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## Famine in Art - Imagery, Influences and Exhibition in Mid-20th-Century Ireland

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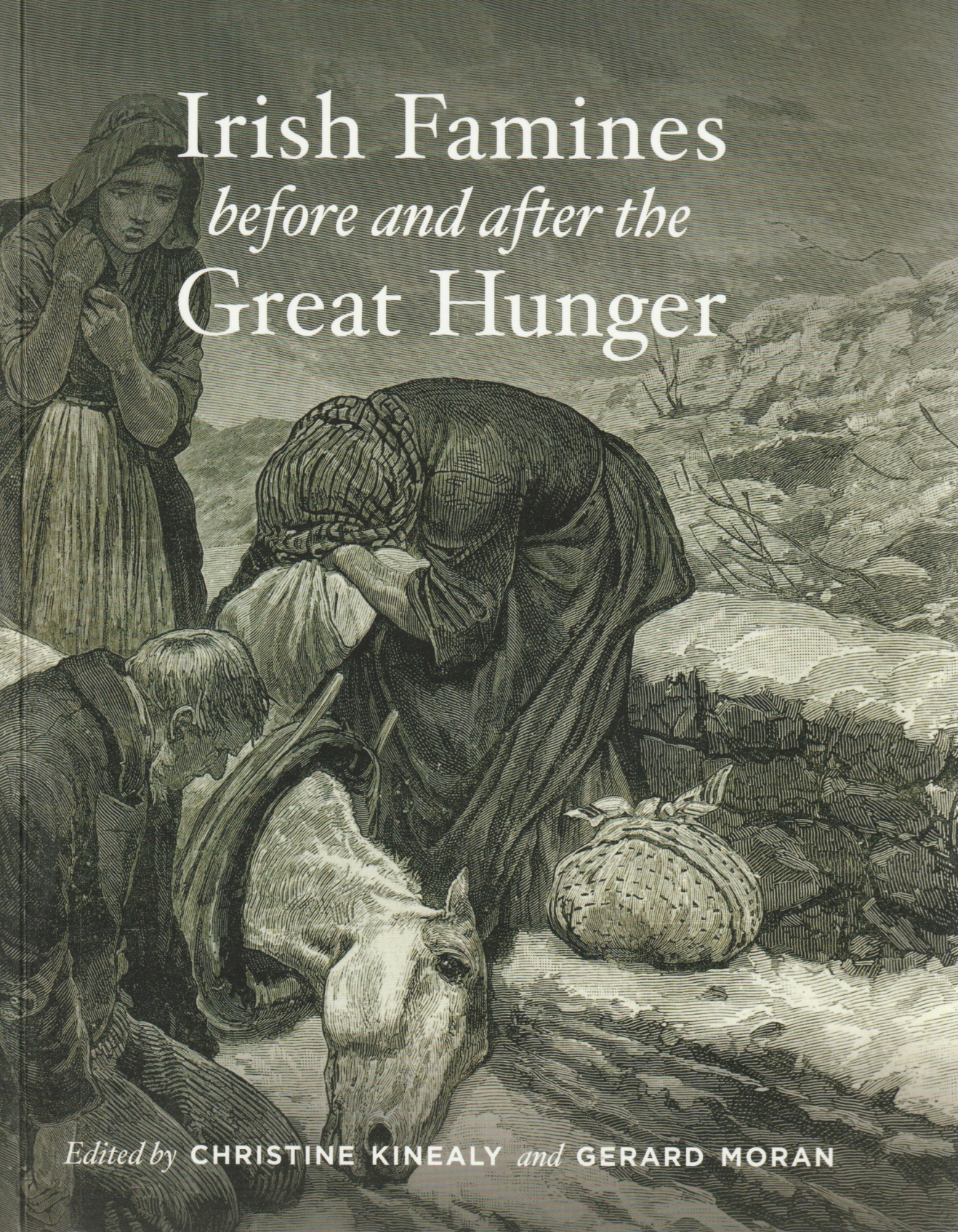
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Irish Famines  
*before and after the*  
Great Hunger

*Edited by* CHRISTINE KINEALY *and* GERARD MORAN



The Great Hunger of 1845 to 1852 cast a long shadow over the subsequent history of Ireland and its diaspora. Since 1995, there has been a renewed interest in studying this event, not only by history scholars and students, but by archeologists, artists, musicians, scientists, folklorists, etc., all of which has added greatly to our understanding of this tragic event.

The focus on the Great Hunger, however, has overshadowed other periods of famine and food shortages in Ireland and their impact on a society in which poverty, hunger, emigration and even excess mortality, were part of the life cycle and not unique to the 1840s. This publication re-examines some of the forgotten famines that not only shaped Ireland's history, but the histories of the many countries in which successive waves of emigrants chose to settle.

Editors

Christine Kinealy

Gerard Moran

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## FAMINE IN ART: IMAGERY, INFLUENCES AND EXHIBITION IN MID-20TH-CENTURY IRELAND

Works by Lilian Lucy Davidson and Muriel Brandt in the Centenary Commemoration of Thomas Davis and Young Ireland, 1946

Niamh Ann Kelly

In August 1946, *Gorta* (also known as *Burying the Child*), 1946, by Lilian Lucy Davidson (Image 1) and *Famine*, 1946, by Muriel Brandt (Image 2) were exhibited at The Exhibition of Pictures of Irish Historical Interest at the National College of Art, Kildare Street in Dublin.<sup>1</sup> The exhibition was the last in a series of cultural events in the Centenary Commemoration of Thomas Davis and the Young Ireland Movement that had commenced in 1945.<sup>2</sup> This chapter positions these two paintings as images of history made by artists who had clear biographical and artistic differences, but whose working lives overlapped in a number of ways. Davidson (1879–1954) was born in Wicklow and lived with family there before settling with two of her sisters in Dublin. She was reliant upon teaching and commissions for economic survival. Even so, she crossed disciplinary boundaries through her writing and design work. Brandt (née McKinley) (1909–1981) was born in Belfast and moved to Dublin as a young adult. Married, she undertook a variety of visual commissions to supplement the sale of her non-commissioned works. Both artists were highly active in arts organizations, committed to the art of others through education, guidance and leadership, and highly productive in their artistic outputs and pursuit of public exhibition. This chapter explores the evolution of their 1946 famine paintings by assessing the





**Image 1:** Lilian Lucy Davidson, 1946, *Gorta* (also known as *Burying the Child*). Oil on canvas, 70 x 90 cm, Coll: Ireland's Great Hunger Museum, Quinnipiac University, Hamden, CT.

crossovers between the social and historic contexts in which they produced their art. The topical focus is principally upon aspects of changing patterns of food consumption—commercially and culturally manifested—in Ireland from the post-mid-19th-century famine adjustment period up to and during the artists' lifetimes. The first part of this paper advocates the significance of works by these two artists for the historiography of hunger, and food politics more broadly, in Ireland in light of the potential of art to contribute to historical understanding. The combined influences of temporary open submission exhibitions as the pillar for the public display of art in Ireland in the mid-20th century and the impact of the artists' oeuvres on the imagery of their 1946 famine works form the second and third parts of this study, respectively.

Analyses of the complexity of influences on the making and public accessibility of works of art and in turn, an artwork's capacity to contribute to historical understanding, suggest that art is not merely illustrative. Rather, images can be actively historiographical, indicative not only of an artist's attitudes and interests but also





**Image 2:** Muriel Brandt, 1946, *Famine* (also known as *An Gorta*).  
Oil on canvas, 89 x 119.5 cm, Coll: National Museum of Ireland.

of those of their wider contemporary society. Writing on 19th-century “historical painting” of the global north, Peter Burke notes two features. Firstly, a tendency for the subject-matter of such painting to be, more often than not, informed by nationalistic sentiment or themes. Secondly, a common trend toward focusing on social history or “the social aspects of politics” that reflects a desire by artists to move from modalities of formal history painting to more popularly readable genre art.<sup>3</sup> In reading Davidson’s and Brandt’s works as images of history, their art offers evidence of social and cultural life in Ireland at a time of early, and fraught, national assertion. In their 1946 famine works this is two-tiered as the artists set about historical retrospection on a time known to their parent’s generation, while simultaneously informed by their contemporary experiences and observations of ordinary life which, in turn, were framed by the period in-between. Their 1946 genre informed historical paintings are thus, among other descriptors, cultural artefacts embedded in 100 years of food politics in Ireland.



## An Expanded Archive of Food Politics in Ireland: Tea, Bread and Art

[...] [W]e have moved away from the History (capitalized and in the singular), as it has been normally studied in the halls of the academy, and find ourselves in the realm of histories (in lower case and inevitably in the plural), which reflect the myriad ways in which the past is routinely recalled in discreet social and cultural interactions, some of which are barely noticeable to outsiders.<sup>4</sup>

Guy Beiner's thesis on the significance of what he terms "social forgetting" in vernacular historiography is centred on, for example, the gathering of stories and intangible forms of heritage, often articulated either casually or informally, and promotes multiple histories to counter monolithic approaches to the past. Refocusing historiography on polyphonic forms "... necessitates the compilation of a wide range of sources, effectively creating an alternative custom-made archive ... most of the sources for such ... are to be found outside of state and institutional archives."<sup>5</sup>

By embracing and thus generating an expanded notion of archive, the net is effectively broadened as to who, or by extension what, might be a form of witness to the past. Reading images, including art, as "historical evidence", in Burke's terms, is potentially a comparable scoping of an expanded archive.<sup>6</sup> This conception of visual culture mitigates against repeatedly implied "condescension towards images," where history-writing has conventionally overlooked, to its loss, the potential of images: instead of regarding photographs, printed illustrations and art works as "mere illustrations" they can be explored as pieces of history.<sup>7</sup> In a further elucidation of his contention on the uses of images as sources of information, Burke cites cultural historian Johan Huizinga: "What the study of history and artistic creation have in common is a mode of forming images."<sup>8</sup> This provides a theoretical point of departure for the exploration of the 1946 commemorative artworks by Davidson and Brandt in the context of the imaging of food politics from the late 19th to the early 20th century. While Davidson's and Brandt's works are retrospective and thus "after-images" of the mid-19th-century Irish Famine, in their execution in the mid-20th century, the impetus and imagery of each work reflect on a range of social, economic and cultural influences of the interim 100 years.<sup>9</sup>

The latter decades of the 19th century saw subsistence crises in parts of Ireland that threatened to recall the severity of the catastrophic famine begun in the 1840s. Gerard Moran notes the periodic crises of the early 1860s, 1879–83 and the 1890s and that the "western seaboard suffered most on these occasions because local landowners were often absentees and did little to assist tenants overcome destitution and poverty."<sup>10</sup> In 1880, the *Illustrated London News*, *The Graphic* and *Harper's Weekly* printed



illustrations of suffering that variously echo the conditions imaged at the time of 1840s famine.<sup>11</sup> These news weeklies were the mainstays of text and image accounts of the effects of economic distress in Ireland in the public domain with a readership largely outside of Ireland. Moran suggests that a catastrophe was only averted in 1877 because of credit extended by local shopkeepers.<sup>12</sup> Ian Miller describes that “[f]rom the 1870s [...] a national network of urban and rural retailing was established that encouraged the less affluent to rely increasingly upon food purchased from shopkeepers and, in many instances, to accumulate considerable debt.”<sup>13</sup> On the relative rise of traders outside of Dublin and Belfast at the turn of the century, Liam Kennedy writes:

For the country as a whole, the large number of outlets, particularly from 1890 onwards, ensured that local monopolies were generally not possible. However, in isolated rural areas, mainly in the west of Ireland, probably a not uncommon market form before 1890 was one of a limited number of sellers, each with a degree of monopoly power, and shielded in part by transport and information costs from contiguous markets.<sup>14</sup>

In exploring the links between agriculture and rural traders, he suggests the “very probably [...] the social origins of rural traders lay to a considerable extent in the farming community,” elaborated through kinship links and patronage and he quotes a report from 1914 that remarked “many shopkeepers in Ireland are themselves farmers.”<sup>15</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the crucial role of shopkeepers in social and economic life across rural Ireland examined in art. Claudia Kinmonth discusses Davidson’s work in terms of wider Irish genre painting that draws attention to social spaces such as public houses, shops, markets and fairs and describes Davidson’s painting *Fair Day in Miss O’Dowd’s*, c. 1945, as an “enthusiastic and colourful depiction.”<sup>16</sup> Davidson’s theatrically populated shop is thought to have been in Roundstone, Connemara, County Galway.<sup>17</sup> Using a richly-hued palette, she presents an animated scene with a sense of the bustle of a fair day. There is a clear interest in imaging cultural history with much emphasis placed upon the traditional clothing of the elderly female patrons in the shop. None of these figures nor the younger female shopkeeper look out of the canvas. Kinmonth notes the viewer’s perspective from the back of the shop, with a view out its door, as well as the bleeding of internal space between the shopkeeper and customers which suggests a social mixing.<sup>18</sup> The image is detailed in its observation of the shop interior which typically sold diverse produce from consumables to hardware, often hung from the ceiling as well as arranged along wall shelving. The interior in Davidson’s shop is well-stocked and the countertop is “piled high with white baker’s bread of various sizes.”<sup>19</sup> An elderly woman sits behind the counter and appears to sip from a bowl or saucer, while a full teacup sits on the ground at her feet.



Such village and market town shops typically served some food and drink, but the pictorial prominence given to white bread and tea speaks to Davidson's observation of social life as economically and culturally bounded. The shop is a meeting place, but, perhaps more significantly, it had also become in the early 20th century an increasingly central locus for rural dietary survival as food distribution networks altered the flow of food to and from rural Ireland. An outcome of this was a dietary shift. Miller quotes the *Freeman's Journal* of 6 December 1893: "White bread and tea have now taken the place of the humble but more strengthening oatmeal, stirabout and milk."<sup>20</sup> Patricia Lysaght writes that:

Increased consumption of tea among all the social classes ... is shown to be the result of reduced prices for tea occasioned somewhat by the reduction in grocers' licences and the increased facility of purchasing tea in the little shops which were springing up in many rural areas.<sup>21</sup>

Miller highlights that by the late 19th century the preponderance of this dietary dependence was considered problematic: "... the Irish poor seemed undernourished and underfed as they now subsisted upon nutritionally insufficient diet dominated by tea and white bread."<sup>22</sup>

Tricia Cusack analyses the social mores and class segregation enacted by tea cultures: "as tea drinking spread across society in Ireland, differences in the manner of making and taking tea were associated with social status."<sup>23</sup> Cusack outlines the perceived links between good tea habits, which implied social aspirations for betterment and indications of propriety, and bad tea habits, specifically of poor and laboring-class women, which were linked to slovenliness and distemper wrought by indulgent and addictive behavior. Lysaght discusses that "the descent of tea" took two centuries; it was the 1880s that "tea would become firmly established in the daily diet of all classes in Ireland."<sup>24</sup> Cusack looks to visual art for evidence of historical and class-based tea cultures and though she finds imaging of "respectable farmers" and middle- to upper-class families, "there is scant visual imagery of the tea-drinking habits of the poor, which are repeatedly deplored in medical writings and improvement tracts."<sup>25</sup> The pile of large white loaves prominently displayed in Davidson's shop interior is brightly rendered and a focal point in the image. The figure of the crouched tea-drinking women defies all decorum associated with refined tea cultures as performed to dictums of social aspiration. Davidson's imaging of the social space of the country shop in the 1940s is thus as much a historical document on the socially-charged nutritional habits fostered by expanded access to imported products, altered networks of food distribution and trade, as it is a nostalgic lingering on diminishing cultural traditions in rural Ireland.<sup>26</sup>



Miller notes that the over-consumption of cheap white bread and perceived excessive tea-drinking led to a “moral panic” about tea-drinking in the late 19th century.<sup>27</sup> While there was an embedded class-based prejudice within these outlooks, there were also social health benefits by way of increased knowledge and awareness on the importance of improved and varied diet. Indeed, the desire to improve nutritional health led, in 1900, to domestic education becoming a compulsory school subject for girls.<sup>28</sup> Cusack recounts how tea-rituals among the middle- to upper-classes came to be viewed by some women as simultaneously a sign of civil society and a mechanism of limitation on women’s potential as political beings.<sup>29</sup> Arguably, similar might be said for the impact of domestic education as the preserve of women.

The devastating links between women and dietary habits were more starkly defined among the poor and laboring-classes in urban areas, where child mortality was eventually linked to the nutritional health of mothers and babies. The making of tea was unlikely where there was no access to running water and little to heat it with, even by 1945, Dan Buckley writes, only one in four had running water.<sup>30</sup> As outlined by Miller, significant improvements in nutritional health at the start of the 20th century were pushed along by voluntary groups. In 1907, Lady Aberdeen founded the Women’s National Health Association, which was primarily aimed at infant health and encouraged the use of pasteurized milk.<sup>31</sup> In 1910, Maude Gonne established the Ladies’ School Dinner Committee to deal with “school-day starvation.”<sup>32</sup> The committee provided hundreds of dinners daily to inner-city Dublin children and eventually led to the provision of school meals through legislation in 1914.<sup>33</sup>

During and after the national and international political turbulence of the first decades of the 20th century, the dynamics of food distribution changed significantly in Ireland and food shortages were intermittent and geo-politically defined. The 1916 Rising temporarily compounded food poverty for inner-city Dubliners, giving rise to short-lived but severe food shortages.<sup>34</sup> While through 1924 and 1925, a number of local, national and international newspapers reported near famine conditions in the west of Ireland, Adrian Grant describes that “poverty and distress were acute in the west”, and itemizes contributory factors including a post-war economic slump that hit cottage industries, combined with excessively wet weather that led to repeated crop failures and unusable turf.<sup>35</sup> Subsequent decades were also difficult, particularly in expanding urban areas. Alvin Jackson notes the rising cost of living between 1937 and 1945 when: “industrial wages rose by 30 per cent, while prices rose by 74 per cent,” amid shortages caused by the effects of the war.<sup>36</sup>

In Brandt’s post-war painting on the 1916 Rising she focused on the distribution of bread during the food crisis it precipitated and titled the work *The Breadline, 1916*,



c. 1950.<sup>37</sup> The painted scene is a busy one. The Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul distribute white bread from baskets to a poor population amid the ruins of Dublin city center, while in the background, British soldiers survey the damage on Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street). Well-dressed passers-by moved through the scene, but, as in many of Brandt's works, the main focal points were the children who both actively assess the scene and visually engage the viewer. Sighle Bhreathnach-Lynch terms the image an "historical genre painting" that celebrates "the unobtrusive gallantry" of those "unwittingly caught in the fray" and notes "the attitude of the children is pathetic yet humorous." She further suggests that Brandt "remains aloof from her subject" when compared to works by Kathleen Fox or Seán Keating.<sup>38</sup> However, both Fox and Keating had direct experiences of 1916, whereas Brandt was then a 7-year-old, living in Belfast. In this regard, her imaging is overtly commemorative in form, rather than directly observational, and its inspiration is presumably drawn from archival, biographical and artistic sources.<sup>39</sup> The painting has resonance not least in its insistence on retrospective social documentary and the depiction of charity encapsulated in the distribution of an increasingly common food product: white bread.

Around this time, Brandt painted populated streetscapes with her focus trained upon a more contemporary subject: the sociality and spectatorship of urban shopping cultures. *Window Shopping*, N.D., images a rapidly altering consumer landscape where more specialist shops became accessible to a wider social descriptor.<sup>40</sup> Painted from a viewpoint of inside a butcher's shop, the picture's composition draws attention to the people who pass by and peer in at the elaborate display of meat products on the window. *Christmas Eve (Figures on Moore Street)*, N.D., though different in style, is similarly focused upon the social and visual aspects of new consumer spaces where desire overtakes need within the modernist shopping environment, fueled by the spectacle of shopping itself.<sup>41</sup> This colorful scene of one of Dublin's best known shopping streets, noted for its stalls of fresh produce and range of food stores, is depicted at a slightly overhead angle filled with figures, balloons, toys and a somewhat jaded air of expectation. Children are rendered with particular attention and seem overawed by intense seasonal excitement.

By the mid-20th century, Ireland was in economic and political transformation. Buckley terms the 1940s as "a decade of war and want—and change."<sup>42</sup> The consumer change was exemplified, nationally, by the opening of Dunnes Stores in Cork in 1944, which denoted the advent of a shift towards self-service grocery shopping in Ireland presented in the coded visuality of a department store. An international dimension was epitomized by the launch of Shannon Duty Free in 1947, a first in the world. Such



changes in the dynamics of retail trade and supply chains had a huge impact on the organization and distribution of food networks in Ireland. Brandt's post-1946 works on consumer streetscapes bear witness to that changed urban environment of shopping. Davidson's work visualizes earlier altering patterns of urban-rural networks and related socio-cultural implications through the prism of the country shop.

When Thomas Davis published in the *Nation* in July 1843, his Hints for Irish Historical Painting, he not only presented a rationale, but he supplied a list of heroic content for the establishment of a national art. The significance of Davis' text, as Brendan Rooney outlines, was perhaps most apparent in its subsequent aspirational appropriation for nationhood for Ireland. As articulated through the Loyal National Repeal Association, a political organization founded by Daniel O'Connell in 1840, such art would be "for future decoration of the Irish Parliament house."<sup>43</sup> Despite these public statements, artists remained largely reticent to embrace, or at least exhibit, what might be construed as political works and "well-established exhibition orthodoxy, dominated by portraiture and landscape painting remained intact."<sup>44</sup> In the main, from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, "historical subjects remained, for the most part, the stuff of passive conversation and editorial comment. Moreover, Irish political paintings proved consistently unmarketable."<sup>45</sup> Even so, Rooney outlines three factors which indicated subtle shifts in the appearance of history subjects in Irish art as the 19th century progressed. Firstly, an increase emerged in response to "nationalist momentum"; secondly, changes occurred in the "cultural profile of the artistic community," and lastly, there was a shift in patronage from Anglo Irish to "a professional, and often Catholic, elite."<sup>46</sup> By the start of the 20th century, some artists had engaged with ambitious largescale works to indicate historical gravitas of certain subjects.<sup>47</sup> John Turpin explains from the period 1916 to 1923, "... several artists responded to the violence of the day in creating images from a national point of view," noting Fox, Jack B. Yeats and Keating in particular.<sup>48</sup> Despite this, the continued lack of curatorial, critical or market appetite for such works dictated the ongoing invisibility of nationally or culturally resonant historical subjects in art in Ireland. Turpin writes that the rising Catholic middle-class "wished to be socially assimilated into established Protestant social conventions and taste" and thereby had no desire for art that might appear nationalistic.<sup>49</sup> Thus, debates on what might constitute national art stalked art education and public exhibition practice well into the mid-20th century.



## Public Art Exhibitions in Mid-twentieth-century Ireland

By the time of the 1946 Exhibition of Pictures of Irish Historical Interest, the international aesthetics of Modernism was the crux around which many debates on art revolved. As artists from Ireland travelled to absorb European Modernism in particular, new paradigms of art became fuel to a backlash against the perceived rigidity of academy traditions associated with the National College of Art (NCA) and its linked professional public output in the Royal Hibernian Academy of Art (RHA) exhibitions.<sup>50</sup> An account of the 1946 exhibition is thus clarified in light of the contemporary reigning debates on artistic styles and the primary outlet for their articulation: open submission and, usually annual, public exhibitions.<sup>51</sup> In mid-20th-century Ireland, these large-scale fora were the mainstay of the artistic calendar and the life-force of an artist's economic survival and professional recognition. The key exhibitions in Dublin were organized by the RHA, from 1826; the Water Colour Society of Ireland, from 1871; the Oireachtas Art exhibition, intermittently from 1905 and annually from 1943, the Irish Exhibition of Living Art (ELA).

Up to the 1940s, the RHA had demonstrated a consistently academic outlook, reflecting the bastion of art school education in Britain, known as the South Kensington System, which had prevailed at the Dublin Metropolitan School and later the NCA.<sup>52</sup> The RHA's first building in Lower Abbey Street had been ruined by fire during the 1916 Rising and it found a modernist home in 1985 in the purpose-built Gallagher Gallery at Ely Place, designed by Raymond McGrath. Between 1916 and 1985, exhibitions alternated between the NCA and the NGI. From 1914 until her death in 1954, Davidson exhibited 135 works at the RHA.<sup>53</sup> In 1940, she was voted an associate member.<sup>54</sup> Also an active member of the RHA, Brandt was elected an associate in 1948 and a full member in 1961.<sup>55</sup> She exhibited over 145 works there over a 40-year period starting in 1938, a great many of them portraits.<sup>56</sup>

The Water Colour Society of Ireland was founded in 1870 and held its first exhibition the following year in Lismore, County Waterford.<sup>57</sup> From 1874 onward, the Society typically held two exhibitions a year—"one in the provinces and one in Dublin."<sup>58</sup> Davidson exhibited with the society annually from 1912 to 1953, totaling 188 works. From 1934, she served on their committee.<sup>59</sup> From 1943 up to her death in 1981, Brandt exhibited regularly with the society, showing 41 works.<sup>60</sup> The Oireachtas Art exhibitions were established as part of the Irish language festival that Oireachtas had begun in 1897. In the mid-20th century, its significance was mostly in its links to State sponsorship. The event's demise in 2003 was lamented in some quarters as a lost opportunity for artists to exhibit in the public arena.<sup>61</sup> Both Davidson and Brandt exhibited regularly at the Oireachtas Art exhibitions. In 1946, for example, Davison



had two exhibits and Brandt had four. In 1967, Brandt was awarded the President Hyde gold medal for the best “Irish historical painting” for her work *Carrickfergus Castle, where William III landed in 1690*.<sup>62</sup>

The ELA began when two paintings by Louis le Brocquy were rejected by the RHA for exhibition in 1942 and again, with works by other artists, in 1943.<sup>63</sup> Le Brocquy, Mainie Jellett, Jack Hanlon and Norah McGuinness began the actions that resulted in the establishment of the annual exhibition. Whilst the 1943 exhibition was regarded as a watershed in the history of art in Ireland, and the divisions between academy tradition and Modernism were at times caustically expressed, the ELA did not promote division, inviting academicians to exhibit.<sup>64</sup> So, while raising a debate on Modernism and inversely on what was national art, many artists continued to exhibit across the public fora. There is no record of Davidson exhibiting with the ELA, though her work with the Dublin Painters’ Society is proffered as evidence of a tacit support of Modernist trends.<sup>65</sup> Brandt exhibited with the ELA in 1958.<sup>66</sup> The ELA had chosen the National College of Art as its venue and so, in summer of 1946, they had no exhibition in Dublin as the venue was taken by the Exhibition of Pictures of Irish Historical Interest.<sup>67</sup>

This exhibition was the final event in the Centenary Commemoration of Thomas Davis and the Young Ireland Movement that had begun in the previous year. A pamphlet combined photographs, textual description, excerpts from speeches and lists of organizing committees in an account of the commemorative events of 1945. These included formal parades and plaque unveiling to broader cultural celebrations of music, theater and literary events and three loan art exhibitions.<sup>68</sup> The pamphlet had a photograph of the Painting Committee tasked with organizing the exhibition. They were, Dr. M. Quane, Dept. of Education; Dr. George Furlong, Director, National Gallery of Art; Lucius O’Callaghan, R.H.A.; Henry Mangan; Thomas McGreevey; M. de Burca, A.R.H.A National College of Art; Joseph Brennan and John Burke. The project’s aims were: “to encourage the production of pictures based on some aspects or episodes in Irish History during the past century facilities will be afforded for the holding in the Autumn of 1946 of an exhibition of original paintings of Irish Historical interest,” with a view to purchasing some for government buildings.<sup>69</sup>

Of the 87 works listed in the catalogue, 47 were selected from the open submission process, with the rest loaned from various national collections.<sup>70</sup> The *Irish Times* declared the art in the exhibition “mournful and depressed.”<sup>71</sup> In view of the 1946 exhibition’s wider context, Rooney’s assertion of its brief as “anachronistic” can be understood.<sup>72</sup> In many senses, the overtly commemorative agenda of the project appeared out of time with dominant art debates of the day. However, a number of the exhibited works were a complication of the project’s curatorial assumption and,



of interest here, are the emergent relationships between art and historical understanding magnified by some of the works. Many of the artists had a number of paintings exhibited and some have since been considered seminal historical works including Yeats' *Men of Destiny*, 1946, which was shown for the first time in Ireland.<sup>73</sup> A work by Sir John Lavery was listed as: *The Trial Of Roger Casement, London, 1916*, with a note: "Sir Roger Casement (1864–1916) was tried for high treason in May and June, 1916, convicted and executed on August 3rd, 1916."<sup>74</sup> Given that Donal O'Donnell has noted that Lavery's painting *High Treason: The Appeal of Roger Casement, 1916*, 1916–c.1930, is often thus "mis-described," this listing suggests 1946 was the first intended public exhibition of an extraordinary monumental work that proved as controversial as its subject.<sup>75</sup> Another large-scale exhibited work that was based on a different kind of court scene and which also remained out of public view in subsequent decades was *Republican Court, 1921*, 1946, by Keating.<sup>76</sup> The painting depicts the titular scene re-enacted for the artist in a kitchen in a house in north Cork, described by Kinmonth as an "authentic location."<sup>77</sup> Among other works by Keating listed in the 1946 exhibition catalogue was the now iconic painting, *Men of the West*, 1916.<sup>78</sup>

Davidson and Brandt were the only two of the eight exhibiting women who chose to depict a famine theme. The other women were Fox, Nano Reid, Norah McGuinness, Lily Williams, Sarah C. Harrison, Dawn Maureen Steele. Among the male artists, Hanlon, le Brocqy, Michael O'Farrell, Cathal MacLuain, Geo F. Campbell, Padraic Woods, Muiris MacCongaill all presented works on famine-related themes.

### The Pictorial Histories of *Gorta* and *Famine*

Davidson was born in Bray, County Wicklow in 1879, her family being "as poor as church mice."<sup>79</sup> Her mother died when she was 9-years-old and her father in 1897. In the same year, she received a scholarship from the Royal Dublin Society. This carried free studentship at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, which she had attended from the age of 16, winning prizes there in 1895 and 1896. After her father's death, Davidson and her sisters moved to Rathmines in Dublin to live with an aunt. Cahill suggests her brothers emigrated, possibly to Canada.<sup>80</sup> By the 1911 census, just Davidson and her two sisters were living in Gulistan Terrace.<sup>81</sup>

Kinmonth describes Davidson as a prolific artist and Cahill terms her a "journeyman artist."<sup>82</sup> Though Davidson was diverse in her cultural output—she designed costume displays for Switzer's Department Store and, later, set designs. She also



wrote poems, short stories and plays under the pseudonym Ulick Burke—by necessity, however, she chiefly earned her living from teaching art.<sup>83</sup> In 1920, she co-organized with her friend, Mainie Jellett, a joint exhibition of their work in Dublin. The exhibition was described in the *Irish Times* as: “[...] in these troublesome times [...] a tonic which can be safely recommended to the worried citizen.”<sup>84</sup> Davidson’s depictions of the environment—its ambience, colors and textures—is particularly evident in her paintings of boats and waterways, with much attention given to qualities of light and its varied reflections on water. A friend of Yeats, Davidson’s reputation as an artist was limited by comparisons to him; an association that, arguably, continues to sideline her in histories of art. An artistic legacy of their friendship exists in the form of a warm portrait by her of Yeats, which she bequeathed to NGI.<sup>85</sup> By the 1930s, she had clearly distinguished her artistic focus on distinctive genre studies of rural life that took account of the environments and social forms of fading cultural traditions.

A number of Davidson’s works in the 1920s and 1930s show an influence from continental European art. Though she did not possess the financial resources to stay for sustained study periods abroad as her better-known contemporaries did, she visited France, Belgium and Switzerland on painting holidays in the 1920s. Working under the “South Kensington” influence from her days of study at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, Davidson amalgamated other artistic influences—both earlier and contemporary to her.<sup>86</sup> She harnessed these stylistic and thematic interests upon Irish subject choices, such as in *The Flax Pullers*, 1921 and *The Potato Harvest*, 1931.<sup>87</sup> The harvesting of flax for the Ulster linen industry is depicted on a sun-drenched hillside, and potato harvesting is portrayed in an earth-toned field, bathed in evening light. Each recall the figurations of laborers presented, for example, by Jean François Millet and Honoré Daumier in a previous century with a similar “naturalism” dominating the works.<sup>88</sup> During this period, Davidson also produced her “Western peasant cycle” of paintings, based on her travels to counties Donegal, Galway and Mayo.<sup>89</sup> This tour of the west of Ireland influenced many of her works thereafter, and included thematic explorations such as *The Holy Well* and *Bringing Home the Turf*, both undated.<sup>90</sup> *The Holy Well* depicts an elderly man and woman paused in prayer at a sacred site on the landscape. Such sites were associated with earlier religious practices, where people would rest in the course of their agricultural labor or make a pilgrimage to, perhaps on a saint’s day. The diffused lighting of *Bringing Home the Turf* denotes a growing emphasis on light in her works.

Arising out of her early visits to the western seaboard and prior to the brighter more animated works of the 1940s, such as *Fair Day in Miss O’Dowd’s Shop* and *Fashions at the Fair*, Davidson produced an atmospherically elegiac set of works.<sup>91</sup> Marianne



O'Kane Boal writes that in her "night studies," Davidson demonstrated her remarkable ability to "capture the mystery and nuances of colour, light and shadow."<sup>92</sup> The tonal quality of these works indicate a dramatic, almost expressionistic, use of color that prefigures her depiction of *Famine* in 1946. The mood of works such as *Night at Claddagh*, c. 1933 and *Cottages, Keel, Achill*, 1938, capture the closing of the day. In each, lone figures washed in blue-purple tones walk rough lanes towards cottages from which leak warmly-glowing light, calling the walkers out of the cool and misting fall of night. Cahill suggests the Keel painting recalls a line from a Davidson poem, *A Night*: "The sky itself like a purple cloak."<sup>93</sup> Heavily pictorial, rather than documentary in content, the works' evocations of temporality imply a symbolic, and romanticized, meditation on a passing way of life. Cahill comments on Davidson's empathy with her subjects as most "potent" in her "night scenes."<sup>94</sup> There is a considerable portion of twilight and night-time scenes in her oeuvre, which implies many evening study excursions. Her command of tonal expressiveness, empathy with rural subjects coupled with observations of pictorial landscapes and figurations all served to heighten the effect of her most arresting imaging of the past: *Gorta*, 1946 (Image 1).

The harshly unsettling and confrontational image of *Gorta* presents a devastating scene of three emaciated people burying the body of a dead baby. The lack of markers in the bleakly autumnal landscape suggest this is not a formal graveyard. This is either a hurried burial at a roadside or ditch, or perhaps, given Davidson's *Holy Well* painting, it is a locally-known site with former religious association such as old church or well. Such symbolic sites were often chosen for burial during the haste precipitated by famine conditions.<sup>95</sup> If the baby was not baptized before death, it might be the site of a *cillín*, a type of burial ground for unbaptized children and other "individuals considered unsuitable for burial in consecrated ground by the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland," evident in Ireland since the early 17th century.<sup>96</sup>

The figures are visually striking, in somber dress with bodily demeanors of despair. The woman holding the wrapped tiny body appears on the verge of collapse. Unusually for Davidson, the male figure looks straight out of the canvas, as if to challenge the viewer, and a mourning elderly woman with rosary beads catches the viewer's gaze as she appears to lean back with her eyes half-closed, perhaps to start an exhausted keen, a traditional lament for the dead led by women.<sup>97</sup> The inclusion of these overt gazes and carefully rendered facial expressions distinguish the painting among Davidson's genre works where faces are rarely depicted in any detail and they further suggest her pictorial choices in *Gorta* were indicative of the gravity with which she approached the historical subject as an artist. Davidson died eight years later and is buried with her sisters in an unmarked grave in Mount Jerome's cemetery in Dublin.<sup>98</sup>



*Famine, 1946, Muriel Brandt*

Brandt was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. She studied at the Belfast School of Art and in 1934, she won the Sorella Scholarship to attend the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London. As part of her course at the RCA, she studied mural painting under the tutelage of Gilbert Spencer.<sup>99</sup> She returned to Ireland in 1937 and settled in Sutton, Dublin. She was active across the Dublin art scene, including as a member of the United Arts Club and had her first solo show in the Dawson Gallery in early 1960s. She travelled and, “never let her pen rest.”<sup>100</sup> Brandt married Frank Brandt, a designer and art advisor for the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) Ireland, in 1935 and they had three children.<sup>101</sup> Her design work included a *Fógra Fáilte* poster and the state-sponsored commission of the first postage stamp to mark the official declaration of the Republic of Ireland in 1949.<sup>102</sup> She is best known for her portraits and fellow artist and friend James Nolan observed her as “... a compulsive draughtsman [who] sketched like lightning, achieving in minutes those likenesses of her contemporaries.”<sup>103</sup> Among her sitters were key figures in Irish cultural life, including Lady Christine Longford, Micheál MacLiammóir, Hilton Edwards and Sinéad de Valera.<sup>104</sup> Along with personal commissions, she had formal ones, on which she relied to support her art, such as *Major General Liam Egan*, c. 1961, the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, 1952–54.<sup>105</sup>

Throughout her career, Brandt demonstrated a consistent interest in imaging outdoor life in Ireland with a particular focus on social gatherings, apparent in such paintings as *A Courting in the Meadow* and *The Road Bowler*, thought to be based on a festival in County Antrim.<sup>106</sup> These bright and busy bucolic scenes are rendered in light-washed tones and, though their figure-filled compositions have a staged quality, the images document by turn generational distinctions and gender segregation in aspects of the cultural formations of social life. In the same series, *The Spirit Grocery* depicts a lively crowded shop, painted from a similar viewpoint to Davidson’s, the back interior of the shop.<sup>107</sup> Brandt has rendered a notable mix of gender and ages and great detail is given on the produce for sale, as well as on the customers’ and shop workers’ clothing and animated interactions. In other works, her painted depictions of land- and sea-scapes demonstrate fluidity in the use of watercolor as well as oils, and suggesting an artistic sensibility informed by environmental awareness. Some of her topographical works on Ireland were published intermittently in the *Irish Times* and included heritage ruins. She also produced drawings on topographical features of other countries she visited. This sustained element of her oeuvre highlights her extraordinary skill at observational drawing and the depth of draughtsmanship underpinning her work. Some works, like the *Daisy Market, Dublin*, N.D.



harken a mural influence, perhaps from Spencer's teaching, while others appear more consciously driven by documentary interests.<sup>108</sup>

Alongside her portraits, Brandt was noted in her lifetime as a keen observer of children and in many of her figurative paintings it is children who carry the viewer's gaze. The children are the primary bearers of meaning in *Breadline, 1916*, where they not only signify aspirational symbolism, but reflect on the historic social reality and poverty of inner-city Dublin.<sup>109</sup> Brandt's many studies of her own children and of wider family and friends are indicative of a powerful strength in portraiture, which she often deployed in other works. However, this artistic emphasis on figuration and visualizing children may have mitigated against her work harboring the serious critical engagement it deserved in mid-20th century.<sup>110</sup>

Brandt's manifold use of children in her works was often highly affective: the direct, intense gazes of children, that are rarely given or held past adolescence, were frequently appropriated to full pictorial potential, as exemplified in her 1946 painting, *Famine*. The visual impact of *Famine* references another iconographic influence on her work: Renaissance religious art. Blaithein O'Ciobhain draws attention to Brandt's close study of early Renaissance painting on her travels to Italy, suggesting that this may have tailored her use of children.<sup>111</sup> Brandt gave expression to this aspect of her artistic studies in her first major commission: a series of scenes from the life of St Anthony for the Franciscan Church of the Immaculate Conception, better known as Adam and Eve's Church, on Merchants Quay, Dublin. She began work on the seven large paintings in 1938.<sup>112</sup> In their general compositional orders and her imaging of children within them, the paintings reflect on her study of early Renaissance art.<sup>113</sup> Her depiction of Irish elements of landscape in the scenes offer further insight into *Famine*. The trees, house, bridge and mountain horizon in the 1946 commemorative work all echo details of the topography Brandt presented at Adam and Eve's Church.

Though the gloomy mood of *Famine* is highly differentiated from her genre works which were largely upbeat in tone, there are commonalities. As in her Antrim scenes, *Famine* is set out of doors and defined by an array of observed social customs: here, the wake and related burial and mourning rituals, greatly diminished by the 1840s Great Famine, are depicted. Furthermore, as in many other of her works, all the figurative elements are embedded in a carefully rendered Irish landscape. The image's affective atmosphere of defeat is evoked by the weariness in the woman's face and the fear depicted across the children's expressions. This bereaved, and perhaps now homeless, family are overwhelmed by the circumstances in which they find themselves. A religious connotation is lent by the pieta-like composition of the woman with children in foreground. At the time of painting *Famine*, Brandt was



37-years-old, a prolific artist, a committed arts organizer and a mother to young children. In later years, Brandt was a governor of NGI and a board member of National College of Art and Design.<sup>14</sup> She remained a proactive contributor to art until her death in 1981.

### Imaging Hunger

The imaging of social life in Ireland generated in the art of Davidson and Brandt articulated various temporally defined cultural tropes, such as the country shop, out-of-doors social events and historically specific Irish topographies. The influences upon their works were complex. Place and circumstances of childhood shaped the artistic paths they set upon as young adults. During their later adult lives, personal, as well as socio-economic shifts occurring in Ireland impacted upon their artistic themes and mode of outputs. With contrasting results, their art was defined by their individual experiences and observations of early-20th-century life in Ireland, and aesthetically framed by the wider expanse of shifting artistic currents around them. Various aspects of their works take account of dietary and related consumer and cultural changes in Ireland in the early to mid-20th century, thus effectively expanding the archive on the socio-economic realities of food politics.

Davidson's and Brandt's distinctive responses to the call for submissions to the 1946 Exhibition led to the making of two extraordinary images of history. *Gorta* and *Famine* are the result of entanglements of social, economic, cultural and personal experiences of the artists. Davidson and Brandt applied these experiences as forms of knowledge to produce retrospective views on a past that preceded them and by so doing, reinvigorated the scope of historical painting with nuanced genre informed observations.

### NOTES

1. *Gorta*, oil on canvas, 70 x 90cm. Coll: Ireland's Great Hunger Museum; *Famine*, oil on canvas, 89 x 119.5 cm. Coll: National Museum of Ireland.
2. Along with Charles Gavan Duffy and John Mitchel, Thomas Davis (1814-45) was a leader of the Young Ireland movement, which was initially aligned with Daniel O'Connell's Repeal movement. In 1842, they launched a weekly newspaper, *The Nation*.
3. Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), pp 158-159.



4. Guy Beiner, "Introduction: Sites of Oblivion," *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster* (Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 5.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
6. Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, p. 9.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 10. This approach is underway in some historical writing on Ireland's past as evident in work by Claudia Kinmonth and Tricia Cusack, for example. Claudia Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors in Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Tricia Cusack, "'This pernicious tea drinking habit.' Women, Tea, and Respectability in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," in *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 41, The Food Issue (2018), 178–209.
8. Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, p. 11.
9. "After-images" references James Young's use. James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000) pp 3–4. Art on famine as after-images is discussed in Niamh Ann Kelly, *Imaging the Great Irish Famine: Representing Dispossession in Visual Culture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).
10. Gerard Moran, "'Near Famine': The Roman Catholic Church and the Subsistence Crises of 1879–82," in *Studia Hibernica*, 32 (2002/2003), pp 155–56.
11. The crisis of the late 1870s was a result of both potato failure and a fall in seasonal migration to Britain, due to increasing mechanization, coupled with an influx of American grain. Moran, "Near Famine," p. 157.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
13. Ian Miller, "Nutritional Decline in post-Famine Ireland, c. 1851–1922," in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 115C, Food and Drink in Ireland (2015), pp 313–14.
14. He adds: "In cases of such limited local monopolies, underinvestment or too few resources committed to retailing was the problem ...." Liam Kennedy, "Traders in the Irish Rural Economy 1880–1914," in *The Economic History Review, New Series* 32, no. 2 (May 1979), p. 206.
15. *Ibid.*, pp 209, 205.
16. Oil on canvas, 71 x 91.5 cm. Exhibited RHA 1945. Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors*, pp 234–235.
17. Katherine Cahill, "In the Mainstream of Irish Naturalism: The Art of Lilian Lucy Davidson, 1879–1954," in *Irish Arts Review Yearbook* 15 (1999) p. 45.
18. Oil on canvas, 71 x 91.5 cm. Exhibited: RHA 1945. Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors*, pp 234–235.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
20. Qtd. in Miller, "Nutritional Decline," p. 315.
21. Patricia Lysaght, "'When I makes Tea, I makes tea...': Innovation in Food – the Case of Tea in Ireland," in *Ulster Folklife*, 33 (1987), p. 48. Also: "Allied to tea consumption was the increasing use of baker's bread which the memoirs [Ordnance Survey memoir material] show to be a response to market forces." *Ibid.*, p. 45.
22. Miller, "Nutritional Decline," p. 307.
23. Cusack, "this pernicious tea," p. 183.



24. Lysaght, "When I makes Tea," p. 49.
25. Cusack, "this pernicious tea," p. 203.
26. Brendan Rooney comments that painting "is strikingly theatrical in composition." National Gallery of Ireland, *A Time and A Place: Two Centuries of Irish Social Life* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, 2006), p. 147. Davidson's *Fashions at the Fair*, c. 1940s (oil on canvas, 71 x 92 cm. Coll: NGI) demonstrates her interest in rural social life and in the tonal exploration of texture and textiles. See: National Gallery of Ireland, *A Time and A Place*, pp 145-147.
27. Miller, "Nutritional Decline," p. 315.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
29. Cusack, "this pernicious tea," p. 183.
30. *Irish Examiner*, 9 March 2015.
31. Miller, "Nutritional Decline," p. 312.
32. Maude Gonne, "Responsibility," *Irish Review* 1, no. 10 (Dec. 1911), 483. Quoted in Miller, "Nutritional Decline," p. 320. See chapter by Christine Kinealy.
33. *Ibid.*, pp 320-21.
34. Food queues outside bakeries were noted by John Gibney, *Irish Independent*, 15 April 2016. Contemporary reports on food shortages and distributions in *Daily Mail*, 3 May 1916; *Cork Examiner*, 3 May 1916.
35. Adrian Grant, "'Workers to the rescue: Workers' International Relief in Ireland, 1925,'" in *History Ireland* 19, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2011), p. 38.
36. Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), p. 305.
37. Oil on board, 61 x 38cm. Coll: Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.
38. Sighle Bhreathnach-Lynch, "The Easter Rising 1916: Constructing a Canon in Art and Artefacts," *History Ireland* 5, no.1 (Spring, 1997), p. 39.
39. Press clippings from the era show great similarity between Brandt's retrospective depiction of children and photographs of inner-city children printed in newspapers contemporary to 1916. Bureau of Military History (1913-21), "1916 Press Cuttings," at: [www.militaryarchives.ie](http://www.militaryarchives.ie).
40. Oil on board, 41 x 53 cm. Coll: Waterford Municipal Art Collection, purchased by the Haverty Trust, 1955. Peter Jordan, *Waterford Municipal Art Collection: A History and Catalogue* (Cork: Waterford Institute of Technology and Waterford City Council, 2006), p. 126.
41. Oil on boards, 43 x 29 cm. Exhibited: Dawson Gallery, 1963. Coll: private. For an account of the designed spectacle of modern urban consumer spaces, see, Aaron Betsky, "All the World's a Store: The Spaces of Modern Shopping," in Jane Pavitt (ed.), *Brand New* (London: V & A Publications, 2000), pp 110-41.
42. *Irish Examiner*, 9 March 2015.
43. Brendan Rooney, "'If the artist be as national as the minstrel: Irish History on Display'" in Brendan Rooney (ed.) *Creating History: Stories of Art in Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2016), p. 4.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 6.



45. Ibid., p. 16.
46. Ibid., p. 10.
47. Ibid., pp 17–18.
48. John Turpin, “Irish History Painting,” *The GPA Irish Arts Review Yearbook* (1989/1990), p. 242.
49. Ibid., p. 240.
50. The NCA was known as the Dublin Metropolitan School up to 1936, and from 1971, as the National College of Art and Design.
51. Through the second half of the 20th century, these were augmented and then overtaken by burgeoning networks of both public and private galleries, augmented by a growth in the internationalization of art through increased participation in biennales and art fairs. In the 1940s, private galleries such as the Victor Waddington Galleries, on Anne St, from 1927 and the Dawson Gallery on Dawson St, opened in 1944 by Leo Smith, were supporting a market for contemporary art in Ireland.
52. Turpin describes the pedagogical approach of James Brenan’s Headmaster at the Dublin Metropolitan Schools, 1889–1907, as “pure mid-Victorian theory of South Kensington.” Brenan advocated for design to “enter more largely into our teaching” and “the application of art to industry in the past, and a constant reference to nature.” John Turpin, “The South Kensington System and the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art 1877–1900,” in *Dublin Historical Record* 36, no. 2 (March 1983), p. 48. The South Kensington System refers to both administrative and ideological aspects of the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. The school remained under the Department of Science and Art, South Kensington until 1900, and its curriculum was perceived to be influenced by its founding aim in 1853, to primarily encourage design for industry. Ibid., p. 42. In a review of the 1944 Oireachtas exhibition, Thomas MacGreevy commented on the RHA, who had selected the exhibition, that the “secularist and middle-class South Kensington tradition ... still prevails at the Academy and at our schools of art,” underlying the close association between the RHA and the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art. *Irish Times*, 23 Oct. 1944.
53. Theo Snoddy, *Dictionary of Irish Artists* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1996), p. 94.
54. John Turpin, *History of the Royal Hibernian Academy of Arts, Volume Two 1916–2020* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2018), p. 166.
55. Ibid., p. 626.
56. Snoddy, *Dictionary*, p. 34.
57. Patricia Butler, *The Silent Companion: An Illustrated History of the Water Colour Society of Ireland* (Woodbridge: Antique Collector’s Club, 2010), p. 16.
58. Ibid., p. 17.
59. Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors*, p. 39.
60. Whytes, “Whytes Irish and British Art Auction listing, 28 September 2009,” at: [www.whytes.ie](http://www.whytes.ie).
61. Gerald Davis, “Demise of Oireachtas Exhibition,” *Irish Times*, 17 July 2003. Davis (1938–2005) was a Dublin-based artist and gallerist based.
62. *An Chomhairle Ealaíon* (The Arts Council), *Sixteenth Annual Report and Accounts, from 1 April 1967 to 3 March 1968* (Dublin: An Chomhairle Ealaíon, 1968), pp 4–5.



63. Fionna Barber, *Art in Ireland Since 1910* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), p. 104.
64. Robert O'Byrne refers to the 1943 exhibition as "a milestone in the history of Modernism in Ireland." Robert O'Byrne, "Irish Modernism: The Early Decades," in Irish Museum of Modern Art, *The Moderns: The Arts in Ireland from the 1900s to the 1970s* (Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2011), p. 21. The beginnings of the ELA are discussed in: Riann Coulter, "Hibernian Salon des Refuses," in *Irish Arts Review* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), 80–85. S.B. Kennedy, *Irish Art and Modernism 1880–1950* (Belfast: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1991), 115–133. Jellett, an active advocate of Modernism, died the following year. Also, in 1944, the IELA committee voted to include non-Irish artists.
65. Katherine Cahill writes, "given her involvement with The Dublin Painters' Society, whose aim was 'to encourage artists whose tendencies are in harmony with contemporary world movements', her interest in the *avant-garde* is unquestioned." Cahill, "In the Mainstream," p. 36.
66. National Irish Visual Arts Library File: Muriel Brandt, Ref. IE/NIVAL AR/293.
67. Kennedy, *Irish Art*, p. 132.
68. Michael Quigley, "Pictorial Record: Centenary of Thomas Davis and Young Ireland," in: Government Publication Sales Office, *Illustrated Centenary Volume: Thomas Davis and Young Ireland 1845–1945* (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1945).
69. Quigley, 'Pictorial Record', 1945.
70. National College of Art, *Thomas Davis and the Young Ireland Movement Centenary: Exhibition of Pictures of Irish Historical Interest* (Dublin: National College of Art, 1946).
71. As this is dated 23 July 1946, it may have been a preview text. Quoted in, Niamh O'Sullivan (ed.), *Coming Home: Art and the Great Hunger* (Hamden, CT: Quinnipiac University, 2018), p. 109.
72. Rooney, "If the artist," p. 18.
73. Oil on canvas, 51 x 69 cm. Coll: National Gallery of Ireland. Yeats' painting was exhibited at Society of Scottish Artists 52nd Exhibition, Royal Scottish Academy Galleries, Edinburgh, in Spring 1946.
74. National College of Art, *Thomas Davis*, p. 16. Oil on canvas, 194.5 x 302.5 cm. Coll: Government Art Collection London, on Loan to the Honorable Society, King's Inns, Dublin. Lavery took more than 10 years to complete the work. Catherine Marshall, "Of all the trials not to paint...": Sir John Lavery's painting *High Treason, Court of Criminal Appeal: The Trial of Roger Casement 1916*, in Lisa Godson and Joanna Brück (eds.), *Making 1916: Material and Visual Culture of the Easter Rising* (Liverpool University Press, 2015), p. 228.
- Fintan O'Toole and Catherine Marshall point out that Lavery had bequeathed the work to the National Portrait Gallery in London and the Royal Courts of Justice, but neither institution wanted it: "If Darling commissioned it, he did not pay for it: it remained in Lavery's studio until his death, in 1941. [...] After years in storage at the NPG it was hung in the office of the senior clerk of the court of criminal appeal in London, removed from the public gaze, for fear of arousing the wrong kind of attention from 'people who considered Casement a martyr.'"
- The painting was lent to the Honorable Society of King's Inns in Dublin, in 1951. The message from the lord chancellor's office accompanying the loan said, "We can adopt the



- suggestion of lending it to the King's Inns on indefinite loan, which means that we can forget to ask for its return." *The Irish Times*, 21 Feb. 2015.
75. Donal O'Donnell, 'High Treason: The Appeal of Roger Casement' in Dublin City Gallery the Hugh Lane, *High Treason: Roger Casement* (Dublin: Dublin City Gallery the Hugh Lane, 2016), p. 38.
  76. Oil on canvas, 172.8 x 289.6 cm, Coll: Collins Barracks Cork. Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors*, p. 69.
  77. *Ibid.*, pp 69–70.
  78. Oil on canvas, 97 x 125cm. First exhibited: RHA 1917. Coll: Dublin City Gallery the Hugh Lane. Éimear O'Connor outlines the extraordinary impact of the image, which was produced as a limited-edition poster and sold to raise funds for families affected by "the political turmoil" following the 1916 Rising. Éimear O'Connor, *Seán Keating: Contemporary Contexts* (Cork: Crawford Art Gallery, 2012), p. 13.
  79. Cahill, 'In the Mainstream', pp 34–45.
  80. *Ibid.*
  81. Census of Ireland 1901/1911, "Residents of a house 13 in Gulistan Terrace (Rathmines & Rathgar East, Dublin), 5 May 1911," at: [www.census.nationalarchive.ie](http://www.census.nationalarchive.ie).
  82. Kinmonth, *Irish Rural Interiors*, pp 34–45.
  83. John Turpin writes "Switzer's employed Miss Davidson to draw costume designs." Turpin, "The South Kensington System," p. 60. Katherine Cahill discussed her literary work including her play *Bride*, performed at the Gate Theatre in 1931 "directed by Hilton Edwards with costumes and set design by Michael McLiammoir [sic]." Cahill, "In the Mainstream," pp 39, 45.
  84. Quoted in Bruce Arnold, *Maine Jellett and the Modern Movement in Ireland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), pp 43–44.
  85. *Portrait of Jack B. Yeats (1871–1957)*, N.D. Oil on canvas, 93 x 74 cm. Coll: National Gallery of Ireland.
  86. See note 52.
  87. Oil on canvas, 66 by 76cm. Exhibited: RHA, 1921. Coll: private; Oil on canvas, 76.2 x 101.6 cm. Coll: private. Exhibited: RHA, 1931.
  88. Cahill writes: "She remained firmly in the mainstream of Irish naturalism, using Irish landscape, seascape and genre scenes as her raw material, material she used with remarkable facility." Cahill, "In the Mainstream," p. 44.
  89. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
  90. Oil on canvas on board, 30 x 25 cm. Coll: private; Oil on canvas, 57.15 by 73.66cm. Coll: private.
  91. Re: *Fashions at the Fair*, see note 26.
  92. Marianne O'Kane Boal, "Lilian Lucy Davidson, *Boats at Wicklow, Dusk*," in *Adam's, Adam's Important Irish Art Catalogue* (Dublin: Adam's, 30 Sept. 2015), Lot 21.
  93. Cahill, "In the Mainstream," p. 39.
  94. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
  95. This is discussed in, Niamh Ann Kelly, *Ultimate Witnesses: The Visual Culture of Death, Burial and Mourning in Famine Ireland* (Hamden CT: Quinnipiac University, 2017).



96. Colm J. Donnelly and Eileen M. Murphy, "The Origins of Cillíní," in *Archaeology Ireland* 22, no. 3 (Autumn 2008), 26–29.
97. Patricia Lysaght, "Caoineadh os Cionn Coirp: The Lament for the dead in Ireland," *Folklore* 108, no. 1–2 (1997), 65–82.
98. Cahill, "In the Mainstream," p. 44.
99. Spencer (1892–1979) was Professor of Painting at the R.C.A., 1932–48 and an Official War Artist in Britain, 1940–3. He was the younger brother of better-known painter muralist, Stanley Spencer (1891–1959).
100. *Irish Times*, 13 June 1981.
101. Their eldest child was born in 1936, a year before Brandt completed her exams for the ARCA diploma. Snoddy, *Dictionary*, pp 34–35.
102. One of the posters is held at the National Museum of Ireland, Museum of Country Life, Castlebar, County Mayo.
103. Nolan is quoted in Snoddy, *Dictionary*, p. 35.
104. Among these are: *Micheál MacLiammóir (1899–1978)*. Oil on canvas, 66 x 86.3 cm. Coll: NGI; *Christine, Countess of Longford*. Oil on canvas, 53 x 76 cm. Coll: NGI and: *Sinead, Bean de Valera*. Oil on board, 37 x 30cm. Coll: private.
105. Oil on canvas, 74 x 60cm. Coll: McKee Barracks, Dublin John de Vere White writes that "she struggled to make a living out of art" and relied on her portrait commissions. De Vere, *De Vere's Irish Art Auction, 22 May 2012* (Dublin: de Vere's, 2012), p. 84.
106. Both: Undated; Watercolour and ink, 33 x 46 cm. John de Vere White writes that these are part of a watercolour series that "show scenes from a rural Irish festival and may well be her interpretation of the Ould Lammas Fair, Bally Castle, Co. Antrim, that has been going for over one hundred years." De Vere, *De Vere's Irish Art*, p. 84.
107. Watercolour and ink, 28 x 39cm. Coll: private.
108. Oil on board, 42 x 57cm. Exhibited: RHA, 1960.
109. The symbolism of the children is emphasized in writing by Cristín Leach, *The Sunday Times* (Ireland), 13 March 2016.
110. The complexities of ethnic, class-based and gendered exclusions were actively at play in the climate of art criticism from 1960s to 1980s. See, Róisín Kennedy, "Lhote's wives – Scapegoating Women Artists, 1962–84," in Éimear O'Connor (ed.), *Irish Women Artists 1800–2009: Familiar but Unknown* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), pp 168–178.
111. Bláithín O Ciobhain, *Irish Press*, 12 June 1981.
112. Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, *Irish Art 1900–1950: An exhibition in association with Rosc Teoranta* (Cork: Rosc Teoranta, 1975), p. 18. She painted seven scenes from the life of Saint Anthony, six of which survive, one being destroyed by fire shortly before her death. Snoddy, *Dictionary*, pp 34–35. She also painted two largescale works for the church's mortuary chapel.
113. A poignant study for this, *A Child Standing beside Saint Anthony* is in the NGI collection. Graphite on paper, 39.8 x 17.7 cm Coll: NGI.
114. Turpin, *History of the Royal Hibernian Academy*, p. 284. Houses of the Oireachtas, "Written Answers—State Board Appointments, Dáil Éireann Debate, Tuesday, 7 Nov. 1978," at: [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie).