

# Multi-Generational Legacies of HUNGER AS A WEAPON OF WAR AND SUBJUGATION



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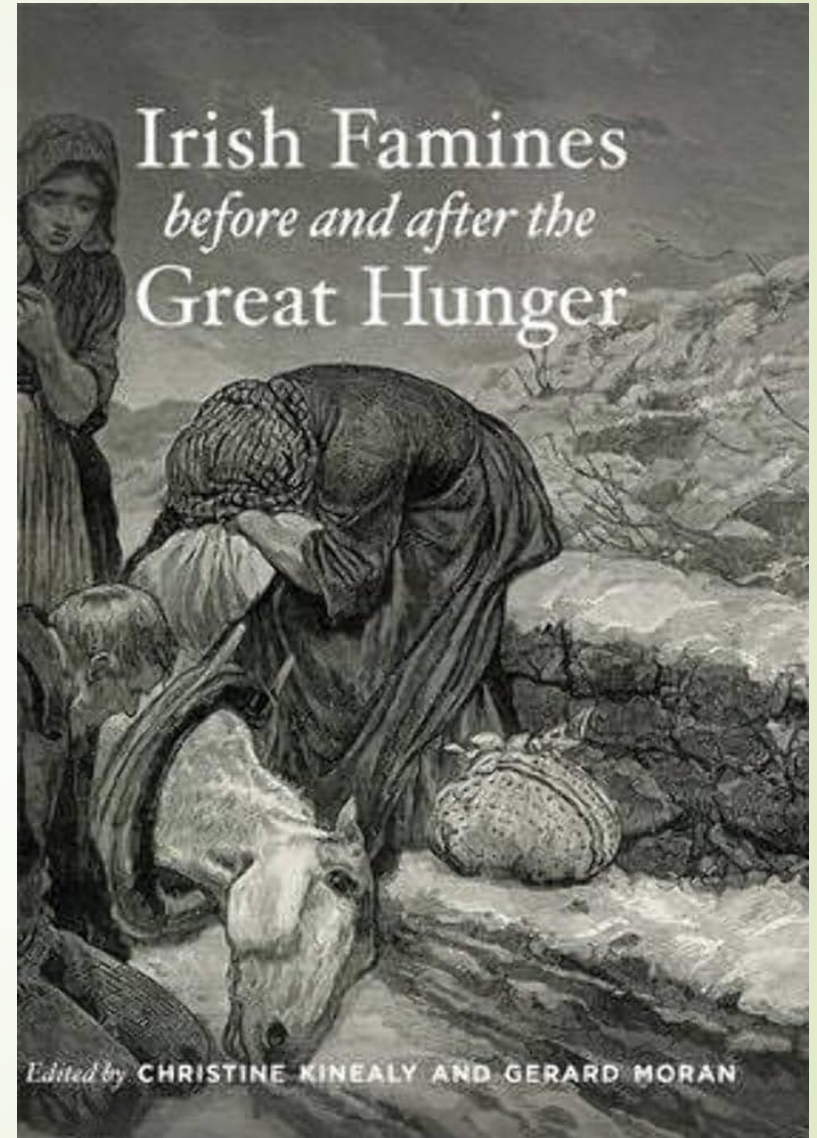
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# Ireland: A case Study

## *the great famine, 1845 - 1852*

- ▶ Subsistence crises, food shortages and famines were regular occurrences before 1845 and after 1852



# How to name the tragedy?

- The Great Irish Famine
- The Potato Famine
- The Irish Starvation
- The Great Hunger / *An Gorta Mór*
- The Bad Times / *An Drochshaol*
- Genocide



# The Great Hunger – a forgotten famine?

Up to 1995:

- ▶ The Famine was not part of the curriculum in Irish schools or universities.
- ▶ There were no official monuments in Ireland or elsewhere
- ▶ Few scholarly books had been written on this topic.



Since 1995 –  
international interest

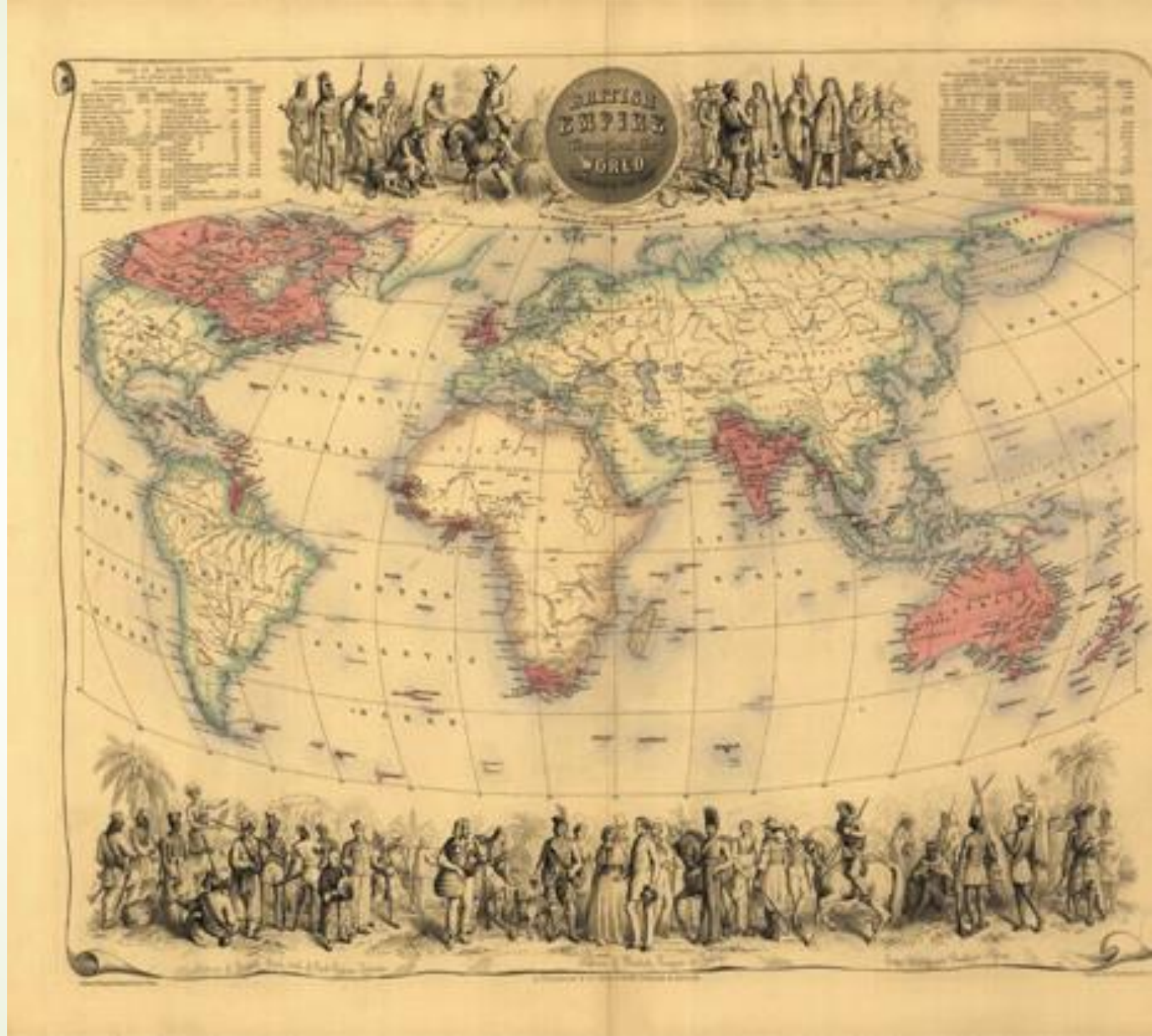


- Scholarly publications
- Courses
- Heritage sites
- Memorials
- Poetry
- Opera
- Music
- Documentaries
- Novels
- A graphic novel

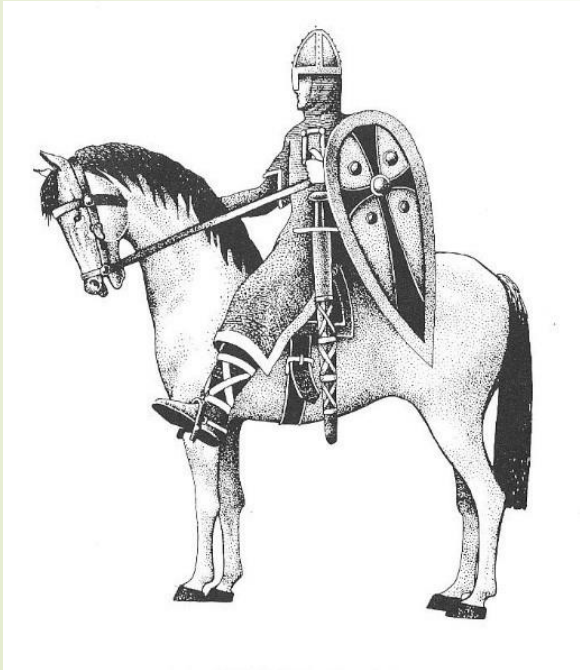


# A Central Question:

► How did a famine of such magnitude and severity occur in a country that was still exporting vast quantities of foodstuffs, and which, moreover, lay at the center of the resource-rich British Empire?



# The 'invasion' of the Anglo-Normans in the twelfth century



- *This people is, then, a barbarous people, literally barbarous. Judged according to modern ideas, they are uncultivated, not only in the external appearance of their dress, but also in their flowing hair and beards. All their habits are the habits of barbarians ...*

Gerard of Wales, Norman Chronicler

## After Centuries of Dispossession and Marginalization:

- By 1714, Catholics (85% of the population) owned 5% of land in Ireland.





# Potato Blight

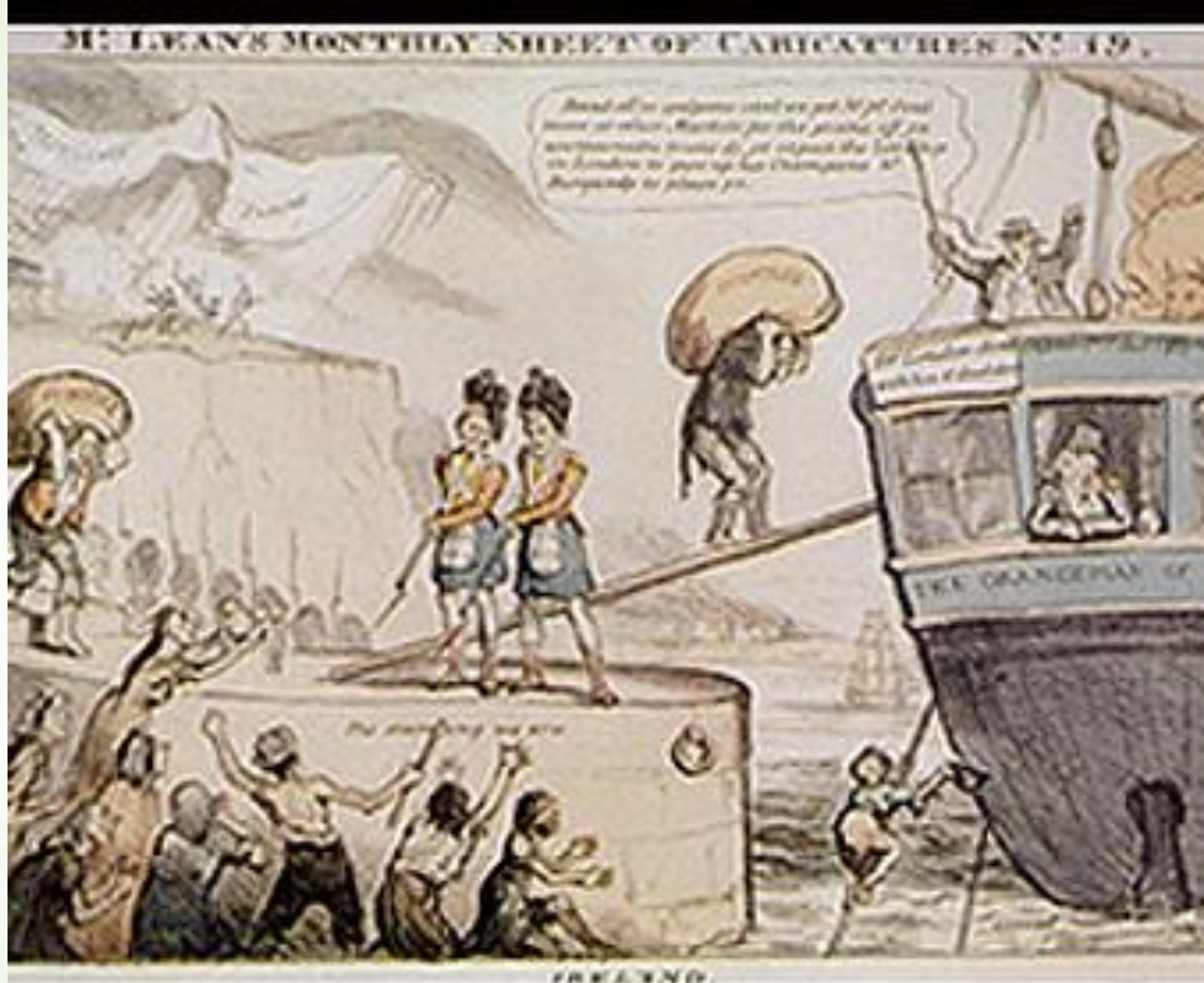
*Phytophthora infestans*



- ▶ In August 1845, an unknown potato blight appeared in Ireland. It destroyed approximately 40 per cent of the crop.
- ▶ Partial failures 1845, 1847, 1849, 1850, 1851
- ▶ **Almost total failure in 1846 and 1848**

# Relief from British Government

- ▶ “The judgment of God sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson. That calamity must not be too much mitigated. The greater evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse and turbulent character of the Irish people.”
- ▶ Charles Trevelyan, Head of British Treasury






## *Music, Poetry and Dancing Died ..*

### Why Remember ?

- Within the space of 6 years (1846-52) Ireland lost 25 per cent of its population.
- The highest proportion of deaths occurred among children aged under 9 years old.
- In the decades after 1852, the Irish population continued to fall.
- 175 years later, the population of Ireland remains smaller than it was in 1845.
- Epigenetics provides insights into the Famine's multigenerational legacies
- *The Famine changed everything.*



# *Famine* (1994) by Sinead O'Connor (1966-2023)

- ▶ There was no famine  
See Irish people were only allowed to eat potatoes  
All of the other food  
Meat, fish, vegetables  
Were shipped out of the country under armed guard  
To England while the Irish people starved  
And then, in the middle of all this  
They gave us money not to teach our children Irish  
And so we lost our history  
And this is what I think is still hurting me
- ▶ See we're like a child that's been battered  
Has to drive itself out of its head because it's frightened  
Still feels all the painful feelings  
But they lose contact with the memory
- ▶ And this leads to massive self-destruction  
Alcoholism, drug addiction  
All desperate attempts at running  
And in its worst form  
Becomes actual killing

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An American army regulation  
Says you mustn't kill more than 10% of a  
nation  
'Cause to do so causes permanent  
"psychological damage"  
It's not permanent, but they didn't know  
that


Anyway, during the supposed "famine"  
We lost a lot more than 10% of our nation  
Through deaths on land or on ships of  
emigration  
But what finally broke us was not starvation  
But its use in the controlling of our  
education  
Schools go on about "Black 47"  
On and on about "The terrible famine"  
But what they don't say is in truth  
There really never was one ...

- ▶ And if there ever is gonna be **healing**  
There has to be **remembering**  
And then **grieving**  
So that there then can be **forgiving**  
There has to be **knowledge**  
**and understanding**



# 'Famine'





Thank You –  
and any questions?

Go Raibh Míle Maith  
Agaibh

