

Christine Kinealy, Jason King, Gerard Moran, eds.. *Children and the Great Hunger in Ireland*. Cork: Cork University Press, 2018. 330 pp. \$25.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-9904686-9-1.

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Commissioned by Douglas Kanter (Florida Atlantic University)

The editors of *Children and the Great Hunger in Ireland* have done excellent work compiling a volume that offers new insight into both the history of the Great Hunger and the history of childhood. Emerging out of a conference hosted by The Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University, *Children and the Great Hunger in Ireland* covers a range of topics from life for children in Famine workhouses to stories of Famine era children in contemporary young adult fiction. Christine Kinealy, the director of the Great Hunger Institute, is one of the foremost scholars of the Famine working today, and she and her coeditors, Jason King and Gerard Moran, both of the National University of Ireland Galway, have compiled a diverse and intriguing collection. As Kinealy, King, and Moran point out in their introduction, the imagery of starving children has long been associated with the Famine. Perhaps the most well-known image of the era is James Mahony's sketch of Bridget O'Donnel and her two children which appeared in the *Illustrated London News*. However, the experiences of children have been largely ignored by historians despite the fact that children and the elderly made up a large percentage of Famine era mortality. The greatest contribution of the book is the way it centers the study of children and integrates the history of childhood with the study of the Irish Famine.

The collection begins with a foreword by noted young adult novelist Marita Conlon-McKenna, and after the cowritten introduction it is organized thematically. The first four chapters, including contributions from editors Kinealy and Moran, comprise the first section, "The Workhouse Experience." The next section, "Orphaned in Canada," focuses on the experiences of Famine emigrant orphans in Canada. The final six chapters, in the section titled "Representing Trauma," deal broadly with memory and representation of the Famine. Each section is admirably committed to interdisciplinarity. Historical and literary analysis is most prevalent but there are also chapters written by novelists, a librarian, a biological anthropologist, and a linguistic anthropologist.

The section on the workhouse combines Kinealy's and Moran's solidly researched historical contributions. Kinealy's chapter, "Attenuated Apparitions of Humanity: The Innocent Casualties of the Great Hunger," provides a general overview of how the Great Hunger affected children. Moran's chapter, "'Suffer Little Children': Life in the Workhouse during the Famine," details the functioning of the workhouses and the impact the institution must have had on children, calling them a "lost generation" (p. 45). Simon Gallaher's essay continues the narrative and traces the long-term impact of the Famine by examining the ex-

periences of workhouse children in the 1850s and 1860s. Even once Famine conditions abated, Ireland was still left with a large number of orphaned children for whom the workhouse was the only option. This section also incorporates Jonny Geber's chapter, "'Wretched in the Extreme': Investigating Child Experiences of the Great Hunger through Bioarcheology," on how bioarcheology can provide insight into the Famine experience for children. Based on the results of a dig at the Kilkenny Workhouse, Geber's study details child mortality at the workhouse revealing that young children suffered from signs of scurvy and that many children died at the age of three just as they would have been separated from their mothers according to workhouse policy.

The focus on the orphan experience continues in the chapters on Canadian emigration. Mark McGowan's contribution, "Rethinking the Irish Famine Orphans of Quebec, 1847-1848," summarizes the preliminary findings of a research team at the University of Toronto who examined 619 Famine orphans who arrived in Quebec City between 1847 and 1848. Based on preliminary research findings, most Famine orphans wound up in what McGowan terms "semi-indentured service" (p. 96). McGowan's large-scale social history analysis is nicely balanced by the succeeding chapter by King, "Finding a Voice: Irish Famine Orphan Robert Walsh's Search for his Younger Sister." King focuses on the story of Robert Walsh, a Famine orphan who was adopted in Canada and did not wind up in "semi-indentured servitude" but instead received an education and achieved professional success as a priest and academic. However, Walsh remained profoundly traumatized by the Famine and the loss of his family. Koral La Vorgna's well-researched essay, "Not Standing Idly By: Educating Famine Orphans at the Emigrant Orphan Asylum in Saint John, New Brunswick, 1847 to 1849," looks at one response to the influx of Famine orphans by Canadian officials at a charity school. The Emigrant Orphan Asylum seems broadly similar to many charity schools

created in the British Isles in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, aside from its short-term existence. Its focus on teaching children "industry" and saving them from "idleness" reveals much about how Irish Famine orphans were perceived.

The final section, "Representing Trauma," is the most uneven. It also covers the widest array of topics, which do not connect with each other as well as chapters in the earlier sections. Stephen Butler's essay on Mary Ann Sadlier raises good questions about the reception of Sadlier's work in her own time but fails to draw an original conclusion on this score. Michael Collins's chapter, "What a Writer Seeks in History: In Search of a Voice," focuses on the difficulty of writing fiction about the Famine but does not engage with the central theme of children and the Great Hunger. The other chapters provide more insightful conclusions. In particular, E. Moore Quinn engages with the use of Irish by Famine emigrants through memories of their children, while Salvador Ryan's essay addresses the Irish Folklore Commission's School's Scheme and the extraordinary array of Famine folklore gathered by children participating in the scheme.

Overall Kinealy, King, and Moran have done excellent work organizing a wide array of chapters into a coherent collection. Despite some shortcomings within individual chapters, *Children and the Great Hunger in Ireland* succeeds in raising important questions and hopefully it will inspire further research on its theme.

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