

REVIEW ESSAY

Debating *The Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*

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The Atlas of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–52, edited by John Crowley, William J. Smyth, and Mike Murphy, Cork, Cork University Press, 2012, 728 pp., €59, £55 (hardback), ISBN 978-185918-479-0

Celebration and debate

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The Atlas of the Great Irish Famine is a singular event in Irish publishing and in Irish historical geography (Kearns 2013). Few academic works gather this much public attention and acclaim. This Roundtable offers five reactions to the *Atlas*. Each is a partial view from a distinct disciplinary perspective. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh considers the general historiographical context, while Marguérite Corporaal looks at the treatment of literature in the *Atlas*. Nessa Cronin considers the history and the purpose of Famine mapping, and Lisa Godson reviews the use of visual evidence in the *Atlas*. Gerry Kearns looks at the *Atlas* as a work of historical population geography. With typical good humour and generosity, the editors respond in a concluding essay. It is clear that the *Atlas* will keep on giving to teaching, to the popular historical and geographical imaginations, and to further research on this appalling event.

Reference

Kearns, G., 2013. Irish historical geographies: colonial contexts and postcolonial legacies. *Historical Geography*, 41, 22–34.

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The time and territory of calamity

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Certain words – principally adjectives – become devalued by overuse (or by careless use). One such word, perhaps, is ‘monumental’, when applied to all sorts of accomplishments. However, in the case of the *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*, there is not one scintilla of exaggeration or extravagance in describing this work as monumental. Its awesome size and scope, the extraordinary richness of its data, its combination of evidence, analysis and multiple genres of narrative and representation, relating to the greatest social calamity that Ireland (and its people) has ever endured in its recorded history – all of these features insist on ‘monumental’ as the appropriate adjective to be applied. With 710 pages, text content by 60 contributors, over 200 maps and some 400 other images and illustrations, of document excerpts and art works, the term ‘Atlas’ may seem too restrictive. But the word monumental also aptly applies to the scope of its ambition and the level of its achievement.

In a certain sense, this project may be said to have had a long gestation. As the editors inform us in the Introduction:

The cartographic journey of the *Atlas of the Great Famine* began almost twenty years ago with a discussion in the Department of Geography UCC, on the best way to calculate the shape and size and then map the civil parishes of Ireland. It was decided that the best approach was to computerize/digitize the civil parishes from the Ordnance Survey six-inch County Index Maps and then compute the shape and size, and map the distribution, of the parishes. [...] It was then decided to generate a computer database for the 1841 (pre-famine) and 1851 (post-famine) censuses. Then, using GIS (Geography Information Systems) to link the Civil Parish maps to the Census database, choropleth (thematic) maps could be produced to visualize changes in population and social structure before, during and after the Famine.

[...] The process was completed for over 3300 parishes [...] and 1400 towns... This *Atlas* contains over seventy such maps, derived from the database. A total of 130 additional maps were drawn for this publication over the past three years. These maps are at the centre of the unraveling, analysis and interpretation provided here of the origins, varying impacts and consequences of the Great Famine for Ireland and for the Irish people, both at home and abroad. (Crowley *et al.* 2012, pp. xv–xvi)

Thus, even if the angel in the marble was glimpsed in Cork back in the early 1990s, the finishing of the work within the last three years may be considered expeditious. And, in any case, the later timing of the publication may be said to have been most auspicious and well-starred. I say this on two principal grounds.

First, it enabled the editors to take account of the enormous advances in scholarship in the specific area of ‘Famine studies’ since the late 1980s. One can speculate on the reasons for this surge. There is the matter of numbers: an increasing number of researchers, including overseas scholars, stimulated interest in the Famine, so also did new methodologies (e.g. econometrics and the application of social theory); access to new sources or the publication of neglected sources (e.g. relating to poor law structures);

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a flowering of local studies, its community of practitioners more numerous and more professional than ever before.

The changing national mood was significant: a nation in the mid-1990s more at ease with the past, more confident and prosperous, less fraught. This coincided with a wider public awareness of famine and poverty, as global phenomena, carried by the mass media and by active voluntary agencies. All of these, and other factors, were at play in driving the surge in Irish Famine studies. The second major development, with which the surge in famine scholarship has joined, to the advantage of the editors and the *Atlas*, is the advance in recent years in general IT sophistication, as exemplified in the work of GIS in Cork and specifically in the cartography in this volume.

It is not my intention to offer here a detailed appraisal of every aspect of this work. But it may be helpful were I to comment, however briefly, on certain of its principal features that attract the particular attention of the historian. The complete work comprises multiple forms of 'text' – selected to describe, analyse, explain/interpret, represent, and, in the case of literary excerpts, paintings, photos, sculpture and other art objects (and even a commemorative musical score), to evoke the calamity of the Great Famine. The list of contributors is a distinguished roll-call, drawn from a variety of disciplines and perspectives. The main blocks of written texts combine overview essays on key aspects of the Famine – population change, excess mortality, migration and emigration (with all the key variables regarding its impact identified, quantified and mapped – by region, gender, age-cohort, social category, farm size and type, categories of dwellings, urban–rural dimension, etc.) – with a host of case studies, on the famine impact on particular localities, on workhouses and medical infrastructure, on emigration; on 'the scattering' and key sites of new settlement for famine and post-famine emigrants. There are essays on 'legacy' themes, including folklore, memory, recollection, monuments, art representation and literary texts, concluding with a section on famine and hunger in our contemporary world and the relevance of our own experience of Famine to our responses to famine globally in our own time.

Some of the essays are a distillation of work by experts who have already made seminal contributions to Famine studies in recent decades; others are sharp local studies by distinguished local historians and emerging young scholars; there are also vignettes of key episodes, persons and themes. The decision to group a significant number of essays (overviews and local case studies) on a provincial basis may raise an eyebrow, given the variable patterns of spatial distribution of famine-related phenomena revealed in the maps. But the outcome is an enriched set of cross-referenced 'readings' of the experience of the Famine throughout the island.

It is also worth noting, given the sheer volume of text, that there is relatively little overlap or repetition between contributors: Willie Smyth and Cormac Ó Gráda discuss mortality and vulnerability from different perspectives, while the essays on the urban dimension of the Famine by Smyth and Hourihan largely complement each other. It may seem crass to ask for more, but Butler's essay on the landed classes might have been supported by a detailed case study or consideration of a cluster of estates.

A welcome feature of the volume is the inclusion of essays which explore for the first time hitherto neglected aspects of the Famine (e.g. Neil Buttimer's fine essay on 'The Great Famine in Gaelic manuscripts'). But all the essays are written in a manner likely to engage a broad spectrum of readers. Indeed, the sheer variety of the textual and illustrative material (including art work, illustrations, vignettes of key actors and episodes) indicates the ambition of the editors and the publishers to reach a wider audience than that of specialist scholars. This is no bad thing. Certainly, in the judgement

of this reviewer, the illustrative material in no way dilutes or compromises the integrity and impact of the scholarly core of the work.

But, as the editors justifiably proclaim, the maps are the ‘gold standard’ by which the *Atlas* will be judged. The triumph of the maps is, no doubt, the outcome of many factors; notably, conceptual acuity on the part of the editors (in formulating the right questions, for interrogating the data) and outstanding cartographic imagination and technique. But fundamentally, what makes these maps triumph that they are is that they succeed in representing change over time. That is to say, they are not a series of interesting ‘snapshots’; rather, they combine the spatial with the diachronic, using the aggregate social data taken from the 1841 and 1851 censuses (but greatly refined), to provide a cartographic narrative of the impact of the Great Famine. They are a triumph, for all concerned.

The *Atlas* addresses virtually all of the main questions posed by the great catastrophe of the Famine. How did it happen that by the early 1840s some three million or more people (of the Irish underclass) out of a total Irish population of eight-and-a-half million were virtually exclusively dependent on one root crop, the potato, for their survival? What was the conventional wisdom of the time regarding Irish poverty and how to deal with it? (For ‘normal’ Irish poverty, the Poor Law of 1838 was designed with a total workhouse capacity of just over 100,000). What was the response of the government of the day to the Famine – its onset and its unfolding horror – as the potato failure quickly overwhelmed the just recently constructed system of workhouses? Was the Famine a watershed or an accelerator of certain social trends, the contours of at least some of which can already be discerned before the 1840s and the arrival of the blight (rising emigration rates are a case in point)? The analysis of the data engages all of these issues – and others – with a revisionist turn on a number of points (for example, on famine mortality, pp. 111–114).

Does the *Atlas* answer every question? Of course not, nor should one expect it to. Its exploration of the data, in maps and commentary, generates new or reformulates older questions and puzzles. As the editors acknowledge: ‘Yet, after all the work, we are left wondering about a whole range of issues’ (Crowley *et al.* 2012, p. xvi). The maps, the data and the commentary reveal and explain clearly and convincingly what was the impact of the Great Famine on changes in Irish population and social structure, on the economy and on the very landscape itself. The more difficult (not easily quantifiable) impact of the catastrophe on cultural change – on the landscape of the Irish mind and on the complex ‘designs’ for living (values, beliefs and practices) that constitute Irish culture as it is lived – continues to prove elusive. Some of the aggregate socio-psychological and cultural changes which, it is sometimes claimed, were wrought by the Great Famine continue to challenge and to perplex us. As the editors speculate, for example, in looking at the exponential growth in the number of nuns in post-famine Ireland: ‘was there something about the devastation of family and marital life during the Famine which made more attractive the solace of the convent?’ (Crowley *et al.* 2012, p. xvi). Indeed, the wider issue of the impact of the Famine on the (incremental but relentless) enactment of the ‘devotional revolution’ in Irish Catholic cultural practice is an issue still requiring closer calibration. (In this context, the short essay by Miller, Gurrin and Kennedy, on the famine and religious demography in mid-nineteenth century Ulster, is something of an ‘outlier’ in the volume). Again, what precise role does the Famine play in the decisive (and, in terms of raw numbers and rapidity, the dramatic) language shift from Irish to English as the main vernacular of the population at large in Ireland in nineteenth century

Ireland? Census data is an indispensable part of the evidence, but it does not provide the explanation for this language shift.

What, then, is the value of this impressive volume: its social, educational or, indeed, economic value? I would contend that, by virtue of its contribution to how, in the light of our historical experience, we Irish understand ourselves and indeed how we understand the world, its explanatory value is simply incalculable. However, while its value is incalculable, this is the kind of project that must be paid for: in man-hours and wages, in materials, in technology, in production and in marketing and distribution costs. We live in an era of league-tables, ranking exercises and metrics for everything. But if we are to have measurement applied relentlessly to performance, let us ensure that we also have judgement and discrimination. The impressive scholarship represented by this *Atlas* needs to be evaluated in terms, and by criteria, that are appropriate to its ambition and to its achievement. And, in this instance, the impressive achievement of editors and contributors has been matched by the highest production values of the press.

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Mapping out the Great Irish Famine in fiction, 1847–1870: imperial counternarratives

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Recent scholarship on the Great Irish Famine (1845–1852) has increasingly addressed the fateful era of wide-scale starvation and mass emigration in the context of Ireland’s colonial status. David Lloyd explains the London Government’s *laissez-faire* policies to the subsistence crisis as responses to the problems it had with the ‘abundance of the means’ necessary to support the sister island’s huge population (2011, p. 27). David Nally interprets the high rates of Famine casualties in light of two previous centuries of ‘colonial biopolitics’ that had increased the vulnerability of those population groups ‘who stand in the way of progress, or refuse to be assimilated’ (2011, p. 15). Several contributions in the *Atlas* also engage with the interrelationship between England’s imperial rule over Ireland and the dramatic outbreak of famine. In several chapters, William J. Smyth discusses the inadequate relief measures taken by the Peel and Russell administrations which ‘clearly added to mass mortality’ (2012a, p. 11). Nally makes a similar observation, arguing that ‘colonisation might have generated mass vulnerability’ (2012, p. 65).

These close intersections between Ireland’s subjugation to England’s sway and the outrages of deprivation by which it was afflicted during the Great Hunger are also a central theme in the fiction written during and in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe on both sides of the Atlantic. In representing the destitution by which

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especially the peasantry was afflicted, these early literary recollections of *An Gorta Mór* attribute the plight of the Irish to the inadequacies and the malevolent intentions of British authorities determined to root out Irish culture. Moreover, these often underexplored novels and short stories consciously speak back to the imperial discourses in which the Irish Question was cast and by which British administrators legitimised their Famine policies.

F.B. Ryan's poem *The Spirit's Lament, or the Wrongs of Ireland* (1847) strongly condemns the English Government for its cold indifference to the 'the cries' of Ireland's 'children, suing for bread': England is 'lost to all pity, he's steeled to the pain' (p. 25). The poem thus voices a more widespread tendency to hold English rule responsible for its failure to relieve the sufferings of its colonised Irish subjects: William Smyth aptly illustrates how the accusation that the English administration was culpable of a policy of extermination 'has surfaced in the political and historical literatures ever since' (2012b, p. 53), and this sense of blame inspired 'Young Ireland's politicisation of Famine suffering and migration', as Kerby Miller clarifies (2012, p. 223).

Early Famine fiction often engages with the Malthusian discourses which informed English perceptions of the Great Hunger (Lloyd 2008, pp. 46–47, Nally 2012, p. 69) by holding the English authorities who intended to decrease the dense rural population of its colony responsible for the extent of Ireland's miseries. These critiques of the London Government and its policies take on the form of extradiegetic digressions on the part of the narrator, thereby illustrating the frequently made point (Morash 2012, p. 645) that Famine literature adopted discursive modes from other genres such as political and economic treatises and nationalist pamphlets. For example, David Power Conyngham's novel *Frank O'Donnell* (1861), which was later republished for transatlantic markets as *The O'Donnells of Glen Cottage* (1874), suggests that England looked upon the Famine as a blessing, the dramatic downfall of population enabling them to tighten their firm grasp over an unruly people. Describing how Ireland is transformed into; 'one vast lazaretto' where '[l]iving skeletons stalked about with barely the semblance of life' and 'poor emaciated-looking beings' breathe forth 'a living miasma' (1861, p. 412), the heterodiegetic narrator represents the potato blight and consequent famine as 'powerful engines of state to uproot millions of the peasantry, to preserve law and order, and to clear off a surplus population, and to maintain the integrity of the British empire' (1861, p. 275). Stating that for the English, famine and starvation are more effective tools to suppress 'an incipient rebellion' than 'thirty thousand British bayonets' (1861, p. 275), the narrator not only seems to allude to the failed Young Ireland rebellion of 1848 as a direct consequence of unmitigated conditions of mass hunger but also implies that the attitude of the imperial power during the Famine era should be interpreted as a campaign of genocide. Similar assuinations are made in Dillon O'Brien's *The Dalys of Dalystown* (1866), a novel written after the author's migration from county Roscommon to Wisconsin. Here Henry Daly, the son of a debt-ridden landlord who settles in America's Midwest after his family has lost the encumbered estate, is the mouthpiece to denounce Lord John Russell's championing of 'political economy'. Henry argues that the Prime Minister's relentless support of this doctrine conceals an ulterior motive to 'uproot the Celtic race from Ireland', the famine being a fast and 'effectual agent' to achieve his goal (p. 499).

These early recollections of the Great Famine in fiction not only cast England's role during the Famine in terms of extermination but also exploitation. Alice Nolan's Irish-American Famine novel *The Byrnes of Glengoulah* (1868) aimed at transmitting the legacy of the Famine to 'dear young relatives who never saw the historic land of their

fathers' (p. viii), contains a passage in which the heterodiegetic narrator compares the conditions in Ireland in the year 1846 with those in Russia. Asserting that in Russia:

there is not a single work-house, a single poor-law board, or a single pauper. The cow of the Russian serf is never distrained for rent or taxes. The cabin of the Russian serf is never thrown down unless another is built in its stead. If he is protracted by sickness, he is cared and tended at the cost of the lord of the soil. (p. 144)

The narrator indirectly comments on the politics of rackrenting, eviction and inadequate relief for which the English Government, and by extension the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy class, were known. Thus pointing out the incompetence of the English Crown in dealing with the plight of the starving tenantry, the narrator concludes that Ireland's dire straits are aggravated by the greed of the 'the thrice accursed British rule' who 'oppress the Irish people and squeeze out of them the last shilling', meanwhile, appropriating the country's rich 'agricultural and mineral productions' for their own advancement (p. 145).

The Dalys of Dalystown likewise suggests that the English take advantage of the famishing Irish peasantry, drawing an analogy between the abuse of Irish agricultural labourers and the ill-treatment of slaves in America's Southern states. Through intertextual references to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), the narrator emphasises the 'Maudline' hypocrisy of the English. They 'weep over slavery in the South', but simultaneously ignore 'the lot of the Irish peasant, robbed, enslaved, lashed to madness' by those merciless Legrees', the landlords, whose power is 'spawned and nursed by your English laws' (O'Brien 1866, p. 57). In this respect, O'Brien's novel echoes nationalist discourses which commonly associated the abjectness of extensive mortality and destitution in Ireland with the outrages 'in the West Indian and other colonies ... where slavery reared its black front', as Thomas Doolan's *Practical Suggestions on the Improvement of the Present Condition of the Peasantry of Ireland* (1847, p. 9) exemplifies.

Novels and short stories written in the aftermath of *An Gorta Mór* not only lash out against England's inadequate policies to resolve the food crisis but also respond to the 'cultural and racial stereotypes' that promulgated in coverage of the Famine in the British press (Smyth 2012b, p. 56) as well as in accounts of British writers such as Thomas Carlyle (Crowley 2012, p. 483) who witnessed the situation on the Emerald Isle. These works of fiction challenge the bias that informed British perspectives of the Famine-stricken Irish by subverting the common assumptions that the Irish were indigenously indolent and improvident and that any efforts at relief or reform would, therefore, remain unproductive. *A Tale of the Irish Famine in 1846 and 1847* (1847), written by an author who called herself 'Ireland', consciously speaks back to representations of the destitute peasantry as slovenly, uncivilised people. Such depictions pervaded Famine treatises like Mrs. Maberly's *The Present State of Ireland and Its Remedy* (1847) which attributes Ireland's famine crisis to a 'people ... too indolent to go out of their way for improvement' (p. 16) and uneducated Irish housewives who are 'brawling, idle, dirty creatures' (p. 27). *A Tale of the Irish Famine in 1846 and 1847* elaborately describes the miseries faced by Honour McCarthy who, with her husband abroad, has to fend for herself and her six children during the season of 'famine and pestilence' (1847, p. 11). Despite her dire circumstances, which eventually force the 'stricken mother' to see her infants turn into emaciated 'lifeless forms' (p. 27), Honour manages to keep her household clean and organised. She consequently refuses to allow the pig, which is 'most resolutely excluded' (p. 9), into her cabin.

In a similar vein ‘Ellen Harrington’ (1865), a story written by Irish-born Susanna Meredith after her immigration to London, undermines the notion of indigenous squalor that dominated imperial discourse about the Great Hunger. Although the narrative emphasises the decay to which a Famine-stricken West Coast village has fallen prey, it makes clear that the overall degeneration is the result of the potato pestilence and subsequent famine rather than a feature inherent to Irish life. The story suggests that the general state of neglect throughout – the fact that ‘people stopped short in their building, repairing, decorating, even house-cleaning’ (p. 58) – is a direct result of ‘the potato-blight’ which ‘paralyzed everything’ (p. 57). Furthermore, pointing out that domestic degeneration extends to all classes – including the family of sick and poor Reverend Longwood whose premises are ‘sadly dilapidated’ and ‘felt no tiller’s hand for many a day’ (1865, p. 57) – Meredith’s text undermines the conventional and specific identification of the Catholic Irish rural population with destitution.

Mary Anne Sadlier’s Irish-Canadian novel *New Lights; or Life in Galway* (1894 [1853]) more particularly criticises the narrow-mindedness of the English and the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy with regard to the native Irish who try to hold on to their Catholic faith in spite of starvation. Caroline, an Englishwoman, who accompanies her husband Colonel Hampton to Ireland, views Ireland’s present misery in terms of ‘the heavy curse of Popery’ (p. 269), thereby voicing a common providentialist perspective on the Famine (Ó Gráda 2009, p. 204). However, this viewpoint is represented as coming from ‘an Englishwoman of limited education, and full of strong prejudice against Ireland and the Irish’ (Sadlier 1894 [1853], p. 267), and is thus dismantled. Landlord Ousely who forcefully seeks to convert his famishing tenants by threatening them with eviction and who shows no compassion for the plight of the farming cottiers unable to pay the rent is likewise misguided by bias about the Irish in his belief that the ‘peasantry of whom O’Connell was so proud’ is ‘just as civilized and enlightened’ as the Hottentots (Sadlier 1894 [1853], p. 325). The fact that this opinion is expressed by a character who on the whole appears ridiculous through his penchant for cursing and his association with immoral and gluttonous Evangelicals further deconstructs the conventional assumptions about the Irish to which he adheres as well as exposes the inaptitude of those in power in Famine afflicted Ireland.

Mapping out the narrative geographies of Famine fiction thus reveals a strong interaction and what Chris Morash calls ‘dialogue’ (2012, p. 645) between the literature which transmits the legacies of the Great Hunger as a ‘a medium of remembrance’ (Erl and Rigney 2006, p. 112) and the theological, economic and political frameworks by which the event was framed and interpreted. By, moreover, offering counternarratives to the templates in which the Famine was cast by representatives of the imperial power, these works of fiction demonstrate their significant role in the development of a ‘subaltern consciousness’ (McLeod 2000, p. 109).

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Spatialising history?: a cartographic review

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When Gerardus Mercator created his first atlas, his reference point was not the Atlas of Greek mythology who was punished by Zeus and made to bear the weight of the heavens on his back, but rather King Atlas, the mythical king of Maurentia, who was according to legend the philosopher, the mathematician and the astronomer that made the first celestial globe. Mercator had a similar plan to incorporate history, geography and theology in his work, and so the title page of his first atlas was illustrated with an image of this king. From the perspective of historical cartography then, the term 'atlas' denoted a close association between maps, images and texts. The *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* is a continuation of this cartographic history, in that it contains over 200 maps that are accompanied by 50 essays and additional shorter pieces all concerned with different aspects of the legacy of the Great Irish Famine. If the other mythological Atlas was originally charged to hold up the heavens, then the editors of this volume (and indeed the entire team at the Department of Geography and the University Press in University College Cork) have inherited and shouldered this Herculean task well. They have managed to create, commission and collect an impressive amount of material that might,

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otherwise, be overwhelming given the vast range of sources that could be included in any book dealing with the event and the experience of the Famine.

From a cartographic perspective, the achievements of the *Atlas* are twofold. The first, and more obvious point, is that the *Atlas* presents exemplary cartographic work in Irish Famine Studies. With the construction and the compilation of new maps from old sources, it literally gives us new perspectives on the Famine, while also offering us an improved ‘toolkit’ of maps to aid with analysis and interpretation of this formative period of modern Irish history. As Kevin Whelan notes on the dust jacket, ‘[i]ts unparalleled assemblage of new maps, old images and extensive documentation offers a brilliant teaching aid for the history of Ireland and of the Irish diaspora’. It is also arguably the first time that a geographic *view* of the Famine has been given to the reader in such a clearly defined and refined manner that allow for (if not encourage) cross-disciplinary and comparative conversations.

The second contribution marks a broader methodological point in that the conceptual focus on space as the organising principle for the work reinforces the underlying argument that narratives of history, colonialism, economics or culture can never be detached from narratives of space and scale. As the editors remark, ‘[t]hese maps are at the centre of the unravelling, analysis and interpretation provided here of the origins, varying impacts and consequences of the Great Famine for Ireland and for the Irish people, both at home and abroad’ (Crowley *et al.* 2012, p. xvi).

The *Atlas* is the culmination of expertise built up over two decades at University College Cork, with contributions from various national and international scholars across a range of disciplines. It is the compendium of work already completed elsewhere (as many arguments presented here are already well framed in previous articles, essays and monographs), but it also presents new material through the creation of a remarkably wide cartographic corpus. The maps began with a digitised map of the country based on the unit of the civil parish. This, along with the integration of previous data-sets (primarily the 1841 and 1851 censuses), led to the creation of 21 categories (which included persons, houses, means, education, etc.), from which various combinations could be tabulated and mapped, giving new ways of viewing Irish life and culture. One minor quibble, however, in that a Map Index at the beginning of the book would have been a useful reference guide for the reader (especially when one returns to the book to search for a particular map), but it would also have served to foreground that this is an atlas of maps, with essays attached, and not the other way around.

While the *Atlas* provides an original, island-wide, and ‘almost panoptic’ view of the Famine, the editors are careful to note that such a view has its limits, noting that, ‘[w]e can see every parish from above but we still do not know how the Famine affected individual families and communities on the ground’ (Crowley *et al.* 2012, p. xv). The maps document a ‘range of human worlds and conditions never previously published and revealed in Irish Famine Studies’, and that ‘the interpretation of these maps and other evidence equally highlights the diversity of local, county, provincial and emigrant conditions and experiences’ (*loc. cit.*). While some of the essays focus on particular regional case studies, many of the maps present information on an island-wide scale, and so will undoubtedly prompt further work in the future. The editors make no claim to comprehensiveness, and they alert the reader that ‘there has been no attempt made to provide an overarching, unifying synthesis. Rather what is recognised in this *Atlas* is the necessity for a great diversity of approaches and perspectives in seeking to illuminate and represent the monstrous reality of the Famine tragedy and its consequences’ (*loc. cit.*). Indeed, to reinforce the point regarding the limitations of mapmaking, the choice to locate

Eavan Boland's poem 'That the History of Cartography is Limited' at the beginning of the *Atlas* is a flare that arcs over, and has deep resonance with, the content that is to follow. Not only is the reader of the poem told that the famine road as witnessed in the poem, 'will not be there' on any 'map of the island', but, indeed, that the poem's narrator had to be informed about the very existence of such roads in the first place. Something similar happened recently during a visit to the Portumna Workhouse in County Galway, where I was informed that the high walls were built not to keep the inmates in, but to keep the wider population (during the worst of the famine years) out.

The visual representation of information, data and statistics as cartographically rendered throughout the volume is what stands out as being of immediate scholarly value. Maps such as the poignant representation of the percentage population change in children under five (p. 198), and the map of over 4000 female orphans that emigrated to Australia (p. 554), give us a glimpse of what a children's geography of the Famine might look like. In addition, other maps signal the demographic patterns of change in urban spaces where some towns lost over half their population, and 165 'census' towns are seen to 'disappear' altogether between 1841–1851 (maps on pp. 235, 237, 252, 253). Such maps challenge the popular notion that the Famine almost exclusively devastated rural areas and by critically reexamining the impact on urban spaces and populations. Alongside maps that show the physical infrastructure of the colonial state (Army Barracks, p. 54; Poor Law Unions, p. 125; Workhouse Plans, p. 122; Fever Hospitals, pp. 202, 207; Dispensaries, p. 204), are maps that illustrate other informal or unofficial networks of famine support and infrastructure (Quaker Relief, pp. 101, 104; Pawnshops, p. 248).

Other maps are also demonstrably maps of mobility, by showing the flows and pathways of people and goods, and so link the regional and national experience of the Famine to various diasporic geographies. Other formats used to illustrate these *dynamic* geographies include location and sketch maps, such as the map showing 'Externally generated non-government contributions to Irish relief efforts during the Great Famine' that illustrates proportionately what groups and nations offered donations, with the cursory note that 'Irish emigrants sent millions of dollars' via emigrant remittances (p. 489). The extended notes appended to many of the maps are most useful in that they clearly explain the parameters of the map and qualify the definition of the terms used for a non-expert reader. The uses of urban descriptors have varying values in an Irish context in the nineteenth century and as the editors carefully note for the reader, 'the category "town" included all agglomerations that contained twenty or more houses [...] other "towns" were large farm clusters or roadside streets of labourers cabins' (Hourihan 2012, p. 237).

What, then, can cartographic narratives and a spatial reflex tell us about the Famine, that other approaches cannot? Can a geographical frame and spatial interpretation provide a counternarrative to previous (largely temporally focused) work? Are maps purely instrumental, or do they point to something of wider significance? In this volume, maps are not presented to merely 'illustrate' the historical information (in the role of a supporting actor with history taking centre-stage), nor is the map merely a convenient framing device for otherwise unwieldy statistical data, but they are rather the starting points for alternative modes of analysis and interpretation in themselves. Maps, then, are not *just* visual teaching aids for the teacher, illustrations for a scholar's conference presentation or images for a book cover, but they also serve another function as they tell a different story in themselves.

A critically informed mapping practice can provoke alternative sets of questions and, therefore, demand different categories of understanding, in terms of spatial networks, mobilities and ways of being. The question of the changing relationship to place comes to mind with regard to the last point. In the context of Ireland, why is it that emigrants, having largely come from rural backgrounds and expertise, chose urban-based work and destinations overseas in the post-Famine decades? Was this an unconscious rejection of the land in retaliation to how the land rejected them during and after the Famine? Or was it merely just an issue of well-worn emigrant pathways being forged to where the work was most plentiful? Alternatively, how did the memory of the Famine shape and inform popular political narratives (Land Wars, Home Rule, Gaelic Revival) towards the end of the century? In generating questions that might not otherwise present themselves, critical cartographies and a spatial reflex can offer distinctly different ways of thinking about such key moments in Irish history.

An understanding of the *dynamic* nature of the Famine, the spread of disease, movement of people, emigrant pathways can only be achieved (arguably) with the employment of a spatial imagination as a guiding principle (with movement *to* and *from* places being of key interest here). The production of the *Atlas* also demands comparison with other similar projects such as the recent publication of the second edition of the *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (Aalen *et al.* 2011; also published by Cork University Press), and in a different way, with Stanford University's *Spatial History Project*. This latter project, led by Professor Richard White, has been the location for a variety of different projects (from mapping the American railroads to tracking border changes in the Second World War). White argues that spatial history 'reveals historical relations that might otherwise go unnoticed, and it undermines, or substantiates, stories upon which we build our own versions of the past' (White 2010). Similarly, the collaborative and cross-disciplinary publication of the *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Eltis and Richardson 2010) later engendered a larger online project entitled, *Voyages* – a single multi-source dataset of trans-Atlantic slave voyages now available as an open-access website (*Voyages n.d.*).

The traditional presentation of the *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* means that it has been accessible to a particular audience. One would hope that the possibility of an open-access digital platform (integrating other digital sources, the Down Survey and Ordnance Survey of Ireland maps, in addition to post-1851 census data, for example) could allow for a layering of spatial and comparative histories and inspire new directions for Irish Famine Studies in the future. Such a project might also allow for alternative Famine cartographies, or 'deep maps' of the Great Irish Famine, to be created (Pearson and Shanks 2001). In the Introduction to the volume, the editors' note that 'the first great silence relates to the Famine dead', and that they have endeavoured to 'excavate carefully along these fissures to try to expose the wounds, the memory loss, that which is hidden' (Crowley *et al.* 2012, p. xii). The 'silence' that drifted across the landscape in the decades after the Famine was not just a literal silence marking the absence of individuals and communities but was also the silence associated with the loss of the Irish language in many areas. It also subsequently relates to the silence of generations that tried to live within a landscape scarred with trauma, humiliation and shame.

After reading, viewing and thinking about the *Atlas* in detail, the reader is left with the feeling that one has not just learned more about The Great Hunger, but is left rather with an acute awareness that there will always remain an immeasurable silence, an area of knowledge that can never be accessed or fully known, and can only be incompletely imagined to some small degree. Who were the decision-makers in family households as

to who got what food rations? Was there a deliberate process of ‘natural selection’, with the very young and the very old being left without to allow the stronger members of the family some chance of survival? What were the conditions inside the workhouses really like? The issue of ‘silence’ is just not only a quantitative question of what can be added to data-sets, mapped, digitised, new archives to be found to be transcribed but also a qualitative question about the Famine experience and its aftermath. We know that ‘the great silence’ can never be ‘accurately’ measured or mapped in the conventional sense, but perhaps it can be sensitively imagined with the aid of sources like the *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*.

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Visual and material culture

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The *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* has been rightly lauded as an immense achievement. Winner at the 2012 Bord Gáis Irish Energy Book Awards 2012 in the category, International Education Services Best Irish Published Book, the publication broke through its hefty boards to a supporting website, video and newspaper supplements. With its (ex-)presidential preface, multiple international launches and various media supports, this was a book as news, a book as event. It sets itself up as such – the editors describe it as ‘an act of commemoration’ (Crowley *et al.* 2012, p. xvi). *The Atlas* must also be one of the biggest Irish-published books of last year, weighing in at 3 kilos (the size of an average new-born baby) of 782 pages that include almost 90 individual written pieces, 200 maps and more than 400 illustrations. Again, the book is not only excessive in bulk arguably but also of its title. Although named as an atlas, it is far more than a collection of maps: it is also a compendium of essays and a display of images. This review is largely based on a close content analysis of how visual material is treated in *the Atlas*. It explores how the images are not only (and usually not even) illustrations to the

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text but also create another rhetorical field that suggests a particular relationship to the visual.

The Atlas offers a feast of visuality and has been celebrated for the sheer range of its illustrations and the sumptuousness of its production. Other aspects of its design are fairly meagre. The 'contents' section just includes the titles, not the names of the authors of the various essays; there is no bibliography, and the 'index' is exclusive of all content but place-names. Perhaps these ways of ordering information speak to the nominal identity of the work as an atlas, but reviewers have tended to see the lack of these academic conventions as a regrettable deficiency. In such a large book, we need a few more finding aids and as a navigable object, the book is not 'user-friendly'.

In terms of the treatment of visual material, it is disappointing that there is no list of illustrations. Image captions seem eccentric. For example, some captions of illustrations of works of art offer full details of artist, title, original dimensions and provenance, whereas other captions of other works of art merely offer a few words of description. This lack of detail can be frustrating, although if we look a little closer, these omissions and elisions do not seem to be wholly due to sloppiness. It appears that different types of visual material are treated differently, and patterns can be discerned that have an internal consistency, and reveal an interesting set of attitudes to both the visual, in general, and then specific genres within that. This is not only in relation to captioning, but also how images are referred to in the text, and where images are placed in the book.

In terms of how images are treated in the text, what should be kept in mind is that the editors clearly believe in the importance of visual and material culture. As well as the rich variety of illustrations throughout *the Atlas*, there are a number of written pieces that specifically address these fields and are examples of the rich scholarship that addresses visual culture and the Famine. Essays in *the Atlas* include Catherine Marshall's 'Mapping the Great Famine in Irish art' from the 1850s to the present, sculptor Annette Hennessy's reflection on her own practice and Joe Lee's piece on the Irish Hunger Memorial in New York. Hilary O'Kelly's study of Famine and workhouse clothing does something slightly different in focusing on the ways clothing and attitudes to dress materialised ideas about respectability and destitution, particularly amongst those who governed and those who were subject to governance. The essays by O'Kelly, Marshall and others clearly display great sensitivity to how images and objects might be interrogated to uncover not only the intentions of those who produced them but also how they operate and constitute social worlds. But what of the actual images in the Atlas? It seems to depend on their genre, medium, historicity.

At a fairly rough reckoning, there seem to be eight categories of visual material in *the Atlas*, all of which are treated slightly differently. Again roughly, these are: maps, of which there are 184, textual material (113), contemporary photographs (121), historic illustrations (88), historic paintings (47), diagrams (38), historic photographs (33), contemporary art (12) and photographs of memorials (22). A characteristic in the relationship between text and image throughout much of the Atlas is that, maps aside, they barely seem to be on speaking terms. Again and again, we find an essay with fascinating illustrations but no reference to them in the text. Let us take a look at the first essay – William J. Smyth's overview, 'The story of the Great Irish Famine 1845–52: A geographical perspective'. Written by one of the editors of *the Atlas*, we might assume this will give a good sense of their intentions towards visual material. Of the 12 illustrations, only two are referred to in the main text, both of which are maps – as might be expected in an atlas, cartographic images are treated differently to all other visual material. The captions for the maps are extensive and edifying. Indulgent of the

non-specialist, we are told what data they are based on, how to read them, and what they mean.

For example, the caption to Figure 1 (Distribution of Adult Population in Ireland *c.* 1600) tells us that the map is based mainly on William Petty's 1659 Census, the nature of that source material and provides a fairly exhaustive exposition of the information the map presents. The same patient detailing is present throughout *the Atlas* – with maps, we are taken by the hand and told precisely what we are looking at and how to read it. Figure 2 is a photograph of 'lazy bed' potato ridges in Connemara (although they are not mentioned in the main text of the article). No date is given for the image, and no exact location, just a credit for the photographer and the statement that these 'relic features [...] remain as poignant a reminder as any of the Famine' (Smyth 2012a, p. 5). There are other, similar, photographs of lazy beds elsewhere in the Atlas. This repetition may relate to the memorialising function of the book, speaking as it does of both the typical reiterative nature of commemorative acts and, as we are told in the caption, the physical memory of pre-famine agricultural systems. The lack of detailed captioning of photographs continues throughout the Atlas, as if their specificity is not important. And maybe, if the impulse is one of affect, where and when the photograph was taken doesn't really matter.

But there is a sense of missed opportunity where details in the photograph or its origins are particularly evocative. For example, the double-page photograph that heads Section 1 is simply captioned 'Famine memorial, Doolough Valley, County Mayo' and is of a rough-hewn cross set in landscape. Visible to the reader is the inscription on it telling us the memorial was 'Unveiled by Karen Gearon Dunnes Stores Strikers' in 1994, and then – just about legible – 'Erected by Afri'. Even a few lines of explanation, or at least a transcription of the carved words might give some sense of the intriguing narrative.

Similarly, *the Atlas* might have been more attentive to the materiality of the photographs used as illustration. On page 283, there is a photograph of the Protestant missionary colony on Achill Island (established in 1831, although we are not told that), which is clearly a reproduction of a postcard. In fact, it is a colourised postcard produced by the Lawrence Studio, based on an image by their photographer Robert French. But we can only guess at this, as the book treats it as just more visual fodder and disavows its object-hood. Is there anything written on the back of the postcard? Who was it sent to? When? The illustration raises fascinating questions in relation to the ways images of such sites became produced, represented and circulated, but on such matters *the Atlas* is silent.

Whether matter matters or not is a continual tension in the text/image relationship in *the Atlas*, seen again in illustrations of textual material. For those sensitive to the significance of the material culture of print – the way information is given a hierarchy through choice of style, weight, scale and arrangement of words – *the Atlas* has much to offer. For example, an 1845 notice of a meeting at Moynalty to discuss the failure of the potato crop is reproduced (although seems cleaned up) on page 335, and in emphasis and layout has the urgency of a newspaper headline. The caption says nothing of its origins but looking at the image, we can see that it was 'printed at the "Meath Herald", Office, Kells'. We are not told the dimensions of the original poster, which as well as lessening the sense of it as an artefact would also tell us something about how it might have been 'read' at the time of its production. Even for the non-specialist, the immediacy of the original object is evocative, but elsewhere in *the Atlas*, original text is merely transcribed, and although referred to as 'illustration', the lack of the original appearance of the words greatly diminishes their meaning.

To return again to the essay of Smyth, Figures 4 and 9 are of paintings – Basil Blackshaw’s ‘Two Potatoes’ and Tony O’Malley’s ‘Famine Spectre’. With these as with other recent artworks, we have just the title, artist, dimensions and media – no dates, and no further commentary or reference. This is in contrast to older paintings for which the captions offer fuller details and are treated as literally a ‘sub-text’ to the main content of the essay. Why recent art might be treated differently than other visual material is suggested by one of the editors who wrote in a newspaper piece that the inclusion of contemporary artworks ‘encourage the reader to stop and reflect on the trauma of the Famine. All these materials and perspectives engage the reader sympathetically rather than analytically’ (Smyth 2012b). This idea – that art arouses the sympathetic, not the analytical – suggests that it is transcendental, that further exposition is unfeasible. It also seems to chime with the memorialising imperative the book is charged with. Much of the scholarship on the visual culture of collective or social memory focuses on the way a simplified and singular version of the past might be promoted through the use of images, for example, the presentation of iconography at ritual events. This ‘spectacularisation’ of the past is ultimately propositional and teleological, and present-day circumstances justified and buoyed by the invocation of a past event, particularly one that provides a foundational moment.

If there is any such legitimising happening with the *Atlas*, it seems to take place in the final section ‘Hunger and Famine Today’, and the slightly wonky but once-fashionable suggestion that Irish suffering in the mid-nineteenth century has informed a cultural memory that has seen Irish identification with present-day suffering elsewhere. Cormac Ó Gráda’s contribution here is a sophisticated analysis of these notions. However, the images that book-end the final part of *the Atlas* raise more questions about the use of visual materials. The first, a double-page photograph at the start of the final section, is of workers on a ‘road relief scheme’ in Tigray, northern Ethiopia – following the logic of captioning elsewhere, there is no date given, just a credit for the photographer (Clare Keogh). It sets up a visual echo of images of public works schemes in Ireland in the 1840s, the ‘Famine roads’ that are elsewhere in *the Atlas* suggested as the scars of a punitive system of laissez-faire economics and Poor law strictures. As such, it suggests some form of identification or even empathy from the Irish reader – just as the starving Irish were forced to build roads to earn a crust, so too are these Ethiopians. But this cosy identification seems to be ruptured by the final image of the book, captioned ‘An Irish Aid-built road to Sinkata, Tigray, northern Ethiopia (again, n.d. but also by Clare Keogh). It suggests this is the same road as in the earlier image – was it built by those in the first photograph under the command of an Irish aid agency or did Irish aid workers build it? We are not told. Is this book-ending a clever argument against easy Irish identification with those who suffer today? Or is the reader supposed to understand that, on the one hand, harsh work schemes are still being imposed in Famine areas; on the other hand, Irish aid agencies do good work in Famine areas partly because they are especially attuned to the impact of Famine? It is difficult to tell.

The use of illustrations in *the Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* seems to adhere to a clearly worked system, albeit one that can frustrate in its lack of supporting information. Given the ways consideration of visual culture has become so much more important in the humanities in the last 20 years (the so-called ‘pictorial turn’), it seems the editors of *the Atlas* have gone at least part way to adapting what geographer Gillian Rose deemed necessary in approaching visual images. In her highly influential handbooks, Rose asserts that a critical approach to images has three key characteristics, that it first, ‘takes images seriously’, second, ‘thinks about the social conditions and effects of visual objects’ and

lastly ‘considers your own way of looking at images’ (Rose 2012 [2001], pp. 16–17). The editors of the *Atlas* certainly seem to have reflected on, and reproduced, their own way of looking at images – contemporary paintings, remember, are to elicit a ‘sympathetic’ response, photographs of lazy beds are to stand as ‘a poignant reminder’. However, do they take images seriously? One would think that if they truly did, they would have been more attentive to the specificity of the illustrations in *the Atlas* and would share their full details with the reader. We cannot expect an exhaustive treatment of every illustration in the book within the book itself, but we can hope that any future edition would involve a deeper consideration of those illustrations’ origins, contents and effect.

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Fatal geographies

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The *Atlas* deserves praise and prizes. At its core is a series of full-colour maps based on 1400 towns and 33000 rural civil parishes and showing data from the censuses of 1841 and 1851. In almost every respect, this work surpasses existing cartographic representations of the famine, based as most were on 32 counties, 163 poor law unions or 320 baronies (Kennedy *et al.* 1999). The census-based maps in the *Atlas* are given and discussed at both national and provincial scales, but there is much more and a wide range of further sources are interrogated and mapped including Griffith’s Valuation, poor law statistics, agricultural returns, and data from parliamentary papers on a range of topics. Whereas over a quarter of the text is in chapters by Willie Smyth, and I suspect that in addition a good number of the unsigned captions for maps and other illustrations of primary, photographic or other material are likewise his work, the *Atlas* is also well served by a multitude of his colleagues from Cork, as well as from the wider community of Famine scholars. The *Atlas* reports from the research frontier and future research on the Famine will surely be informed by its rich geographical detail. The work of recognising its substantive contributions must now begin (Mac Suibhne 2013, Ó Ciosáin 2013).

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The *Atlas* attends in particular to the management of the crisis by the British state. In a first period, 1845–1846, Robert Peel’s Tory Government bought maize, opened food depots and established public works at government expense so that the poor could earn the money to buy the grain. The end of June 1846 saw the Whigs in power, and they shifted the funding of public works to local committees which, during the harsh winter of 1846–1847 had real difficulty in employing people on enough days to justify wages that might give poor people any chance of finding food in empty markets (Foley 2012, p. 400). This period of public works lasted until March 1847, and its geography is well covered in the *Atlas*, with a map showing the concentration of public works in the west of the country (over 15% of the population being supported in Clare, Galway, Mayo; Smyth 2012b, p. 49). Although lacking a map, there is also a good account of the network of food depots (Smyth 2012a, pp. 245–247) and, in the case of Donegal, a discussion of niggardly local opposition to government advice to open a broadly spread network (MacLaughlin 2012, p. 454). Yet, for a whole series of facilities, such as dispensaries, workhouses, and hospitals, there was clearly the potential to use GIS techniques to say so much more: how did average distance to facilities vary across Ireland at different stages of the epidemic?

In this first phase of the epidemic, the parts of Ireland where rural society was most commodified saw an influx of keepsakes, furniture and clothing into pawnshops (national distribution shown, Smyth 2012a, p. 248). Connacht, in contrast, showed no such blossoming of pawnshops. A map of the average number of days spent in the workhouse by resident paupers for the year ending 25 March 1847, suggests that in this early period, there may have been a more general recourse to workhouses in the eastern rather than the western part of the country (Kinealy 2012, p. 93). This may even help account for the curious finding that Ulster showed a much higher than average proportion of its starvation deaths concentrated in the early (1845–1847) as compared with the middle years (1848–1851) of the Famine (Smyth 2012c, p. 117). Perhaps in the early phases of the Famine, there was a movement of those who could afford it towards towns where, in their extremity, they encountered medical professionals willing to make the evaluation that a subsequent death was due to starvation. This may also be why the ratio of emigration to mortality was so variable, with seven emigrants for every three famine deaths in Leinster but only two emigrants for every three deaths in Connacht (Smyth 2012d, p. 332).

When the public works were wound up, in the spring and early summer of 1847, the consequences were dramatic. In one part of Cavan, workers drew lots when the schemes were first cut-back, sure that this was the only fair way to deal out death (Smyth 2012g, p. 422). There was intense opposition to the closing of the work schemes, even to the point of riot. This was particularly the case in Munster and not necessarily in the parts with the greatest relative reliance upon the public works. This response was animated by a local tradition of agrarian protest and a clear sense, as Smyth shows, that taking away the opportunity for working or a living was a serious assault on self-respect so that having been reduced to pauper status by later poor law measures the agrarian labourers and small farmers of Munster lacked the pride to claim their rights (Smyth 2012e, p. 369). With the end of the schemes, there was a dramatic movement of people from country to town (Smyth 2012e, p. 367), overwhelming soup kitchens and other small town institutions, as at Cove (Foster 2012, p. 412). From January to August 1847, soup kitchens kept alive many destitute Irish people and, in an amazing feat of welfare provision, the state was thereby feeding perhaps three million people, one-third of the national population, by July 1847, with over two-thirds being fed in parts of Galway, Roscommon and Clare (Smyth

2012f, p. 9). In August, the soup kitchens were ordered closed and the government resolved on the use of the workhouse for reforming the Irish poor, taking advantage of their desperation to do so.

This, third phase, was the most pitiless and ideological. The provision of relief only in workhouses allied with the Gregory clause that denied relief to any applicant still renting as much as one-quarter of an acre. There had been systematic evictions in Ulster during the early years of the Famine, but from 1848, the level in Ulster declined, but with the assistance of the Gregory clause, the national rate of evictions doubled, with the epicenter over Tipperary, Clare and Limerick (Smyth 2012e, p. 370). Deaths in Irish workhouses, which ran at about 100 per week in the early 1840s, were 1300 per week in 1847 and 1849 (Smyth 2012h, p. 127). Tadhg Ó Murchú's 1945 account of the famine memories passed to him by his father and namesake, included a searing account of the poorhouse as allowing the landlords and the authorities to 'gather [the poor] together in one place and let them die [rather than having] them falling by the side of the road. It would be easier to bury them when the soul left the body' (Póirtéir 2012, p. 612). Indeed, in presenting a map of the workhouse deaths 1841–1851 in ratio to the Poor Law union population of 1841 (Smyth 2012c, p. 111), Smyth urges that this is probably the best guide to the general geography of mortality (Smyth 2012c, p. 109). There was no system of the civil registration of births and deaths in Ireland until 1864, and the main indirect source of mortality data for Famine Ireland came in the 1851 census when people were asked to report family deaths for the years since the previous census, 1841, but as Ó Gráda (2012, p. 171) notes, the deaths in the families of emigrants and in those families, where there was no survivor are excluded from such a reckoning and we can have little confidence that the deaths to surviving and still-resident families, even if accurately reported, will be a sure guide to the distribution of the rest.

Particularly in Smyth's chapters, but also in some others, there is a very nuanced description of the materials and basic geography relating both to the demographic dimensions of the Famine and to the contours of the components of vulnerability. The analytical project that this invites is only partially realised in the *Atlas*. There are three ways that the analysis might be taken further: confronting the multivariate nature of the relationships; improving the precision of the data reporting; and modeling the implicit population dynamics more explicitly.

In the first place, then, the serial presentation of topics and materials precludes systematic explanation. Methodologically we are asked to compare maps, with occasionally a bivariate correlation thrown in (Hourihan 2012, p. 232), but in no case is there a scatter plot to indicate relationships and outliers, nor a significance level for the reported correlation. In some chapters, a host of associations is asserted even though the number of cases in the study are rather few, six parishes in the exploration of vulnerability, mortality and emigration for the Union of Skibbereen (Hickey 2012). In one chapter, a multivariate analysis is developed, but its findings might be better integrated with other chapters, for example, in the baronial level analysis, the inclusion of a range of economic, literacy and social variables leaves the variable that relates to Irish-speaking districts as negatively associated with population decline 1841–1851 (Ó Gráda 2012, p. 174). I would like to know a little more about the relations between the 'Irish' and the 'Literacy' variables, but this finding echoes something Smyth noticed that some Irish-speaking areas (Donegal and east-central Mayo) seemed to have lower mortality than adjacent regions (Smyth 2012i, p. 193).

There is occasional untidiness in some of the analysis that a second edition should address. In one case, the discussion elaborates upon tables and calculations that are

manifestly wrong, for it simply cannot be true that in 1841, ‘over 50% of all town families (and 66% in Dublin) depended on vested means, professions and the direction of labour’ (Hourihan 2012, p. 239). The correct values are presumably those mapped for Leinster (Smyth 2012d, p. 328) and are an order of magnitude below those in the earlier tables (Hourihan 2012, 228; 236). The lack of graphs makes it difficult to grasp the basis of maps that purport to show bivariate distributions, as with the map ‘[r]elating land values with percentage population decline per civil parish’ (Smyth 2012i, p. 182) for no values of either land value or population decline are given for any of the categories I–V that are mapped. Several maps used choropleth shading to report absolute values rather than rates or ratios. In such cases, the visual impression of light and dark areas is critically determined by the disposition of boundaries and the underlying uneven distribution of the population-at-risk. In most, but not all cases (Hatton 2012, p. 101), a map of rates for the same data sits alongside the map of choropleth map of absolute values mitigating the problem but still raising the question why some proportional or distributional symbols were not used for the absolute values.

The analysis here builds upon the work of Cousens (1960a, 1960b, 1965) and Mokyr (1985) but having improved the geographical measures of land pressure and mortality among other things, work on the Famine needs to return to population accounting used by Cousens and Mokyr. The chapters by Smyth, in particular, make it very good case for using the towns and the parishes to build up a demographic analysis that goes below the county level to incorporate urban and rural sectors. Many variables need this sort of separation (a large house in the country is almost always a sign of wealth, but in towns, it could be tenement, for example). This sort of separation would also allow decent estimates of internal migration building upon Cousens insights. With some simple life tables, we might be able to constrain estimates of the geographies of internal migration, fertility, emigration and mortality within plausible bounds that would enable us to give a regional account of the interaction between variables to complement the separate analyses given in the *Atlas*. Provoking such further research will certainly be among the least of the achievements of a publishing venture that has made perhaps the single most important historical-geographical contribution to public debate in Ireland since the inception of the Irish Historic Towns Atlas or the popular essays of Estyn Evans.

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The making of the *Atlas*

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The editors warmly welcome the round-table debate on the *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*. We greatly appreciate the attention, work and care with which the contributors – Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, Marguérite Corporaal and Nessa Cronin. Lisa Godson and originating editor Gerry Kearns – have addressed this rather weighty volume. The

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editors have learned much from each contributor and are left with much to ponder. In addition, this venture allows us an opportunity to make clearer the editorial policies and strategies, underpinning the *Atlas* as well as addressing other issues that have arisen in the meantime.

With characteristic finesse and generosity, Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh comments on the awesome size and scope of the *Atlas*, ‘the extraordinary richness of data, its combination of evidence, analysis and multiple genres of narrative and representation, relating to the greatest social calamity that Ireland (and its people) has ever endured in its recorded history’. While recognising that some of the seeds for an atlas of this kind were sown back in the early to mid-1990s, Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh notes that production of the *Atlas* over the last three years (2009–2012) was both ‘auspicious and well-starred’. He is insightful in noting how the *Atlas* has benefited from both the surge in Famine Studies since the mid-1990s and the development of new strategies of analyses in such studies. It is equally the editors’ view that the Irish nation – now more secure, self-confident and prosperous – was then and is now in a much better position than previously to address and remember the trauma of the Great Famine. We were also the beneficiaries of recent rapid advances in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) which facilitated more sophisticated methods of analysing and presenting vast amounts of census data for in this case 3330 civil parishes and 1400 ‘towns’ (We might also explain that the fortunate gap between the original 1995 Famine Exhibition and this *Atlas* publication was determined in part by the fact that two of the editors [Crowley and Murphy] were involved in the making of two other atlases [Crowley *et al.* 2005, Crowley and Sheehan 2009]). Second, the database for this publication had to be substantially expanded and data capturing finished. Much of the data on the subcategories of the censuses of 1841 and 1851 had only been captured for one or two provinces and capturing very complex town data had to be initiated and completed).

As Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh emphasises, the list of *Atlas* contributors ‘is a distinguished roll-call, drawn from a variety of disciplines and perspectives’. It is with much pleasure we acknowledge the specialist contribution made by established academics and/or Famine scholars including Neil Buttimer, Luke Dodd, Patrick Duffy, Christine Kinealy, Willie Nolan, Cathal Póirtéir and, most particularly, Cormac Ó Gráda. We likewise equally acknowledge the generous contributions of so many other geographers, archaeologists, artists, historians, folklorists, literature and local scholars from John Feehan, Regina Sexton, Liz Thomas through Gerard Mac Atasney and Jonny Geber to Piaras Mac Éinrí, Colin Sage and Connell Foley, to name but a few, most of whom are based in Ireland. A special debt is owed to our overseas contributors who willingly illuminated the ‘new worlds’ of the Famine Irish as they scattered across the English-speaking world – to Liverpool (Carmen Tunney and Patrick Nugent), Glasgow (John Reid), London (Don Walker *et al.*), Toronto (Mark G. McGowan), New York (Anelise H. Shrout), Australia (Thomas Keneally and Jennifer Harrison) and elsewhere. The success of this *Atlas* project rests on the shoulders of all these contributors. The contributions of other distinguished scholars – notably Margaret Kelleher, Kevin Whelan, James Donnelly Jnr., Toby Barnard, Joel Mokyr and Ciaran Ó Murchadha would have been welcome but a variety of circumstances and/or editorial oversights intervened. The editors do wish to emphasise that a major chapter on the cultural consequences of the Famine was envisaged, but in the end, this could not be realised.

Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh provides a comprehensive appreciation of the overall structure and content of the *Atlas*. He does so by commenting on the principal features ‘that attract the particular attention of the historian’. He is alert to the key variables examined as

affecting ‘population change, excess mortality, migration and emigration’. In the *Atlas*, he notes Ireland is distinguished and mapped by region, gender, age-cohort, social category, urban–rural dimensions and categories of dwellings. The editors feel that one of the most dramatic maps in this regard is the distribution of families living in four classes of houses in Ireland, showing regional and local variations in the distribution of these four classes and the contrast in their living conditions in 1841 (p. 189). As with so many other maps and their commentaries, which distinguish the different components within the population, there is here not a hint of a monolithic or homogenous Ireland. Rather, what is constantly emphasised is both the internal diversity of populations as well as the varied social, economic and cultural conditions across the island both before, during, and after the Great Famine. Although the *Atlas* is clearly and emphatically focused on the Great Famine period proper (1845–1852), there is due discussion and mapping of pre-Famine Ireland. Apart from the numerous parish-based maps of living conditions in pre-Famine Ireland in 1841 – the outcomes of processes long in the making – there are also up to 30 other maps and accompanying texts dealing with different aspects of pre-Famine Ireland, from the late sixteenth to the early decades of the nineteenth century. Importantly to us, the editors, is the fact that Ó Tuathaigh recognises that the main blocks of written texts contain overview essays on key aspects of the Famine. These overview essays for each section are used to contextualise and often conceptualise the themes to follow in that section. For example, the introduction to the workhouse section is utilised and clearly signalled as underpinning the following detailed chapter on the Roscrea workhouse and union. A sensitive and comprehensive reading of the *Atlas* will recognise the interlocking (but not overlapping or repetitive) nature of contributions and related maps found throughout.

It is most interesting that Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh feels that the ‘decision to group a significant number of essays (overviews and local case-studies) on a provincial basis may raise an eyebrow, given the variable patterns or spatial distribution of famine-related phenomena revealed in the maps’. But he recognises that the outcome enriches all our understandings of Famine conditions as experienced across a diverse island. Behind this series of essays on the provinces and their localities is a story. As we reached towards the end of editing the *Atlas*, it became apparent that the number of pages had overreached the planned size of the volume. For a moment (and only a moment), we toyed with the idea of radically reducing or even excluding the provincial sections. Readers’ responses since have demonstrated how wrong such a decision would have been. Almost invariably, individual readers have reported that their first inclination is to seek out in the *Atlas*, the story of the Famine in their own locality, county or province and/or that of their parents/grandparents. These provincial and local case studies are at the heart of the volume.

Marguérite Corporaal’s lively intervention on ‘Imperial Counternarratives’ in the fictional literature on the Famine 1847–1870 is significant for a number of reasons. First, it reminds us of a very important area of Famine scholarship which is addressed only (alas) in the *Atlas* by Chris Morash’s elegant summary. Marguérite introduces us to an illuminating vein of literature, previously neglected in Famine Studies. Second and most importantly, this essay rightly locates the Great Famine – that ‘fateful era of wide scale starvation and mass emigration’ – within the framework of Ireland’s colonial/imperial status. Our Dutch colleague reminds us that ‘several contributions in the *Atlas* ... engage with the interrelationship between England’s imperial rule over Ireland and the dramatic outbreak of the Famine’. Indeed, this is a clear emphasis throughout the *Atlas*, most particularly in the chapters by Smyth and Nally which introduce Section II, The Great Hunger. We locate Ireland’s famines within the context of both European and global

famines – witness in particular David Dickson’s essay on the 1740–1741 famine as well as Cormac Ó Gráda’s comparative chapter which provides dramatic data (pp. 651–652) on percentage death rates and proportions of famine-related deaths per population for a number of countries including Finland (1868) and the USSR (1921–1922 and 1932–1933). But as David Nally makes clear, the greater emphasis is on placing Ireland’s Great Famine within a British imperial framework and, most particularly, the Indian famine experiences in the later nineteenth century.

Charles Trevelyan was a key British administrator in both Ireland and in India when famine raged. In this context, it is striking, as Corporaal reports, that David Power Conyngham’s novel *Frank O’Donnell* (1861) represents ‘the potato blight and consequent famine as powerful engines of state to uproot millions of the peasantry, to preserve law and order, and to clear off a surplus population, and to maintain the integrity of the British empire’. This novelist clearly emphasises ‘that the attitude of the imperial power during the Famine era should be interpreted as a campaign of genocide’. It is not without significance that this novel with a modified title was republished for transatlantic markets in 1874.

This brings us to another illuminating aspect of this essay – its emphasis on the role of the Irish–American novel in transmitting the legacy of the Great Famine to the descendants of Famine emigrants. Dillon O’Brien’s *The Dalys of Dalystown* was written after the author had emigrated from County Roscommon to Wisconsin. This novel provides powerful images of the evicting landlords whose power is ‘spawned and nursed by your English laws’. Given that Roscommon was one of the epicentres of numerous landlord-inspired evictions during the Famine, this emphasis on the landlords’ power is insightful – as is the recognition in the *Atlas* that a whole series of English Acts from 1815, 1829, the late 1830s and early 1840s made it increasingly easier and cheaper for landlords to evict. Mary Kelly’s essay on County Roscommon illuminates these processes in the *Atlas*.

The editors recognise the central contributions of Marguérite Corporaal and her Dutch colleagues in organising a global conference on Ireland’s Great Famine at Radboud University, Nijmegen, in March 2012, some months after the launch of the *Atlas*. This Nijmegen Conference was a most revealing and powerful event which included a very significant series of papers on fictional literature dealing with the Great Famine. The conference also included seminars and key papers by Peter Gray, Margaret Kelleher, Chris Morash, Kerby Miller and Kevin Whelan, the latter again emphasising the need to locate Ireland’s Great Famine within a much wider extra-European, imperial framework. As Marguérite Corporaal emphasises, the narrative geographies of Famine fiction offer revealing ‘counternarratives to the templates in which Famine was cast by representatives of the imperial power’, demonstrating how these worlds of fiction played an important role in the development of a ‘subaltern consciousness’ amongst these emigrant Irish.

Nessa Cronin’s essay is valuable from a number of perspectives. First, given her knowledge of historical cartography, she illuminates the concept of the *Atlas* tradition as involving a close association ‘between maps, images and texts’.¹ Nessa argues that the publication of this atlas may be the first time that a specific *geographic* view is provided on the Famine. This in turn allows for and, indeed, encourages ‘cross-disciplinary and comparative conversations’. As Nessa Cronin emphasises, maps are not merely presented to provide a backdrop for the historical information. Rather the maps and their analysis are seen as starting points ‘for alternative modes of analysis and interpretations in themselves’. Nessa emphasises, ‘a critically informed mapping practice can provoke alternative sets of questions and therefore demand different categories of understanding’.

Third, the need to penetrate beneath the panoptic view of the island-wide maps – however valuable the overviews they provide – is recognised by Nessa. A ground-up view is essential to highlight the diversity of local, county, provincial and emigrant conditions and experiences. The numerous case studies documenting the fate of individual families and communities both at home and abroad provide these essential perspectives in the *Atlas*.

However, a combination of the panoptic and ‘ground-up’ views are necessary to explain some of the anomalies identified in the *Atlas*. Geographers are not only concerned with outlining patterns of living (and dying) – they are also centrally concerned with proposing explanations. For example, since County Donegal in 1841 is characterised by a whole series of measures – a low level of literacy, a high level of dependence on both agriculture and manual labour and high levels of families living in fourth-class houses – one would predict large population losses. But this is not the case. Amongst other factors, it appears that the dominance of coastal communities in the county, the continuing greater importance of oats as opposed to potatoes in the diet, seasonal migration outlets to Scotland and supportive as opposed to evicting landlords all combined to reduce population losses over much of the country.²

Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh has already observed that ‘what makes these maps the triumph that they are is that they succeed in representing change over time’. They integrate the geographical and the historical to provide a cartographic narrative of the impact of the Great Famine. Nessa Cronin further emphasises the *dynamic* quality of the mapping narrative – including maps of mobility, ‘showing the flows and pathways of people and goods, and so link the regional and national experience of the Famine to various diaspora geographies’. Although at an early stage, we are also exploring – as Cronin hints – the possibilities of putting these famine maps online – and, indeed, many previously unpublished maps – so as to make the material available to a wider audience. The *Atlas* project – as well as the maps themselves – allows for a dynamic and open agenda.

However, the editors are not as convinced in seeing, as Nessa Cronin does, that the conceptual focus is on space ‘as the organising principle for the work’. Notions of space and scale are obviously relevant, but the more grounded concepts of ‘place’ and ‘territory’ are seen as more fruitful. Hence, the editorial emphasis on understanding what happened in specific local communities and regions. Neither do we see the most significant parallels of the *Atlas* project with such endeavours as the impressive Stanford University’s Spatial History Project. The editors, therefore, value the question mark after *Spatialising History* in Nessa’s essay title. Rather we see the *Atlas* as deeply rooted in the rich, older tradition of historical geography proper. Our immediate predecessors are the Cork University Press atlases, beginning with the prestigious *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (Aalen *et al.* 1997). But the roots of all these endeavours go back to conceptual developments in French geographic (*‘la géographie humaine’*) and German *‘landschaft’* traditions (Smyth 2012). Equally, the importance of American cultural and historical geography is paramount – notably expressed in the work of Cole Harris and others on *The Historical Atlas of Canada* (Harris and Matthews 1987, Kerr *et al.* 1990, Gentilcore and Matthews 1993) and the kind of atlas projects inspired by such students of Carl Sauer as David Sopher in the *Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World* (Al Faruqi and Sopher 1974).

Lisa Godson’s meticulous review is largely based on a ‘close content analysis of how the visual material is treated in this *Atlas*’. The editors are a little surprised by the limitations that such an agenda imposes in an assessment of the merits (and demerits) of the *Atlas*. We recognise the lack of critical academic conventions at the beginning and at

the end of the *Atlas* – features then determined by page-length constraints. Excluding the names of the authors of the various essays was unfortunate and will be corrected in the next reprint. Likewise, we intend to provide a much fuller index in the same reprint and hopefully include a list of the maps (but not that of the over 400 illustrations). The editors had not internalised the statistic that the *Atlas* includes 658 items of visual material! Lisa Godson has carefully and helpfully broken these down into eight categories – maps, textual material, contemporary photographs, historic illustrations, historic paintings, diagrams, historic photographs, contemporary art and photographs of memorials.

We appreciate Lisa's attention to some important essays that address visual culture and the Famine. These include notable essays by Catherine Marshall, Annette Hennessy, Hilary O'Kelly and Joseph Lee, and the *Atlas* also includes insightful work by Julian Campbell on James Mahony and John Crowley on Famine sculpture. Lisa Godson is quite correct to note differences between how the maps are captioned vis-à-vis other visual materials. It is true that 'with maps, we are taken by the hand and told precisely what we are looking at and how to read it'. Equally, we agree that editorial captions for other illustrative material is less consistent and in some cases, less forthcoming. With regard to the contemporary art work by outstanding Irish artists Basil Blackshaw, Tony O'Malley, Charlie Tyrrell, Seán McSweeney and Jay Murphy – we felt that the reader be given full freedom to make their own interpretations of such work. The editors tend to agree with what Cooke (2000, p. 380) wrote elsewhere:

All artistic creations are contingent in nature: we are free either to like or dislike, agree or disagree with whatever propositions art posits in visual or other terms. Works of art recreate themselves an intellectual and emotional space in which the viewer is free to respond.

Nevertheless, Lisa is correct in noting that different types of visual material are treated differently. For example, and while not utterly consistent, we sought to provide some insights and guidance with regard to other images, including historic paintings. Lisa Godson is also generous in acknowledging that the editors 'clearly believe in the importance of visual and material culture'. The editors made their choices on the grounds that art in its various forms can provide other – more complex – ways of understanding/seeing the Famine. The *Atlas* pivots around a series of original maps which provide the reader with new insights and information on the Famine and its impact. They are the centrepiece which reflects the expertise of the editors. One of the guiding principles of the *Atlas* was to provide the reader/viewer with different ways of seeing the Famine. The many photographs and paintings included are 'objects of contemplation'. As Sontag (2003, pp. 107–108) explains, 'every picture is seen in some setting that alters our way of seeing them'. In the case of captioning for some of the photographs and more modern paintings, the editors took the decision that less was more.

All through the *Atlas*, the deliberate use of visual materials was to provide the reader with many different ways of contemplating and thinking about the Great Famine. A key objective was to achieve a balance between the qualities of insight, understanding, information and affectiveness. But the *Atlas* is not an art book nor is it a book about the art of the Famine. Overall, the editors did not seek to represent the complexities and horrors of the Great Famine in a standard format. We did not seek to make all essays a standard and consistent length. Neither were considerations of all sources and images given equal depth or weight. Hence, Godson's series of queries about say, the photography-cum-postcard of the missionary colony on Achill Island seem somewhat marginal to the main thrust of that section. Likewise, readers will have noted that we

introduce – *always* without comment – each section of the *Atlas* with an evocative and relevant image stretching across two pages. Godson's comment/observations about one of these – the Famine memorial, Doolough Valley – misses this editorial strategy. As geographers, the making, interpretation and captioning of the maps remained central. Yet equally – and the balance between the number of maps (184) vis-à-vis all other visual material (434) proves this – we stressed the need for a diversity of approaches and images in each section and, indeed, often within the same chapter.

Gerry Kearns provides a useful and insightful summary of the management of the Famine crisis by the British state. He identifies three phases: the early period of public works supplemented by the opening of food depots which lasted until early 1847; the middle period in the Summer of 1847 when soup (rather porridge!) kitchens helped sustain close on three million people at its peak and the final devastating period afterwards which Kearns describes as 'most pitiless and ideological'. This was when the full burden of relief was placed on the shoulders of often poverty/famine-stricken unions and workhouses and when landlord evictions – greatly facilitated by earlier legislation – reached their deadly peak. In his discussion on the maps that tell these stories, Gerry is correct in noting that the unsigned captions for all the maps and some related illustrations were written by editor William J. Smyth, and this includes the captions for maps in chapters by *all* other authors. However, it needs to be emphasised that the greater number of all other kinds of illustrations – archival extracts, photographs and paintings – were both sourced and captioned by editor John Crowley. This division of labour was completed by cartographer Mike Murphy who imaginatively designed and made the maps.

Gerry Kearns is also correct in saying that there is clearly further research potential to use GIS techniques to investigate how distance to facilities such as dispensaries, workhouses and fever hospitals vary across Ireland at different stages of the epidemic and whether such variations affected levels of mortality. However, there is a misunderstanding on his part about Ulster showing a much higher proportion of its starvation deaths in the early as against the later years of the Famine. This specific pattern simply reflects the earlier than average amelioration of Famine conditions in much of Ulster in the later famine years. We should also note that the pioneering map (p. 108) of Joel Mokyr's upper (should have been lower) – bound estimate of deaths and other minor editorial errors were addressed in the first reprint of the *Atlas* (September 2012) which followed less than a month after the first print run. We recognise too the need to confront the multivariate nature of the factors that determined levels of population loss, mortality and emigration. Two of the editors (Smyth and Murphy) are engaged with colleagues elsewhere in carrying out a more sophisticated multivariate analysis to provide even better explanations. It is intended to publish these findings in a more specialised Famine Studies journal.

In the *Atlas*, analysis and explanation is not only dependent on a very careful and contextualised perusal of the varying content of the parish maps island-wide – but also in many cases involves parallel statistical analysis of correlation coefficients and cross-tabulations involving over 3000 parishes, 1400 towns and relevant census data. It is true that while scatterplots could have been included to indicate relationships, general editorial policies precluded this. We acknowledge that we should have included values to categories I–V in Figure 2 on p.182. Nevertheless, the accompanying text makes quite clear that the strategy of the map is to highlight significant divergences from the expected/predicted relationships between population decline and land values. This analysis, for example, highlights the anomalous status of County Donegal and more

particularly that of east-central Connacht – both characterised by low land values and *low* population losses. This pattern in east-central Connaught has never even been identified not alone analysed in the historical literature. The explanation for this latter anomaly may lie in the fact that this area of Connaught was in receipt of many evicted peoples from 1841 onwards, pushed out of the adjacent better lands of central Mayo and central Roscommon. Consequently, the populations of such exceptional parishes as Kilbeagh, Kilmovee, Castlemore and Kilcolman were far greater in 1845 than in 1841. These parishes were certainly deeply affected by Famine conditions (see p. 289 in *Atlas*). That the map on page 182 could be interpreted as identical to the actual map of population decline per se (p. 19) is to say the least rather surprising (Cooke 2000, p. 380).

One of the main challenges in producing any one of the atlases in the Cork University Press series is how to pitch it so as to ‘reach a wider audience than specialist scholars’. This was particularly challenging in relation to the cartographic content of this atlas. Producing generalised pictures from specific data is always a compromise in relation to the variant you use and how you go about mapping it. It is fair to say that in relation to some of the basic maps, the data has not been ‘normalised’; this relates to only a very small number of maps which are also small in size. Having such an enormous database of Civil Parishes and Towns, with over 25 categories for the two censuses of 1841 and 1851, it would have been very easy to produce an atlas that would generate cartographic fatigue in all but the most avid of readers. We were also very aware of this as we decided what categories to include, since the potential to produce hundreds of maps was available to us editors. As a result, only a fraction of the cartographic potential of the database has been realised in the *Atlas*, but we felt if we included more, we would have lost the general appeal of the publication. The GIS maps to some extent form the backbone of the *Atlas*, and like backbones stand out and were designed to do so. While they are designed to ‘stand proud’, they have subtleties built in to them. For example, within some of the maps, a stronger colour than would normally be expected is used to show population increases, and this (in a way) is to give some glimmer of hope in an otherwise shocking representation of national despair.

What has been most amazing and gratifying to the editors is the response of the people who have attended the numerous book events and lectures given at home and abroad. And we continue to gain new insights. At a lecture in Birr (7 September 2013), we were informed by Paddy Healy that some families along Slieve Bloom Mountain supplied black oats for the horses in Birr military barracks. But during the Famine these families mixed their black oats with turnips to make cakes and so survive the worst Famine years. When shown a slide of a late-nineteenth century photograph of a one-roomed fourth-class cabin, people attending in many lectures everywhere were shocked to reflect on the fact that 500,000 of such cabins dominated the western half of Ireland in 1845. And the descendants of famine-stricken emigrants – attendees at lectures in Australia – were so pleased that the memory of their ancestors was honoured in both the *Atlas* and back in Ireland.

It is extremely gratifying to be involved in producing a volume that has instigated such a response in people. Nothing else resides in and haunts our nation’s subconscious as much as the Famine. Likewise, the level of specialist analyses of the *Atlas* by other scholars is very gratifying, much of which is very positive. Suggestions for amendments from such relevant critiques we hope to incorporate in future reprints and editions and some of the ‘untidiness’ we also plan to address. For example, we now recognise that while the map-title on Figure 14 (p. 194) is technically correct, the figure title and commentary on the map are misleading. Both map and commentary will be revised. We

thank Niall Ó Cíosáin (2013, p. 700) for his diligent scrutiny of this particular map (as well as a few other maps; Ó Cíosáin 2013, p. 701). We also welcome all the new publications in Famine Studies (Coogan 2012; Delaney 2012; Kelly 2012; Ó Murchadha 2011) and the emergence of the Great Hunger Museum in Quinnipiac University, Connecticut.

The *Atlas*, on the one hand, had not only to represent data through choropleth maps but also had to try to represent the plight of people who, for example, got down on their hands and knees to eat the tops of turnips because they did not have the strength to pull them out of the ground. Painting a picture of those who lost everything and presenting it in an accessible manner to the general public was an important responsibility. The central purpose of the *Atlas* was to provide as wide-ranging an understanding of the Great Famine as was possible. As editors, we did want to try to remember and honour as many of the Famine dead and those forced to flee the land as best we could. As in the *Atlas*, we will leave the first and last word to poet Eavan Boland (1994, p. 5):

That the Science of Cartography is Limited
 - and not simply by the fact that this shading of
 forest cannot show the fragrances of balsam,
 the gloom of cypresses
 is what I wish to prove.
 When you and I were first in love we drove
 to the borders of Connacht
 and entered a wood there.
 Look down you said: this was once a famine road.
 I looked down at ivy and the scotch grass
 rough-cast stone had
 disappeared into as you told me
 in the second winter of their ordeal, in
 1847, when the crop had failed twice,
 Relief Committees gave
 the starving Irish such roads to build.
 Where they died, there the road ended
 and ends still and when I take down
 the map of this island, it is never so
 I can say here is
 the masterful, the apt rendering of
 the spherical as flat, nor
 an ingenious design which persuades a curve
 into a plane,
 but to tell myself again that
 the line which says woodland and cries hunger
 and gives out among sweet pine and cypress,
 and finds no horizon
 will not be there.

Notes

1. The notion that the *Atlas* ‘could at least be as accurately described as an “encyclopaedia”’ (Ó Cíosáin 2013, p. 140) is not pertinent.
2. Mac Suibhne (2013) is somewhat mistaken when he suggests that such anomalies were not addressed in the *Atlas*. See, amongst others, pages 196–197, 289–290, 419–420, 426–429 and 494–498.

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