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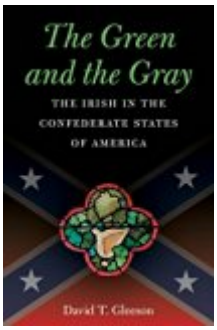
David T. Gleeson. *The Green and the Gray: The Irish in the Confederate States of America.* Civil War America Series. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. 336 pp. $35.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4696-0756-6.



Reviewed by Cian McMahon

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Commissioned by Nicholas M. Wolf (New York University)

David T. Gleeson has written another fantastic book about the Irish in the Southern United States--or the Confederate States of America, as southerners called it during the Civil War of 1861 to 1865. Based on careful reading of a wide range of primary sources, Gleeson's *The Green and the Gray* contributes to recent scholarship on the Irish in the Civil War by such historians as Susannah Ural Bruce (*The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865* [2006])and Christian G. Samito (*Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era* [2009]). This well-written, carefully crafted monograph is suitable for undergraduate and graduate seminars on migration, nationalism, and war. Specialists of the Irish in America will particularly find this full-length analysis of the Confederate Irish revealing.

As a professional historian, Gleeson was troubled by the stereotype, so popular in Civil War literature, of Irish Confederates as unfailingly brave warriors. In the shadow of this image, he argues, "the real and complicated narrative of the Irish and the Confederacy disappeared" (p. 221). The goal of his book is to embrace the complexities of Irish participation in the Southern war effort. In so doing, Gleeson aims "not merely to outline the Irish involvement with the Confederacy but to analyze its significance, for both the Irish and the Confederacy" (p. 1). His overall argument holds that while the Irish war effort highlighted "the ambiguities within Confederate identity," it was also "crucial to the integration of Irish immigrants into white society in the South" (pp. 8, 1). This integration was not consolidated until after the war, however, when participation in "Lost Cause" celebrations allowed the Irish to "banish memories of their ambiguous support for the cause and remember only the 'glories'" (p. 9). Fans of David W. Blight's *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001) will enjoy Gleeson's approach to postbellum identity formation.

The book is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1, "Reluctant Secessionists," shows that while most Irish immigrants living in the Southern Unit-

ed States may not have objected to slavery itself (and some were outright supporters of the institution), they nevertheless steadfastly supported the Union during the sectional crisis of the 1850s. It was only following Abraham Lincoln's victory in the presidential election of 1860 that Irish immigrants hesitatingly abandoned the United States in favor of the Confederacy. Gleeson also notes that tumultuous politics at home in Ireland combined with opposition from nativists in America to leave the Irish relatively politicized. The Democratic Party subsequently capitalized on this energy, drawing the newcomers into the "cauldron of sectional politics" (p. 14).

Chapters 2 and 3 look at Irish military participation. The former analyzes their motivations for joining up. Taking issue with those who argue that economic necessity or defense of slavery impelled immigrants into arms, Gleeson suggests that "Confederate patriotism for the Irish ... was closely tied to their experience of Ireland and America" (p. 46). In particular, rhetoric and images, which drew parallels between Irish and Confederate struggles for freedom (from Britain and the United States respectively) were powerful motivating factors. Appeals to masculinity and to an Irish martial heritage stretching back several centuries were important too. Chapter 3, which focuses on Irish performance on the battlefield, returns to the book's overall theme of ambiguity. "The story of the Irish Confederate soldier," Gleeson writes, "is filled with contrasting examples of bravery and treachery" (p. 73). Some Irish units, such as Alabama's Emerald Guards, had incredibly high casualty rates (suggesting courage in the face of danger). Others, such as the Virginia Hibernians had a relatively high rate of desertion. Gleeson effectively complicates the facile legend of the "Fighting Irish."

The last three chapters focus on Irish Confederates off the battlefield and after the war. In chapter 4, Gleeson investigates the home front, where he finds mixed attitudes and opinions. For the most part, civilian leaders of the Southern Irish population embraced secession after 1860 and advocated a "hard-war" policy, yet as casualties mounted and civilians felt the pinch of wartime deprivation, their enthusiasm waned. This decline culminated in the ease with which many Irish accepted occupation by victorious federal forces in 1865, "clearly indicating," concludes Gleeson, "the equivocal nature of their new Confederate identity" (p. 112). Chapter 5 analyzes the effect that religion, which for most Irish immigrants meant Roman Catholicism, had on their attitudes toward the war. As role models of the Irish community in the South, Catholic clergy, nuns, and prominent lay spokesmen left positive impressions on the native community. Bishop Patrick Lynch of Charleston, South Carolina, for example, publicly endorsed the Confederacy from early on in the war and urged his fellow countrymen to defend secession (although he subsequently attempted to downplay his vehemence after Appomattox). Father John Bannon went so far as to travel to Ireland in October 1863 in an effort to stump for the Confederacy and halt Irish migration into the Union forces. Finally, chapter 6 "Another 'Lost Cause,'" focuses on the Irish in the postbellum period. While initially willing to countenance Reconstruction, they ultimately proved implacable enemies of African Americans' political rights. By actively promoting the war effort as a grand, "Lost Cause," the Irish ensured their privileged racial position in the new South. The Irish "did not become southern 'under fire,'" concludes Gleeson, "but rather in the commemoration of the Confederacy" (p. 221).

This book offers a fresh and intelligent approach to a subject that has been long mired in myth and legend. Gleeson's synthesis of existing secondary sources combined with his careful archival research offers a bold reinterpretation of a popular chapter in Irish American history. Samito has recently suggested that the Irish in the Union forces became American through military service, but Gleeson complements and challenges

this notion by contending that, for the Irish in the South at least, it was the postbellum period, rather than the war itself, that had the biggest impact on immigrant integration. In these and other ways, ***The Green and the Gray*** is an outstanding contribution to our understanding of Irish American identity and to ethnic participation in the Civil War.

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[1]. Susannah Ural Bruce, ***The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers and the Union Army, 1861-1865*** (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Christian G. Samito, ***Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era*** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

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