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# irish studies

## Burns Visiting Scholar, Fall 2018 Semester



Professor Ciaran O'Neill

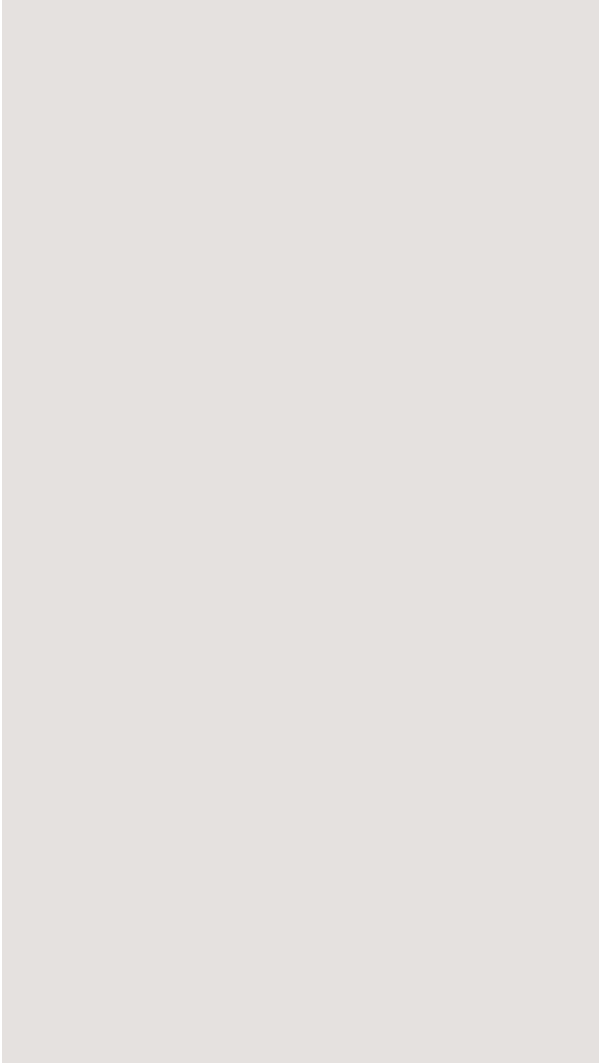
Boston College is pleased to welcome Professor Ciaran O'Neill, Ussher Assistant Professor in Nineteenth-Century History at Trinity College Dublin, as the Fall 2018 Burns Visiting Scholar.

Prior to his appointment in 2011, Professor O'Neill was Government of Ireland Senior Scholar at Hertford College, University of Oxford, and trained at the National University of Ireland Galway before undertaking a Ph.D. at the University of Liverpool.

Ciaran's first book, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational Education, Social Mobility, and the Irish Catholic Elite 1850–1900*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2014 and won the Donnelly

Prize for the best book published in history or the social sciences at the American Conference for Irish Studies in 2015. In 2013 he edited *Irish Elites in the Nineteenth Century* for Four Courts Press. He co-edits the *Reappraisals in Irish History* series for Liverpool University Press along with Professor Enda Delaney and Professor Maria Luddy, and has served as president for the Society for the Study of Nineteenth Century Ireland 2014–18.

Recent work appears in *Eire-Ireland*, *Gender & History*, *The Public Historian*, and *Historical Research* as well as the *Cambridge History of Ireland* (2018), and the *Cambridge Social History of Ireland* (2017). His current work revolves around questions of public history, modern Irish and British literature, history and fiction, and the social and cultural history of Ireland, Britain, and the Empire in the nineteenth century.



and relatives who had emigrated from Ireland to the United States. Ruth-Ann Mellish Harris, who started an Irish Studies program at Northeastern University before coming to Boston College, co-edited an eight-volume compilation of these advertisements, published in 1989 by the New England Historic Genealogical Society. In 2005, Boston College launched “Information Wanted: A Database of Advertisements for Irish Immigrants Published in the Boston Pilot,” a website resource that drew on Harris’s work. The online version included 41,249 records representing advertisements from 1831 through 1869, thus encompassing both the Great Irish Famine and the US Civil War.

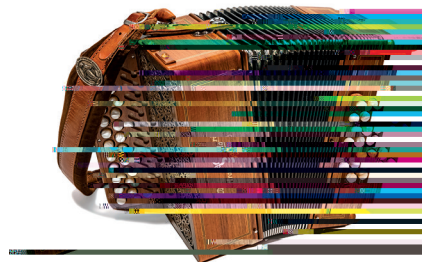
The original “Information Wanted” project had to be decommissioned this summer due to network security concerns over its older programming architecture, so BC Libraries migrated the complete dataset to its new Dataverse repository, linked from the Libraries’ website. Dataverse is an open source web application, developed at Harvard’s Institute for Quantitative Social Science, to share, preserve, cite, explore, and analyze research data. The entire dataset may now be freely downloaded from <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/bc>.

The Dataverse migration was performed by the Libraries’ Digital Scholarship team in collaboration with Irish Studies librarian Kathleen Williams, who retired at the end of June after 30 years of service. With the help of numerous student assistants, Williams prepared thousands of entries for the “Information Wanted” database. A capstone to her

event, a dozen of whom contributed their voices and stories to the video archive that is now available from the Roadshow website at <http://greatfaminevoices.ie/>.

The evening in Burns Library included short talks by Roadshow organizers Christine Kinealy, founding director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University, and Caroilin Callery, a director of the Irish National Famine Museum in Strokestown Park. It also featured presentations by John Foley about efforts to establish a memorial to the hundreds of Irish Famine-era emigrants who died in quarantine on Deer Island in Boston Harbor, and by Ellen Alden, a local author who has published an award-winning historical novel based on letters by her great-great-grandfather, a Famine-era immigrant to Massachusetts who later fought for the Union during the American Civil War.

The Roadshow also made stops in New York,



professor, University of Aberdeen, and 2009–2010 Burns Visiting Scholar in Irish Studies. The program will include remarks by individual volume editors and a speaker to be announced. Additional launch events are being planned for the same week in New York

stipend of €5000, with access to the Boston College-Ireland building, an office, and administrative support. In addition, Boston College-Ireland will work with the Visiting Fellow to organize a one-day symposium that will include a number of invited speakers and will be arranged around the research interests of the Fellow.

The closing date for Fellowship applications is December 3, 2018. To apply, please send your curriculum vitae, an explanation of the research you wish to undertake in Ireland, and details of proposed outputs to Professor Mike Cronin, [croninmr@bc.edu](mailto:croninmr@bc.edu).

### Comhfhios: A graduate student-sponsored conference at Boston College

In February 2018, Irish Studies launched Comhfhios Boston College—a conference both new and, in a way, old to Connolly House. Irish Studies Ph.D. students in the English and history departments joined together to reignite a Boston College tradition from a decade prior: a graduate student Irish Studies conference, sponsored by the Center for Irish Programs. We named the conference “Comhfhios,” meaning, in Irish, “knowledge together” or “open to all knowledge”—a name chosen for its literal meaning to invite a collaborative discourse on Irish Studies between faculty and students across the New England area. The conference was designed to be interdisciplinary, to put all kinds of perspectives on Irishness in conversation with each other, and to emphasize innovative approaches to Irish Studies. Our inaugural 2018 theme was “Living Irishness,” which raised various theoretical inquiries into Irish culture, such as feminist material, or ecological perspectives while also reinvigorating older debates like nationalism.

With nearly 60 people in attendance, Comhfhios was a great success. It generated a number of rich conversations as well as important connections between faculty and graduate students. The day began with three graduate student conference papers, presented by Bridget Keown (Northeastern), Tracy Anne Travis (Penn State Harrisburg), and Sarah Kimball (NYU), covering topics from gender and trauma in 1916 to American Irish music and Busch Gardens’ Killarney Town as cultural artifact. These were followed by three more exemplary graduate

student papers, given by Megan Holly (BC), Ruby Harris-Gavin (NYU), and Sarah Churchill (Housatonic Community College), on Seamus Deane and Colum McCann, the decline of forests in Ireland, and finally, Irish dance costumery. The breadth and diversity of the student papers not only achieved the Comhfhios goal of an interdisciplinary conference but also enlivened the academic environment in Connolly House, as faculty became the students, asking questions about disciplines outside their own expertise. As became evident in the Q and A, these panels spotlighted topics little discussed in Irish Studies circles, such as fashion and ecology.

Perhaps the most important part of the day was the co-current afternoon roundtables, where faculty and students freely and casually discussed prominent topics in Irish Studies research. One roundtable covered the topic of “Living Feminism” while the other addressed “Ireland(s): Living the State.” Universities represented included BC, Holy Cross, UConn, Central Washington, UMass Amherst, Framingham State, and UMass Boston. Each roundtable was composed of six official participants, three professors, and three graduate students, but each conversation naturally extended out to spectators in the audience. At this

