



## Irish American Cultural Institute Newsletter

### In this issue:

- The Power of Irish Wisdom
- Ireland's Great Hunger Institute
- IACI O'Malley Art Award
- Irish Way
- Upcoming Events

Welcome to the latest edition of the IACI e-news. Founded in 1962, the IACI is the leading Irish American cultural organization. The IACI is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit national organization devoted to promoting an intelligent appreciation of Ireland and the role and contributions of the Irish in America.

Sincerely,  
Carol Buck  
Irish American Cultural Institute



### The Power of Irish Wisdom

By Renee' Gatz, Author of *Wise Words & Witty Expressions*  
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Human behavior is a marvel. On one hand, we have the ability to happily help those in need, forgive those that hurt us, joyfully encourage others to follow their dreams and can easily see the best in those around us. We genuinely believe that others have the power to be successful, overcome challenges and lead fulfilling lives. It gives us great pleasure to be of use to our fellow man and speak positive messages designed to help them. On the other hand, our "inside voice," those conversations we have with ourselves, don't always seem to mirror the conversations we are able to easily have with others. We can be very harsh, critical, unforgiving and unable to see in ourselves what others do. While our "outside voice" comes naturally and happily, we sometimes need to remind ourselves to extend the same love and compassion we have for others to ourselves.

There may be many reasons why it is so hard for us to speak as gently to ourselves as we do to others. Perhaps it is a belief that it is conceited to say positive things about yourself to yourself. Perhaps it is a belief that it is selfish to focus on yourself with the same zeal we have when helping others. Perhaps responsibilities limit the time for our interests and we feel guilty when we use any time for ourselves. Perhaps we don't feel worthy of forgiveness or success. When we look closely at these internal conversations, it becomes clear that they are all negative messages that do not serve us and are messages we would never share with others, yet we feel free to say them to ourselves.

To turn this negative inner voice off, remember that we do not set out to create conceit when we praise the talents of others; if we don't help ourselves to grow, we will cease to be able to add value and by not making ourselves a priority we become worn out, unhappy and unable to be a light to others. As for forgiveness, let us remember that forgiveness is given to those who seek it. When you ask for it, it is granted; so take the lesson and leave the guilt. As for success, we were divinely created to be successful so please drop that notion from your mindset and speak heaps of success into yourself.

When encouraging others, we have the advantage of not living the challenge day in and day out. We easily see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is obvious to us that all can and will be well. However, when we are journeying on a dimly lit road, we sometimes can only see what is in front of us. When the challenge becomes consuming, it can cause us to have negative conversations, which are not only useless, they make the situation worse. Perhaps, the best way to help ourselves is to ask what we would say to a loved one faced with the same circumstances and start speaking that positive message into our head and heart.

Being kind to ourselves and speaking softly is not always natural but with practice it becomes easier. By habitually being patient and loving ourselves in small ways each day, we are able to become all that we dream and triumph over our challenges. Remind yourself of your talents and strengths. Be patient when things don't go well. Remember how far you have come, that your best days are always ahead of you and most of all pray for yourself. God greatly appreciates your prayers for his children but don't forget you are his child too and are loved by God just as much. God wants to hear from you, so take the time to speak with him about what is on your mind and don't be afraid to get angry if that is how you feel. God can take it and understands. By opening up a conversation with God, he will help move you past your anger and surprise you with new joys because when God closes a door, he always opens a window. And your new blessings, thanks to your positive inner conversations, will allow you to be a blessing to others. Nothing could give God or you greater joy.



## Ireland's Great Hunger Institute

by Christine Kinealy, Founding Director

Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University was founded in 2013. Its establishment was a result of approximately 16 years of commitment to collecting historical and cultural resources, including art work, relating to the Irish Great Hunger by the President of the University, John Lahey. In October 2012, a dedicated Great Hunger Museum was opened by Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut to widespread acclaim in both North America and Ireland. Immediately, President Lahey announced that he wanted to establish a Great Hunger Institute that would remain distinctive from the Museum, but complement the work that it was doing. Professor Christine Kinealy, formerly of Drew University in New Jersey, was appointed Founding Director of the Institute and commenced work on 1 September 2013.

The new Institute is:

... a scholarly resource for the study of the Great Hunger, which is also known as An Gorta Mór. Through a strategic program of lectures, conferences, course offerings and publications, the institute fosters a deeper understanding of this tragedy and its causes and consequences.

..To encourage original scholarship and meaningful engagement, the institute develops and makes available the Great Hunger Collection, a unique array of primary, secondary and cultural sources, to students and scholars. In educating people of all ages and backgrounds about the Great Hunger, the institute also supports the mission of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum.

The first year of the Institute's existence has been eventful. In April 2014, an Exhibition, based on original letters written by Hester Catherine Sligo, was opened in the Arnold Bernhard Library at Quinnipiac. 'The Lady Sligo Letters: Westport House and Ireland's Great Hunger' (Litreacha an Bhantiarna Shligigh: Áras Chathair na Mart agus An Gorta Mór) tells the story of how one family in County Mayo – one of the poorest counties in Ireland – responded to the catastrophe that faced the Ireland after 1845. The exhibition was opened by Ambassador Anne Anderson on 29 April 2014.

Part of the mission of the Institute is to hold symposia and conferences. In June, the Institute hosted the twentieth Ulster American Heritage Symposium at the beautiful York Hill campus, near New Haven. The theme was 'Famines and Emigration'. Over 80 delegates, from North America and Europe, attended. In addition to hearing from 40 people present papers, the symposium included visits to the Great Hunger Museum, the Yale Centre for British Art, and the Famine Memorial in New York City. The theme of next year's conference is 'Women and the Great Hunger'.

An Irish Studies Minor was introduced into the under-graduate programme at Quinnipiac University in August of this year. It brings together a wide range of faculty with an interest in Irish culture, including professors from History, English, Film, Theatre, Politics, Art History, Library Studies and Sport. The students will be able to draw on the rich resources available at Quinnipiac, including both historical documents and art work. They will also be encouraged and supported to undertake study visits or a semester abroad in Ireland.

Over the last few months, the Great Hunger Institute has established a number of partnerships with other organisations dedicated to promoting engagement with Ireland, her history, her culture and her people. One of the most rewarding of these has been with the Irish American Cultural Institute. The IACI has been around since 1962, and its work is widely admired by Irish communities throughout the world. The Institute is working with the IACI to bring its Irish Studies Library to Quinnipiac University. The Library contains almost 4,000 books relating to Ireland, some of which are first editions or rare works. In addition, two artefacts, a Curragh and a Traveller's Caravan, will move to Quinnipiac. These items will provide a unique teaching and research resource that will be available not only to Quinnipiac students, but also to the wider Irish community. It is hoped that this partnership between the Institute and the Irish American Cultural Institute will flourish over the next few years.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of the Institute, please look at our web page for contact details, or follow us on face book:

<http://www.quinnipiac.edu/institutes-and-centers/irelands-great-hunger-institute/>

## The Treasure of Irish and Irish American Literature

By Raymond D. Aumack

The Irish certainly do not have national lock on arts and culture, any more so than most other nations. However, what this nation, impoverished until recent decades, has done in the world of literature is nothing short of spectacular. Samuel Beckett, George Bernard Shaw, Seamus Heaney and William Butler Yeats have all been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. This is an incredible achievement for a country with a population that is half the size of the City of New York that was impoverished and oppressed for centuries. (continued)

Literature is an important art for any nation. It is through literature that the hopes, dreams, and accomplishments of a nation can be expressed. It is a metaphor for expressing the history of a nation with its triumphs, struggles, successes, and failures. It puts a face, family, and personality on the struggle to live life within the framework of the resources given to us by history.

Just for example, American Irish author, Mary Pat Kelly has written an historical novel, Galway Bay, about her family's struggles from the 1830s through the next fifty years both in Ireland and America. She told the story so beautifully that I felt very powerful emotions as I read it. I rejoiced in her great great grandmother's love story, interesting because she was on her way to entering a convent when she met the man who would become her husband and the father of her children. I experienced the great hunger of the famine, mourned the deaths of the children, and the husband she loved so dearly. I actually grieved for them. No history of the great starvation that I have ever read, touched me like Mary Pat's description of the Kelly family experience. I thrilled to the courage of Mary Pat's great great grandmother with her children and her sister as they rowed out to the Atlantic Ocean shipping lanes in the hope of stopping a ship that could take them to America. Mary Pat told the story of their life in America up to and through to the re-construction period after the Civil War and I thrilled at every accomplishment. The story is based on a true story told by Mary Pat's great grand aunt, a Chicago nun, who lived for a century and relayed the story as oral history. I spent three days riveted to every word, living through the torment and torture of famine, the painful experience of the deaths of loved ones, the escape with nothing more than the clothes on their back, and the eventual establishment of an Irish American family in the Chicago area. I felt that I actually lived in 1840s Ireland. I actually lived through the uncertainty and fear of their great Atlantic escape. I felt pride as they built a great life in America. Only genuinely great literature can draw you into the experiences written on a page. Only a great artist can paint such a picture with words and Mary Pat Kelly is that great artist.

The same can be said of Irish American writers Peter Quinn with his magnum opus, *The Banished Children of Eve* and Nora Roberts, especially with her Irish trilogies.

On the Irish side of contemporary writing, we should never overlook William Trevor. His short stories wrap us in the soul of Irish life and the ordinary people who live it.

For the best of Irish writing, read Sebastian Barry's, *The Secret Scripture*. Barry is an exciting story-teller and craftsman of the written word. Two of his books have been shortlisted for the prestigious Man Booker Award and this particular work won the Costa Award for Fiction.

Don't overlook the women. After I read my first Maeve Binchy story, I set out to read her whole body of literature. She was a marvelous story-teller and her characters are all people you know. I am currently reading her posthumously published book of short stories. While I enjoy them immensely, I am also saddened that this is the end of her literary output.

Edna O'Brien is also on the top of my list. Every one of her stories is riveting. In many ways, she was the literary precursor of the Women's Movement in Ireland. All of her novels and short stories are great, and her characters are strong, the kind of people you would like to meet. Her first novel, *The Country Girl* attracted such notice that it was soundly condemned from every pulpit in Ireland. There is nothing terribly salacious about it. It does expose Ireland's "dirty little secret." All of her novels and short stories are powerful and well worth reading.

I love the detective stories of Tana French. I usually avoid detective stories and mystery thrillers but Tana French's stories have awakened for me the possibility that I may be missing something.

Not to be overlooked are contemporary Irish novelists, Colum McCann and Colm Toibin. Some of their great stories are focused on the Irish in America but the work of both authors has commanded the respect of the literary world on both sides of the pond.

Do not ignore the poets. I model much of my own poetry on Nobel Prize winner, William Butler Yeats. Then again, every responsible poet studies Yeats. Though he passed over a year ago, Seamus Heaney, another Nobel Prize winner, was a prolific and powerful poet. Some of his poems can also be considered tracts for meditation. Another favorite and a highly skilled poet of general interest is Patrick Kavanagh.

Among the greatest in their field are Ireland's other winners of the Nobel Prize for literature, Samuel Beckett and George Bernard Shaw. You may also like the works of John Banville, Roddy Doyle, Oliver Goldsmith, John B. Keane, Frank McCourt, Sean O'Casey, Frank O'Connor, the O'Faolains, Jonathan Swift, John Millington Synge, Oscar Wilde, and the author of the novel considered the greatest work of fiction of the 20th century, James Joyce. All of them are considered literary contributors to the entire world.

Enter into the world of your heritage. Run to the local library and start reading some of these authors. Enter into their world. In some cases you can relive the life of your forebears. You will be exposed to some of the world's greatest literature with impressive characters that will become role models, confronting and gaining victory in some of literature's most dire situations. You become what you read, and this is the best.

## IACI O'Malley Art Award

When in the late 1980s the Irish American Cultural Institute had to sell some elements of the O'Malley Art Collection in order to cover the Collection's storage and other costs, it decided that one way to honor Helen Hooker O'Malley's original intent was to create an annual award in honor of her husband, art collector and critic, Ernie O'Malley. Helen O'Malley was delighted with the concept as she felt that giving a cash award to an artist would not only give recognition and status but cash in the pocket to travel abroad the way she and Ernie had done when they were younger. Sad as she was to see some of her European, American and Native American art - that she had collected over so many years in so many places - sold, she was indeed thrilled to have her collection have a secondary life and purpose.

When the first two O'Malley Art Awardees - Tony O'Malley in 1989 and Brian Maguire in 1990 - chose to use their monetary award to make life-changing moves Helen O'Malley was truly moved and convinced that the forced sale had gone for a good cause. The awards were used by Tony to help him decide to move home from Cornwall to Kilkenny and by Brian to take time off for six months to travel in the United States which he has often said changed his perspective on art and life. From those early days the O'Malley Art Award has gone from strength to strength and with the redefinition of its purpose some ten years ago it now has a focus and a definite place in the Irish art world.

With the addition of Fergus Martin's name to the list of recipients this year, the history of the O'Malley Award reads like a history of Irish art in the last twenty five years. The Judges, during that period have sought, not only to recognise great achievement but also, more recently to mark important shifts in an established artist's practice or to enable artists to make life-changing moves that impact on their artwork. Perhaps not surprisingly painters and sculptors have dominated the list, but it is increasingly the case that artists whose practices are time-based and those who work with new media have been recognised, reflecting wider national and international trends. Fergus Martin established his reputation initially as a painter with an acute interest in space, leading seamlessly to a painterly exploitation of sculptural form, but very recently he has been breaking new ground with photography that has a performative element.

The Award now celebrates its first quarter century. Four of the previous recipients have died during that time, and we are sad to record the deaths of Barrie Cooke and Patrick Scott earlier this year. It is timely, then, to look back over the benefits that it has brought to Irish artists during that time. Their testimony to the value of the recognition and the financial boost at pivotal moments in their careers is as unanimous as it is enthusiastic.

## Irish Way

We could never express our sincere and heartfelt gratitude for the Irish Way trip to Ireland our daughter, Emily, participated in this past summer. When we first learned about the program we knew that it would be a wonderful experience and opportunity for any young person, but considering Emily had barely any experience with such independence we weren't certain that this was the right time in her life to pursue this trip. The thought of sending a child abroad alone for nearly four weeks in the care of a group of unknown people would make any parent hesitate. We continued researching and looking for other options that would be challenging and rewarding, but keep Emily closer to home. We even looked at a few other study abroad programs, but we kept finding ourselves going back to Irish Way. The more we looked at the pictures on Taryn's website and Facebook page it became obvious that the kids had an amazing time, and after reading the detailed information provided it became clear that IW could offer Emily the chance to have a truly unique and authentic experience. IW appeared to promote a less stressful and more well-rounded opportunity for Emily to join, interact and travel with a group of her peers in a well-supervised environment whlW being exposed to her Irish heritage by a group of enthusiastic and passionate counselors, guides and teachers. The other programs that we researched seemed competitive, stressful and scripted with the hidden agenda of primarily providing students with a means to "pad" their resumes for college applications.

We still can not believe that we took a "blind leap of faith" and sent our daughter on this trip. In the beginning things were challenging and difficult for our homesick daughter. Although we questioned whether or not we made the right decision we knew that Emily would have to persevere, because coming home early was not an option. This could have easily been the most miserable four weeks that turned out to be the biggest mistake that we as a family made, but Taryn and the IW counselors proved to be everything that we had hoped for. The safe, caring and nurturing environment that they provided helped Emily become more relaxed and comfortable so that she could finally enjoy herself. This experience has given her so much more than she can even begin to realize. She has made some great life long friends who have helped her discover so much more about herself. The benefits of exploring the beautiful country of Ireland with a wonderful group of people will forever more be a positive part of Emily's life that will help shape who she becomes as an adult. We can not thank Taryn and the Irish Way enough for giving us the opportunity to give Emily this priceless gift.