There are two kinds of people in the world, says Kerby Miller: those who instinctively love bagpipe music and those who don’t. In the 19th century, that instinct became part of America’s heritage when millions of Irish immigrants poured into the United States.

*Out of Ireland*, a new book Miller co-wrote with filmmaker Paul Wagner, is a moving portrayal of two centuries of Irish emigration.

Today, more than 40 million Americans claim Irish descent, and the impact of Irish immigration has been felt in almost every sphere of American life and culture. Industrial pioneer Henry Ford, labor leaders George Meany and “Mother” Jones, athletes Babe Ruth and Jack Dempsey, writers Edgar Allan Poe, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Flannery O’Connor and film stars Spencer Tracy, Grace Kelly, Jimmy Cagney, John Wayne and Jack Nicholson all sprang from Irish stock. Ten American presidents — including Wilson, Kennedy and Reagan — have traced their ancestry back to Ireland.

In the 1850s alone, more than a million people came to America from “the Emerald Isle,” fleeing British oppression, poverty and famine. *Out of Ireland* is a sweeping historical epic personalized by the stories of several individual immigrants, using the letters they sent home describing their experiences in the New World. As such, the book also addresses the profound psychological consequences of emigration.

“I have everything that would tend to make life comfortable,” wrote Maurice Wolfe, a young Irish immigrant and a sergeant in the U.S. Army in 1870. “But still at night when I lay in bed, my mind wanders across the continent and over the Atlantic to the hills of Cratloe. In spite of all I can never forget home, as every Irishman in a foreign land can never forget the land he was raised in.”

Perhaps all the different nationalities who came to the United States from Europe, Ireland’s Catholics most forcefully and poignantly reflected the painful ambiguities of the immigrant experience,” Miller says. “The Irish tended to characterize themselves not as voluntary seekers of fortune or economic improvement but rather as sorrowful, unwilling exiles who were leaving Ireland involuntarily, forced out by powers beyond their control. Usually those forces were associated with Britain or with the Protestant landlord class.”

Unskilled and impoverished, the Irish arrived at a time when most Americans prided themselves on both their British ancestry and their Protestantism. Americans believed that Irish poverty was a sign of laziness, immorality, ignorance and superstition. Newspapers depicted the newcomers as violent and drunken subhumans, resembling apes.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Irish immigration is the high proportion of women who arrived, the vast majority of whom did not come as wives or accompanied by parents. During several decades, Irish female immigrants actually outnumbered males. The women found better employment opportunities than men, especially as domestic servants.

*Out of Ireland* draws upon Miller’s exhaustive research and his collection of more than 10,000 letters, diaries and memoirs of Irish immigrants. The text is further brought to life by 110 remarkable photographs and illustrations found in Irish and American archives.

Next spring PBS will air the documentary film *Out of Ireland*, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and directed by Wagner. The book is a companion to the film.

Wagner, who won an Oscar for a documentary in 1985, is a descendant of immigrants from southwest Ireland. He began working on the film project in the late 1980s, selecting Miller as his chief historical consultant and collaborator on the script.

The book and the film follow the same general storyline, but the book covers more ground and runs deeper and broader.

“I think for most Americans, even Irish Americans, the understanding of Irish immigration is fairly thin,” says Wagner. “Obviously we hope that we’re helping to change that, because the Irish story is a very American story, a very human story. When you’re talking about someone standing on the shore of any country, looking across the ocean and thinking about whether they have the courage to go across and start life all over again, and what that would mean — those are fundamental human issues that almost everyone’s ancestors had to face.”
Dixie City Jam
By James Lee Burke, AB ’59, MA ’60
367 pp. Hyperion. $22.95

Cajun detective Dave Robicheaux tangles with sinister nightclub owners in a tale involving a Nazi U-boat sunk 50 years ago off the Louisiana coast. Dixie City Jam, which quickly jumped on the New York Times best-sellers list, is the seventh in a series of novels featuring the colorful Robicheaux.

Dancing to a Black Man’s Tune: A Life of Scott Joplin
By Susan Curtis, MA ’81, PhD ’86
265 pp. University of Missouri Press. $26.95

In this interpretive biography, the author recounts the life of the great African-American ragtime composer whose musical genius helped break down racial barriers and led America to new cultural frontier. Joplin’s story is told within the context of America’s social and cultural evolution at the turn of the century.

Private Correspondences
By Trudy Lewis, assistant professor of English
196 pp. Northwestern University Press. $19.95

The narrator, a 15-year-old daughter of a state senator, receives an anonymous letter threatening her with rape and murder. As the story unfolds, the reader is confronted with the effects of male force and violence on women, as well as the complicity of both men and women in this violence. Lewis’ first novel is winner of the 1994 William Goyen Prize for Fiction.

En Divina Luz: The Penitente Moradas of New Mexico
By Michael Wallis, Arts ’69
144 pp. University of New Mexico Press. $39.95

The Penitente Brotherhood is a lay Catholic organization unique to the Southwest. Fiercely private and deeply pious, the Penitentes have been objects of intense curiosity ever since New Mexico became a tourist attraction. This book focuses on the buildings in which they meet and pray, and offers an intimate and respectful account of their religious observances. Wallis, who took careful measures to protect the privacy of the Penitentes, is the best-selling author of Route 66 and Pretty Boy.

Domesticity: A Gastronomic Interpretation of Love
By Bob Shacochis, BJ ’73, MA ’79
326 pp. Scribners. $23

In this collection of essays, the author muses about his enduring romance with his wife while he reflects on the social and cultural relevancy of what we eat and why we eat it. The essays are capped with serious recipes for food lovers. Shacochis is the author of Easy in the Islands, a collection of stories that won the National Book Award in 1985.

52 Ways to Re-connect, Follow Up, & Stay in Touch … When You Don’t Have Time to Network
By Anne Buber, BJ ’73, and Lynne Waymon
152 pp. Kendall/Hunt Publishing. $14.95

Buber and Waymon, who speak to corporate and association audiences nationwide on business networking, reveal their sensible and rewarding methods for refreshing and renewing relationships with business contacts.

For Our Beloved Country: American War Diaries from the Revolution to the Persian Gulf
Edited by Speer Morgan, professor of English, and Greg Michelson, MA ’78
400 pp. Atlantic Monthly Press. $27.50

This collection contains seven eyewitness accounts from seven different American wars. The diarists — including a bugler, a nurse and an ambulance driver — offer a new and fresh perspective on events with which readers may already be familiar. The book looks at a dimension of war that historians rarely cover — the life of the ordinary soldier. Morgan and Michelson edit The Missouri Review.

Walking with Wildflowers: A Field Guide to the St. Louis Area
By Karen S. Holler, BS Ed ’56
257 pp. University of Missouri Press. $22.50

Illustrated with full-color photographs, the down-to-earth guide provides assistance to both the novice and the advanced botanist in the recognition and appreciation of the flora of St. Louis. It is designed for use by individuals interested in planning their own wildflower walks.

Rising Waters: Reflections on the Year of the Great Flood
Edited by Walter Bargen, AB ’70, M Ed ’90, and Bob Dyer, AB ’61, MA ’66
61 pp. Pekitanou Publications. $6

Sometimes a natural disaster creates a river of new imagery. This anthology of poems and short stories offers imaginative interpretations of last year’s almighty flood. The 27 contributors are students, novelists, teachers and others, most of them from mid-Missouri.

Marriage Ain’t for Wimps: The Best Cartoons from Marriage Partnership
Edited by Ron R. Lee, BJ ’76

Marriage Partnership magazine premiered in 1988, and since that time the topic of marriage has been treated in a light-hearted fashion in its cartoons. This collection takes a look at the ordinary, everyday experiences that can bring a smile to a spouse’s face.

Other People’s Lives
By Catherine N. Parke, professor of English
63 pp. BlkMk Press. $9

Parke’s poetry has appeared widely in magazines including the Webster Review, Louisville Review, Poetry Canada and the Panhandler. This collection of poems touches upon the lives of familiar people, like Marilyn Monroe, and those forgotten.

The Whipping Boy
By Speer Morgan, professor of English
326 pp. Houghton Mifflin. $21.95

Set in the Oklahoma Territory of the 1890s, Morgan’s latest novel spins a yarn about three unlikely traveling companions — an aging hardware salesman, a beautiful woman with a mysterious past and a teen-age half-Indian orphan. Morgan is the author of the widely acclaimed Belle Starr. [8]

Story by Jim Kelty
Illustration by Deborah Zemke

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