'Forward For Our Homes!' Lyrical Expressions of Home Heard in Irish American Civil War Songs

As the United States reunited at the end of the American Civil War in 1865 and the nation began to look to its future reconciled prosperity, a grandmother sat 'in her rocking-chair' in New York City, 'relieved from work, each happy hour is spent'. She was Mrs. Malloy, mother to one Pat Malloy, the fictional Irishman depicted in two ballads produced during and after the conflict. Pat's mother appeared in the second ballad called *Return of Pat Malloy*. The final verse portrayed Mrs. Malloy sitting carefree in her chair in a house where 'her childer [children] pay the rint [rent]'. Her family surrounded her, including Pat Malloy's son, named 'young Pat' after his father. This older migrant to the United States now spent her days with her grandson 'on her knee' as she 'sings a good old Irish song' to him while he sits there. The ballad concludes with this scene, where 'she sings, and talks, and plays with him, both morning, noon and night', settled in her new residence.[1]

Placed in an American home setting, *Return of Pat Malloy* highlighted what the United States had come to represent to members of the Irish diaspora who resided in the nation in the middle of the nineteenth century. During the Civil War (1861-1865), some 200,000 Irish-born, and an even greater number of second and third generation Irish Americans fought for the Union and Confederate causes. Countless more experienced life on the home front as families resided in the warring states. The eponymous Pat Malloy who appeared in both *Pat Malloy* (c.1860) and *Return of Pat Malloy* had, according to the ballad lyrics, migrated 'from Ireland to America across the seas' to 'roam', work, send 'every shilling that I get' to his family over the Atlantic. Eventually, he returned to his birthplace to bring his fiancé Molly and his

[1] Unknown lyricist, *Return of Pat Malloy* (Boston, c.1865). All song and primary source quotations are in the original US-English spelling.

mother back to the United States at the end of the conflict.[2] Countless of his brethren did likewise, many of them migrating during Ireland's Great Famine years of 1845-1852, when approximately 1.5 million Irish migrants moved to North America. They were followed by steady waves of Irish men, women and children to American shores throughout the rest of the 1850s and 1860s. These migrant communities all worked, settled and fought in their new American homeland. Additionally, throughout this period, the experiences of this Irish American diaspora group were written into song.

This article will draw attention to one of the underlying sentiments heard in many of the Civil War ballads produced during the conflict by and about the Irish experience of living, serving and settling in the Union states in the mid-nineteenth century. Out of the approximately 11,000 songs written during the conflict, over 200 related directly and indirectly to the Irish involvement on the front-line and home front. Of these, several sang directly about how America had become an Irish home nation, and that its cities and regions were now homes to live in and to defend while Confederate secession threatened to break up the country.[3] As the war came to a close, these songs reflected how willing the Irish diaspora was to help build and shape

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[2] Unknown lyricist, *Pat Malloy* (Boston, c.1860). The songs cited here are gathered from archival collections and published wartime song-books held at the British Library (London), Boston Athenaeum (Boston), Library of Congress (Washington, D.C.), and Duke University (Durham, North Carolina). The author is grateful for funding from the Eccles Centre at the British Library and the Boston Athenaeum for access to their special collections to aid this research project.

[3] Unknown lyricists composed the majority of songs written during the American Civil War. Music hall and stage theatre performers, publishers, home-front citizens and mostly soldiers themselves penned wartime ballads, but often did not include biographical details on song-sheets or music scorebooks. The examples quoted in this article were written by both members of the Irish American diaspora and non-Irish Americans – all of whom contributed to the wider milieu of Irish songs and music in nineteenth century American singing culture. They were written for commercial and cultural reasons (as all contemporary American songs were), articulating wartime sentiments and viewpoints from a variety of standpoints. For analysis of the various types of wartime songs and music and the reasons behind their publication, see C. McWhirter, *Battle Hymns: The Power and Popularity of Music in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 2012).

the country after 1865. This article will show how Irish American Civil War songs reveal the fact that the United States had become home to the diaspora by the outbreak of the conflict. It will note how references to the American Union as a home nation appeared in wartime balladry, how they compared to personal individual articulations of the same concept, and how the fictional image of Mrs. Malloy singing in her New York home by the end of the war came about as her son and fellow countrymen and women aided in United States nation building in the late nineteenth century.

Irish American Home Identity in the United States

Irish American Civil War songs produced in the Union states articulated the expression of American home identity as part of their overall message of Irish loyalty to the nation on the battlefield and on the home front. One lyric in *War Song of the New-York 69th Regiment*, sung from the perspective of New York's Irish soldiers marching to war, gave the cry: 'Then forward! For our homes and altars, all we hold most dear'.[4] This rousing sentiment was designed to rally other members of the diaspora to fight and support the Union cause. Although such lyrics were only singing about one specific regiment, this view could be expressed by any soldier in either army, Union or Confederate, Irish or otherwise. They were marching forward to fight for and defend what they all held closest to them. Their homes and families mattered above all else. In wartime ballads, these families resided in American homes.

One fundamental aspect missing in Irish American historiography is the serious consideration that by the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the diaspora was well-established in the United States. Many immigrants had been in the country for

[4] Unknown lyricist, *War Song of the New-York 69th Regiment* (New York, 1861).

several years, decades and generations. Even the Famine migrants of the 1840s and 1850s had been resident for at least a decade before Confederate secession and fighting broke out. They established families and livelihoods for years before 1861. While they retained a sense of Irish cultural heritage, such as Mrs. Malloy teaching her grandson traditional Irish songs, they also expressed American identity because they had come to share an inherent association with the nation by the 1860s. Whilst national identity is personal and fluid, especially amongst immigrants, there has been too much of a sense in scholarship that the Irish fighting and living through the Civil War used the conflict to express various aspects of their 'dual' Irish identity and a developing American home identity. This has led a confused impression of the diaspora being Irish and being American, and simultaneously finding ways to articulate their Irishness and their Americanness.

For example, Lawrence J. McCaffrey argued that the Civil War 'gave Irish Americans an opportunity to prove their patriotism' by fighting and supporting respective Union and Confederate causes.[5] Bernard Aspinwall, however, stated that even before the war 'American patriotism was firmly established among Irish Americans'.[6] These two opinions create a binary position along a spectrum of the question: 'when did the Irish become American?' More recently, Christian Samito raised complex challenges to this sense of national identity articulation. He suggested, 'some Irish Americans gained a greater appreciation for their American identity'. Thus, the Irish in the United States 'increasingly felt they could be considered Americans'. It was, according to Samito, a long process of identity evolution in a 'climate' where the diaspora 'increasingly recognised the American component of

[5] L.J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Diaspora in America* (Bloomington, 1976), 95.
[6] B. Aspinwall, 'Irish Americans and American Nationality, 1848-66', in T. Gallagher and J. O'Connell (eds.), *Contemporary Irish Studies* (Manchester, 1983), p. 112.

their identity and allegiance'.[7] By extension, the diaspora recognised and demonstrated greater appreciation for their American homes, a sentiment enhanced during the Civil War.

As the song lyrics quoted in this article will illustrate, the Irish in the American Union during the Civil War fought and contributed to the cause because they were defending their home nation and were invested in their home nation's future. Through these lyrics, Irish American national identity formation came to the fore. It was an identity framed through a firm understanding of the United States as more of a home to them than their Irish birthplaces. This has implications for the way in which the Irish American diaspora understood its own cultural and national identity through the formation of lyrical constructs about being in, and contributing to, a new homeland. It also shows how migrant groups saw the United States as their home within a few years of their settlement, even during tumultuous periods of civil warfare.

The Lyrical Appearance of Home in Irish American Civil War Songs

The Irish who served and fought in the Union Army during the Civil War began depicting and singing about the United States as their home nation and place of residence from the earliest days of the conflict. In May 1861, members of the Irish-dominant 69th New York State Militia, formed by Irish-born and descended men from New York City's largest diaspora population, offered up their service to the Union cause. They did so after President Abraham Lincoln called for troops following Confederate secession and firing upon Fort Sumter, South Carolina, the previous month. Within days of mustering and preparing to march to the Union's defence, the

[7] C.G. Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era* (New York, 2009), pp. 112, 133.

ballad *Glorious 69th* was written in their honour. Its lyrics were to be sung from the perspective of one of the militia's Irish soldier members. Several lines described how he felt about leaving New York City. By extension, it described how he felt about leaving his home. Depicting the militia's mobilisation, march down Broadway through the city and embarkation onto boats that would sail southwards to the nation's capital of Washington D.C., the song's singing soldier offered up a 'Farewell unto New-York'.

In the very first weeks of the war, no one in American society could know how brutal the conflict was to become. Even so, the soldier sang of his understandable concern about possible death in battle while fighting, questioning: 'shall I never see it more?' Here, 'it' meant his home of New York City. He continued by describing how 'it fills my heart with pity, to leave its sylvan shore', a grand lyrical and sentimental expression that painted the city in a poetic, heartfelt light. This portrayal would have been understood and shared by many of New York's Irish residents who would have heard this song performed in the music halls, theatres and home-front settings where Civil War ballads gained most attention. Yet, for all the seeming lament about having to leave home to go to war, the singing *Glorious 69th* volunteer soldier told audiences that he was leaving because 'our President [Lincoln] commanded us to sail another way', namely towards the capital where the 69th New York State Militia arrived. They then took up a new temporary residence around Arlington Heights outside the city. From there, they defended Washington D.C. and prepared to face the Confederates in the first major engagement of the Civil War on 21 July 1861 at the First Battle of Bull Run, close to the nearby railway town of Manassas, Virginia.

The unknown lyricist of *Glorious 69th* could not have foreseen the outcome of this engagement when the ballad was penned in the weeks before it occurred, where

many of the militia fought bravely and some were either imprisoned, wounded or killed. Those who survived returned to New York City before the unit was subsumed into the newly established 69th New York Regiment, the founding part of the Union Army's official Irish Brigade, in the late summer of 1861. Considering the fact that this song was one of the very earliest produced in the conflict, and certainly one of the first about Irish fighters in this period, it is interesting to observe how its final verses actually included reference to a future image of returning soldiers and a postbellum reunited country. These lyrics focused on an expansion of the 'sylvan' impression heard earlier in the ballad about the home Irish-born and descended immigrants had made by 1861 in New York City specifically, and the United States more broadly. The song hoped that 'when the war ended, may Heaven spare our lives', soldiers 'then...will return to our children and our wives' on the home front. As the nation's peace was restored, in an image not so dissimilar to that of Pat Malloy's home scene with his son and his mother in her rocking chair, *Glorious 69th* concluded by describing how returning soldiers would 'embrace' their families 'in our arms…both night and day'. Furthermore, they would 'hope Secession is played out in all America!' and that civil conflict would not tear the nation apart again.[8] The fighting men of the Irish diaspora had done their duty to the country they resided in and would not leave their homes and loved ones anymore.

Glorious 69th articulated the idea that members of the 69th New York State Militia joined the war effort in 1861 because they were commanded to do so by President Lincoln and were obligated to serve at their leader's behest. The following year, one of several ballads written about the Irish Brigade, which included militia veterans, gave a further reason to Irish wartime service. Their motivation was

[8] Unknown lyricist, *Glorious 69th* (New York, 1861).

grounded in a fundamental association with the American Union itself and Irish immigrant adoption in the belief that the United States represented the best hope on earth, as Lincoln believed, for democratic republican liberty, peace, freedom and a flourishing home front. The *Irish Brigade*, written by a Kate C.M. and published in the Union-produced songbook *The Continental Songster*, presented the same sentiments heard throughout the collection, only this time with an Irish accent. Lyrics declared that 'the Union forever' was the diaspora's war cry, extolled by those fighting until their 'last dying breath' and by their family members.

The *Irish Brigade* also told the diaspora to 'let the Stars and the Stripes be henceforth your boast', with the flag both embodying the ideals of the nation and symbolising their American loyalty. This metaphor was emphasised further by the following line: '"And the Union forever", the Irishman's toast', a direct lyrical reference to *The Battle Cry of Freedom*.[9] This popular and widespread Union wartime anthem, written in 1862 by George F. Root, told Americans in the Northern states to 'Rally 'round the flag' and shout 'the Union forever! Hurrah, boys, hurrah!'[10] Kate C.M.'s lyrics reveal that the Irish were co-opting that same message of devotion to their American home nation because they too rallied around the Star-Spangled Banner.

Irish American Civil War songs produced throughout the conflict in the Union states often used the American national flag as the symbolic image of home, and they associated it with the ideals of the country that they adopted as their own. These lyrical articulations strengthened the bond Irish migrants had with the new homeland nation they had come to, enhanced by the wartime climate where these ideals were

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[9] K.C.M., *The Irish Brigade*, in *The Continental Songster: A Collection of New, Spirited, Patriotic Songs, For the Times* (Philadelphia, 1863), pp. 58-59.
[10] G.F. Root, *The Battle of Cry of Freedom* (Chicago, 1862).

used to strengthen and show loyalty to the United States and for all that it stood. In 1862, for instance, the music hall performer Kathleen O'Neil wrote and produced *No Irish Need Apply*. This was one of several contemporaneous ballads with the same title written in response to anti-Catholic Irish sentiment that saw sections of American society attempt to restrict migrant employment and success. In O'Neil's song story, she praised America for welcoming her and letting her contribute to the nation through successful work. She concluded her ballad by presenting her own personal display of American Union devotion and thanks to the country 'now [that] I'm in the land of the "Glorious and Free"'. Her American dedication extended to stating that she was 'proud I am to own it, a country dear to me', singing about how the American nation belonged to her. This was an articulation that she saw the country as her home; her heart was now American, not Irish. Indeed, so committed to the American Union was O'Neil, that, in the middle of the Civil War, she pledged her wish that 'long may the Union flourish' in the conflict and in its future. She also hoped that the Union 'ever may it be, a pattern, to the world and the "Home of Liberty"' for future generations of immigrants who would make it their home in America during the second half of the nineteenth century.[11]

The 1863 ballad *Corcoran's Irish Legion* echoed the same sentiments heard in O'Neil's *No Irish Need Apply*. It sang about how the wider diaspora were committed to the American Union. Music hall performer and songwriter Eugene T. Johnston, who composed several wartime ballads that sang of the Irish experience, wrote this song in honour of the Irish-dominant New York regiments that formed part of Corcoran's Legion in the middle of conflict. Their leader was General Michael Corcoran, originally from County Sligo, Ireland, who had joined the 69th New York

[11] K. O'Neil, *No Irish Need Apply* (Boston, 1862).

State Militia not long after he migrated to the United States in the late 1840s. He was elevated through its ranks and became its colonel by the outbreak of fighting in 1861. At the First Battle of Bull Run he was captured by Confederate forces and spent thirteen months, between July 1861 and August 1862, in various prison holdings in the Southern states. Upon his release and return to New York City, he set about organising a new de-facto Irish Brigade so that more of the city's, and the wider New York State's, Irish diaspora sons could serve in ethnic-Irish units. Johnston's song was one a few written about Corcoran's new military leadership and men. Its lyrics stressed to American society that they were as loyal and committed to fighting for the Union cause and keeping the country united as their fellow Irish regimental brethren elsewhere in the army.

Just as O'Neil had sung, *Corcoran's Irish Legion*'s singing soldiers stated that 'it's the Flag that we love, and by it we'll stand', pledging their own loyalty to the Star-Spangled Banner. They would remain in military service ''til the bonds of Rebellion we sever, and peace is restored to our dear adopted land', which revealed the Legion's desire to see Confederate secession end and national reconciliation come about. However, the reason behind this articulation of loyalty and commitment was not just because the Irish-born and descended soldiers under Corcoran's command were ardent American Unionists. One lyric stated clearly that they had joined the war effort 'to fight for our home, our dear adopted land'. This was a direct lyrical equation of the United States being an Irish homeland, settled in by thousands of migrants in the years before the Civil War.[12] The men of Corcoran's Legion fought for the nation

[12] E.T. Johnston, *Corcoran's Irish Legion*, (Boston, 1863).

that had become their home and they were ready to sing and die for it throughout the second half of the conflict.[13]

It is important to stress that the Irish were not unique in extolling lyrical sentiments about their loyal association and devoted relationship to their United States homeland. In the first months of the war, the ballad *Free and Easy of Our Union!* sang about general wartime pro-Union stances, namely about how committed volunteers were to ending Confederate secession as quickly as possible, and to bring about reunited national prosperity. It also contained lyrics that were specific to New York regiments mobilising for the war effort, including comment about New York City's Irish sons' enlistment. Within this ballad though, were also broader articulations about Union loyalty that spoke to all volunteers' reasons for donning Union uniform. These statements were aimed at home-front families, as if the soldiers themselves were explaining why 'to the war [we] are going'. In the song's words they were 'Patriots', following in the spiritual footsteps of their American Revolution

[13] These sentiments continued to be expressed in ballads throughout the war, especially after the introduction of Union Army enrollement in 1863. Irishmen were drafted into military service, though the decision earned hostile reaction in some sections of the diaspora. In July 1863, New York Irish residents participated in the New York Draft Riots – the bloodiest civil unrest of the conflict in the Union. Rioters cited objection to drafted conscription, and economic, social and racial concerns about recent African American slave emancipation. The New York Draft Riots dominate Irish American historiography as a sign of Irish resistance to the war. However, further study is needed to re-address the balance of contemporary disagreement over diaspora grievances in the middle point of the war. The overwhelming sentiment in popular culture song articulations by and about the Irish in relation to issues of the draft and Draft Riots was one of fervent public support and loyalty to the wartime policies of the American Union home. Indeed, many across the country opposed their riotous New York brethren, and Civil War songs by the Irish themselves criticised their actions. *Paddy the Loyal*, written 'by Himself' in the aftermath of events in July 1863 (published in *The Continental Songster*, pp. 36-37), chastised rioters and anti-draft diaspora members. Its lyrics argued how riots would aid Confederate secession and undermine the Union:

Hould your hush, that my advice is;
If ye's won't fight, don't talk disloyal,
Nor aid the scamps who would destroy all.

ancestors, even if some were born in another country long after the events of 1776 and the War of Independence from Great Britain. Once again, like O'Neil and Corcoran's Legion soldiers would later sing in their own examples, Union soldiers including the Irish were 'fighting for our glorious Banner' of the Stars and Stripes. For this flag, and for all that the nation stood for, these soldiers were 'leaving happy homes behind'. The inference was that they were also fighting in defence of these 'happy homes' and to ensure such entities continued to exist after the war ended.[14] This lyrical depiction of a 'happy' home-front would no doubt be familiar to the one Pat Malloy's mother would find herself in by 1865 after Union victory.

Michael Corcoran and Individual Irish Examples of American Home Association

If general wartime songs and specific Irish related ballads were singing about devotion to the American Union homeland, and Corcoran's Legion were singing about their regimental association to the nation, then they were also doing so because their own leader shared and articulated the same sentiments. Michael Corcoran had lived in the United States for over twelve years before the conflict began. The country had truly become his home nation in that period. This was apparent in the way in which he wrote regularly about America, not Ireland, being his home. At the same time as he set about establishing the Legion named after him in 1863, Corcoran also published a brief account of his time in various Confederate prisoner of war holdings in the Southern states. This memoir was full of rhetorical references and statements about his American homeland.

For instance, Corcoran often described how 'my heart constantly yearned for home' while he was imprisoned. This was most apparent when he was moved to different prisons in Virginia and the Carolinas, further southwards into the

[14] Unknown lyricist, *Free and Easy of Our Union!* (Boston, 1861).

Confederacy and away from the North and New York City. He noted that 'the greater the distance from the latter [New York] became, the stronger grew the tie that still held me to it'.[15] The 'home' he described was his home in New York, not his County Sligo birthplace. His American home was foremost in his mind. Certain instances also enhanced this home association during what Corcoran described as 'the most pleasurable moments of my captivity'. Here, he was referring to occasions 'when I received a letter from friends at home', again meaning New York City and not from family and friends in Ireland. New York City was where his first wife Elizabeth and his close friends resided, which included many of the Irish diaspora's elite members who worked to free him from his Confederate holdings. Corcoran would describe their messages from home as 'angel's visits, few and far between' during his thirteen months away.[16]

Corcoran's joy at returning to his home city in the summer of 1863, some fifteen moths after leaving it with the 69th New York State Militia before the First Battle of Bull Run, was tantamount in the final passages of his memoir. Relating his boat journey back to the North and to New York City after he was released from being a prisoner of war, he commented how 'eagerly, very eagerly, did I strain my eyes down the river to catch the first glimpse of the Starry Flag'. When, finally 'in due time I saw it, as my eyes fell upon its bright stars and stripes, my soul thrilled to its center'. After so long away, Corcoran described seeing 'Home' again. Within that homely construct of his New York were all his 'friends and loved ones', which 'sprang up before my eyes like an enchanting vision'. He concluded that the sight of

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[15] M. Corcoran, *The Captivity of General Corcoran: The Only Authentic and Reliable Narrative of the Trials and Suffering Endured, During his Twelve Months' Imprisonment in Richmond and Other Southern Cities, by Brig-General Michael Corcoran, The Hero of Bull Run* (Philadelphia, 1864), p. 45.
[16] Ibid., p. 49.

the city and the knowledge that his heart, now 'welled up with emotion', was back safe in familiar surrounds, 'swept [away] every trace of care'.[17] Effectively, Corcoran was endorsing the concept that home is where the heart is, and that family and the hearth are more important than birthplace. Many of his fellow Irish brethren in the diaspora would have likely agreed.

His thirteen months of prison captivity notwithstanding and following his 'journey home', Corcoran informed his American public readership at the conclusion of his account that he had once 'again taken up the sword' for the Union Army. He alluded to the fact that he was now at the head of his Legion. Corcoran stressed he would continue to fight for his home country and see Confederate secession defeated. He stated that he would 'never sheathe [his sword] until victory perches upon the national banner of America, or Michael Corcoran is numbered among those who did not return home from the battlefield'.[18] This was in keeping with his own belief that soldiers fighting for the Union should defend the United States to their very end. For Corcoran, giving his life for his American home was a sentiment he expressed whole-heartedly and without question because it meant dying for the defence of home, loved ones, and the higher concept of nationhood and obligated duty to one's country. As he mentioned earlier in his memoir, he went to Bull Run, faced his captivity and returned to military service because he knew that whatever happened, 'dying for one's country is glorious'.[19] He would fulfil that ideal, though not in heroic glory on the battlefield but after falling from his horse in December 1863.

Corcoran's personal expressions of his devotional home ties correlates with the overall image of the Irish American Union Army commander as a loyal, gallant

[17] Ibid., p. 100.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., p. 27.

Irish-born American heroic patriot serving his country. This impression was emphasised particularly in Irish American Civil War wartime songs. Although his prisoner-of-war memoir was written with a wider readership in mind, showing his national devotion to the American public beyond the diaspora, it was not the only display of such sentiment. Corcoran's dedication to the country and his commitment to the military fight against the Confederacy were reoccurring expressions heard in Irish wartime ballads. The intimate way song lyrics portrayed his character demonstrated his inherent sense of Americanness, developed over a decade of living in New York City before the conflict. The ballad *Corcoran's Ball!* was written in 1863 by the Irish songwriter John Mahon. He portrayed Corcoran as the ultimate faithful American officer. Aimed at the whole nation, one verse of the song exclaimed:

You've all heard of the Great Michael Corcoran,
That true Son of Erin, so brave in the strife;
The National cause he was ever a worker in,
And the Union to him was more precious than life.
When dastard Secession raised its dark crest upon
This Glorious Country, he answered her call.[20]

He answered the call to defend the American Union, Mahon's lyrics were singing, because it was his own home country's call for defence and protection. 'The National Cause' to keep the country united was as much Corcoran's as it was every other Union citizen, whether they were foreign-born or not. *Corcoran's Irish Legion* quoted above likewise expressed the same sense that Corcoran was fighting to defend 'the

[20] J. Mahon, *Corcoran's Ball!* (New York, 1863).

National cause' of American Union reconciliation and the peaceful future of a united country.

The continual focus and return to Corcoran's example raises the question of whether the County Sligo native turned ardent American citizen was atypical of wider Irish fighting service and wartime experiences. Certainly, Corcoran himself was more vocal and lyrical in his expressions of what the American Union meant to him than most, but his sentiments could be heard in the accounts of other Irish-born and descended serving soldiers and in other outputs from the home-front. In addition, the description of Corcoran going to fight in *Corcoran's Irish Legion* applied not just to the 69th New York State Militia who went with him in 1861, but all those of Irish descent who fought across the Union. If the sentiments were reversed to one that extolled Confederate defence, then these lyrical views could extend to all on both sides of the divided nation. Love of country and nationality is a malleable construct. Corcoran provided the diaspora with a solid example and impression that could be used to inspire everyone. He may have been one man, but his wartime experience and sentiments, especially in his expressions of devotion to his home of the United States, could apply to anyone in the diaspora. Ballads helped stress this association.

Moreover, Corcoran was not the only Irish-born Civil War soldier who had come to see the United States as home by the time of the conflict. James Shields, a Democrat, three-time Senator (of three different U.S. states) and Union Army general, had migrated in the 1820s. Originally from County Tryon, this Irishman-turned career American politician and military figure had made a national name for himself in the 1840s during the Mexican-American War, and served for a time leading regiments in the American Civil War. When he died in 1879, lyricist Daniel Moran penned *Lamentation of Gen. James Shields* in his honour. This ballad obituary sang about

how 'he emigrated to America when sixteen years old' and 'for his adopted country fought vigorously and bold', just like other Irish-born and descended soldiers. The song continued by noting how Shields had 'proved to be a true citizen' to the country that had been his home for almost fifty years. His own personal 'history relates' that American devotion. On the battlefields, debating floors, and across the country, Shields 'fought a hard battle for the United States'. He was thus lamented as a key figure of nineteenth century assimilated Irish migrant society.[21]

Fictional Irish individuals, like Pat Malloy and his family, also appeared alongside their real-life contemporaries in Irish American Civil War songs to sing about their American home nation association. Micky O'Flaherty was another such fictional Irish-born soldier employed in a ballad to be an example for his fellow Irishmen and diaspora members in America relate to in relation to articulating their loyalty to the Union cause. He appeared in the song *Off for a Soldier*, also produced around the middle of the war in 1863, composed by a S. Leonce. In this lyrical story, O'Flaherty 'marched with the boys 'till rebellion is done' in the Southern states with 'the stars and the stripes' floating 'over my head'. In a mock-Irish brogue, O'Flaherty described the reason he headed to war to his wife, telling her: 'Peggy, you know I must help save the counthry [country] that affords me protection and gives me my bread'. Here, O'Flaherty was making the rhetorical point that his American home nation cared for him and fed him, and thus it was only right to repay a debt of duty and aid the country in her hour of wartime need.

By going to war and safeguarding the United States as an all-protecting nation of liberty and freedom welcoming migrant populations, O'Flaherty would 'return a hero to be pointed at as America's pride'. He would be an honoured veteran soldier

[21] D. Moran, *Lamentation of Gen. James Shields* (unknown, 1879), quoted by R.L. Wright, *Irish Emigrant Ballads and Songs* (Bowling Green, 1975), p. 478.

who had defended his home when called upon. Furthermore, *Off for a Soldier*'s lyrics described how O'Flaherty defence of his family on the battlefield was more important than defending them in the home-front because the severity of American unity was at stake. The song stressed this fictional Irish soldier would not return to his family and give 'a kiss for his wife and his children three' until the Civil War was ended and Confederate 'traitors have fired their last gun at the flag of the free'. In a similar vein to Michael Corcoran's fervent belief in Union victory, only success would bring O'Flaherty home. He would march to the beating drums and under flying regimental colour banners 'with the soldiers' who had fought alongside him for their fellow Americans and 'for the flag of the faithful and free'.[22]

The Return Home and Building the Postbellum American Nation

As the American Civil War drew to a close in the spring of 1865 and Union victory looked assured in the wake of Confederate Army surrenders, contemporary song writers began to turn attention to the aftermath of the conflict, hinting at the future directions the reunited United States of America would go in over the postbellum period and late nineteenth century. The return home from the fighting would bring about prosperity, opportunities and new events for all those living in the country. This was laid out clearest in the ballad *There's A Heap of Work To Do*, written by Edward Burke in 1865. It was 'sung, nightly, by James Gaynor, the celebrated Banjoist, at Tony Pastor's Opera-House, Bowery, New York'. Audiences, including members of the diaspora who lived close to this music hall and who heard its frequent ballad performances about their war service and experiences during the conflict, would have been listened to a list of postbellum issues to tackle. 'Now, the war is gone and past'

[22] S. Leonce, *Off for a Soldier* (unknown, c.1863).

and the 'Reunited Country' was reconciling its former warring states, 'there's a heap of work to do' Gaynor wrote.

First was the issue of Reconstruction, slave emancipation and giving African Americans the right to vote, the most pressing concern of the Civil War era. 'Next, there's Max, in Mexico' to contend with, referring to Maximilian I of Mexico, brother to Emperor Francis Joseph I of Austria. Maximilian had been proclaimed emperor himself in 1864, becoming Emperor of Mexico, and was supported in this claim by French Emperor Napoleon III. Maximilian, according to the song, had come 'here [to the United States] like a sneak, when you thought our people weak – but you'll find them getting stronger, if you stay'. These lyrics were highlighting the international diplomatic machinations that had been playing out south of the border while the Civil War raged. Now that the conflict had ended, the United States would attend to nearby territorial sovereignty affairs as national focus moved further westwards. All those living in the county would help 'securely…glide, down the Future's changing tide, the Union-Ship, for ever stout and trim!' [23]

Irish-born and descended residents of the diaspora in the postbellum United States would aid in ensuring the nation kept afloat and advanced after they returned home from the war. Having fought to defend America, they then sang about how they would keep contributing to their reunited homeland. This enhanced their commitment to their American home by talking about serving in future causes, a sentiment mentioned both in passing and in more specific ballads about the Irish American Civil War experience produced in the 1860s. For example, Timothy B. O'Regan wrote and 'dedicated to the 9th Conn. Volunteers' the ballad *Save the Constitution*. The 9th Connecticut Volunteers were another Irish-dominant regiment in the Union Army,

[23] E. Burke, *There's A Heap of Work To Do* (New York, 1865).

comparable to their New York counterparts. This ballad sang about the unit's commitment to the Union cause and the fight to keep the country united. In its final verse, O'Regan described what would happen 'when peace once more will bless this shore for what it was intended'. Advancement of American liberty, democracy and prosperity would flourish. The Connecticut Irish, as well as the whole country, would then contribute to domestic and international 'trade and commerce', and national economic and social developments that 'will revive' once 'civil war is ended' across the home nation.[24]

Tony Pastor, the owner of the New York Bowery neighbourhood music hall where *There's A Heap of Work To Do* was first performed, and who penned many of his own Civil War ballads as well as facilitating their recital and dissemination during the 1860s, also produced the song *Gay is the Life of a Fighting American* at the end of the Civil War. Its lyrics were sung from the perspective of any former Union Army soldier, Irish-born, descended or otherwise; the inference was that by fighting for the home in America, American identity would be enhanced. It too included expressions about future developments and fights to come in the American homeland when the singing veteran described how he was 'now…out where grass is no scarcity, but there's a plentiful lacking of trees'. This was an observation about the American West, where many postbellum Irish families migrated after settlement in eastern seaboard enclaves in the first half of the nineteenth century. The veteran, who was singing to those in crowded cities along the Atlantic, urged them to move their homes westward with him: 'to my friends in adversity', he sang, they should 'carry light hearts and be lively as fleas!' by migrating to the open range. Pastor's lyrics then

[24] T.B. O'Regan, *Save the Constitution* (New York, 1862). For further exploration of the Irish 9th Connecticut's American Civil War history, see R.W. Keating, *Shades of Green: Irish Regiments, American Soldiers, and Local Communities in the Civil War Era* (New York, 2017).

turned to another postbellum military issue to contend with by making direct reference to 'your Mormons', in other words Latter-Day Saints in Utah. There was a lyrical warning that now the Civil War was over, 'here comes Uncle Samuel, marching his men to the liveliest tune'.[25] Many Irish-born and descended soldiers continued to serve in military forces after the war, serving with the United States Army. However, they did not bother Mormon residents to any great extent in the late 1800s. Attention turned toward ongoing Native American tribal subjugation and destruction. The American Indian Wars through the late 1860s and 1870s up to the turn of the twentieth century saw American home expansion carried out at the continued expense of the country's oldest inhabitants. That was a subject excluded from Irish American Civil War balladry.

Conclusion

As the lyrical examples quoted in this article have shown, the concept and understanding of the United States as an Irish home ran through Irish American Civil War songs and articulations about their loyalty, commitment and desire to bring forth American Union prosperity and continued existence in the 1860s. The fact that America was an Irish home by this period in the diaspora's history was reinforced through the performance of these ballads before and after the war. As noted, Pastor's songs and music hall were close to Irish communities who would have heard this reinforced expression of home and spread this message to the wider American society to which they belonged. The ballads about Pat Malloy could also highlight how well-established migrant communities had come to be in the United States.

Pat Malloy was 'sung by D.J. Maginnis, of Morris Brothers, Pell and Trowbridge's Minstrel' performing group. This troupe included Harry Pell, who was

[25] T. Pastor, *Gay is the Life of a Fighting American*

also his own producer and proponent of Irish music and songs in American culture.[26] *Return of Pat Malloy* was subsequently 'composed for, and sung with unbounded applause by William H. Lindsey' in New York and American music halls.[27] Placed together, these two ballads reveal how far members of the diaspora had come over the course of the Civil War era. Across the both songs, it was possible for audiences to trace and become familiar with the fictional Malloy's transition. Throughout the verses, he returns to Ireland after he establishes himself in American society, raising enough money to bring his family back with him and look after his mother. The fact he pays Mrs. Malloy's rent is indicative of that. In addition, the ballads' refrains alter to show how his home had moved from Ireland to America. In both, listeners and performers were told: ''Ould Ireland' is my country'. This continues until the final line of *Return of Pat Malloy*, when the notion of Ireland being Pat Malloy's home disappears from the lyrics altogether.[28] It was New America that now took on that mantel and identity. Michael Corcoran's own example provided a real-life counterpart to this same national home association.

Irish American Civil War songs provide one of the clearest contemporary popular and public articulations of the American Union being an Irish home nation. The reason that Irish-born and descended soldiers fought for the country, adopted its ideals, upheld and bled for the flag, was because they were the manifestations of their American homeland. It was home that was ultimately being fought for and sung about during the conflict. Civil War songs by and about the Irish who fought in the war pulled together all the strands of American loyalty, identity and home nation association that returned continually to rhetoric of innate kinship with the United

[26] *Pat Malloy*.
[27] *Return of Pat Malloy*.
[28] *Pat Malloy*.

States through expressions of sharing and defending American ideals. As demonstrated, the constant collective association of viewing the United States as the Irish American home in writings and lyrics reveals how an inherent sense of Americanness pervaded the diaspora's understanding of their place in the country by the 1860s.

Fighting for the Irish American home in the conflict gave the Irish opportunities to demonstrate this through song. Ballad proclamations that America and its ideals were entities that belonged to the diaspora, and articulations of sentiments about how the diaspora shared in the collective citizen body contributing to the war effort and the country's future prosperity, reveal how Irish identity had become American in the mid-nineteenth century. The American Civil War, and their own lyrical song productions, provided the platforms onto which this home identity could be observed amongst the Irish diaspora American community to which Michael Corcoran, Mickey O'Flaherty and the Malloy family all belonged and extolled through singing.

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