

‘Some Have Come From a Land Beyond the Wave’: Return Migration to Ireland

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Ireland. As far back as I can remember, the name was always around, in the air. Maybe you absorbed it by osmosis. As a child in fifties Glasgow, it was always around like a relative you’d never met but knew you’d like when you did.

Liz Niven (McGonigal *et al.* 2000: 214)

I had this growing thing that I was Irish, and if I was Irish why was I living in Scotland? Why not go and live in Ireland?

Pat Doherty (Dooley 2004: 138)

In public discourse, migration is regularly reduced to a simplistic dichotomy contrasting immigration – arrivals – on the one hand and emigration – departures – on the other. Both movements attract impassioned comment¹. This obscures – and frequently elides – a more nuanced set of social phenomena involving considerable complexity: immigrants may leave again, emigrants can come back, and in many cases both groups move on again later, sometimes going to and fro numerous times (increasingly so in our modern age of cheap, convenient global travel). An obsessive focus on immigration and emigration as the sum of long-term movement ignores the special role performed by diasporas in underpinning a third, equally ubiquitous population stream: return migration.

Return migration should be defined not only as emigrants returning to their birthplace, but also the movement of their spouses, children and grandchildren – and, in some cases, great-grandchildren and further descendants – back to a perceived homeland. There are diverse causes and configurations to this trend: it may be the always-intended homecoming of a single emigrant after a few years’ work away; it may involve the return of a family with only one parent

arriving back in their birth country after a life overseas, relocating a raised-abroad partner and offspring; it may be an altogether more complex notion of return with the grandchild or great-grandchild of an emigrant choosing to move to what they regard as their ancestral land.

This paper investigates the background of return migration to Ireland both historically and contemporaneously, with special consideration of recent demographic developments of this nature in the twenty-six southern counties. Whilst the immigration of foreigners to the island of Ireland has received much welcome academic and public attention during a late economic boom, the concomitant coming home of many thousands from Ireland's vast diaspora has attracted conspicuously few comments, as if repatriation of the Irish overseas to their homeland – identified so perniciously with persistent export of its people – was both a ridiculous proposition and contradiction in terms. I also evaluate the function of citizenship law in facilitating and encouraging return migration, and assess the effects of this barely understood social stream on Ireland and its diaspora.

Return Migration in its Irish Context

Return migration is a largely hidden population flow when contrasted with both immigration and emigration but it is as ancient and as ubiquitous as either. Historically, of course, emigration was held by virtually every observer – apart from the emigrant, hence the 'myth of return' – to be a permanent state of banishment, a sad but formative ritual of self-exclusion tinged with perpetual loss to both those who went and those who remained. The emigrant was an outcast, doomed henceforth to be on the outside looking in.² Yet throughout history, despite emigration being such a seemingly final undertaking, many who left returned.

Emigration necessitates diasporas, and diasporas in turn understandably look to homelands. Destinations for some, and repositories of compatriots beyond the waves to others, diasporas can also be a source of return migrants as those born and raised overseas gravitate to what they perceive as their countries of origin. This is particularly evident in diaspora centres where a vibrant sense of ethnic identity is maintained and where links to the old country are constantly reaffirmed: the Irish of Boston or Glasgow, for example, are extremely diverse, comprising many generations from the off-the-boat fresh arrival to those who know their identity and homeland but whose ancestors left centuries ago (Bradley 2006). It includes those of mixed

background and those who married into the community. Most look to Ireland (McGonigal *et al.*, 2000) and many – whether it be the emigrant, their spouse, child, grandchild or great-grandchild – aim to move, as they see it, home.

Ireland's history of return migration is intermittently large-scale but mostly it is an extremely quiet and unnoticed movement home of emigrants with foreign-born spouses and children. Its impact is scarcely appreciated.³ However, this movement has increased considerably in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first and emigration is now so low that return migration is contributing significantly to demographic growth throughout the island. This inflow is idiosyncratic, with different areas experiencing different numbers and drawing returnees from different parts of the diaspora for different reasons; but it is also clear return migration is increasing – though not at the same speed as immigration of those with no ties to Ireland.

The Long History of Return Migration to Ireland

Return migration to Ireland is likely as ancient a trend as emigration from the island (Fitzgerald in Harper 2005). The existence of the surnames 'Ireland' and 'Irish' – described by de Bhulbh as 'fairly numerous' and located primarily in Antrim, Down, Dublin, Kilkenny and Wexford (de Bhulbh 2002: 283) – are testimony to Irish-born who left for Scotland and England in the Middle Ages and whose descendants returned after some generations, often but not exclusively as entirely anglicised Protestant planters in the seventeenth century⁴. Similarly, an early nineteenth century traveller encountered a Protestant loyalist of particularly virulent anti-Catholic opinions on the road to Larne (Elliott 2000: 335-6). Upon further questioning, the man revealed that he had a typically 'Catholic' surname, O'Sullivan, but insisted that despite this he was a good Protestant and that his ancestors had been Huguenots.

This account is a perfect example of the unpredictable character of return migration: it is probable the man in question's ancestors *had* indeed been Huguenot exiles to Ireland, but before becoming Protestant they must have originated in one of the old Gaelic Catholic refugee families who escaped Munster – O'Sullivan is a Munster name – following the Battle of Kinsale in 1601. They likely fled to France, serving in one of the Irish regiments there for a few generations, their conversion to Calvinism demonstrating integration into French life at a time when many French aristocrats were turning Protestant. Instead of returning to Munster, these Huguenot O'Sullivans –

perhaps weavers – aimed for the industrial north east alongside other Huguenot refugees in the eighteenth century, just in time to have descendants old enough to meet inquisitive travellers to Larne in the 1820s (Caldicott *et al*,1987)⁵.

Repatriates Written Out

Returnees have played exceptionally important roles in Irish history, especially within Irish republicanism – largely because many rebels were forced to flee Ireland to evade capture, to garner support abroad, or because they were consigned there by the British authorities. Most of the leaders of the 1798 Rebellion spent periods in revolutionary France and the nascent United States; Young Irelander James Stephens was transported to Australia after the 1848 revolt in Tipperary, only returning to Ireland in 1891 after developing the militant Irish Republican Brotherhood with likeminded nationalists in the United States. Irish America thenceforth became a centre of republican organising, and a support network of Irish Americans enabled the Easter Rising of 1916 – hence the reference to ‘exiled children in America’ in the Proclamation (Daly 2001: 377).

The prevalence of return migrants in Irish history from here on is generally not widely known, even though both James Connolly and Thomas Clarke, two of the executed leaders of the Rising, were repatriates (Dooley 2004: 29) – Connolly was born and raised in Edinburgh to Irish parents and spoke with a Scottish accent; Clarke was born in England, moving to Tyrone with his family when he was ten (*ibid*: 32-33). Countess Markiewicz had been born an aristocrat in London and had an upper-class English accent (*ibid*: 40). John McBride spent years fighting the British in South Africa; his son Seán, who would also become a prominent republican, was born and raised in France, had French as his first language, and spoke English with a French accent (*ibid*: 62). His mother, Maud Gonne – another revolutionary returnee – was born in Surrey to an Anglo-Irish father (*ibid*: 170). Only future president Éamon de Valera – born in New York to an Irish mother and a Spanish father and sent to Limerick to be with his maternal grandmother – is instantly identifiable in the public mind as a repatriate.

Yet, as Dooley demonstrates (*ibid*: 31-49), the Rising was characterised by the returned emigrants and overseas Irish who took part: it was a diaspora endeavour. Most had been born in Britain to Irish parents or grandparents and arrived in Ireland specifically to undertake revolution – nicknamed ‘the Refugees’, with few relatives in Dublin, they established a training camp of their own in Kimmage. Foremost was Michael Collins (who emigrated from West Cork to London aged fifteen in 1906, only returning for the Rising) but

Liam Daley, Desmond Fitzgerald (father of future Taoiseach Garret), Sean and Ernie Nunan, Johnny 'Blimey' O'Connor and Desmond Ryan (Pearse's secretary) had been born and raised in London and had Cockney accents; Paddy Moran, Margaret Skinnider and Séamus Reader were from Glasgow and active republicans there; Arthur Agnew, Piaras Béaslaí and George and Paddy King had Liverpool accents due to Merseyside origins. Joe Good was born and raised in London and uncertain of his Irish ancestry, but travelled to fight for Ireland nonetheless (ibid: 35). Thus Dooley evocatively describes the scene: 'Shouts in Scouse, Mancunian, Glaswegian and Cockney accents echoed around the GPO as the men barricaded the windows.' (ibid: 35) Perhaps most remarkably, the Irish Argentine Volunteer Eamon Bulfin – born and raised in Buenos Aires, he had only moved to Ireland aged seventeen (Berresford Ellis 2007) – hoisted the tricolour and green flag inscribed 'IRISH REPUBLIC' over the GPO. Bulfin was sentenced to death by the British authorities; he was saved only by the Argentine ambassador's intervention. Fascinatingly, Bulfin's sister Catalina – who also returned from Argentina – became Austin Stack's secretary, and ultimately married Seán MacBride.

Many other return migrants were notable for roles in the War of Independence, the Civil War, and IRA campaigns of the later twentieth century, but we have insufficient space to describe them here. The silent ubiquity of the return migrant in Irish life should be clear, and we must now concern ourselves with their position in the Ireland of today.

Diasporas and Citizenship Law

Few countries experienced emigration's bitter reality as acutely as Ireland: Irish people had fled abroad in response to intermittent socio-political and economic crises for centuries (Bolton 2000: 1-21),⁶ but the unimaginable catastrophe of the Famine began a habit which literally emptied the land of people in a cataclysmic natural decrease, touching every family, that saw the island's population fall by half over the next hundred and fifty years. The Irish consequently became a people of exile, one of the greatest diasporas in history, with up to seventy million members spread throughout the world – as explained by former President Mary Robinson in her inaugural address. Today only three million of these Irish abroad are Irish citizens, and only 1.2 million were born on the island of Ireland.⁷ By contrast, the present-day population of Ireland itself, north and south, is around six million. Ireland itself may be the capital of this vast Irish association (Keown 2001: 365-376) but it is only a fraction of it.

Return Provisions as International Best Practice

Aside from the better known examples of Germany (Levy et al. 2002: 16-35, von Kloppenfels 2004), Greece (Agtzidis 1991: 372-381; Bryer 1991: 315-334, Clogg 1992: 47-50, Gropas et al. 2007; Mazower 2005; Clark 2006), Israel (Levy et al. 2002, Al-Haj, 2004: 35-45; *Guardian*, 10 September 2007) and the Italian-Argentines heading to Italy (*Time*, 12 January 2003; *Miami Herald*, 8 July 2001), return migration is also a characteristic of national life in Croatia, Serbia, Finland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland (Korcelli in Bauböck 1994: 121-132), Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Armenia, Spain, Sweden, India, Japan, Korea, Kazakhstan, China, and other countries. It is unsurprising, therefore, that these countries have legislation encouraging diaspora return. Indeed, such rules are so widespread they could be described as a norm of international law, and whilst it is standard practice to permit the transmission of citizenship to children born abroad – a practical measure ensuring those temporarily overseas can bring foreign-born children back with them – the states named above also confer citizenship or permanent residency on the grandchildren or great-grandchildren of emigrants and, in some cases, on co-ethnics whose ancestors left many centuries ago. China, for example, generally only naturalises ethnic Chinese – even those whose families have lived in the diaspora for millennia (Backer 2007) – while Spanish law allows descendants of Sefardic Jews expelled in 1492 to acquire nationality (Frommer 2007). The self-flattering Irish ministerial mantra that Irish citizenship law is ‘liberal by comparison with the law of many other countries’ (*Seanad Éireann deb.*, cxiii, 1387, 25 June 1986) seems very hollow by contrast. Thus there is an international precedent insofar as countries with large diasporas generally design their citizenship legislation to facilitate the return of as many applicants as possible from that diaspora.

Whilst nationality law can encourage repatriation, it may also inhibit it. The vast majority of Irish emigrants settled in Anglophone countries – either other British colonies or the United States: most Irish overseas, therefore, live outside the European Economic Area (EEA), hold non-EEA citizenship and permanent residency in Ireland – should they attempt to move back – is hard to obtain: whole families who may otherwise undertake return migration to Ireland elect to remain overseas. Though Irish citizenship is transmitted automatically at birth to those with an Irish-born parent – and those with an Irish-born grandparent may register as Irish citizens if they wish – I estimate these provisions apply only to around three and a half million in a diaspora of seventy million. Most overseas Irish – particularly descendants of the million who fled the Famine – are a generation or more too late to be covered by the terms of Irish nationality law. Consequently, unlike the many countries described above, any Irish abroad who are not citizens (or EEA nationals⁸)

must return as foreigners. They must apply for residency and work permits; only after several years will they be eligible for permanent status and citizenship. Even for the most determined, this is a time-consuming and unreliable entry route, and one which refuses to acknowledge their Irishness.

Irish Government Responses to Return Migration in the Celtic Tiger Era

In what is for the diaspora a bitter irony a recent economic boom in Ireland has seen the Irish Government belatedly using job fairs to attract the Irish overseas – no matter their generation – home to fill labour shortages (Coogan 2000: xi). There is an implicit theme of an end to exile and an Ireland able at last to offer opportunities to its children abroad, yet those in the diaspora without EEA citizenship – the vast majority – have not been offered any special status despite Irish policymakers reassuring them that they and their Irishness are held dear; return migration is encouraged only so far as it suits the perceived requirements of the economy. Understandably, many Irish abroad are disappointed by what they see as Irish Government ingratitude: whilst Dublin cynically invokes romantic rhetoric of familial closeness to obtain investment, political lobbying and tourists, the Irish overseas see little reciprocity over their concerns.⁹

What is worse, Irish citizenship was literally sold to rich foreigners with no connections to Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s, at the same time nationality law was re-written to undermine diaspora entitlement: between 1989 and 1998, the 'passports-for-sale' scheme saw 143 naturalisations as a reward for a minimum million-pound investment in an Irish company. In one infamously squalid incident, then Taoiseach Charles Haughey personally handed over eleven Irish passports to Saudi banker Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz at a lunch at the Shelbourne hotel in Dublin in 1990 (*Irish Examiner*, 26 May 1998). In an example of both breath-taking hypocrisy and contempt for the diaspora, only four years previously the Irish Government had, without warning, effectively abolished the hitherto easily exercisable right of those with Irish-born great-grandparents to Irish citizenship, on the specious pretext of guarding the integrity of Irish nationality law.

The loving kinship supposed in Article Two of the Constitution – 'the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage' – has not been manifested in any legislation benefiting the diaspora: indeed, coming immediately after the clause guaranteeing birthright citizenship to those born in Ireland, the amendment must feel like an insult to repatriates with only Irish-born great-grandparents, whose applications for Irish nationality are at the same time consistently, controversially and unsentimentally refused (McWilliams 2007).

Under present ministerial practice, such a paragon of Irishness as John F Kennedy would be ineligible for citizenship because his only link to Ireland was through great-grandparents. (Indeed, his brother Senator Ted Kennedy and Jean Kennedy Smith are two of the very few – less than a dozen – recipients of Irish citizenship ‘as a token of honour’; they could not be eligible otherwise. Similarly, there is great pride in the Irish background of Ernesto Che Guevara Lynch: a mural to him was unveiled in October 2007 in Derry’s Bogside which included his father’s quote, ‘In my son’s veins flowed the blood of Irish rebels...’ Yet if Che applied for Irish nationality today on the basis of his Irish great-great-grandparent, he would be unsuccessful.)

Overseas-raised Irish often count the arrival of their Irish passport as the moment they feel – finally – indisputably Irish (Dooley 2004: viii). Irrespective of accent, birthplace or background, a passport confirms one’s Irishness in law. Sadly, it is a cathartic affirmation most in the diaspora are unlikely ever to know: though the Minister for Justice has – under the *1956 Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act* – ‘absolute discretion’ over naturalisation for those of ‘Irish descent or Irish associations’, contemporary policy is simply never to invoke these clauses in the case of applicants with Irish-born great-grandparents. This perception has in practice become a rule, even though it runs contrary to the intent of the Act and whilst ministerial discretion in this area has rarely been used to naturalise returnees from the diaspora, it has frequently, cynically and brazenly been invoked to literally sell Irish citizenship to businessmen who have no other connection to Ireland than a wish to profit from the place.

Such a stance contrasts starkly with the aims of the republican revolutionaries in the war of independence; acutely aware of the involuntary nature of emigration from Ireland in the nineteenth century, and of the crucial support afforded by the diaspora, de Valera hoped Irish nationality would be available to persons ‘of Irish ancestry, some or all of whose grandparents *or more remote ancestors* were born in Ireland’ (Daly 2004: 401, italics added) – hence the provisions of the above Act. Paradoxically, whilst rejecting applications based on Irish-born great-grandparents (specifically, from Irish Argentines), then Minister for Justice Michael McDowell stated in 2004, apparently without mischief:

Wolfe Tone, Charles Stewart Parnell, Henry Grattan, Patrick Sarsfield and others would be people whose descendants by blood would be comprehended by this statute. The reference to Charles Stewart Parnell makes me think of the phrase ‘No man shall attempt to fix a boundary to the concept of Irish descent.’ We should not attempt to put the ne plus ultra in terms of the longevity of a line of descent and we never shall. (Dáil Éireann deb., dxciii, 5, 30 November 2004)

In fact, the recent history of Irish nationality law is characterised not only by the passports-for-sale scheme and a dismissive attitude toward applications from the diaspora, but also by an accumulation of minor changes incrementally reducing entitlement to citizenship and making return migration more difficult; worryingly, these far-reaching alterations were inserted into unrelated amendments at late stages, and enacted with minimal criticism despite the very serious consequences for the Irish overseas. Firstly, in 1986, the entitlement of the great-grandchildren of emigrants to Irish citizenship – provided their parents, the grandchildren of the Irish-born, registered first, they too could register – was effectively abolished as part of a revision ostensibly providing for equal treatment of men and women in applications. Secondly, in 2004, legislators severely curtailed the entitlement of foreign spouses to citizenship – previously it could be applied for after three years' marriage – when legislating for an unrelated change (approved by a controversial referendum) restricting birthright acquisition of Irish nationality (Shatter 2004).

Each clause had been an important facilitator of return migration: the unsolicited 1986 shift particularly affected Irish returnees from Argentina, whose ancestors left Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, while the 2004 amendment put discouraging caveats on a citizen's ability to bring a foreign spouse to Ireland, discouraging repatriation of entire families. Such needless alterations – on both occasions, ministers insisted the relevant clauses were being 'abused' yet could not provide evidence when asked for clarification – alongside a blanket policy not to invoke ministerial discretion over the Irish descent waiver, can only be interpreted as demonstrating at best a selfish indifference and at worst a longstanding governmental culture of disdain for the diaspora – especially for those hoping to relocate to their homeland.

Evidence from the 2006 Census

There is limited official data on return migration to Ireland, particularly in the north where neither return migration nor the nationality of the population is routinely recorded¹⁰. Nonetheless, we have some statistical evidence – gleaned from the 2006 southern census and communication with Irish Government departments in Dublin – with which to make observations on trends across the island¹¹.

Most notably, 19 per cent of the usually resident population (778,577 persons) in 2006 recorded they had lived abroad for more than a year at some point in their lives, making nearly one in five residents either a returnee or immigrant: nearly half (49 per cent) of this number had lived in Britain; a fifth (18 per cent) had lived elsewhere in the EU; almost one in ten (8 per cent)

went to the United States; other countries accounted for the remainder (CSO 2006: Table 23A). There was no gender imbalance. Unsurprisingly, the greatest proportions of returnees were to be found in traditional emigrant counties, mainly in the west: Leitrim (24 per cent had lived abroad), Mayo (23 per cent), Galway (23 per cent), Donegal (23 per cent) and Roscommon (21 per cent). Laois (14 per cent), Offaly (14 per cent), Carlow (15 per cent), Louth (15 per cent) and Kilkenny (16 per cent) had the fewest returnees, though even here they formed substantial minorities. Of the three-quarters of a million who had lived abroad, half a million arrived between 1991 and 2006, with 267,694 coming in the five years prior to the census (*ibid*: Table 27). Though this figure includes foreigners, it is clear the pace of return migration has also quickened in the last decade. In both cases it is attributable to the economic boom which is encouraging emigrants to come back, often bringing foreign-born spouses and children with them, though in many cases the children and grandchildren of the Irish-born must be returning without their parents.

Data on birthplace and nationality allows us to distinguish not only returned emigrants, but also repatriates. There were 23,548 Irish-born arrivals in the year to 2006 (*ibid*: Table 11), but a further 5,192 who held Irish nationality but had been born abroad (*ibid*: Table 12). In total, 28,740 Irish citizens returned in 2005, with returned emigrants accounting for 82 per cent of this influx and repatriates for the remaining 18 per cent. From these figures we may conjecture that as many as 348,000 overseas Irish came back between 1995 and 2007, including an estimated 63,000 who had been born and raised in the diaspora. Projecting island-wide to include the north, return migration may have brought as many as 450,000 of the Irish abroad home.¹¹

The main regions supplying returned emigrants were England and Wales (31 per cent), Australia (23 per cent), other EU countries (16 per cent), the United States (12 per cent) and Asia (4 per cent). New Zealand and Scotland supplied 3.0 per cent each. While the predominance of England is predictable – British census data shows the Irish-born population decreased by eighty thousand between 1991 and 2001, with return to Ireland the main cause (National Statistics, 2001) – the prominence of Australia is probably due to a working holidaymaker scheme which attracts thousands of twenty-something Irish each year, with many staying for several years.

There are slight variations when it comes to the countries of origin of repatriates. Those born and raised in England and Wales account for an even larger proportion (34 per cent) of this group; Australia slightly less (22 per

cent) but still in second place; other EU countries (14 per cent), the United States (13 per cent) and Asia (4 per cent) account for most of the rest. New Zealand and Scotland were the birthplaces for 3 per cent each. Considering the vast majority of the diaspora was born outside Ireland, the data show remarkably few have undertaken to return to their homeland.

There is one repatriate for every five returned emigrants, suggesting return migration is characterised by the Irish-born coming back from the diaspora once their foreign-born children are old enough to fend for themselves there. However, age group distribution (CSO, 2006L Table 21A) contradicts this: by far most returnees, whether born in Ireland or overseas, are of working age. This is particularly true of Irish arriving back from Australia and New Zealand: 66 per cent of the former and 72 per cent of the latter are aged 25-44. This is undoubtedly a demographic result of the large numbers entering Australia and New Zealand as working holidaymakers, but it may also be to do with the fact both the Australian and New Zealand immigration regimes favour younger, skilled workers. The Irish of Latin America and the Caribbean are also conspicuously young, with two-thirds aged 25-44 – similar to those from the United States (63 per cent) and Asia (60 per cent). Only those from Africa can be classified as a retiree group, with 35 per cent over the age of 45.

Finally, if we presume the conferral of citizenship increases the likelihood of return migration – particularly when foreign spouses are involved – then it should be instructive to investigate data¹³ relating to naturalisation, especially in relation to post-nuptial citizenship. Data in these cases show an upward trend between 2000 and 2005, the year in which the automatic entitlement to post-nuptial citizenship was abolished: there were 14,003 applications for post-nuptial citizenship between 2000 and 2005, with 11,260 grants in this stream over the same period. Whilst applications for post-nuptial citizenship accounted for 44 per cent of all applications of naturalisation, post-nuptial citizenship accounted for 62 per cent of naturalisation grants. Nearly two-thirds were lodged in Irish diplomatic missions abroad.

Though long unrecognised as such, return migration to Ireland is as much a facet of Irish life as emigration and, increasingly, immigration; moreover, the phenomenon is a crucial link between Ireland and its diaspora. As in many other countries, returned emigrants and their foreign-born descendants have been an important influx throughout history, especially in the early twentieth century when many from the diaspora arrived in their homeland hoping to establish an independent Irish republic. Their role in this regard has yet to be even partially – let alone fully – acknowledged.

In the context of an island-wide economic boom the Irish overseas have undertaken return migration in increasing numbers, which show little sign of slowing. However, the Irish Government has done little to encourage them; those who returned have done so as a matter of sentiment and personal enterprise, and oftentimes a mean-spirited interpretation of Irish law has obstructed their attempts to do so. The Irish Government has repeatedly – and inexplicably – altered Irish citizenship to the detriment of the diaspora yet simultaneously proclaimed a pious special relationship with them, with the effect that Article Two of the Constitution must be considered effusive nonsense, rather than a legal prescription. Whilst the diaspora are expected to advocate on behalf of the Irish Government and Irish issues, Dublin does not appear to see a *quid pro quo*: Irish Governments past and present have been cautious in their obligations and allowances to the diaspora, and selective in considering their interests. In fact, if the debates around citizenship law in the Oireachtas are characteristic of official attitudes, lawmakers actually view the Irish overseas with manifest contempt, at best as romantics and at worst as shams, frauds and impostors.

Though almost half a million emigrants and repatriates have returned to the island of Ireland, these numbers would undoubtedly be greater if existing provisions surrounding naturalisation on the basis of Irish descent and Irish associations were used in the sense for which they were intended: to bring as many of the Irish diaspora – which came into being largely as the consequence of forces beyond its control – as possible back to their homeland. Only then will the Irish Nation be said to cherish its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.

Endnotes

- 1 It should be noted, however, that immigration tends to lead to greater public anxiety than emigration, which is usually treated with resignation – more a social ill than a moral panic. See Legrain, Philip. *Immigrants: Your Country Needs Them*. London: Little, Brown (2007).
- 2 Hence the Irish tradition of the emigrant's wake.
- 3 To my knowledge, the only dedicated assessment of the role of return migrants in Irish history is Dooley's *Choosing the Green?* (2004), and I strongly advise readers consult the work; that it is only one book amongst thousands published on Ireland says much about Irish indifference to the Irish abroad. For example, Tim Pat Coogan, in his otherwise impressive work on the diaspora, *Wherever Green is Worn*, gives little mention to return migration.
- 4 Ibid. For example, at the time of writing Stephen Ireland (born Cork, 1986) is a midfielder for the Irish national soccer team.
- 5 It is clear from the surnames of Huguenots listed – Coyne, Galwey, Green, Kearney, Lynch, Quin, Hennessy – that a significant minority must have had ultimately Irish origins. Surnames, however, only record the paternal line, and may have been changed, so cannot trace all Irish Huguenots.
- 6 Bolton identifies a thousand Irish-born migrants to England in 1440. Ironically for this paper, one is surnamed 'Englyssh' – a return migrant!
- 7 Estimates published in the Irish Government's *White Paper on Foreign Policy* in 1997, they must now be considerably outdated due to return migration and naturalisations both at home and abroad increasing significantly the number of Irish citizens.
- 8 The European Economic Area consists of the European Union plus Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland. EEA nationals are free to move, reside and work in any EEA member state.
- 9 The Irish Government funds some emigrant projects abroad, but these are by their nature intended to keep the diaspora where they are.
- 10 In any case, the Good Friday Agreement permits those born in the north to be 'British, or Irish, or both'. This is problematic for the study of return migration because while second-generation Irish repatriates have Irish citizenship and can be identified by their country of birth, repatriates with a British identity cannot be separated out from other arrivals from Britain. Moreover, the British census – which covers the north – is decennial, while that of the south of Ireland takes place every five years.

- 11 Most of the trends observable in the south apply equally to the north, with the exception that whilst Connacht and Munster are characterised by return migration from the United States and England, Ulster (including Donegal), tends to draw a significant proportion from Scotland.
- 12 Emigration from both jurisdictions, however, has continued – though to a lesser extent than the haemorrhaging experienced in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Though the Central Statistics Office records returning Irish citizens in its population estimates, it does not record the nationality of those leaving Ireland. Emigration from the south ran at approximately twenty five thousand a year between 1995 and 2007. If two-thirds of emigrants are Irish then over the same period, island-wide, 282,000 left. Therefore, net migration of Irish between 1995 and 2007 amounted to 168,000.
- 13 I am very grateful to Mr Brendan Ring of the Citizenship Section of the Department of Justice in Dublin for furnishing me with the figures quoted.

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