they write about their sense of belonging to "here" and "there" for those who have not migrated, create an important part of the transnational field during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. A first finding from this article is therefore how the practice of transnationalism among ordinary citizens precedes the rise of new media and instantaneous communication by decades.

The relative difference in the use of home between the German-language and Irish letters is staggering and points to deeper underlying integration experiences. The language about home reveals processes of socio-cultural integration of migrant groups and the balance between the place of residence and the place of origin. Indeed, a more far-reaching integration into the New World does not mean that migrants cut their ties to the places left behind. The Irish writers are throughout the corpus more preoccupied with the idea of returning home to Ireland, despite both parties knowing that this was very unlikely to ever happen. The expression of an emotional bond between writer and recipient is rare in the German-language letters, where writers affirm to have found their new home, even though they still remember the old home.

These differences, a second key finding from the article, also point to how different factors that push migrants out of their place of residence lead to different integration trajectories. The Irish thought of themselves as being in a temporary and "involuntary exile" as their exodus was caused by the famine (Miller 1985: 280), whereas the German-speaking migrants quickly considered America to be their new home. The emotional bonds the Irish express reflect on the significant differences in the share of migration relative to the population in Germany and Ireland. From Ireland, up to 14 percent of the population left during peak periods (1851–70, 1881–90), a value that on the national average reached 3 percent for German-speaking Europe (Baines 1995: 10). Amidst a general mindset of leaving among the Irish population, migrants felt an urge to reassure recipients back in Europe about them not having been forgotten.

In addition to these informative differences in frequency, contrasts in the content of what home signifies between the Irish and the Germans is a crucial third finding. Throughout the nineteenth century, the multiple meanings of home and the fact that it is not primarily delimited by geography become obvious. Moreover, for the writers home is experienced in migration – whereas the Germans talk primarily about how they appropriated a new home in migration, for the Irish the language around home is evocative of loss and remembrance.

Nevertheless, the Irish are known to have socially and economically integrated into the American mainstream at an altogether higher rate, whereas the integration of Germans was significantly more protracted. The letters give insights into the German-speaking networks in the US that helped the migrants in quickly finding a home among fellow Germans in the place of destination, whereas in the case of the Irish an emotional link with Ireland was maintained for much longer. A fourth key finding that emerges from the historical perspective is its resonance with ongoing debates in the social sciences and the public regarding integration and transnationalism. The letters demonstrate the extent to which conditions in the host society – such as available ethnic support networks – may help newcomers feel at home and eventually ease their transition into society, but also how events back in the country of origin may reactivate links with home. Even the supposedly quickly integrated Irish maintained a dense transnational network and integrated into America in social, cultural, and economic terms, without cutting their ties to a quickly depopulating country. This demonstrates how migrant communities, even those that seem proximate to the host society, or those who do not have a strong national identity backed by their place of origin, can maintain a transnational identity.

The article also demonstrates the value of combining different methods and why for detailed historical analysis a qualitative interpretive approach remains necessary. The linguistic macro- and meso-level analysis provide insights into patterns and trends across the two collections and over time, but it is the micro-level perspective that unpacks the shared social realities that link with the language contained in the letters, pointing to the role of friendship and ethnic networks, neighborhood dynamics, economic opportunities or the desire to receive news from home. It is also through this close reading in the context of the identified linguistic patterns that we can appreciate the contradictory reality of America for the European newcomers and how they assess a contradictory society that is demanding and marred with economic risks, while being at the same time applauded for its opportunities.

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Cite this article: Krawatzek, Félix and Emma Moreton (2025) "Finding home in Irish and German migrant letters: A comparative analysis," *Social Science History*. doi:10.1017/ssh.2025.2