

# The Great Famine and its Impacts: Visual and Material Culture

Maynooth University 14-16 March 2016



*Funded by the Netherlandish Organization of Scientific Research, NWO and Maynooth University.*

*Co-organized by the International Network of Irish Famine Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen.*

The Great Famine of 1840s Ireland left a profound impact on Irish culture, as recent groundbreaking historical and literary research has revealed. Less well documented and explored, however, is the relationship of the Famine and its related experiences (migration, eviction, poverty, institutionalization and urbanization) to the visual and material cultures of Ireland. This conference, which is hosted by Maynooth University and organised as part of the NWO-funded International Network of Irish Famine Studies, aims to consider broadly how the material and visual cultures of Ireland and its diaspora (including painting, sculpture, photography, drama, architecture, film, dance, ritual, musealisation, heritage, archaeology) intersect with the multiple impacts and experiences of the Famine.

The aim of the conference is to highlight new research and resources, yet also to refocus attention on material and visual technologies, economies, and epistemologies that shape Famine memories and legacies. Papers might address the visibility of impacts of the Famine upon the land and environment; social and material cultures of food and hunger; ritual and social practices of protest, resistance and commemoration; the architectural history and legacy of workhouses and other institutions; print and periodical culture; photographic and cinematic engagements; dramatic stagings of the Famine; folklore collection and the museology of social histories; archaeologies of death and burial; the Famine and popular culture; tourism and heritage development; tenement life and displacement/settlement in Ireland and the diaspora; historical and

contemporary artistic engagements with the Famine; intertwined representations of Famine and contemporary migrations.

Taking a broad approach to the impact of the Famine on visual and material cultures, the conference will bring together scholars from various fields to promote new, cross-disciplinary dialogues and deepen our understanding of the Famine's cultural history.

**Confirmed plenary speakers:**

Professor Fintan Cullen, University of Nottingham

Dr Jason King, University of Limerick

Dr Emily Mark-FitzGerald, University College Dublin

Professor Chris Morash, Trinity College Dublin

Professor Niamh O'Sullivan, National College of Art and Design, Dublin

The conference will include a reading by acclaimed Irish author and Aósdana member Evelyn Conlon, whose most recent novel, *Not the Same Sky* (2013) draws on the social and material history of the Earl Grey-assisted emigration scheme, reimagining the story of three young women from amongst 4,000 Irish girls sent to Australia between 1848-50. We will also see a presentation by Moonfish Theatre Company, whose stage adaptation of Joseph O'Connor's Famine novel *Star of the Sea* has been on a sell-out national tour. Screenwriter and playwright Hugh Travers, Maynooth University's Screenwriter-in-Residence who has been commissioned to write a sitcom on the Famine for Channel 4, will also take part. Participants will have a special tour of the National Gallery of Ireland's forthcoming exhibition *The Pathos of Distance*, a curatorial collaboration with artist Sarah Pierce exploring the visual history of Irish emigration.

Hosted by the International Network of Irish Famine Studies and Maynooth University, the conference takes place at Maynooth University from 14-16 of March, and will include a conference dinner at historic Carton House.

Abstracts of 100 250-300 words for 20-minute papers, or proposals for roundtable sessions on specific themes and comprising 10-minute contributions, are invited and can be submitted **by 15 December**, along with 100-word biographical statements, to:

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