Abstract
As 225 women sailed out of Cork harbour in October 1834 bound for a new life in the colonies, a cartoon depicting their imagined experiences was published in London. It comprised a sequence of ten small scenes which depicted the voyage as a terrifying experience, to the recently-arrived women living on the edges of society in an imagined industrial city of Australia. The realities of the women’s emigration experiences were vastly different to this portrayal and this paper considers the extent to which perceptions of female migration impacted on the lives of the women participants.

Liz Rushen’s work focuses on the 1830s to the 1850s. They were decades in which decisive changes took place in the demography of the eastern colonies of Australia. Potential emigrants were attracted to the British government’s schemes, but there were long-lasting tensions between the government’s commitment to imperialism and the wishes of influential colonists for self-determination. The women were caught in the middle. Immigration to Australia is a process which is on-going and as contentious today as it was in colonial times.