From Colonial Legacy to Difficult Heritage: Responding to and Remembering An Gorta Mór, Ireland’s Great Hunger

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From Colonial Legacy to Difficult Heritage:
Responding to and Remembering An Gorta Mór, Ireland’s Great Hunger

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree
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ABSTRACT

This research has two main components: first, an exploration of how communities react to socio-natural disasters through time, and second, a discussion of how communities constructed the responses to tragedies as heritage over the long term. Disasters are often conceived as short-term, natural catastrophes, but, in reality, they are always social and natural phenomena and often impact communities for years or even decades. Employing archaeological, historical and ethnographic methods, this project examines local, regional, and national responses to social upheaval cause by prolonged food insecurity beginning with a potato blight in 1845 in Ireland. The 1845-1850 Famine was not just a single episode of food insecurity, rather it was a process that lasted decades, not just 1845-1850 as it is governmentally demarcated, and included multiple periods of food insecurity. However, The Great Famine, An Gorta Mór, is the one most remembered. Through a case study and comparison of Inishbofin and Inishark, County Galway, islands five miles off the western coast of Ireland to mainland communities, I conceptualize the responses to the tragedy by households and communities through the movement of people and goods. I consider the local, regional, and national responses to famine and their manifestations on Inishbofin, and I question the vulnerability of island communities that some researchers find implicit (Gaillard 2007; Kelman et al. 2011; Kelman and Khan 2013:1131; Mercer et al. 2009). Next, my research investigates how communities construct heritage about reactions to the disaster and the resulting social upheaval, and in particular how this develops in Ireland. This project explores potential alternative understandings of the 1845-1850 Famine and Famine
Process compared to regional and national discourses. It examines the ways in which communities construct heritage around a negative event through community involvement in the research. Through the analysis of ceramic material from nineteenth-century tenant farmer residential structures, historical documents, heritage constructs and sites, and ethnographic data my work observes how communities respond to disasters through a change in their taskscape, a concept introduced by Ingold (1993). My work observes the changes in difficult heritage over time in a post-colonial community that is at a juncture departing from prescribed forgetting and humiliated silence (Connerton 2008) to detailed rememberings of the Great Hunger. I reframe how anthropologists and archaeologists can understand how communities respond to and reframe disasters, both in the past and as enduring, long-term heritage.
CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

What sow ye? -- Human corpses that wait for the avenger.
Fainting forms, hunger-stricken, what see you in the offing?
Stately ships to bear our food away, amid the stranger's scoffing.
There's a proud array of soldiers -- what do they round your door?
They guard our masters' granaries from the thin hands of the poor.
Pale mothers, wherefore weeping -- Would to God that we were dead;
Our children swoon before us, and we cannot give them bread.
We are wretches, famished, scorned, human tools to build your pride,
But God will yet take vengeance for the souls for whom Christ died.
Now is your hour of pleasure -- bask ye in the world's caress;
But our whitening bones against ye will rise as witnesses,
From the cabins and the ditches, in their charred, uncoffin'd masses,
For the Angel of the Trumpet will know them as he passes.
A ghastly, spectral army, before the great God we'll stand,
And arraign ye as our murderers, the spoilers of our land.

_Famine Year By Lady Jane Wilde (1847)_

the stink of Famine
hangs in the bushes still
in the sad celtic hedges

you can catch it
down the line of our landscape
get its taste on every meal

listen
there is Famine in our music

Famine behind our faces

it is only a field away
has made us all immigrants
guilty for having survived

has separated us from language
cut us from our culture
In 1845, farmers across Ireland witnessed a fungus sweep over the land and destroy potato crops. At the time, over 75% of the people in Ireland relied on the potato as their main source of food and nutrition (Connell 1951; Cullen 1968; Ó Grada 1997:25). In addition to their own physical nourishment, farmers fed potatoes to their cows, pigs, and other livestock to supplement grasses. While people relied on the potato for personal sustenance, they worked as farmers or fishers to sell or barter cash crops in order to pay rent, buy farming and fishing equipment, and cover physical needs (Concannon 1993:21,53; Woodham-Smith 1962:21-26). Irish farmers were not exceedingly worried about a single lost season of a potato crop, as they had experienced food insecurity before. However, the fungus, *Phytophthora infestans*, was persistent, and there were multiple years of poor crops (Ó Grada 1999:13). One million people died and another million migrated due to the subsequent sustained inability to access food. While there is significant amounts of variation, the government calls the period from 1845-1850 the Great Hunger, the Great Famine or *An Gorta Mór* (Ó Gráda 1995; Ó Gráda and O'Rourke 1997).

While my research focuses on the Great Hunger, I propose to reexamine understandings of *An Gorta Mór* because famines are not single events or demarcated periods. Rather, they are social and natural disasters that are a process constructed by inability to access food. Disasters
are powerful events or processes that are destructive. They stem from natural, technological, and human-created environments (Oliver-Smith 1996:305). As a specific disaster, I use the word famine to mean “denial of access to food by force employed by those who possess food” (Edkins’ 2000:59). Further, famines are processes that include distinct periods that can be identified (Rangasami 1985:1749). The inability to access food is created over time and response to the food insecurity is part of famines.

In 1845 Ireland, the lower socioeconomic classes lost their major food source due to a potato fungus. However, that did not cause a famine, because there was ample food being produced and sold in Ireland (Ó Grada 1997:25). The Great Hunger was caused by inability to access food following years of colonial land dispossession, oppression, and marginalization. The resulting process was in response to a potato blight, and the process occurred throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In this dissertation, I focus on the 1845-1850 Famine which is also known as the Great Famine, and An Gorta Mór. I refer to the it as as “the disaster,” “the catastrophe,” “the social upheaval,” and “the tragedy” among other terms. Alternatively, I use the term “Famine Process” with a capital ‘F’ and ‘P’ to describe the lack of food between 1845-1850 and subsequent periods of food insecurity, unrest, and social, political, and economic, change throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In order to end the Famine Process, Irish politicians, farmers, fishers, and laborers worked to change the colonial constructed vulnerability in Ireland.

My dissertation topic is epitomized in the two poems above. In 1847, Lade Jane Wilde wrote about the hunger and migration she witnessed during the great tragedy. She described the suffering people, the atrocities that followed the potato crop failures, and anger at the governmental response to the disaster. One hundred and fifty years later, Desmond Egan (1997)
wrote about the lasting impact of the 1845-1850 Famine, its ever-presence in the Irish landscape, and the conflicting feelings people have about the events that transpired during *An Gorta Mór*. The Famine Process was the result of colonial undertakings in Ireland. The English government slowly created laws that marginalized native Irish Catholics, like limiting the amount of land they could own, types of jobs they could have, and people they could marry (Kinealy 1997). During the post-medieval period, the English government took land from native Irish people and gave it to loyal English citizens. In 1801, the British government forced the Act of the Union with Ireland, which essentially made it impossible for Ireland to self-govern (Kinealy 1997; Woodham-Smith 1962:15). When the disaster came, the government kept food prices high and limited disaster relief efforts, which left people dying all over the Irish countryside (Ó Gráda 1999:25). Since the disaster, the remembrance of the tragedy has been framed through an inherited structure that encouraged ‘prescribed forgetting’ and ‘humiliated silence’ (Connerton 2008). However, the 1845-1850 Famine lingers in social memory, even if it is rarely documented in official heritage (and largely ineffectively when this is the case). As Egan (1997) says, “the stink of Famine hangs in the bushes still.” My research considers the reactions to, and rememberances of the Great Hunger.

**Positionality**

I began researching nineteenth century social upheaval, the Great Hunger, and long-lasting effects through happenstance. As a dual major in anthropology and Arabic as an undergraduate, I was drawn to topics like colonization, marginalization, and disenfranchisement. As the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants from Palestine and Mexico, I was interested in researching the factors that caused millions of people around the globe to uproot their lives. Throughout time, people have moved to new places with unfamiliar surroundings and, often,
major language barriers. I learned about colonialism and diasporas in both archaeological contexts and ethnographic case studies through my undergraduate courses. I read about colonialism and its broad-reaching impacts. During my archaeological field school in Summer 2007, I excavated and researched residential structures associated with Irish migrants in South Bend, Indiana, USA. Initially, I was drawn to the class through convenience; I was able to live at home during the field school and complete the required methods course for my anthropology major. Also, I hoped that I might learn a little about Ireland, in anticipation of my plans to spend my Spring 2008 semester studying abroad there. However, during the field school, I was captivated by historical archaeology methods and theories while exploring migration, resettlement, and colonialism.

Thanks to an undergraduate research grant at the University of Notre Dame, I pursued independent studies while abroad to understand more about nineteenth-century Ireland. This endeavor complemented what I learned during my field school. When I returned home from study abroad, my research interests in Ireland snowballed. After completing my undergraduate degree and publishing an article about Irish immigrant experience in the United States, I returned to Ireland for a Master’s program at the University College Dublin (UCD), where I wrote my thesis on the archaeology and heritage of a small rural community on the border of Tipperary and Kilkenny. After earning my degree at UCD, Dr. Ian Kuijt invited me to join the Cultural Landscapes of the Irish Coast (CLIC) project, which focused on the anthropology and archaeology of Ireland’s western coast.

While researching the historic period on the islands of Inishark and Inishbofin with the CLIC project, I noticed how contemporary people cherish their nineteenth-century ceramics, proudly displaying them on the walls and shelves of their dressers, display and storage cabinets
ubiquitous in Ireland. Islanders display ceramics with patterns identical to the ceramic sherds I found while excavating the tenant-farmer residences. I began researching the nineteenth-century rural farmers and fishers in Ireland and their preferences for ceramics. They purchased and used Scottish- and English-made ceramics which dated to times of great hardship in Ireland. While the material culture and ceramics date to the mid- to late- nineteenth century, the time of the Irish Famine, archaeologists who study this area and time period have rarely engaged with the food insecurity and other social problems wrought by the 1845-1850 Famine (Donnelly and Horning 2002; Horning 2007; McDonald 1998; Orser 2005; Orser 2006; Orser 2010). Growing up in North America, my education on the topic was likewise limited, focusing mainly on the 1845-1850 Famine as a trigger for a wave of immigrations to America. As a result, I decided to focus my doctoral research on the marginalized disaster, which was the result of long-lasting British colonialism in Ireland.

**Dissertation Goals**

I have two main goals in my dissertation; first, I address how past communities responded to the Famine Process with a focus on the island communities of Inishark and Inishbofin, off the country’s western coast (Figure 1-1). I explore how these communities survived the disaster in comparison to similar communities on the mainland. Using historical and archaeological data, I argue that island communities were able to leverage coastal resources and expand their taskscapes, a social defined space of related actions (Ingold 1993), to survive the catastrophe.
Second, I explore how the Famine Process, largely restricted to the 1845-1850 Famine, is remembered and incorporated into heritage over the long-term in Ireland. Using written sources, oral history, and ethnographic interviews, I look at ways that Irish people have incorporated the disaster into their heritage, by which I refer to “a set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past” (Harrison 2013:14). I argue that, in the first few decades following the disaster, people suffered from a sort of survivor’s guilt that led them to try and forget what had happened. As a result, some communities - like Inishbofin - downplayed the impact the Famine Process had on the island. At a broader level, the colonial government did not try to remember the event because doing so would have created divisions among an already conflicted nation.
As time passed, Irish scholars and communities changed their approach to the disaster. As will be discussed in detail in this dissertation, initial remembrances, which were largely books, were focused on certain aspects of the disaster, like the failure of the potato crop, migration, and changes in burial practices. While there was shame and embarrassment associated with the trauma, the general public in Ireland began to understand the root causes of the catastrophe and pushed for memorialization and commemoration. Nevertheless, the Great Hunger heritage has continued to be marginalized in favor of more “positive” aspects of Ireland’s past, especially those associated with the Neolithic, Bronze, and medieval eras. This marginalization of the 1845-1850 Famine is particularly acute in the “official” heritage discourse directed by the national and county governments. For example, at the National Museum of Ireland Archaeology and History Museum curators include only one mention of the post-medieval period is a temporary exhibit on the humanitarian work of Roger Casement, a nineteenth-century politician (National Museum of Ireland 2019). I demonstrate more examples of this in Chapters 6 and 7, the heritage chapters. Heritage constructors have created a discourse in which a few are valorized, with the implication that others are less deserving of such memorialization. The poor interpretation serves to subjugate the memory of most of the people who suffered. Nevertheless, I note a recent shift in the heritage of the Great Hunger, largely through unofficial or unsanctioned heritage projects which are working to more fully contextualize the tragedy.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

The questions that guide my dissertation research are divided by conversations on archaeology of *An Gorta Mór* and heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine, with an understanding that archaeological practice is part of heritage. While there are many nuances involved in heritage, a
simple approach is that heritage is what communities have inherited from the past and archaeology is the material remains of what has been preserved from past generations (O’Keefe 2014). With this framework, archaeology is always related to heritage. Before delving into the archaeology and heritage of the disaster, I provide necessary background information for this dissertation in Chapter 2. I contextualize the Ireland through a discussion of England’s presence in Ireland which started in the medieval period. Then, I focus on nineteenth-century Ireland and the social, religious, political, and economic factors that created an extremely vulnerable lower class of tenant farmers. These farmers were limited to small plots for subsistence farming, and since the potato can produce high yields in small amounts of space, they relied heavily on the crop as their staple food. I focus my case studies on the islands of Inishark and Inishbofin in County Galway, and I present background information on the islands after contextualizing Ireland as a whole.

In the third chapter, I provide an overview of scholarship on both the 1845-1850 Famine and memory of the disaster. Then, I delve into theories I employ to research the Great Hunger and heritage of the disaster. The archaeology of the 1845-1850 Famine is a growing field, and there are many new projects on the horizon (Christy Cuniffe personal communication 2017). Still, many projects struggle because there is not a clear “Famine” horizon in the archaeological record for many sites (Orser 1996). However, both seasoned researchers and young scholars are embracing the archaeology of the Great Hunger, and I join them in the challenging endeavor and expand the conversation to include the Famine Process. By taking on this thought-provoking topic, I create a way for the Famine Process to be examined through material culture. I examine the theory involved in a dynamic area of meaning through the lens of a taskscape (Ingold 1993), where communities embed parts of the area where they live and work with memories and
meaning as they perform repetitive tasks in their lives. Additionally, I probe into the literature on representation in heritage with close attention to “difficult” heritage, a concept which refers to the remembering of tragic pasts and acknowledges challenges encountered in the construction of this type of heritage (Macdonald 2010; Samuels 2015). Finally, I consider the interpretive nature of heritage and include a conversation on best practices.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the methods I used to answer how people responded to the disaster and how the Great Hunger was inculcated into heritage over time. I use “inculcate” to refer to the way heritage is instilled in a community over time through repeated practice. My understanding of this process builds on the examination of historical, ethnographic, and archaeological data. This chapter explains the methods that I employed to gather these data. Chapter 5 focuses on the archaeology of the Famine Process. I examine ways in which people respond to the disaster through the archaeological record. Through a case study on the islands of Inishark and Inishbofin, I use excavated material culture, specifically ceramics, to see what consumption choices the islanders made in a time of social upheaval, and I compare it to pre-Famine assemblages. Further, I compare the 1845-1850 Famine-era assemblage to ceramics from previously excavated sites in counties Mayo, Donegal, and Sligo which provides a larger context to how people responded to the disaster given limited archaeological materials available to researchers. I hypothesize that the islanders changed their taskscape as a response to the disaster to survive in ways that other communities could not. My objective is to track the change through the material footprint during the Famine Process. Primarily, I aim to observe small changes in settlement patterns, use of the surrounding space, and consumption practices.

Next, I examine the ways in which people have framed the Famine Process. Past and present communities in Ireland largely restrict the Great Hunger heritage discourse to the years
1845-1850. I divide the remembrance of the Great Hunger into two main categories: official heritage (Chapter 6) and unofficial heritage (Chapter 7) using terms coined by Harrison (2009). I use these terms because in heritage, some aspects of the past are prioritized over others. Some people are ignored or marginalized by heritage constructed by the government, and these disenfranchised individuals may create heritage that does not align with the governmental discourse (Harrison 2013:20; Smith 2006:30). By “official heritage,” I mean remembrance of the 1845-1850 Famine that is governmentally sanctioned in heritage constructions at local and national levels (Harrison 2013:20). I observe that in policy and practice the government of the Republic of Ireland present the Famine Process through a particular lens that superficially addresses the disaster. Unofficial heritage is that which is not sanctioned by local, state, or national government; As I discuss in Chapter 7, I noted trends in the unofficial heritage discourse that both imitate the official dialogue. I argue that official heritage inherited an approach to the 1845-1850 Famine remembrance framed by prescribed forgetting and humiliated silence, which kept remembrance to a minimum. However, I observed select participants in unofficial heritage resisting the national discourse by creating the conversation to contextualize the Famine Process through structural factors produced by colonialism.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I conclude with discussions on the anthropology of the Great Hunger, potential reasons for the young field, and the lasting impact of the 1845-1850 Famine and heritage on Irish people. I discuss the nuances of prescribed forgetting and lack of commemoration due to resources. I include comments concerning the next steps for the archaeology of the Famine Process and examine where I see heritage of the disaster heading, given the current state of heritage and politics in Ireland. Finally, I address how this project will
give back to the communities who shared their heritage with me through recommendations for heritage about the disaster and deliverables for the islanders.
CHAPTER TWO:

CONTEXTUALIZING COLONIAL VULNERABILITY, FAMINE, AND HERITAGE

Background

Today, “Ireland” refers both to the nation state of the Republic of Ireland and to the entire island, home to both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The island was united as part of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 1801 until a war of independence in the early twentieth century, which resulted in the partition of the island between an Irish Free State in the south and the country of Northern Ireland, which remained part of Great Britain. My research includes time periods when Ireland was an independent united island, as well as when it was part of Great Britain, and the current division of the island into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (which remains a part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain). I use the terms “Ireland,” “Republic of Ireland,” “England,” “Britain,” and “Great Britain” throughout this dissertation. I use “England” and “English” to refer to the government and monarchy that colonized Ireland. In 1707 England and Scotland united to become Great Britain; I employ “Britain” and “British” to reference the government after this event. Finally, I use “Ireland” and “Irish” to mean both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland together, since their material culture and historical archives cannot be divided easily along contemporary geo-political lines. For context on the contemporary treatment of the 1845-1850 Famine and archaeological excavations and legislations, I focus on the Republic of Ireland due to the amount of information available.
Ireland consists of four provinces: Ulster, Munster, Leinster, and Connacht, which predate the Norman invasion of 1169. I focus my archaeological and local-scale ethnographic study in the Connemara district, which lies in County Galway in the province of Connacht (Figure 2-1). Connemara is west of Galway city, and the region bounded by the Lough Mask and Corrib. There are a number of islands in Connemara including Inishark and Inishbofin, where I focus my case study.

**Contextualizing the Past**

**Colonial involvement and the creation of disaster risk in Ireland**

There were a number of different agents through time that worked to create marginalized communities at risk for a disaster (West 2016), and it is important to understand the colonial creation of disenfranchised people that led to the Famine Process in Ireland. The English government, through the combination of colonial land dispossession and changes to political and subsistence economies, created a vulnerable community. In Ireland, the land dispossession started with English Presence in Ireland during the medieval period. On May 1, 1169, Diarmait Mac Murchada, the deposed king of Leinster, and a group of Norman mercenaries invaded Wexford with the support of the English king. Mac Murchada was attacking his native Ireland to avenge his father’s death, and King Henry II agreed to provide aid in exchange for land. During this time, Ireland’s four kings battled each other constantly in an attempt to amass power, leaving them unprepared for the English invasion. This marks the beginning of an English governmental presence in Ireland (Kinealy 2004).

Following the Norman Invasion in Ireland, and throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, As a colonizer, England created distinctions between English settlers and native Irish, othering the Irish, and minimizing Ireland’s ability to self-govern. Over the
centuries, the English government placed a number of restrictions on Ireland, which benefitted the English crown and negatively impacted Ireland’s economic, social, and political well being for centuries.

The Statute of Kilkenny in 1366 is an early example of the English intention to protect Anglo-Norman powers in Ireland and prevent the incorporation of English people into Irish society (and vice versa). Under the statute, English people were barred from marrying native Irish. In addition, the English government prohibited English people from dressing in Irish-style clothing. Further, the government banned Irish storytellers from visiting English areas. Through this statute, the English attempted to create and reinforce differences between English settlers and native Irish. While the statute was largely a failure, it signifies the English government’s attitude toward Ireland from some of the earliest interactions (Kinealy 1997:17). In the eyes of the English, the Irish and English were two separate groups of people and the English government viewed the Irish as inferior.

While the Statute of Kilkenny focused on social interactions, later laws and government infrastructure focused on politics. In the fifteenth century, England passed Poyning’s law, which stipulated that the English monarch had to approve requests for the Irish parliament to assemble. The intention of this law was to curb the power of Anglo-Norman rulers in Ireland; however, it had a broader and more lasting impact in restricting governmental proceedings in Ireland. The Irish politicians, comprised of wealthy Catholic and Anglo-Irish Protestant elites, were highly involved in English politics throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and there were multiple attempts to eliminate English oversight in Irish government. During the late 1600s, Irish elites were supporting Catholic monarchs, like James II, who fought against Protestant William of Orange. Following the defeat of James II, the English parliament expanded their power in
Ireland and created a government system, imitating their executive, legislative, and legal branches that imitated theirs (McNally 2002: 203-406). In the eighteenth century, Britain’s government managed Ireland’s parliament from London. Protestants and Catholics from wealthy families comprised parliament in Dublin, although Catholics were barred from serving in high positions, like in the House of Commons in Westminster. The British House of Lords had the final judgment on matters for the Irish Parliament. Judges served for as long as the king or queen of England deemed appropriate (Powell 2002:414-415). The high-ranking politicians in this infrastructure created and maintained a colonial situation between England and Ireland.

In the first half of the post-medieval period, the English rationalized their presence in Ireland, in specific ways; they were there to pursue public good (Canny 1973:576) and “for the sake of decency, peace, order, and stability” (Montaño 2011:8). The English government criticized the way the Irish people used the land, dressed, built houses, and many other aspects to daily life (Canny 1973:576). They accused the Irish of not understanding how to tame the landscape for agricultural purposes, thereby accusing them of ineffective occupation of the area, undermining the Irish claim to land. The English felt it was their duty to demonstrate their perceived best way to use the land. Evidence of English aggression and othering is found in medieval and post-medieval English texts such as Joannes Boemus (1611) and Edmund Spencer (1596) where Irish people are described as unruly, incestuous pagans who lived with animals (Canny 1973: 584-588; Montaño 2011:28). While the sixteenth-century Tudor government only controlled the Pale, the land surrounding Dublin, they had avowed to govern the entire island. Rationalized through their perceived superiority over the Irish, the English government used plantation schemes to gift land to English and Scottish citizens who demonstrated loyalty to the crown. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the English government slowly changed the
demographics of the land-owning classes. Irish Catholics owned 61 percent of the land in 1641 but only five percent by late 1770s (Kinealy 1997:18-19; Levine 2013:10). With early programs like Plantations in the seventeenth century and later colonial projects like Improvement in the nineteenth century (explained in more detail later), the English intended to civilize the landscape and make Ireland more like Protestant England (Andrews 2000:113; Canny 2001:23).

With other colonial projects in North America, the English established a series of laws that would ensure growth of their economy by controlling all aspects of trade between their colonies. For example, the English government passed the Act of 1696, which ruled that Ireland could not trade directly with American plantations. Rather, England required all goods to pass through English ports, be taxed, and then imported by Ireland or America (Levine 2013:5). As a result, the Irish economy was restricted and reduced to certain aspects of the manufacturing process which had lasting impacts. The Woollen Act of 1699 suppressed the Irish export of wool in order to bolster the English wool industry (O’Hearn 1994:598). Irish manufacturers began to focus on producing linen instead of wool for export. However, due to restrictions, Irish linen producers were able to export undecorated linen only. All Irish linens had to be decorated in England, and English distributors sold the final product for consumption in England’s colonies (Longfield 1937:29). Through these measures, the English government ensured industrial jobs for its citizens and more money flowing into England. Ireland was left to invest in limited aspects to production.

There were also laws that focused specifically on the suppression of Catholics in Ireland. Through seventeenth century Penal laws, Cromwell’s government aimed to reduce Catholic authority in Ireland, empower Protestants in Ireland, and provide a check on Catholic power elsewhere in Europe, specifically in Spain and France (Woodham-Smith 1962:26). Penal Laws
limited every aspect of a Catholic’s life in Ireland. Catholics were restricted in the amount of land they could own, their profession and employment, firearm ownership, and educational opportunities; they could not study or practice law or medicine. Later manifestations of the law restricted Catholics to low ranking positions in these fields (Kinealy 1997: 19). The laws restricted Catholic inheritance; if a Catholic owner of an estate died, his land was divided among his sons, unless the eldest son became a Protestant, in which the Protestant son would inherit the entire estate. If a Protestant married into a Catholic family, the Protestant’s life was restricted in the same ways as a Catholic’s life. Penal laws legalized the exclusion of Catholics from government; the Corporation Act of 1661 and the Test Acts of 1673 and 1678 barred Catholics from holding public office (Levine 2013:4), and Catholics were banned from voting. Only through strenuous efforts by people like Daniel O’Connell, the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 passed and Catholics were given voting rights (Levine 2013:11).

Irish people did not passively accept the colonization and marginalization; Ireland attempted multiple rebellions. However, each failed uprising resulted in further restrictions on Irish people. One of the earliest Irish attempts to oust the English was an extension of Louis XIV’s Nine Years’ War. From 1593 to 1603, Hugh O’Neill and majority Irish forces, with some Spanish aid, attempted to halt England’s expansion beyond the largely Protestant Pale. After defeating the Irish rebels, the English forced O’Neill and other Irish lords to leave their lands, paving the way for the Ulster Plantation in 1607 (Braudel 1995: 229; Morgan 1993: 21).

**Introduction and Spread of the Potato to Ireland**

Prior to the introduction of the potato, Irish farmers had a mixed agricultural landscape focusing on dairy, cattle, and tillage farming (D’Arcy 2010:120). The potato was brought to Ireland in the post-medieval period around 1600. Lore associated with the origination gives
credit to Sir Walter Raleigh, John Gerard, Sir Francis Drake, and Sir Thomas Cavendish. O’Riordan (2001) presents the various scenarios associated with Raleigh, Gerard, Drake, and Cavendish, but he argues that none of these men brought the potato to Ireland. Irish people initially referred to the tuber as An Spáinneach Gael. O’Riordan (2001:31) contends that Spaniards brought the potato from South America to Ireland through Waterford sometime around 1586 to 1600. The potato prospered in Ireland's agricultural environment.

People across Ireland adopted the tuber in part due to different agricultural approaches. During the post-medieval period, Ireland could be divided into five main settlement regions based on primary economic activity. Farmers in Munster practiced dairying in the early post-medieval periods (1690s), and they sold their goods in Cork City, and the market became a major hub. The farmers in Munster focused on the production of milk products, like butter, and people in Ireland and Great Britain consumed the butter. As a result, dairy farmers substituted their consumption of cow by-products with potatoes (Aalen et al. 1997:71). In the northeastern Leinster, north Munster and inner Connacht, farmers focused on pastoral cattle, for the meat markets. From 1600 to 1845, the number of cattle fairs, regular markets for the sale of live animals, expanded from 700 to 5,000. The farmers in the regions in southwest of Ireland and north past Dublin focused on the production of corn, wheat, and lime to treat acidic soils. With the growth in tillage economy in the second half of the eighteenth century, large farms required agricultural laborers, the cottier class. The cottier class was provided with small cabins and a .4 hectare plot of land for subsistence farming, with poorer soil quality. With such small plots of land to support a family, cottiers relied on the potato for sustenance (Aalen et al. 1997:73-76). In Ulster, farmers were linked to the linen industry, which expanded during the post-medieval period. From 1712 to 1746, linen exports expanded form 1.5 million yards to 46 million yards.
(Allen et al. 1997:76). For all of these farmers, it was more economically advantageous to focus more of their land on the political, rather than subsistence, economy. As a result, farmers used less of their land on subsistence agriculture.

In Western Ireland, from Donegal down to Kerry, people lived on small farms and the number of these farms grew as the population grew during the post-medieval periods (Table 2-1). With millions of more people in Ireland, small farmers lived on reclaimed, subdivided, and previously unsettled land. The land was wet and lacked nutrients, which made it the ideal place for potatoes. Smaller farmers densely settled western Ireland (Aalen et al.1997: 79-80). As a result of the increase in population, people change their settlement patterns. In 1750, small farmers lived in clachans, or hamlets, and they practiced the rundale system, where they jointly leased common land. The agriculturalists practiced transhumance, moving their grazing livestock from different areas depending on the season. During this time many small farmers were consuming oats and grains. As the population grew, more farmers occupied the clachan spaces, rented from landlords. Shares in the rundale system were spread among more farmers. By 1840, agriculturalists occupied transhumance sites year round because of the increased population. From 1840-1870, farmers in rural Ireland occupied more of the secondary villages which were located on marginal land with poor soils (Aalen et al.1997: 80). However, farmers abandoned many of these transhumance suites during the Famine Process and land reforms in the late nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Irish farmers relied on oats and milk for their meals. Following the potato’s introduction to Ireland, farmers in south Munster used the potato as a supplemental food. By 1750, agriculturalists on small farmers in Connacht and Leinster began to use potatoes during the winter months. People of all classes in Ireland were
consuming the potato, however, poorer classes relied on the crop as their main food source, while higher socioeconomic classes used the potato as a supplemental food. From 1750-1810, cottiers and tenant farmers relied on the potato as their staple food throughout the entire year. The tillage agriculturalists planted the potato on alternate years from the corn or wheat, which contributed to the spread of the potato in the south and west of Ireland. By 1800, the lower socioeconomic classes, and the majority of the population, were entirely dependent on potatoes. In 1810, the lumper potato, an inferior potato in quality was widely adopted (Aalen et al. 1997:85; D’Arcy 2010:122). Farmers dedicated more of their land to cash crops, including butter, milk, cheese, oats, and corn, which comprised 80 percent of agricultural produce (D’Arcy 2010:121; Kinealy 2002:32). In order to support cash crops, farmers used less land for their family’s and livestock’s subsistence since potatoes require little space (D’Arcy 2010:121). By the middle of the nineteenth century, millions relied on the tuber crops as their main source of sustenance, and the National Famine Museum (2018) estimates that adult males ate around 14 pounds of potatoes per day.

Lower socio-economic classes adapted to the potato for a number of reasons. In addition to requiring little land to produce high yields, the potato required little fuel to process or cook (D’Arcy 2010:121). Nutritionally, the lower socioeconomic classes in Ireland satisfied their dietary needs consuming potatoes along with some buttermilk (Crawford 1989), including enough Vitamin C to prevent scurvy and other diseases (Geber and Murphy 2012). However, nineteenth-century tenant farmers were not concerned with the specific nutritional values. Unfortunately, potatoes lasted seventy-five percent of the year, and many families in Ireland lacked food during the summer months. Also, potatoes were difficult and expensive to transport. As a result, farmers adopted the potatoes throughout Ireland rather than develop a regional center
that exported tubers (Aalen et al. 1997: 85; Bourke 1968; Woodham-Smith 1964:35-36). Cottiers and tenant farmers comprised 56 percent of the population in 1841. Land-owners possessing less than twenty acres of land were also poor rural farmers who accounted for 19 percent of the population, which means that 75 percent of Ireland’s population in 1841 was a rural poor farmer dependent on potatoes prior to the Great Hunger (Clark and Donnelly 1983: 27; Lee 1973:2).

**Plantation and Land Change in the Era of ‘Improvement’**

While the English had a strong hold on certain parts of Ireland, including settlements close to Dublin in the sixteenth century, the government desired to expand their control. They used various strategies including plantation schemes, in which the government confiscated control of Gaelic clan-owned land and “planted” citizens loyal to the English crown on the newly seized land. Aalen et al. (1997:23) state that by 1660, planters comprised nearly twenty percent of Ireland’s population, which may be a high estimate. However, these new residents were clustered in Ulster, and the immigrants were only five percent of the population in Connacht.

The plantation system was limited, but effective. The British government enabled Protestant newcomers to the land, overpowering previous land owning and inheritance systems, through seizure of over three million acres of land. A centralized government and landlords, focused on ways to financially benefit from the land, eliminated the previous system of lordship and protection based on kinship was eliminated by a centralized government system. The owners of these new estates leased land for agricultural products which were sold at markets and fairs, creating a “commodity-based economy….fueled by a rent paying tenantry” (Aalen et al. 1997:68). Additionally, Oliver Cromwell’s seventeenth-century government created military outposts throughout Ireland, including on Inishbofin. Thousands of soldiers on the ground were
ready to squash any disagreements by landlords or ruling elite, which resulted in further redistributions of land to loyal citizens (Durston 1986:106).

The new land-owning class instituted a series of ‘improvements’ to the land. The idea behind ‘improvement’ schemes stems from late medieval thoughts concerning an individual and their relationship with God. People could alter their relationship with God through internal reflection and change, but they would not be able to change their economic or social situation without external change. By the mid-eighteenth century, the ideas behind improvement intertwined moral self-improvement and increased profit margins for their economic pursuits (Kuijt et al. 2015; Tarlow 2000:11-12). Improvement became relevant to all aspects of life. In Ireland, the landlord employed the ideas behind improvement to change agricultural practices to increase yields. Rather than raise free-roaming animals, landed elites created closed field systems worked by an individual farmer, not than communal farming (Tarlow 2000:78). Landowners and the government drained bogs and wetlands, so tenant farmers could live and farm the change land (Orser 2005:396). The British parliament passed seventeen bills regarding the drainage and changed usage of bogs and wetlands between 1823 and 1850 (Feehan and O’Donovan 1996: 57). Between 1832 and 1881, the government spent over £30 million on land projects, like increasing arable land in Donegal from 600 m$^2$ to over 1000 m$^2$ (Forsythe 2013: 76).

Sometimes, nineteenth-century landlords forced tenants to improve their land and homes as part of the leases (Forsythe 2007:225; 2013:78). Agriculturally the new landlords introduced new crops, like rape and hemp, artichoke and asparagus, chestnut trees and turnips. They introduced new breeds of sheep and fatter cattle (Aalen et al. 1997:70). Farmers grew these as cash crops for the landlords. As a result landlords would have more property that could produce higher profits for them (Ó Grada 1993: 39).
An “improved” society extended to education, hygiene, economics, and morals (Tarlow 2007:86). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, improvement was aimed social and moral transformations attempting to eliminate poverty, rehabilitate morals, and educate the people (Forsythe 2013:73). However, Ireland’s economic situation and social attitudes exacerbated the peoples’ vulnerability throughout the post-medieval period.

**Nineteenth Century Political Union, Population, and Economics**

While the potato was spreading, Irish politicians were actively resisting English presence in Ireland. In 1798, Wolfe Tone, an Irish revolutionary, led a failed insurgence against the English. Following the attempt, the English government wanted to ensure its presence in Ireland and protect their economic interests. During discussions of a potential union, government representatives discussed the economic situation in Ireland, a possibility of a duty-free relationship, and Irish and British debt and taxes (McCavery 2019:359-362). Further, William Pitt, the Prime Minister, argued for Catholic Emancipation in the Act, which would free Catholics from social, legal, and economic restrictions. King George III was offended at the suggestion since he saw it as taking funds away from the Church of England (an entity which he was to protect). As a result, the English government drafted the Act of the Union without changing the restrictions on Catholics. Irish taxes would focus on their debt with some money sent to the British forces, and the executive branch of the Irish government would remain intact, although the Irish parliament would dissolve, creating a single British parliament (McCavery 2019:122).

British and Irish Whigs accused the Unionists, including Prime Minister Pitt, of failing to create a broad-based agreement for the union, causing tension between Ireland the rest of Great Britain (Bew 2016:77). However, the Union was forced through Irish parliament with bribery,
coercion, and trickery (Bew 2016:77). Ireland joined Great Britain under a single parliament in 1801. Through the Act of Union, the British parliament in Westminster was given direct responsibility for Irish social and economic policy.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Irish people accounted for a significant amount of Great Britain’s population. Despite the growing population (Table 2-1) and comprising a significant percentage of Great Britain’s population (Table 2-2), Ireland sent proportionally less representatives than the other countries in the United Kingdom (Kinealy 2002:18-19).

Table 0-1: Population of Ireland during post-medieval period. Adapted from Clarkson and Crawford 1989:10 and House of Commons Census Data 1822; 1832; 1842

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1725</td>
<td>2.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>8.5 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>8,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td>15,929,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2,622,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With an increasing population, a limited amount of land available for farming, and over-reliance on one crop, Ireland was in a vulnerable situation created by the colonial government.

Economically, Ireland’s situation was looking promising prior to the Act of the Union. Moykr (1983) identified two main economies in eighteenth and nineteenth century Ireland: the cash economy and the barter economy. People throughout Ireland participated in both economies, as they were entangled and dependent on each other. The cash economy produced
goods sold for cash, like cattle, grain, dairy products, and linen. The barter economy was focused on subsistence goods. For the most part, cottiers and tenant farmers were in the barter economy where they grew their subsistence and traded their labor for land and shelter. Occasionally, cottiers and tenant farmers participated directly in the cash economy, like purchasing food during the slim summer months, or selling pigs, butter, or eggs. However, they rarely used money and relied on their small subsistence farms to feed family and livestock (Mokyr 1983:23-24).

The Irish economy waxed and waned in the decades prior to Famine Process. People all around Ulster, especially in Belfast, and some in west Munster witnessed the growth of the linen and cotton industries in the early 1800s. Around the 1820s, with changes to manufacturing and competition with England, the linen industry required a centralized production center; Belfast emerged as the linen capital in Ireland (Ó Grada 1993:29-32), leaving rural manufacturers disadvantaged. A banking crisis in 1820 closed many of the smaller banks in Munster and Connacht (Ó Grada 1993:34).

However, prior to the 1845-1850 Famine, an expansion of the middle-class encouraged the rise of the coaching industry and aided the expansion of road networks. There were reduced travel times between major settlements, sometimes by as much as two-thirds. Drivers traveled daily between large settlements, like Cork and Killarney. Additionally, cash economy participants took advantage of the introduction of steam travel, which encouraged trade for butter, eggs, meat, and live cattle in the mid 1820s (Ó Grada 1993:35-36).

During the nineteenth century, landed and elite classes in Britain focused on self-interested and self-help, per hegemonic Victorian ideologies, and minimal government interference regarding business ventures (Machlow 1992:4-6). Throughout the mid to late nineteenth century, the Victorian ethic pushed to minimize governmental support for
impoverished members of the community. The prevailing sentiment was that able-bodied individuals should be able to find gainful employment to survive (Levine-Clark 2000:108). As a result of these attitudes, the British government did support programs that helped build transportation infrastructure and convert the landscape for agriculture in Ireland in attempts to boost the economy. However, these improvement projects mainly benefitted people who the government felt would not become overly reliant on aid, like landlords (Gray 1999:11). As a result, in Ireland and Britain there was increasing economic inequality (Mokyr and Ó Grada 1988: 209-210).

**Reactions to Potato Blight and Hunger**

During the post-medieval period, poor communities lived through several bouts of food insecurity, especially in post-medieval Ireland. William Wilde documented Irish Famines in historical sources from 900 to 1850 (Crawford 1989:1-30). Ó Grada expanded on Wilde’s work and included a conversation about later famines. In the historical records, the researchers looked for descriptions of food scarcity including signs of disease and sickness, reports of famine and distress in certain areas, killing of livestock for food, higher than usual mortality rates, and high food prices (Ó Grada 2014:10-11). Below is Table 2-3 of famines in post-medieval Ireland, including *An Gorta Mór.*
Table 0-3: Post-Medieval famines in Ireland. Derived from Crawford 1989, Ó Grada 2014, and O’Rourke 1875.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600-1603</td>
<td>War-related famine</td>
<td>Moryson's Rebellion of Tyrone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1640s</td>
<td>War-related famines</td>
<td>Bear's Historiae Catholic Iberniae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1651</td>
<td>Famine followed by plague</td>
<td>Hardiman's Galway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1690</td>
<td>Famine and disease</td>
<td>MacFarlane's History of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1725-1728</td>
<td>Famine</td>
<td>Primate Boulter's Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740-1741</td>
<td>Major famine</td>
<td>Journal, Faulkner's Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1756-1757</td>
<td>Partial famine and flu epidemic</td>
<td>Agues were rife'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Corn was difficult to purchase</td>
<td>Commercial Restraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1782-1784</td>
<td>Embargo on food exports</td>
<td>Hibernian Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1801</td>
<td>Potatoes were expensive</td>
<td>Wicklow, Transactions Royal Society of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1816-1818</td>
<td>Mortality between 40,000-60,000 individuals</td>
<td>Barker and Cheyne's Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-1822</td>
<td>Famine in West</td>
<td>Farmer's Journal, MacFarlane's History of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>Potatoes were expensive</td>
<td>Dublin Evening Mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835-1836</td>
<td>Potato crop failure</td>
<td>Irish Farmers magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Potato crop failure</td>
<td>Law Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>Several persons starving</td>
<td>Saunders' News-Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845-1850</td>
<td><em>An Gorta Mór</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>Crop Failures</td>
<td>Irish Farmer's Gazette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879-1880</td>
<td>Reports of death by starvation</td>
<td>Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-1891</td>
<td>Limited food availability in restricted areas</td>
<td>West Cork Eagle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-1895</td>
<td>Limited food availability in restricted areas</td>
<td>Relief Works 1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-1898</td>
<td>Limited food availability in restricted areas</td>
<td>General Balfour letter</td>
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</tbody>
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Ireland was not unique in experiencing occasional famine during these centuries; many populations across Europe experienced similar food shortages. Likewise, the fungus that affected Ireland’s potato crops in the nineteenth century also impacted produce across Europe, including England, Wales, German, and Austria (Yoshida et al. 2013:4). Nevertheless, the 1845-1850 Famine was different than previous famines in three main ways. First, the extent of the crop failure was beyond other experiences. The monoculture approach to subsistence led to overreliance on a tuber that failed spectacularly. Previous and later crop failures and famines did not last more than one season, generally. (Kinealy 2002: 32). Second, the long-term economic, social, and political consequences continued long after the crisis passed (Clarkson 1989:233),
supporting the expansion from a famine to the Famine Process. Third, the disaster occurred in a place associated with one of the richest countries in the nineteenth century (Ó Grada 1993:116).

The English attitude toward Ireland, the prolonged economic restrictions, and the absent government left Ireland vulnerable to social disaster by the middle nineteenth century (Gray 1999:2). The Great Hunger years are officially designated from 1845 to 1850; however, food insecurity and the Famine Process remained an issue throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (Table 2-3).

In 1841, 64 percent of Irish families were employed through agriculture, and most of these families were in Western Ireland (Mokyr and Ó Grada 1982:2). In 1844, Irish farmers were not alarmed with reports from North America that described a blight infecting their potato crops. Belgian farmers were the first Europeans to report the blight in June 1845 (Solar 1989:112). However, Irish farmers anticipated a relatively successful potato crop due to a dry and hot summer in July 1845 (Woodham-Smith 1962:38). The appearance of the blight in late summer 1845 in eastern Ireland did not cause much alarm. While the blight slowly moved west, the failure of the potato crop was not received with much dismay, as there had been poor potato crop seasons throughout the post-medieval period (Table 2-3).

One season of a failed crop did not cause much alarm because Ireland was in relatively good shape to aid people during a temporary food shortage. The British government enacted the Irish Poor Law 1838, which divided the country into 130 administrative units, or unions. A board of guardians was designated to manage each union’s workhouse. Local individuals financed the workhouses through taxes. (Kinealy 1989:158). Further, the government completed the first Ordnance Survey in Ireland in the late 1830s. The surveyors mapped roads, houses, and fields, and provided the government with detailed information about people living in every county in
Ireland (Kinealy 2002:33). Between the workhouse unions and the survey, the government was aware of poverty rates and reliance on potatoes.

Attempts at governmental aid were aimed at preventing death, with the approach that there was a failure in the system, but not that the lack of affordable food was a systemic issue (Woodham-Smith 1962:363). Public expenditure on the crisis totaled about £10 million, which has been criticized considering it was the same amount spent compensating slave-owners in the West Indies in the 1820s and the amount spent on the Crimean War (Ó Grada 2014:20).

**Government response.** Robert Peel was the Prime Minister when the potato blight first impacted Ireland in October 1845. He acknowledged the blight in October 1845. However, he noted the tendency for exaggeration in Irish news. Peel organized a commission to determine the gravity of the issue; the commission confirmed the severity of the situation (Kinealy 2002:33). In November 1845, Peel established a Temporary Relief Commission to establish regional relief committees in the unions. The commissions raised money for relief (which was matched with government aid), gathered information on the available food, noted the state of the blight, provided food and created some public works in each union. Charles Trevelyan, the assistant secretary of the Treasury, issued instructions for the commission in January 1846, and his instructions directed local landlords to alleviate distress. One month later, his government established food depositories around the country, which held corn imported from North America (Daly 1986:70) and local relief committees could purchase food from the depots when local food costs were high (Kinealy 2002: 35; McHugh 1986:157).

Kinealy (2002:35) argues that there were major flaws in the initial governmental famine response that ensured failure. First, the relief committees were financially constrained because their efforts were primarily funded by local collections, and, then the government contributed. In
some poor districts, landlords were unwilling or not present to provide help, and the unions in some of the most impoverished areas suffered from inadequate aid. Second, the British government’s decision to substitute corn for the potato caused issues; the lower socioeconomic classes struggled to process corn, as it required access to a mill, and they could not receive the same nutritional benefits from corn, resulting in a nutritional deficit in the diet of Irish tenant farmers and cottiers. Additionally, Peel’s approach to relief underscored his ultimate goal to end dependence on the potato and move toward free trade in Great Britain. In an unpopular move, he repealed the Corn Laws in 1846, the Tory Party fell and Lord John Russell became the new Prime Minister in Summer of 1846 (Harzallah 2009:86; O’Rourke 1994:120-121).

By August 1846, Russell received word from Daniel O’Connell, a representative for Cork, and Lord Enniskillen informing him that the blight reappeared, and people could not rely on the potato for sustenance (Kinealy 2002:36). Tenant farmers and cottiers were alarmed and worried at a second season of potato crop failures. Russell decided to increase public works and use the Poor Laws and workhouses until they were full. However, rather than import food and stop the export of food, he let the free market continue to work (Kinealy 2002:37). While the increase in public works was good intentioned, hungry people outnumbered the available public works jobs, and they rioted. In Limerick on August 5, 1846 the laborers were informed that their jobs were about to end, and they destroyed the road they had recently constructed (Woodham-Smith 1962:111). Further, there was still the prevailing attitude that government intervention was to be sparse because there was persistent fear throughout the British government that free food would impoverish Ireland and create a permanent pauper class (Leng 2002:82-87). The individual unions were to provide for the residences of their counties.
Originally, the government kept the Poor Law separate from famine relief. However, the Poor Law was the main agency for famine relief in Ireland after 1847 (Kinealy 1989:157). While the Irish Poor Law imitated the English Poor Law of 1834, there were two main differences. First, relief was only available within the confines of the workhouse. Second, there was no right to relief, so if a workhouse was unable to accept patrons due to capacity there was no way for a hungry people to receive governmental aid.

“The Irish workhouse was the most feared and hated institution ever established in Ireland” (O’Connor 1995:13). While Gray (2012:22) debates this—citing the later establishment of asylums and state penitentiaries—scholars concur that the workhouses in Ireland were widely and deeply dreaded (Gray 2012:22, Irish Workhouse Centre 2018; Kinealy 2002). George Wilkinson, the architect of all the Irish workhouses, designed buildings with high small windows, large dormitories where people slept on long, communal wood platforms. Tall walls were constructed to prevent interaction between people within and outside the workhouse (Gray 2012:24; Irish Workhouse Centre 2018). The workhouse board of guardians expected each person in the workhouse to live with their peer group, a policy which separated families. The able-bodied worked in exchange for the government assistance (Irish Workhouse Centre 2018). Together the Victorian ethic of self-help, laissez faire policies, and institutionalized prejudice against the Irish (Henderson 2005:138) served to discourage state investment that would have alleviated extreme poverty and decreased Ireland’s vulnerability to disaster. This becomes important later as food insecurity and the process of the Famine continued throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and institutional change was slow. Tenant farmers, cottiers, and politicians would respond in their own way to the disaster.
Following the second potato crop failure, tenant farmers and cottiers increased their reliance on the workhouses. By mid-October 1846 four of the 130 workhouses had reached capacity. Each workhouse was designed to hold a several hundred people, for example, the Carrickmacross Workhouse had space for five hundred individuals, and other designs held up to 1,000 inmates (Geber 2016:29; Ó Grada 1999:51). At the end of February 1847, workhouses experienced peak admissions. The death rate at workhouses reached 24 per thousand in 1847. In Connacht alone, the death rate in the workhouses reached 43 per thousand in April 1847. Over seven hundred thousand individuals lived in the workhouses by March 1847 (Ó Grada 1999:51-52), and diseases were rampant in the over workhouses and in Fever hospitals in 1847. Paupers applying to enter the workhouses faced death by starvation if they stayed outside the institution or disease like typhus and cholera once they entered (Geber 2016:41).

With the workhouses full, the government reinstated public works programs, which provided cash for work. The aim of the public work schemes was to increase purchasing power in the community, ideally resulting in food where it was needed most (Ó Grada 1999:52). For the most part, only one individual per household was allowed to enter the system and a ceiling was placed on earnings. People earned money on piece-work, which victimized the poor and hungry who exhausted their bodies in the arduous labor (Kinealy 2002: 40; Ó Grada 1999:52) Further, the piece-rate that workers received was not enough to live on, let alone support a family (McGregor 2004).

Mismanagement and corruption at a local level exacerbated issues with relief efforts (Kinealy 1989; Ó Grada 2011). In March 1847, the British government decided to gradually reduce the public labor as a form of relief, as the centralized government was not convinced the local relief committees were effective in their positions. For example, the Relief Commission
relied on landlords and the Irish Board of Works to create opportunities for employment. The opportunities were often temporary positions, and poor people remained poor over the long term. Further, since landlords and wealthy elite were designing the projects, it was common for the small group of people to create project that benefited them, like bog drainage, land fertilization or improved road access on estates. Landlords required less labor following the temporary jobs, leaving people hungry and unemployed.

In a change of attitude, the government focused on soup kitchens, where hungry individuals could receive free food (Harzallah 2009: 87-88). Soup kitchens provided food to over one third of the population during July 1847; however, the quality of the food served is dubious (Donnelly 2002: 90-2). The government imported large amounts of corn in the spring and summer of 1847 (Ó Grada 1999:52), with the caveat that relief agencies were supposed to sell the food. On Achill Island in County Mayo, the commissariat rebuked a government order to end the sale of corn because islanders were dying of starvation (Woodham-Smith 1962:139).

Irish people were not prepared to consume corn as a replacement for the potato, as it required cooking techniques with which the Irish people were unaccustomed. While the government published recipes for processed corn meal, referred to as stirabout, Lady Asenath Nicholson (1851) observed, the poverty-stricken Irish did not have the resources to transform cornmeal into a palatable stirabout because mills were difficult to access and some of the ingredients in the recipes were too expensive for the majority of Irish people. People had to process corn kernels upon arrival in Ireland, and Charles Trevelyan, the British Prime Minister at the time, was hesitant to process the corn for Irish consumption because it would require more government resources (Woodham-Smith 1962:65). As a solution to mill access, the government released a memorandum to relief committees recommending unground corn as a nutritious food
source. The memorandum encouraged people to crush the corn between two large stones or soak it overnight then boil for an hour and a half the next day (Woodham-Smith 1962:135). In reality, the consumption of unground corn gave the consumer sharp pains (Woodham-Smith 1962:135), and people continued to go hungry. Ignoring the results of their efforts, in fall 1847 the government declared the end of the crisis, but as Mokyr (2013:291) said the “British simply abandoned the Irish and let them perish.” However, another failed potato crop indicated the Famine was not over.

The 1847 Poor Law Extension Act provided the right to relief for the old and infirmed, inside or outside the workhouse. Further, The Relief Commissioners could change the size and number of the unions, adding 33 more between 1847 and 1848 (Kinealy 1989:161-162). The government placed the responsibility for providing relief on the Poor Law and urged the relief commissioners to publicly shame elite for not contributing to the fund. The Poor Law system of relief was ineffective; 22 unions along the western coast were in a dire state and the number of deaths from starvation increased at the beginning of 1848 (Kinealy 1989:163). Trevelyan, and the Treasury, expressed their belief that private resources, not government aid, would solve the crisis. There was a cholera outbreak in May 1849 in the poor unions, and the Treasury initially refused aid, until they realized the potential loss of life without governmental support. Reluctantly, Trevelyan offered aid (Kinealy 1989:166). While the west coast continued to suffer with poor crops and insufficient aid, other parts of Ireland began to improve.

In May 1849, the government passed a bill that taxed the wealthier unions and distribute the funds among the poorer unions. In this way the Treasury was not responsible for aid, but local funds were not the primary support for unions. The number of people receiving
governmental relief increased in 1849. However, there were fewer deaths in the workhouses. The government was optimistic about the end of the crisis.

The potato crop of 1849 was a good harvest in most parts of the country, and there was a reduction in the Poor Law relief, even though some counties still experienced failed potato crops. Despite mixed results with the 1849 crop, the Treasury requested repayment of debts from the unions (Kinealy 1989:168-9). The government declared the famine over in 1850 despite the continued agricultural failure in certain areas.

**Private relief efforts.** With inconsistent government aid, private relief efforts from groups and individuals were a major source of aid during the Great Hunger. The Society of Friends, also known as Quakers, was one of the more active groups during *An Gorta Mór*. The Quakers had a tradition of philanthropy, so when the disaster became severe in 1846, the religious organizers created relief efforts on local levels throughout Ireland. In November of 1846, the issue became more severe, and the Quakers in Ireland created the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends because local committees needed more support than they could generate (O’Neill 1950:203). The Quakers obtained resources from fellow Quakers in London and the United States in 1846 and 1847. With nearly £200,000 at their disposal, the central relief committee organized soup kitchens throughout the country and provided sustenance without religious requirements or proselytism, unlike other religious soup kitchens. Some Protestant organizations withheld relief until participants listened to a sermon, sent children to a Protestant school or, in the extreme cases, converted (O’Neill 1950:203; Hatton 1993:5-7).

Relief efforts had difficulty obtaining accurate information in order to provide effective aid. Word of mouth transferred ample amounts of misinformation around Ireland during the 1845-1850 Famine. Relief effort groups wanted to ensure that aid reached those who were
actually in need, and those in the most desperate conditions first. As a result, groups like the Friends sent people from their organization to observe the tragedy. In 1847, James Hack Tuke, along with other travelers, visited the poorest counties, including those in Connemara. After his initial exposure to life in rural Ireland, Tuke devoted his life to bettering the lives of Irish people. On his own, he journeyed to Western Ireland to observe the hardship and provide aid (Hatton 1993:9; Tuke 1848). While Tuke was first exposed to the poverty of Western Ireland in the 1840s, he continued to work well into the 1890s because of Famine Process which included continued food insecurity and response to social upheaval (see Table 2-3) (Moran 1994:7). In the late nineteenth century, Tuke began sponsoring the migration of families. He researched locations around the world where there were ample work and educational opportunities and moved families to those areas, like Manitoba (Moran 1994:7).

Relief groups like the Society of Friends had an extensive network of volunteers around the country, and in 1848 the Friends worked with the Irish government to provide aid. The government had 40,000 pounds of green crop seeds, but they wanted to sell the seeds, an approach that went along with Victorian ideology. The government was unable to find a buyer for the seeds, who would then sell them to the general public. Instead, and with no other option, in 1848, the government gave the Society of Friends Central Relief Committee the seeds, and the committee then distributed the seeds throughout the country (O’Neill 1950:210). The Central Relief Committee also distributed seeds for other crops, to help lessen people’s dependency on the potato. They gave away turnip, parsnip, and carrot seeds (Hatton 1993:7). The government’s programs were largely ineffective due to hegemonic ideologies, but private organizations like Society of Friends’ had more effective approaches at eliminating hunger and providing resources for long-term success (Hatton 1993:6).
Beyond providing food and seeds, the Central Relief Committee looked at previous employment in certain areas and worked to reestablish industries in an effort to ameliorate poverty at its core (Hatton 1993:6). For example, hungry Irish fishers sometimes sold their boats, nets, and other supplies to buy food. As a result, they could no longer fish to provide food, trade on the market, and earn money to pay rent. The Quakers provided small loans to fishers to replace fishing supplies in Donegal, Arklow, Clifden, Achill Sound, Waterford, Limerick, and other coastal villages. The Central Relief Committee helped establish fish curing stations and brought fishers from elsewhere to discuss newer fishing technology (O’Neill 1950:211).

There were other sources of aid as well. The British Relief Association is not as well remembered as the Society of Friends, but they gathered over £470,000 for relief, more than any other organization. The Catholic Pope Pius IX issued an encyclical in 1847 asking for aid from the Catholic community globally, and contributions generated over £10,000 (Kinealy 1997:149). In the same year, the Choctaw Nation of Native Americans donated $174, despite their own recent suffering on the Trail of Tears in 1832 (Kinealy 2012). Queen Victoria donated £2,000 from her personal accounts, which was generous at the time. However, when the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire attempted to donate £10,000 in 1847, agents at the British consulate in Turkey recommended the donation be reduced to £1,000, so as not to outdo the Queen’s generosity (Çelik 2015:17). The Sultan complied, illustrating the manner in which politics and the interests of elites were prioritized over the needs of the majority.

**Evictions, Death, and Migration.** Throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, renters in Ireland struggled to pay landlords. Information about homelessness in Ireland is limited to cases of vagrancy reported in the legal system (Clear 1998:119), and, according to the Vagrancy Act of 1824 and the Poor Relief Extension Act (1847), it was illegal
for people to beg or wander without a clear means of support or housing. Once the potato blight ravished the country, more people were at risk of eviction, and landlords continued to evict people despite the major disaster. Since the landlord or his agent were often absent from the land, the landlords, and their police escorts, often destroyed houses with battering rams after eviction to prevent the occupant’s return after the landlord left the premises (Curtis 2007:207). As a result, families sometimes took refuge in *scalps*, holes dug into earth and covered with sticks and turf. People also lived in *scalpeens*, the ruins of houses destroyed during evictions (Woodham-Smith 1962:71-72). Otherwise they could be taken to prison for violating the vagrancy laws.

Despite aid, over one million people died and another million people migrated from 1845 to 1850. However, the majority of the deaths were not from hunger but from disease, especially those acquired in workhouses during the Great Hunger. More people died from diseases than starvation during *An Gorta Mór* because they were eating inferior foods, had weakened immune systems due to lack of nutrition, and were placed at greater risk of exposure in congested workhouses (Crawford 1989; Geber and Murphy 2012; Geber 2015; Mokyr and Ó Grada 2002:340). Irish diets were nutritionally balanced with the potato, including enough Vitamin C to prevent scurvy. Once people entered workhouses or relied on corn from relief programs, they no longer received enough Vitamin C, exposing them to scurvy and by extension other diseases (Crawford 1989; Geber and Murphy 2012; Geber 2015:121).

Cholera, influenza, typhus, typhoid, and other diseases increase during famines because suffering people move to areas with different virus and bacterial biomes. Additionally, Mokyr and Ó Grada (2002:342) argue that people experiencing hunger let hygiene deteriorate. In their research Mokyr and Ó Grada (2002:351) calculated that from 1846-1850 more often Irish people died from fever, dysentery, consumption, infirmity (old age) than starvation. Some of these
diseases are more likely to impact when individuals they are lacking nutrition. Others like fever are not connected with hunger, but poor Irish people contracted them in workhouses or through interactions at other relief programs (Geber 2015: 116-121; Mokyr and Ó Grada 2002:352).

In order to avoid workhouses and food insecurity in Ireland, many members of the lower socio-economic classes chose to migrate. There were a few types of migration employed in post-medieval Ireland: seasonal, within Great Britain, intra-Ireland, trans-Atlantic, and to Australia. These practices began prior to Famine Process as migration was a common response to poverty and land restrictions, and migrants continued during the Famine Process because of the hardship in Ireland. Seasonal migration, often referred to as harvest migration or tattie hoking, was documented in England as early as 1748 (Johnson 1967:97). Irish migrants were hired by English farmers to help with tasks like gathering and processing hay. By the 1830s, Irish migrants were annual travelers to parts of Great Britain, largely England and Scotland, and the Irish census estimated that 57,000 migrants made the journey (Johnson 1967:97), although Ó Grada (1973:49) argues earlier writers greatly underestimated the number of seasonal migrants. Laborers in Connacht, particularly Mayo, were part of annual migration to Scotland and England during harvest season due to poverty in the west of Ireland (Kerr 1943:372). The British Parliamentary Papers recorded that considerable numbers of people from Connemara traveled to Scotland and England from late Spring through the fall (British Parliamentary Papers 1870:59). Parliamentary papers record that most Achill islanders left their houses as family to earn money in Scotland during the summer and fall (British Parliamentary Papers 1881 Evidence 16754). These archival records group people from Counties Mayo, Galway, and Donegal together, and, collectively, they were known as Achill workers because the island was a hub for recruitment (Holmes 1999:43). Specific to Inishark and Inishbofin, Charles Browne (1893:353) documented
oral history of seasonal migration to England and Scotland in the past, but he did not provide any
details on the practice. Islanders on Inishbofin noted the presence of such migrations in oral
history. Unfortunately, the oral history provides only vague references to the time period.

While some Irish rural farmers temporarily migrated, others permanently moved to parts
of Great Britain. With regular steamboat services between Belfast and Cork to Glasgow,
Greenock, and Liverpool starting in 1816, migration from Ireland to England became easier
(Kerr 1943:370), and 14,000 Irish migrants lived within six riverside parishes in London. By
1850, 1.2 million Irish people had flocked to London looking for work (Swift 2002). Early
nineteenth-century rural farmers practiced intra-Ireland migration because inheritance laws
dictated that family land should be subdivided among married sons. Sons not in line for
inheritance moved to work in industrial jobs in cities like Dublin and Belfast (Guinnane and
Miller 1997; Kelly 2013). Finally, migrants in Ireland often ended up in Australia through forced
migration including transportation and the Earl Grey Scheme. Transportation, the practice of
sending convicts to Australia, was a common punishment by British courts. While the records
are difficult to determine the origin of the convicts, 160,000 male and female convicts were sent
to Australia from Great Britain between 1816 and 1868, including thousands of Irish convicts
(Maxwell-Stewart 2010:1224). From 1846 to 1848, the Earl Grey Scheme, a government
program, sent 4,000 orphan girls from workhouses to Australia to work as maids (Molinari
2018:479).

During the process of An Gorta Mór, suffering people often employed migration as a
response to the disaster. Rural farmers and poor families moved to cities in Ireland seeking work
or aid (Ó Grada and O’Rourke 1997:3). Beyond intra-Ireland movement, some suffering
individuals moved to London (Beaumont et al. 2013). The extremely poor in Ireland were the
ones that needed to migrate, but were unable to afford the journey even though long-distance travel was relatively cheap. However, the poorest and sickest individuals lacked the resources that were necessary to do so (Ó Grada 1993). As a result, counties with higher wealth saw more migration than the poorest counties (Ó Grada and O’Rourke 1997:5). Long distance travel as a response to the 1845-1850 Famine was an effective means of survival and it was often irreversible (Ó Grada and O’Rourke 1997:5), opening up resources for those who were unable or unwilling to migrate. An Gorta Mór directly led to one million people leaving Ireland.

Following the official years of the Great Hunger, lack of adequate food and death by starvation continued. As a response, people lacking appropriate resources to survive continued to migrate. Poor communities from Connacht and Donegal practiced seasonal migration to Scotland and England during harvest times, and it could contribute at least £10 to an annual budget, a considerable amount in the late nineteenth century (Ó Grada 1973:55). Ó Grada (1973:57) estimates that nearly 38,000 migrants went to Britain for seasonal harvests in 1880, but numbers decreased after that, with only 23,000 seasonal migrants in 1890.

**Politics Before and After The Great Hunger**

There were two main groups of participants in Irish politics in the nineteenth century: Catholic clergy and landed elite (Hoppen 1977:62). Clergy played a smaller role in western Ireland than in eastern (Hoppen 1977:66). However, Collins (1999) argues that voters usually voted along sectarian lines, as Protestants had economically prospered following the Act of the Union since Catholics were limited in politics, business, and land ownership. In turn, Catholic elites were able to mobilize the lower class Catholic agrarian population, sometimes even when the political issue was negative for the lower class (Clark and Donnelly 1983: 15). Many political alliances were foraged on the basis of family ties and self-interest (Hoppen 1977:75). The landed
elite worked hard to get their interests a top priority for politicians, and they persuaded any voting tenant to help elect their preferred candidate. Only a minority of landlords withheld their influence on their tenants (Hoppen 1977).

While the government and many scholars demarcate the Great Hunger 1845 to 1850 (Irish Workhouse Centre 2018; Ó Gráda 1995; Ó Gráda and O'Rourke 1997; National Museum of Ireland), poverty, food insecurity, eviction, and migration continued throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. While the government observes the food insecurity as separate events, the Famine Process encompasses a continued inability to access affordable food. The British government continued to build workhouses after 1850 in response to the sustained need to help impoverished, starving people across rural Ireland (Irish Workhouse Centre 2018).

Continued hardship accompanied, and possibly accelerated, political and social change in Ireland. Grassroots organizations, like the Land League, worked to gather influence to support their causes, which took power away from the landlords. The Land League, formed in 1879, was intended to reduce rack-renting practices and enable ownership of land by the occupants (Davitt 1904:37, 247). The Irish Land Acts, a series of legislation that began in 1870, likewise addressed issues of landownership and stability. Tenant farmers were unhappy with the amount of power their landlords yielded, and this was the source of mass evictions during the Famine. Tenants looked for rent stability, incentives to improve their homes, and the ability to own land. The Land Acts provided tenants a way to own land and gave Catholics the ability to obtain larger land holdings, which had previously been restricted (Davitt 1904:xi).

Following the 1845-1850 potato blight, the Irish government enacted a series of policies aimed at continuing ‘improvement’ and alleviating poverty in certain areas of Ireland. The Congested Districts Board (CDB) was created in 1891, and the board implemented programs to
bring work, new roads, and housing for impoverished communities. The CDB worked to alleviate poverty through creating commercial fishing endeavors, upgrading livestock farming, and purchasing land from landlords and selling at favorable rates to tenants. The CDB changed the landscape for rural Ireland, and the impact is visible today through distinct building practices and social memory of the projects (Kuijt et al. 2015:125-126). The government introduced housing requirements that provided more space per person, larger windows, and more hearths. The result was a better living environment with better air quality for lower socioeconomic classes. Islanders living situations changed while the landlord-tenant system changed and it was common to receive remittances from family abroad (Kuijt et al. 2015:128).

Unlike previous food shortages in Ireland, the Great Hunger in the 1840s coincided with political movements for Home Rule. The Young Irelanders, which stemmed from Daniel O’Connell’s home rule movement, engaged in physical altercations with the British army during the Famine in a well-documented event at the Widow McCormick’s house in Ballingarry, County Tipperary (Heritage Ireland 2018). At the same time the political movement for home rule had been growing. In 1916, the Easter Rising, an armed conflict against the British rule occurred. While the rising was unsuccessful militarily, the execution of the leaders of the movement would have a lasting impact on the push for Home Rule. The Irish War for Independence began in 1916 between the Irish Republican Army and the British Army. In December 1921, a treaty was called, and the Irish Free State, consisting of 26 counties, was created (Hopkinson 2004). The six counties that remained loyal to Great Britain comprise the modern nation state of Northern Ireland.
Case Study Background: Inishark and Inishbofin

Inishark and Inishbofin are islands off the west coast of Ireland in the Atlantic Ocean. Inishark is about 3 by 5 miles in area and Inishbofin 5 by 7 miles. Inishbofin has a large natural harbor, making it a safe location for boat launching and landing. The islands were first inhabited during the Neolithic, however, there is little archaeological evidence of Ireland’s iconic Neolithic architecture and early farming on the islands. Quinn et al. (2019) identified Bronze Age enclosures, circle huts, and features on the island landscape. Early medieval ecclesiastical communities were the first large scale settlements on the islands. The monastery on Inishark was associated with St. Leo, while Colman and his followers were associated with the medieval Inishbofin settlement (Kuijt et al. 2010). While the islands may be on the edge of Ireland and Europe, they have not been forgotten or ignored throughout time.

Table 0-4: Landowners of Inishark and Inishbofin. Reconstructed with material from Concannon 1993:63.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landowner</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O’Flaherty Clan</td>
<td>12th century</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Malley Clan</td>
<td>1380</td>
<td>Captured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clanrickards</td>
<td>1641</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Malley Clan</td>
<td>1650s</td>
<td>Repossession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cromwellians</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>Captured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobites</td>
<td>1690s</td>
<td>Captured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clanrickards</td>
<td>1690s</td>
<td>James II bestowed land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquess of Sligo</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>Acquired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilberforce Family</td>
<td>1850s</td>
<td>Purchased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allies Family</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Acquired as debt payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Free State Land Commission</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Acquired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Throughout the post-medieval period, absent elite and wealthy clans and families owned Inishbofin and Inishark. Grace O’Malley, the infamous pirate queen in Ireland, is said to have had a castle on Inishbofin, which lies under the Cromwellian fort, which was built in the 1650s.
The British held priests captive on Inishbofin under the Penal Laws, British laws which effectively made the practice of Catholicism illegal in Ireland. The Marquess of Sligo (Table 2-4) owned the islands during the Great Hunger, and, as explored in Chapter 6, his wife worked to provide resources to the islanders. Cyril Allies is the only landlord who lived on either of the islands, and he and his wife are buried on Inishbofin (Concannon 1993:64).

While Inishbofin and Inishark are located on the physical periphery of Ireland and Britain, islanders were integrated into the world economy in a number of ways. However, the islanders were unique because they living on islands impacted their responses to disaster.
During the Famine Process the population fluctuated. Similar to mainland tenant farming communities, the population of the islands decreased by thirty percent between 1845-1850.

Between the years of 1851 and 1871, population increased by 200 people up to 1262 islanders.
However, in 1871, with continued hardship, islanders migrated more which accounted for a 20 percent population decrease (Browne 1893:352). Throughout the post-medieval, families combined fishing and farming, shared boats with families or neighbors. If they could afford it, families kept a few pigs, cows, sheep, or fowl (Browne 1893:352).

Before, during, and after the 1845-1850 Famine, islanders were well connected to the larger political economy through fishing (Figure 2-1). During the post-medieval the waters around Inishbofin were known as a rich fishing spot. A Dutch company ran a fishing center in the early seventeenth century off the coast of Inishbofin. In the early nineteenth century, Inishbofin was home to a prime fishing industry, and many islanders participated in the kelp burning industry to produce sodium carbonate, which had many applications including glass making, soap production, and agriculture (Concannon 1993: 22; Forsythe 2006:219). The Commissioner of Irish Fisheries Reports (1823, 1824, 1837) repeatedly commented on the great fishing in the waters around Inishbofin and Inishark. Fishermen up and down the western coast of Ireland traveled to the islands to work for the international fishing companies. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the islanders sometimes struggled to participate in the cash fishing economy as it was competitive. They used rowboats, which were not as suited to fishing as other water vessels, and, in 1836, someone stole 15 fishing nets from Inishbofin, and the offender was not caught (Irish Fisheries Report 1837). In 1837, the Fisheries Report noted the presence of an active fish curing station on Inishbofin, but sometimes the islanders lost potential profits because there was not enough salt to cure the fish, and Westport, the closest market, was not close enough to fulfill the sometimes immediate need for salt. (Concannon 1993:22).

During the Great Hunger, there was continuity and change in the islanders’ participation in the political economy and waxing and waning moments of prosperity and struggle. During the
second half of the nineteenth century, islanders decreased their involvement in the kelp burning industry and increased participation in fish curing, as it paid better. They harvested cod and ling for curing and oil extraction. Up until the 1870s, islanders caught basking sharks, because of the economic profits, but they ended this practice in because of the danger. Fishermen also focused their efforts on crabs and lobsters, which were exported to the English market. While they participated in mainstream economy, they also struggled. Unable to afford food, many islanders had to sell their fishing equipment during the Famine Process (Poor Law Commission 1962).

While islanders struggled, relief groups and improvement schemes worked to better the situation on the islands. In the 1860s, the currach was introduced to the island, as better choice for fishing over the rowboat. In the mid 1870s, islanders secured loans to purchase new fishing equipment (Horne 1873:53). They continued fish curing, but through different companies than pre-Famine days. Oral history reports that first a Scottish man, and later a Norwegian man, ran fishing curing businesses on the islands in the 1890s, in collaboration with the Congested Districts Board (Concannon 1993:24).

On a local scale, islanders traveled to Westport for goods they could not purchase on island. Three or four islanders ran shops out of their homes, and when one family decided to close their shop, another family would open a shop in the same village (Browne 1893). In addition to selling fish, islanders sold eggs, butter and cheese in Westport and then purchase food they were unable to produce like tobacco, sugar, tea, and flour (Browne 1893:353). These livestock by-products earned contributed to the islanders’ involvement in the cash economy.

Women participated in the fishing economy and the textile industry. Women were often the ones who cured the fish and extracted fish oil from the livers. After spinning wool from the island sheep, women would process the textiles. Women could earn money quilting or knitting
for the international market, and this would bring in about 40 or 50 pounds (Browne 1893:353; Tommy Burke personal communication 2017; Concannon 1993: 29).

The islanders experienced similar pre-Famine trends of occasional famines throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. However, their responses to the food insecurity varied because of available sea resources. Agriculturally, they farmed small subsistence plots based on land they rented. While they relied heavily on potatoes, islanders’ diet was more varied than tenant farmers on the mainland because they could access seafood. Islanders caught and consumed sea bream, glassan, mackerel, turbot, and plaice, while they reserved other seafood for the international market. They enhanced their soil by using kelp as manure.

When Cyril Allies became landlord of the islands in the 1870s, he reorganized the farms, but there was still a lack of food and livestock died during the mid 1870s. Ethnographer Charles Browne (1893) observed that, like other tenant farmers and cottiers during post-medieval, the islanders heavily relied on potatoes and homemade bread. In addition to the tuber and unlike many mainland tenant farmers, islanders consumed a large variety of salted fish, which was consumed as a staple food group. Islanders rarely consumed fowl, beef, or sheep, except on special holidays like Christmas and Easter (Browne 1893:353), as the by-products were an importance source of income and nutrition for the islanders. In the years that followed the famine, the islanders incorporated crops like barley, oats, rye and some turnips into their subsistence farms. While men fished, women worked the subsistence crops, gathered seaweed for manure, processed grain, and spun wool for clothing.

Like the political economy and agricultural situation, socially, islanders were both similar and dissimilar to mainland tenant-famers. Prior to the Great Hunger, islanders experienced food insecurity and resorted to foods not usually consumed like limpets, certain parts of the fish, and
seaweed for sustenance in the 1830s according to Browne (1893:348) and oral history. They struggled with numerous bouts of cholera in the 1830s and 1840s, and the priest reported people dying on the road during the cholera outbreaks (Concannon 1993:23). When the 1845-1850 potato blight impacted the islands, the islanders struggled to process the corn provided, like mainlanders. However, their island status brought some added hardship. On more than one occasion, the seas were too rough, and the boatmen were unable to get governmental food to the island before it rotted (Hildebrand 1847; General Relief Committee 1849:4). In both 1852 and 1855, Protestant groups went out to the islands and attempted to convert islanders from Catholicism in exchange for food (Concannon 1993:23; Hildebrand 1855), which mainland communities also experienced. As the Famine Process continued, the islanders experienced poverty and starvation continued throughout the 1860s and the 1870s. In addition, islanders contended with high taxes (relative to their income) and a lack of medical aid (Poor Law Commission 1862:19-20). The London Illustrated News depicted distress in the west in the early 1880s. In one illustration, islanders are collecting seaweed and limpets for food (Figure 2-2).

![Figure 2-2: Drawing from Illustrated London News on April 3, 1886. It depicts people on Inishbofin collecting what islanders call “famine food”, limpets and seaweed during a food shortage. A copy hangs in one of the pubs on Inishbofin. Permission to use image reference number 237628. © Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans.](image-url)
In another, they are welcoming the relief assistance. Throughout the Famine Process, some groups continued their relief efforts. The Society of Friends continued to provide aid to those in need well beyond 1850. In the 1880s, James Tuke, paid for entire families to emigrate from Inishbofin to North America (Moran 1994:7). By the time Browne (1893) completed his ethnographic research on Inishark and Inishbofin, the islanders were in a much better situation than previous decades.

After the 1845-1850 potato blight and during the Famine Process, many island and mainland families were unable to pay rent. Concurrently, many landlords were struggling financially and were responsible for providing money to their poor relief unions to support their tenants. As a result, on the mainland landlords were looking to increase profits from their holdings, and many evicted their tenants because of unpaid rent throughout the 1850s through 1880s. Often, police and the courts helped the landlord or agent evict the tenants and destroy the house, making it unlivable. (Castle Kelly Papers 1853:265). In one of the most extreme and notorious examples of eviction, Mahon, the landlord at Strokestown in County Roscommon, evicted some of his tenants and paid for their passage to North America. Most of them died on the journey, and the tenants that remained were so angered at the landlords forced evacuation and migration that they protested and killed Mahon when he tried to do the same to them (National Famine Museum 2017). Landlords evicted tenants on the mainland and islands, and the Illustrated London News documented evictions on Clare Island, County Mayo (Byrne 1886). While islanders do not remember Hildebrand and Lord Sligo as a kind or generous landlord and agent (Tommy Burke personal communication 2016), they did not evict the islanders for nonpayment of rent, and neither did Cyril Allies.
The Land Acts, which were a series of acts beginning in 1870 through 1909, changed the islanders' relationship with the land, making it more difficult for a landlord to evict them and islanders received compensation for making improvements to their rented houses or land. The Irish Free State Land Commission purchased the land from Cyril Allies in 1907. With different programs like the Congested Districts Board (founded in 1891), islanders had the opportunity to purchase land, construct in new houses, move to different parts of the island, and work larger plots of land. These responses to the Famine Process were implemented at a national level and had lasting impacts on the islanders' lives. The islanders were both intricately connected to the broader social, political, and economic system in Ireland, but they also were unique because of their island position and ability to access the sea and sea resources. As a result, the islander response to social upheaval was unique.

In the next chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework I use for this dissertation. While I contextualized Ireland and the islands in this chapter, I begin Chapter 3 with a discussion of the study and social memory of the famine. Then, I explore definitions of disaster and famine, followed by a discussion of taskscapes in response to disaster. I end the chapter with a discussion of heritage theory and how it applies to this work.
CHAPTER THREE:
SITUATING FAMINES AS DISASTERS AND IT’S IMPACTS ON HERITAGE TASKSCAPES

In this chapter, I ground my research in the literature on the 1845-1850 Famine and the Famine Process as well disaster more generally, and agency, taskscapes, and heritage. Scholars have studied how disasters impact contemporary communities and have explored the strategies and institutions that may contribute to regrouping of the individuals, households, and societies (Glickman et al. 1992; Oliver-Smith 1996; Tobin and Montz 1997). To an extent, scholars have also considered how disasters may be inculcated into social memory (Sheets and Grayson 1979; Torrence and Grattan 2002). Specific to Ireland, archaeologists have explored post-medieval Ireland through the 1845-1850 Famine, national policy aimed to alleviate poverty, and changes to the landscape (Donnelly 1995; Kuijt et al. 2015; Orser 2005). However, few studies exhibit the time depth that is necessary to fully understand community response and resilience to disaster over the long term, or how the record of disaster can be understood as long-term heritage. Further, I bring in the concept of the taskscape to understand how the community used their agency to react to the Famine Process.

Contextualizing the Study and Social Memory of the Famine

First, I contextualize the academic body of literature that has engaged with the 1845-1850 famine in Ireland. Woodham-Smith (1962) wrote a groundbreaking work on the Great Hunger in which she, as a wealthy British historian, used strong language to implicate the colonial government for its actions and questioned the inevitability of the disaster, and this nationalist
approach was the prevailing attitude from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Scholars like Kinealy (2004) and Davis (1997) praise her book, while acknowledging its faults. Davis (1997:17) goes so far as to call it “best narrative history of the Famine.” Woodham-Smith’s book was one of the few non-fiction academic books to engage with the Famine since those of O’Rourke (1875) and O’Brien (1896), monographs discussed later in this dissertation.

The sesquicentennial anniversary of the Great Hunger was a major turning point for commemoration and research on the disaster. Kinealy (1997:1) noted a “historiographical silence from the 1930s to the 1970s” and said, “more has been written to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine than was written in the whole period since 1850.” Following in the footsteps of Woodham-Smith, academic researchers focused famine topics like responsibility, culpability, and blame (Daly 1997:591). Scholars, largely historians and economists, have and are exploring causes and consequences of the Famine (Daly 1997; Kinealy 1994), ineffective and misguide relief efforts (Kinealy 1994; Daly 1997; Gray 1995), social policy in Ireland during the famine (Gray 1999; Foster 1988, Donnelly 1995; Donnelly 1996), the novelty of the event given Ireland union with Great Britain and comparison to contemporary Famines (Kinealy 1994), the economic policies during the Famine (Mokyr 1985; Ó Grada 1994; Ó Grada 1999; O’Rourke 1991), and migration (Crawford 1997; Ó Grada 1975; Guinnane and Miller 1997; Kenny 2003; O’Sullivan 1992a; 1992b; 1995). There is a large and growing body of literature on the global legacy of the Irish Famine. A number of researchers have explored experience of Irish migrants in the United States, Canada, England, and Australia (Brighton 2009; Corporaal and King 2014; Kenny 2003). For the most part, scholars are ignoring anti-Catholic and racist causes for the Great Hunger, because it is not really mentioned in many
official documents of the 1845-1850 Famine. Although, Brantlinger (2004:199) argues that religious and racial ideologies are found throughout newspaper archives and personal journals.

However, some scholars are taking a revisionist approach, like Daly (1986) and Foster (1988). These authors exculpate Trevylan and the British government, arguing that they cannot be blamed given the laissez faire economic approach and Victorian ideologies at the time. Further, they argue that the 1845-1850 Famine was not a watershed moment for Ireland. The revisionist approach is short sighted because it fails to contextualize the disaster within the social, political, and economic changes following the potato blight.

Economists and historians have been the major contributors in the field (Ó Grada 1998:232), and, due to the limited nature of the archival data, and the low literacy rate of nineteenth-century tenant farmers, the research has been focused on top-down understandings of the Famine.

Other scholars have engaged with the 1845-1850 disaster through the literature, song, and folklore of the Famine. Eagleton (1992, 1995) takes a literary approach to the subject by looking at the connections between literature and the Irish Famine. He observes that in the first scenes of Wuthering Heights, Brontë describes the young Heathcliff as “‘dirty, ragged, black-haired child’ who speaks a kind of ‘gibberish’” (Eagleton 1992: 108 referencing Brontë 1858:30) and Eagleton argues that this child was probably Irish, given the sociopolitical climate at the time of Brontë’s writing. In Writing the Irish Famine, Morash (1995) discusses difficulties identifying the Great Hunger in literature because the tragedy is hard to pinpoint in fictional narratives about the nineteenth century. This is similar to the difficulties in doing the archaeology of the Famine, and one of the most important questions is, “So, when was the Famine?” (Morash 1995:1). While addressing this question and others, he brings together the interrelated events of disease,
migration, starvation, and death into a combined perspective, although he does not go as far as I do to call it a process rather than an event. Corporaal (2009) has also taken the literary route, where she studies how *An Gorta Mór* has been incorporated into Victorian literature, but she has incorporated the global legacy of the Irish into her work by exploring Irish immigrant experience as portrayed in fiction. These scholars have noted both subtle and obvious ways the Famine was incorporated into nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature.

Scholars have engaged with the social memory of the famine through folklore and visual arts. Cathal Póirtéir, who was well known in Ireland for his career as a documentary film maker, engaged with the folklore of the Famine and went on to author and edit books on the Famine, including one that focused on the Famine Questionnaire housed in the National Folklore Archive (1995a; 1995b). The folklore of the Famine kept the memory of the Famine alive, even if the memory was skewed, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Another form of memory of the 1845-1850 Famine is through monuments; the monuments in Ireland have three main foci: to commemorate the dead, survival, and present day and future Famines. Mark-Fitzgerald (2013) examines the meaning behind certain Famine monuments, including New York, Philadelphia, Sydney, and in Ireland. Her conversation is limited to a few main monuments in Dublin, and she ignores the dozens of local monuments around Ireland despite her argument that the 1845-1850 Famine was a local experience (Mark-Fitzgerald 2013: 96-150). Kelly (2018) wrote about visual culture and the commemoration of the Irish Famine, with a large focus on art from disaster through the present day, and like Mark-Fitzgerald, monuments around Ireland.

Kelleher (2017) looked at the commemoration of the Famine through monuments in North America and Ireland. In North America, 1845-1850 Famine monuments in Canada and the
United States were established significantly earlier than ones in Ireland, and they often explore ideas of a new hope following suffering. For example, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, and Irish descendant group, from Quebec visited Grosse Île and created a monument there in honor of the disaster to commemorate the 50th anniversary. The monument in Boston has three starving people in conjunction with people looking forward to a new life. The monuments in North America, like the famine memorials in financial districts New York City and Boston, are in highly visible locations and were designed to remember past suffering, but recognize the success of Irish immigrants in North America. Most of the commemorative sites in Ireland are post-1995, and some are in hidden locations, as I will discuss in Chapter 6.

**Explaining the Silence**

From the 1850s until the 1990s the Great Hunger was largely invisible on a public stage in Ireland. Following the 1845-1850 Famine, the British government was prepared to quickly move past the death and migration of millions of its citizens. As a result, there were very few studies on the catastrophe. National commemoration and monumentality was almost nonexistent, but the disaster remained ingrained in the consciousness of the people (Kinealy 1994:1). As Egan said in the quoted poem in the introduction, “it was only a field away” because the landscape held the memory of the 1845-1850 Famine through the remnants of the disaster, the lazy beds (a ridge and furrow agricultural practice), workhouse ruins, and abandoned houses and villages. Despite such widespread acknowledgement of the event, there was no real engagement with the topic until relatively recently.

Scholars have posited some theories about the lack of scholarly work on the 1845-1850 disaster. Kinealy (1997:1) argues that scholars “imposed self-censorship” because of ideological struggles occurring in Ireland during the twentieth century. Donnelly (2001:17) echoes Kinealy’s
sentiments, saying Edwards and Williams (1957) “appear to have been quite anxious to avoid
reigniting old controversies or giving any countenance to the traditional nationalist-populist view
of the Famine.” Toibin (1999) posits not wanting to contribute to the long-standing Irish
survivor’s guilt as the historian’s rationale for ignoring the Famine. Bradshaw (1989:340) agrees
more with Toibin, claiming that the trauma of the disaster resulted in baggage that scholars were
unable to ignore, and therefore the unable to write an unbiased history of the topic (although I
argue it is impossible to ever write without bias).

Whatever the reasons for the relative silence, researchers and the media have engaged
with the topic of long-lasting impact on Irish psyche and mental well being (Ó Grada 1998:226).
Kinealy (1997:151) referenced the “transgenerational trauma” and the long impact on population
and demographics in Ireland, and for example, the population decline only reverse in 1960.
Writers have alluded to the multi-generational trauma An Gorta Mór left on Irish people. In
Angela’s Ashes, Frank McCourt (1999), an American of Irish ancestry mentions a demon
traumatizing Irish people over food. Thomas Kenelly (2000), an Australian with roots in Ireland
called his book about Irish migrants The Great Shame. During my time spent in Ireland, I heard
allusions to the shame, embarrassment, and communal post-traumatic stress in colloquial
conversations about the Great Hunger. Going beyond the folklore of lasting trauma, Oonagh
Walsh (2016) researched the epigenetics caused by the Famine, with a focus on the high levels of
mental health issues and cardiovascular disease in Ireland. In the article, she says the impact of
the Famine on people whose ancestors suffered during the Famine lasted 150 years, and that the
project needs to be expanded to thoroughly grasping the long-lasting impacts of trauma.

The end of the twentieth century was a turning point for engagement with the difficult
heritage of the Great Hunger. To a large extent, the 150th anniversary in 1995 was a period of
engagement with the Famine from multiple disciplines including folklore, geography, history, economy, nutrition, and social activism. The issue with these scholarly works, is that they neglect to engage and educate the masses, so misconceptions about the Famine were perpetuated in the way people remembered, learned about, and thought of the Famine, which explains the general lack of the Famine in Irish heritage. However, as I will discuss in Chapter 6, the contemporary heritage of the Famine leaving the colonial legacy of embarrassment and shame behind and embracing a renewed understanding of the An Gorta Mór.

**Disasters: Definitions and Foci**

Disasters are powerful events or processes that are destructive. They stem from natural, technological, and human-created environments. Using Oliver-Smith’s (1996:305) inclusive definition, I use the word disaster to mean a:

> Process/event involving a combination of potentially destructive agent(s) from the natural and/or technological environment and a population in a socially and technologically produced condition of environmental vulnerability. The combination of these elements produced damage or loss to the major social organizational elements and physical facilities of a community to the degree that the essential functions of the society are interrupted or destroyed, which results in individual and group stress and social disorganization of varying severity. Oliver-Smith 1996:305

An important aspect to disasters is the inability of a society to adapt to “features of its natural and socially constructed environments in a sustainable fashion” (Oliver-Smith 1996:303). While scholars like Oliver-Smith (1996:303) use the term “failure” to discuss disaster, I find that the term implicates the community who suffered the most during the disaster, rather than hegemonic structure that created the pre-disaster social environment and landscape. Further, disasters are often conceived as short-term, natural catastrophes, but they are always both social and natural and often impact communities for years or even decades. Key concepts for disaster research are
construction of hazards or pre-existing conditions, temporality, and vulnerability (Faas 2016). Vulnerability is the inability to resist a risk or hazard due to unequal access to resources, and in colonial and post-colonial contexts, it is often constructed from economic, social and political factors (Faas 2016: 14; Wisner et al. 2004). Scholars can examine a number of disaster factors which include pre-existing condition, vulnerability, risk, change, disaster management, and community responses. Disasters can marginalize certain social groups through various factors (Hoffman 2005:19). However, I am conscious of how some disaster research, especially a vulnerability-focused approach can frame those most impacted by disaster as passive or powerless (Hewitt 1997). In fact, disaster researchers finds “human agency contesting social structures and revealing important aspects of societies, cultures, political economies, and human-environment relations” (Faas and Barrios 2015:290), as communities can be aware of the policies and actions which create risks and hazards that cause or exacerbate disasters.

**Pre-existing Conditions and Vulnerability**

Fagan (1999) noted how certain human behaviors created a system where there was an unsustainable practice putting the community at great risk, which is why I began this dissertation with an exploration of the context in which Ireland suffered. Understanding pre-disaster systems are key to understanding how and why people experience disasters in the manner in which they do. Pre-disaster systems are culturally and environmentally constructed systems which create communities vulnerable to disaster (Oliver-Smith 1996:303). These systems can result in the overreliance on certain goods, like oil (Omodundro 1982), pesticides (Loughlin and Brady 1978), or a specific food, like potatoes, and overreliance creates vulnerability. Prior to disasters, communities and the social, political, and economic systems within which they operate are rife with disparity, and researchers can identify patterns of inequality in pre-disaster systems that are
sanctioned by moral and religious ideologies (Oliver-Smith 1996:307; Torry 1986), like Victorian ideologies and laissez-faire economics in nineteenth-century Ireland.

Anthropologists examine a variety of aspects to vulnerability, which exacerbates catastrophes, including physical location, employment, overreliance on resources, religion, ethnicity, and other factors that contribute to group identity (Bankoff 2003; Haque and Zaman 1993; Henry 2005:2; Petryna 2013; Torry 1979; Zaman 1989). These identifying elements are often the reasons communities are disenfranchised, and researchers have demonstrated that socially vulnerable people suffer during calamities to a greater degree than other groups in society (Adger et al. 2005; Dawdy 2006; Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 2002; Myers et al. 2008:273). As was the case with pre-disaster Ireland, some community members live in conditions like sub-standard housing or land conditions that increase the severity of future disaster (Henry 2005:3). Anthropologists, like Farmer (1999, 2004), argue that society structures create a situation within which marginalized communities are at risk of epidemic and the structures can be blamed for the disaster, like overreliance on potatoes, the tenant farmer and cottier systems and workhouses in Ireland.

Physical or geographic location increases vulnerability as well. Scholars look at the disenfranchised classes that may live or work in risky areas and aim to explain the settlement patterns. Scholars like Zaman (1989) argued that colonial governments and systems restricted the living locations of marginalized communities to locations that are more liable to disasters, like along rivers that are likely to flood, or near earthquake prone coasts that caused devastating landslides. Socially and territorially disenfranchised groups are made more vulnerable through inability to adequately access basic resources like food, land, and shelter (Maskrey 1989), which are created by colonial contexts, or modern neo-liberal economies. The colonial institutions often
created risk environments or caused communities to be unable to respond in their preferred, pre-colonial manner due to colonial restrictions (Fagan 1999; Turton 1997).

In Ireland, colonial institutions and their economic goals created pre-disaster systems. Britain had two main objectives during colonialism. First, they wanted to open up foreign markets for British products. Second, British colonial governments wanted to provide British businesses access to cheap labor, land, and raw materials. By expanding the market for British products the British economy would become stronger and the crown would reap the benefits (Frankema 2010:434). The government prioritized colonial interests and enterprises over pre-colonial land claims or native concerns (Banerjee 2000:3), and resistance to colonial rule or land-ownership laws resulted in further governmental land acquisition and restrictions on native people (McCavery 2019:122). In many British colonies, like Ireland, Sierra Leone, Malaysia, and Zambia, the rural population was organized in relatively small communities based on kinship. However, the colonial government worked to “alienate, sell, and redistribute indigenous land resources” (Frankema 2010:434) among loyal citizens. The British developed plantations for the export of cash crops to the world makers, which impacted land access in the colonies and resulted in poor farmers living on small plots of marginalized land. Landed elite received plots of land that promoted cash crops while lower socioeconomic people were pushed to less desirable land (Ranganathan 2015:1301). Additionally, the British redistributed land in order to control or defend the colonies against internal or external threats. As a result, native people in British colonies were coerced into producing the cash crops, rather than subsistence crops, and living on poor quality land while loyal British citizens obtained prime land to better their economic situation (Frankenma 2010; Ranganathan 2015).
**Island vulnerability.** Island communities, which may have chosen their living location prior to any colonial presence, are often viewed as especially vulnerable during disasters due to their relative isolation (Gaillard 2007; Kelman et al. 2011; Kelman and Khan 2013:1131; Mercer et al. 2009). Living on islands, the Inishbofin and Inishark islanders were isolated from the aid centers, but they were not restricted from harvesting food off the coast. With access to sea resources, islanders were less vulnerable during the Famine. Ultimately, their island location may have had a significant influence in their survival relative to mainlanders. Ireland’s status as an island nation may have caused greater vulnerability, in addition to the other factors that created millions of vulnerable people across Ireland. For example, the population of Ireland included disenfranchised Catholic farmers who were in a lower socio-economic class due to legal restrictions placed on them by the English Protestant colonial government in pre-disaster times.

**Disaster Response**

Anthropologists have robustly studied disaster response because such occurrences change institutions, structures, and organizations with communities, and they are part of the human experience cross-culturally. This study, like others (Guillette 1993; Tobin and Whiteford 2001), examines how individuals and groups respond to disaster. Researchers have demonstrated that different communities employ a variety of coping mechanisms given risk and skill prior to and during disaster (Anderson 1994; Nordstrom 1998). Sociopolitical and historical structural factors influence social responses to disaster (Zaman 1989; 1996). Two coping mechanisms are migration and social, economic, and political change. Migration includes short- and long-term movements, but it also extends to relocation within and beyond the community’s geographic location during the disaster.
Movement, relocation, and emigration at both an individual and household level may be a means of adaptation (Loebach 2016:187). These movements can be short- or long-term, and may cover long disasters or be restricted to movements within a community (Banerjee et al. 2011; Gray et al. 2014; Loebach 2016: 188; Yelvington 1996). Community members form attachments to places, and leaving a place can be traumatic because it changes a factor that may have been instrumental in individual and social identity (Oliver-Smith 1982:133). Migration over short distances may be preferred in order to support family and friends or to retain close ties with the land and their community (Zaman 1989:200). Migration, as a response, creates a hardship for community members because place is an important factor to the construction of community, and changes to a community’s physical place impact construction of community identity. Some community members fear loss of identity if they move too far (Zaman 1989:200); as a result, some community members stay and others migrate. In Ireland, communities responded to the Famine by migrating, which had been a response to food insecurity prior to the disaster. Inishbofin and Inishark witnessed a 20 percent decrease in population due to migration as the Famine continued in the 1870s (Browne 1893:352).

Archaeologists have to the power to use the material record for understanding the long-term depth of human response to social upheaval. Scholars have employed flora, fauna, and material remains to understand how population density, wealth distribution, and political complexity have impacted human response and social adaptation over time (Bawden and Reycraft 2001; McGuire et al. 2000). Some researchers are examining the lasting impact catastrophes have on communities including social change prompted by treatment prior to and/or during disasters. Button (1992), Johnson (1994), and Laughlin (1996) observed grassroots and disenfranchised groups calling for accountability, justice, and socioeconomic change following
disaster. In case studies from around the world, marginalized communities seized power with relation to aid and assistance, which then threatened the existing hegemony (Robinson et al. 1986). Disasters may result in the mobilization of communities to change their ideology and act due to the inequalities (Button 1992). Rebuilding in response to disaster can create areas for change and reorganization of power within a community (Oliver-Smith 1977a, 1977b, 1979a, 1979b). However, the opposite can happen where existing hegemonic powers are reified and the vulnerable communities remain at risk (Chairetakis 1991; Davis 1986; Robinson et al. 1986). In the years during the Great Hunger in Ireland, political organizers engaged in armed conflict which culminated in the Irish Free State in 1922. In my research I noted that people involved in the heritage of the disaster also created groups asking for accountability, justice, and activism, something not included in previous studies.

Following disasters, island communities have responded in various ways given their access to resources and connections to other communities. In Manhiki, an island in the Pacific, the community prepared for the disaster, a cyclone, prior to the actual event. They helped each other secure belongings and structures. When the cyclone passed, they began rebuilding before the arrival of outside aid. While they lost subsistence crops following a cyclone, the islanders harvested abundant fish and rainwater for survival (Taylor 2003:182). Island communities in Fiji, the Cayman Islands, and Polynesia responded to disaster through the reevaluation of disaster response (Adger et al. 2005:1038; Taylor 2003). Other studies found that island communities, particularly those facing increasing disasters related to climate change, adapted preventative measures and migrated to avoid disaster in general (Lacher 2015; Rasmussen et al. 2013). Oral history passed down on an island in Indonesia provided the community with appropriate immediate responses to a natural disaster (Kelman et al. 2008:109). However, many of the case
studies on island communities reacting to disasters were short-lived events with long term consequences, like tsunamis, hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes, and volcanoes (Guillard and Patton 1999; Kelman 1999; Lacher 2015; Paul and Rahman 2006; Rasmussen et al. 2013; Taylor 2003), which are obviously different than prolonged food insecurity even of the consequences likewise vary with inequality.

**Elaborating on the Meaning of Famine**

Scholars approach famine in different ways, which impacts the identification of famine in historical or contemporary cases. In Malthusian terms, a famine is excess population over the means of subsistence. Population growth has outpaced food production and mass starvation is unavoidable until a balance occurs between population and food production (Malthus 1807). The disaster approach to defining famine would be an environmental factor, such as drought, that causes a failure in food production. Economists may look at poverty and the price of food, arguing that extreme prices signal famine. Finally, epidemiologists examine the prevalence of disease that are viewed as the byproducts of malnutrition (Ó Grada 2014; de Waal 2000:4).

Sen (1981) argues against the use of famine in respect to a food shortage because, as was the case in Ireland, food may be available to the area, but there may not be access to food for certain individuals or households. Sen (1981:1) says “starvation is the characteristic of some people not having enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there not being not enough food to eat.” Sen’s argument moved the conversation concerning famine to a contextualization of the circumstances surrounding food insecurity and accessibility. Additionally, researchers moved away from Malthusian population examinations to individual and household levels (Edkins 2002:13). Edkins argues that famines are often viewed as failures, and governments respond to identify lack of food but not response to inequality in the social or economic system. Experts
creating famine solutions are viewed as apolitical agents, removing any fault of an economic or social system. Those suffering from hunger are viewed as voiceless, apolitical victims, even though those suffering have agency and resist the structures or systems that created inequality (Faas and Barrios 2015:290).

Politics are inextricably intertwined with famines. Edkins’ (2000:59) definition of famine is the “denial of access to food by force employed by those who possess food.” This moves famines away from theories of natural disasters and incorporates the social aspect of disasters, a perspective especially appropriate in cases like An Gorta Mór where food shortages were tied to colonial policies and practices. Rangasami (1985) argues that scholars of famines need to observe responses by victims and the rest of the community during times of hunger because during famine some members of society benefit from situation while others suffer (Rangasami 1985: 1748). As a result, every famine study needs to include an examination of victims’ responses to the disaster and the action, or lack thereof, by non-sufferers.

Defining an a famine is a power struggle in and between societies because it ignores the construction of vulnerability, hazards and risks created by the colonial and hegemonic powers (Alex de Waal 1989:6). In reality, famine should be defined as a process (Ati 1988; Corbett 1988; de Waal 1989; Edkins 2002:14; Rangasami 1985:1748). Inability to access food does not occur immediately, rather there are multiple small steps that lead to food insecurity for part of a community which stems from action or inaction by those in power (Edkins 2002:15). Those in power benefited from a series of actions that resulted in the lower socioeconomic classes extreme poverty and inability to purchase food (Duffield 1998; Edkins 2002:15; Keen 1994). Rangasami (1985: 1749) identifies distinct periods of the famine process: dearth (when things required for life are expensive), famishment (a process of hunger), and morbidity (social distress associated
with and sickness among the masses). With this approach, people do not have to die following hunger for a famine to be defined as a famine, rather, there is a “rising desperation” where the strategy is to prevent death (Rangasami 1985:1749-1750).

There was plenty of food in Ireland, but it was not affordable by the masses of cottiers and tenant farmers. Rangasami’s (1985) definition helpfully frames the Famine Process because it identifies the long creation of vulnerability, inability to afford available food, inadequate relief programs, and the death and migration of impoverished Irish. Rangasami’s definition lacks a conversation about the long-term systemic change that occurred toward the end of the process, and I argue that a fourth stage of sustained prevention should be added. Famines are not binary, rather the use of stages demonstrates that disenfranchised communities, like poor, rural farmers in Ireland, were vulnerable and continually at risk of food insecurity. The process of famine incorporates the struggle for food security and the fight for systemic change.

**Archaeology of Famines**

Can scholars identify famine in the archaeological record? Famines are different from other disasters. Volcanoes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, wildfires, explosions (like Chernobyl), and tsunamis impact the material culture and structures that were in place prior to a disaster in a short period of time. Most disaster anthropology focuses on the catastrophes that have a major impact on the material footprint of a society. Famines require an understanding of cultural components, ecological factors, and political context. For example, researchers must understand the type of food consumed to identify a lack of food for a given population’s cultural culinary customs.

When studying the 1845-1850 Famine from an archaeological perspective, scholars (e.g., Fewer 1997; Orser 1996) have sometimes struggled, perhaps because most of the archaeological
evidence from the Famine speaks to a process, rather than an event. The Great Hunger does not leave a particular trail of destroyed architecture and material culture. Rather, people’s daily lives were changed, and the material footprint of their lives was slow to change. My objective is to track the change through the material footprint during the Famine Process. Primarily, I aim to observe small changes in settlement patterns, use of the surrounding space, and consumption practices.

Morgan (2013) wrote one of the few articles focused on archaeology of Famines. The author suggests various ways to study famine through the archaeological record. Environmentally, archaeologists can observe sudden changes which impact human and animal food sources including: drought, excessive rainfall, low ocean temperatures, floods, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Through tree rings, ice cores, fluvial and lava deposits, and char lines, scholars can contextualize the Famine in relationship with lack of food (Morgan 2013:117).

For scholars of famines, diet or change in diet is an important topic because it can help detect a famine and see how and whom it impacted in a population. Archaeologists study diet using the bioarchaeological record, residue analysis, food waste in middens, and coprolites to understand the general nutrition or changes in health for a population. Using domesticated assemblages, communities may prematurely butcher animals during a period of need or want, or they could be consuming different parts or species of animals. The key aspect to studying diet in relation to Famine is observing deviations from the norm for a given population (Morgan 2013:119).

Bioarchaeological evidence is one of the most common ways to observe Famine in the past. Researchers can identify manifestations of physical and psychological stress on skeletal remains (Geber 2014; Mokyr and Ó Grada 2002). Archaeologists can study human remains in
order to answer questions about nutritional deficiencies and systematic stress through enamel hypoplasia, Harris lines, decreased robusticity and stature, and periostitis (Roberts and Manchester 2005). Of particular use for nineteenth-century Irish populations, enamel hypoplasia are linear bands on teeth reflecting permanent defects from life-threatening health issues during tooth formation. Starvation, low birth weight, chronic illness, and stress can cause enamel hypoplasia in children. Harris lines found on bone tissue are also signs of inadequate nutrition, disease, and stress during childhood or adolescent development. By looking for enamel hypoplasia and Harris lines in skeletal remains, archaeologists learn about the extent of the malnutrition and disease, as these markers on the skeletal remains are manifest during extreme periods or in response to extreme periods (Geber 2014:150).

Using nutritional data from the skeletal remains, scholars can study isotopes to track migration, a common survival strategy during Famines. Irish migrants in a London cemetery were identified through carbon and nitrogen isotopes in bone collagen and hair keratin. Similar to enamel hypoplasia and Harris Lines, skeletal remains of pre-adolescent individuals are helpful in studies concerning changes in nutrition because of the high collagen turn around rate in developing individuals. Thus, a quick change in diet is observable through the bioarchaeological record. This is useful for Irish population who changed from a rich potato diet, low nitrogen 15 isotopes, to corn, high nitrogen 15 isotopes (Beaumont et al. 2013:88), and is observable in groups moving into workhouses or cities, like London, with a large amount of food diversity.

Demographic changes are an important aspect to study for archaeology of Famines. Extreme changes in population numbers through death or birth, are a line of evidence which can suggestion lack of food for a population (Boyle and Ó Grada 1986). With higher numbers of deaths, there may be evidence of deviations in funerary customs. During Famines, variations in
the rituals are often a quick and temporary change, as members of the population die faster than allows for a typical burial or people lacked resources for a burial typical to that community. Further, children and babies have higher mortality rates during Famines as their bodies struggle with the lack of nutrients and necessary calories. Overall, archaeologists observe Famine in the archaeological record through drastic changes and collapse of social norms due to the biological need to nourish the body and support the next generation (Morgan 2013:119).

**Previous Archaeology of the 1845-1850 Famine in Ireland**

Following the 150th anniversary of the Great Hunger in Ireland, more studies began appearing about the disaster in academic literature (Fewer 1997). However, economists, historians, and geographers dominated the scholarship. Archaeologists discussed the potential for research at this time. In an edited volume by Morash and Hayes, Orser (1996) wrote about the possibility of an archaeology of the Great Famine. He was optimistic about it, despite only having completed one season of survey. In 1997, Fewer wrote an article in the Group For Historic Settlement newsletter discussing the archaeological potential for famine scholarship. He reasoned that archaeologists could study the Famine to enhance our understanding of the disaster in unique ways.

Fewer (1997) admits that the ephemeral nature of some architecture and material culture related to the Famine causes some issues for research. The fever sheds and cholera hospitals were often quickly abandoned as they were only intended as temporary relief measures. Soup kitchens were also short-lived in nature, and the material remains from them are often cast iron boilers that have been moved from their original location. During *An Gorta Mór* and continuing through the second half of the nineteenth century, people abandoned settlements due to mass eviction, death, or migration. They created temporary housing, which were made by cutting
living space into bogs. The lack of material culture used to make them makes it problematic to identify archaeologically.

After excavations in Gorttoose County Roscommon during summer 1996, Orser (1997) published an article, not on the 1845-1850 Famine, but a specific eviction that occurred during the disaster. However, he did not engage with the larger context of the disaster; rather, he framed his work with historical archaeology and studies of folk life (Orser 1997:124). Through this framework, Orser avoided the difficult task of engaging with the archaeology of the 1845-1850 Famine given the limited material footprint and the challenge to attribute the eviction specifically to the years of the Famine as defined by the national government (1845-1850).

There has been some recent growth in Irish archaeology of the Great Hunger. One example is the bioarchaeology of Famine-era skeletal remains from the Kilkenny Union Workhouse. For example, Geber (2014, 2016) has conducted bioarchaeological studies of remains from graves excavated at the site of the workhouse. The result of a commercial archaeology contract, this was the first study of its kind. Geber (2014) identified stress in children at the workhouse during the catastrophe. He later expanded his study to compare the Kilkenny collection to the six other available collections of 1845-1850 Famine-era workhouse burials from Thurles, County Tipperary; Ballinasloe, County Galway; Clones, County Monaghan; Banbridge, County Down; Manorhamilton, County Leitrim; and Tuam, County Galway, all of which are significantly smaller collections than the Kilkenny collection (Geber 2016). Geber contextualizes the poverty of the workhouse inmates, discusses the social bioarchaeology of the poor, examines famine disease, and argues that most of the deaths during the 1845-1850 Famine were not from starvation but from diseases. In his book, he works to correct previous misconceptions about the disaster and provide a contextualized understanding of
suffering and trauma caused by prevailing inequalities. He concludes with a discussion about the workhouses and the mass burial pits in social memory, commenting that governments and communities ignored the workhouses due to denial and post-traumatic stress following the Famine (Geber 2016:192-3), which I identify as prescribed forgetting (Connerton 2008), discussed later in this chapter.

Geber and Murphy (2012) study paleopathological evidence of scurvy in the remains recovered from the Kilkenny workhouse. The potato is rich in Vitamin C, protein, and other essential nutritional vitamins. With little access to potatoes, poor people in Ireland became prone to scurvy because corn, the food the government pushed as a replacement, lacked the necessary nutrients. They concluded that scurvy was an indirect influencer of death during the tragedy. Using the same skeletal collection, Beaumont and Montgomery (2016) performed dental analysis and demonstrated that teeth recorded a dietary change from potatoes to corn. They documented a prolonged stress from an insufficient diet, as corn did not prevent enough nutrients for the population. Beaumont and colleagues (2012) apply the data from the Kilkenny workhouse population and identify migrants in a nineteenth-century London cemetery due to change in diet during the trauma of the Great Hunger.

There are some on-going research projects hoping to address questions about the 1845-1850 Famine. In 1991, Theresa McDonald founded the Achill Archaeological Field School, which explores prehistoric and historic occupations of Achill Island in County Mayo, including excavations on the deserted village of Slievemore, which was occupied during the Famine. Dr. Stephen Brighton at the University of Maryland, who worked with Orser in County Roscommon, has an active archaeology project in County Cork with a focus on the Great Hunger (Excavations.ie 2019). A historical society in County Tyrone pushed for the excavation of the
workhouse burial during Winter 2019 (Young 2019). Dr. Maggie Roynane an archaeologist at National University of Ireland in Galway, is working on a noninvasive survey to start understanding the archaeology of the 1845-1850 Famine at the Buckingham estate in County Clare (National University of Ireland in Galway 2019). In 2018, Christie Cunniffee, an archaeologist associated with the Irish Workhouse Centre, began mapping scalp and scalpeen, temporary housing created out of and in bogs during the Great Famine (Christie Cunniffee personal communication 2018). These projects are still on going.

For my study, I focus on the material remains of communities who lived during a disaster that was a process, not just five years of hunger, and examines the construction of vulnerability in Ireland by colonial endeavors. The British colonial government created a socio-natural disaster process that was the result of colonial land policies. The government enacted a series of land policies in their colonies that result in multiple disaster and lasting-legacies. I look at a number of lines of evidence to understand how communities responded to the disaster. First, I look at the space where people lived to understand changes to the village and island in response to the catastrophe. I look at village-level changes on Inishbofin to see how the community changed their interactions and use of their surroundings. I use the village-scale because it allows me to see how islanders altered their area through time, specifically before and during the Famine. In the section that follows, I introduce the concept of taskscape to see how the community employed short- and long-term changes and this resulted in different interactions and use of their surrounding area.

**Taskscape Changes and Social Upheaval**

Islanders on Inishark and Inishbofin were individuals who made choices within a colonial system. Following Bourdieu (1977), islanders weighed their choices and alternatives and they
acted with meaning in historical and social circumstances before, during, and after the Famine. Islanders were purposeful in their social and cultural production and reproduction. Individuals and their surroundings interacted in a recursive manner which resulted in continuity and cultural change.

Drawing from Bender (1993:3) and Appadurai (1990:296, 1996:33), I use the suffix “scape” to refer to an area of cultural flow that is irregular, fluid, socially constructed, dynamic, and subjective. A landscape a space that is socially constructed, experienced in a subjective manner and linked to multiple meanings through time (Bender 1993:3) Scapes are embedded with meaning that can and do change over time and with respect to the person or people entrenching meaning in the area. Scapes are linked to history, language and politics in their construction and definition (Appadurai 1990:296). A key to examining scapes is to consider people’s interactions and experiences within a space and to view them as dynamic for individuals and groups through time.

To conceptualize the community responses to the 1845-1850 Famine and the Famine Process for coastal groups, I rely on the notion of taskscapes, a temporal and spatial array of features related to practical daily life, identified by Ingold (1993). Ingold (1993) extrapolates from George Mead (1938) when he says, “the landscape as a whole must likewise be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form: a pattern of activities ‘collapsed’ into an array of features” (Ingold 1993:162). An agent performing a task does so while interacting and reacting to other agents and the surrounding environment. A scape specific to the tasks is created when the area is embedded with meaning through repetitive tasks.

Taskscapes embody patterns of activities that are then identifiable through a range of features (Ingold 1993:162), and they are situated in respect to duration and place. Humans
informally create taskscapes through changes in movement and new meaning embedded into space (Ingold 1993:154). Since movement generates taskscapes, as people acts and moves in a scape, they continue to create the taskscape through daily life (Ingold 1993:162). As community members complete tasks in particular areas, they intersect and interact with the environment and other community members performing similar or different daily tasks in overlapping areas. Since taskscapes are repetitive and relational, they result in a remembering of past actions, people, and environment. Through common practices, shared space, remembrance, and the constant embedding of personal and communal meaning in an area, a taskscape materializes and/or changes (Ingold 1993:162).

There is added significance when the resource acquisition occurs during special events or activities (Cooney 1998:113), even if the occasion is associated with negative connotations. Tasks related to the sea move the area of significance beyond the habitation areas into the sea where resource acquisition or travel is integrated into multiple aspects of their lives (Bender 2006). For island and coastal communities a scape can be created through interactions with the coast and the water, like harvesting resources from coastal areas and fishing. For people on Inishbofin and Inishark, the physical environment define some of the scope and nature of tasks and their daily relationships with the landscape and one another. As they performed daily tasks in their villages or around their islands, they embedded meaning in the scape. However, they changed aspects to their tasks when the potato crop failed, altering the types of sea resources they gathered. This resulted in an altered scape that continues to evolve during the Famine Process.

The concept of taskscape allows us to see how the people reacted to the upheaval with respect to resources, class, and social connections in the scape because taskscapes are
materialized in the ways communities use spaces over time. Taskscape also allows for the area of cultural meaning to extend beyond the physical island and into the sea. As discussed before, people were living in a vulnerable, class-controlled space, and the landlord dictated where people could live and what land they could access in the name of Improvement. However, when the potato blight spread through Ireland, the elite approach to land management failed. Communities in Ireland altered their daily patterns of activities by moving beyond the confines of the landlord-prescribed village, incorporating some pre-colonial approaches to interactions with the land, gathering survival food, and changing the scape to access more resources.

On the islands, residents changed their taskscape after the potato blight in 1845 and during the Famine Process in a number of ways in the practical operations of their lives. First, they harvested foods only reserved for times of hunger, they consumed different and types of fish, limpets, and seaweed. They gathered this food from certain areas of the coast. When islanders migrated, they altered their taskscape by moving to new places to earn money or grow food. Some islanders left permanently, leaving homes unoccupied. The islanders that remained used the empty houses as sheds, where they stored fishing and farming equipment. They changed their daily routine by employing new or different resources, and they did this as a community, every family transformed their scape and each family or individuals scape overlapped with others in the community.

Importantly, taskscapes have a duration specific to a place: the taskscape I am investigating the Famine Process in the second half of nineteenth century Ireland. In addition to the temporality, the disaster gives the creation and maintenance of the scape particular meaning. It is impossible to separate human interaction with the environment and negative outcomes due to circumstances forced upon people by colonial enterprises. The potato blight, a temporary
fungus, created a struggle with the landscape where people had to contemplate how the area around them nourished them and why that changed. They had to refocus energies from one task that used to provide daily sustenance, to a different task that would help them meet their biological needs. In this way, people had to alter the way they interacted with their scapes until the potato crop regularly succeeded.

On the islands during the 1845-1850 Famine, men were fishing, farming, or working on temporary projects provided by the government’s famine relief works. Women and children were caring for livestock, farming the subsistence plots, and gathering any resource they could at water’s edge as the whole community struggled to survive. These acts work in relation to one another, one member of the family or community doing certain things – like fishing while other members contributed to the same livelihood of the community by gathering limpets. Additionally, some community members moved to access different resources, and they were remembered through the space they used to occupy. Based on oral history and my interpretations, people remembered past interactions with people who moved. When people returned, the past memory of their departure was not erased, but it was added to through new interactions with each other during repetitive tasks. Through the framework of the taskscape, I argue we can observe changes in the scape and daily activities brought about through a lack of food.

While my project began with a goal of observing changes across the taskscape during the Famine Process, I noticed during my fieldwork that the traumatic nature of the disaster could not be ignored. Dawdy (2006:722) and Tarlow (2000) remind archaeologists to consider the emotional dimensions of past human experiences, with a cautionary label about not projecting contemporary emotions or assumptions. The post-disaster stress due to the death of one million
people and the international migration of another million is a necessary consideration in the understanding of how the community responded over the long-term. Living through traumatic catastrophes has long-lasting sociopsychological stress on the survivors (Oliver-Smith 1996:308). Torry (1986) states that inequalities that existed prior to the disaster cause for greater tension and inequality during times of relief, and the memory of this can be incorporated into heritage. While these responses may not be observed in the archaeological record, it can be seen in the construction of heritage surrounding the catastrophe.

**Agency and Marginalized Communities during Scarcity**

When islanders changed their taskscape during the Famine Process, they accessed a new set of resources. They purposefully made choices about the ways to survive social upheaval and disaster, and part of the response was a continuity of practices and others were changes. Islanders used strategies that their parents and grandparents used during times of food insecurity, however, they looked for new ways to get resources to survive during the famine. These resources came in the form of food from the sea, land, work opportunities, and ceramic goods.

When studying short or prolonged food insecurity, Cook et al. (1996) urge scholars to consider shopping habits and the implications of those habits on a household level. When consumers shop, they do so in meaningful ways, exercising their agency (Cook et al. 1996:50). People purchase goods beyond functional or utilitarian value (Cook et al. 1996:52). In these instances, households are expressing their consumer power and agency (Mullins 1996; 1999). Additionally, when the purchaser gifts the good to a friend or relative, the meaning behind the shopping and purchase is shared (Appadurai 1986).

Ethnographic researchers (Corbett 1988:1009-1100) observed that people did not always purchased food with extra money. Rather, some households purchased goods that indicated
investment in the family’s future (O’Laughlin 1996). Spencer-Wood and Matthews (2011:6) argue that poor people are expected to carefully curate possessions, as a result, when excavating economically disenfranchised households. While interpreting material record from poor households, archaeologists must consider the agency and choice consumers exercised (Reilly 2016:322). These are important considerations as I work through the choices islanders made during a time of social upheaval.

In the well-known case study, the working-class community in the Five Points neighborhood in New York City purchased ceramics that were imported, demonstrating that imported materials were not exclusive to elite communities. Through material consumption, immigrants and working-class families demonstrated their aspirations to change their social conditions (Brighton 2001). Immigrants and native-born working-class members purchased ceramics with purpose to create a home despite social or economic conditions (Brighton 2001; Klein 1991; Wall 1991).

Islanders on Inishark and Inishbofin purchased ceramics during a time of social upheaval and economic uncertainty, and this is an important aspect of my dissertations as it is one way island communities responded to the 1845-1850 disaster. For this dissertation, I utilize Miller’s (1980, 1991) price index to understand consumer choices to an extent, and I am conscious of consumer choices and the ways in which people acquire goods. Chicone (2011) argues against categorizing economic status based on the original price of goods recovered during excavations. Families obtain goods in a variety of ways; higher priced items can be received as gifts to commemorate special occasions, or families inherit heirlooms, which hold special meanings to the giver and receiver of the gifts. I am cognizant of this in my understanding and consider remittances and gift giving an important aspect to nineteenth-century Irish social relations.
Based on research in Ballymenone, Glassie suggests that ceramics are a way for the family to remember events in the past (1982:362-263). As mentioned above, Cooney (1998:113) noted extra significance of resource acquisition during certain events. I hypothesize that the islanders went to Scotland or England to earn money and used their agency to purchase goods for their households. As participants in the barter and cash economies, islanders used cash at hand knowing this was temporary extra money that would be able to contribute to longer investment for the family. They encoded the object with the meaning of their trip and the ability to shop into the object itself. As a result, the vessel becomes a reminder seasonal migration, but in a deeper way of islanders’ strength and resiliency during hardship. The shopper shares the meaning of the object with the family when the ceramic vessel is gifted to the household.

**Heritage: Definition, Construction, and Change**

Scholars and legislative bodies have worked to define heritage, in all its contexts, but have created a divide in the process. Difficulty arises in the disconnect between scholarly understandings of heritage, which begins with premises of constructed, dynamic heritage (Harrison 2013; Lowenthal 1985; Silberman 2007; Skeates 2000), and policy makers who categorized cultural heritage as monuments, groups of buildings, and archaeological site with outstanding universal value (e.g. Athens 1930; Hague Treaty 1954; World Heritage Convention 1972). Academics work within various uses of constructions and interactions with items from the past, while policymakers work with exclusive lists. For example Rodney Harrison (2013:14) views heritage as that which “refers to a set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past.” Alternatively, UNESCO (2019) defines heritage as “our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations” which they then categorize into: cultural heritage sites, historic cities, cultural landscapes, natural sacred sites, underwater cultural
heritage, museums, movable cultural heritage handicrafts, documentary and digital heritage, cinematographic heritage, oral traditions, languages, festive events, rites and beliefs, music and song, traditional medicine, performing arts, literature, culinary traditions, and traditional sports and games. The differences in definitions create a disjuncture in understanding why and how heritage is constructed and how humans should interact with it in the present and future. This is especially relevant in Ireland’s heritage surrounding the Famine given the involvement of governmental and non-governmental entities in heritage projects.

**Heritage Construction and Process**

Heritage as a constructed entity is one way to understand it; heritage is also a process which passes on established, but no less constructed, values and meanings while creating new meanings and values (Smith 2006:48). Heritage is an “active process of assembling a series of objects, places, and practices that we choose to hold up as a mirror to the past, associated with a particular set of values that we wish to take with us into the future” (Harrison 2013:4). Since heritage is an active process, it is dynamic and changing within society, and present day people define it by their values. A group constantly adjusts its values given contemporary needs, and certain members within a group prioritize certain characteristics which they determine to be worthy of preservation based on perceived collective value for society (Dicks 2000; Harrison 2013; Lowenthal 1985; Smith 2006). It is the active process and determined value by a minority which many legislative bodies lack in their understanding of heritage as put forth in conventions, treaties, and mission statements.

Foundationally, heritage must be understood as a contextually specific, purposefully constructed invention. Heritage is often related to and confused with history, but fabricating heritage is more flexible than history. Heritage conforms to what people want and need given
historical context (Lowenthal 1998a:7). Those studying inventions of heritage should anticipate the new construction more frequently during times of social change, when the old social pattern for which the heritage and traditions have been designed are no longer adaptable or flexible (Hobsbawm 1983:4-5). Constructions of heritage use both antiquities as novel ideas and novelty as antiquity. This establishes heritage in a real or fabricated symbol or event in history in a purposeful manner (Hobsbawm 1983:8).

Scholars have created categories for heritage to differentiate who constructs and supports the heritage. Harrison (2013) identifies official and unofficial heritage, Smith and Waterton (2012) use the terms authorized and unauthorized, and other scholars have employed recognized versus unrecognized and elite to describe heritage which is sanctioned by governing bodies (official, recognized, authorized) and that which is not (unofficial, unrecognized, unauthorized). Following Harrison (2013), in this work I use the term “official” to encompass heritage that is sanctioned by governing bodies. Official heritage refers “to a set of professional practices that are authorized by the state and motivated by some form of legislation or written charter” (Harrison 2013:14). Official heritage entities include UNESCO, World Heritage management, governments of nation-states and municipalities, and they present heritage as having universal significance. However, “heritage cannot be universally true” because it excludes others to make room for its value (Lowenthal 1998b:8). Heritage is a process reliant on decisions concerning importance and significance for particular groups of people (Lowenthal 1998b:8). The issue lies at who is included in determining value and importance.

Managing Heritage

Within official heritage, defining and managing heritage has become a highly bureaucratized process. James Scott (1998) discusses state projects which contribute to
standardization and centralization. Heritage is something that demonstrates a regulatory process associated with bureaucratic modernist planning. Heritage received attention from governmental and legislative agencies that make decisions about how to define and care for heritage. As part of this bureaucratic process, a small factions within society prioritize elite histories, reshaping in appealing manners to present day people (Lowenthal 1985), like focusing on the interactions of famous historical figures in a house rather than the enslaved individuals who provided resources for the household.

Throughout the regulatory process, governing groups treat heritage as a thing rather than a process or dynamic construction. They define heritage with features made to fit into stereotypes portrayed as significant on national or international scales. Experts, as determined by ruling bodies, create and determine the features to prioritize in heritage. These experts acquire data and create analysis based on degree of worth and preservation of their defined heritage (Harrison 2013). Empowered governing bodies order and prioritize heritage; then they rank it by perceived value in order to receive funding for preservation and promotion. During this regulatory process, experts create a gap between the practice of heritage management, reality on the ground, local community prioritization of heritage, and archaeology in practice. The result is a misalignment between official and unofficial constructions and uses of heritage (Chakrabarti 2012:130). In practice, scale becomes a factor; at a small-scale people construct local heritage in the unofficial realm, but governing bodies and policy makers ignore or destroy the small-scale heritage in favor of heritage with broader appeal, as determined by the policy makers.

“Where does the production of agency lay in certain societies?” is the question to consider (Harrison 2013:39). Heritage construction and preservation deals with distributed agency (Hutchins 1995), where the outcomes of an action are not the result of one actor, rule,
artifact, routine etc. but a combination of those that unfold during the process of heritage construction among certain legislative bodies. They have collective agency as members of the governing bodies or experts employed by policy makers. Within the collective, some people have more authority or power in certain circumstances. For example, the President of Ireland has the power to preside at the opening of heritage sites, but he relies on heritage experts and the Heritage Council in Ireland to determine what those sites are. By employing both heritage and agencies theories in this project I can then explore the dynamic between official and unofficial heritage. Heritage is a process that involves multiple and diverse groups, stakeholders, descendant communities, policy makers, heritage officials, scholars, and/or policy makers whose agendas rarely coincide and produce conflicting goals and manifestations of heritage (Harrison 2013:33).

Usually, policy makers and heritage experts focus on positive aspects of the past, ignoring dark times or events (Lowenthal 1985; Meskell 2002). However, communities do commemorate and construct heritage of negative events. UNESCO’s World Heritage list includes sites with negative connotations including the Goree in Senegal, an island involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz. Also, the World Heritage list is the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley, which is commemorated for the Buddhist monastic sanctuaries, but also because of the Taliban destruction of the two standing Buddha statues. These are examples of negative heritage, a term coined by Meskell (2002:558) which she defines as a “conflictual site that becomes a repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary” however, I expand the term to include the commemoration or remembrance of events or processes associated with “violence, trauma, or embarrassment” (Samuels 2015:112).
Samuels (2015) expresses concern with the use of ‘negative’ and argues for ‘difficult’ over ‘negative’, ‘dissonant’ and ‘abject’ heritage because he feels they are “unsettling” (Samuels 2015:113). The overarching term scholars use to describe the heritage is not going to make the subject matter any easier to grapple with for constructors or consumers. However, I agree with Samuels that the use of ‘difficult’ instructs the audience as to the topic and process of constructing the heritage. I employ the term ‘difficult heritage’ to encompass the sites and commemoration of past events, processes, and places associated with violence, trauma, and embarrassment.

In her influential article, Meskell (2002) uses the example of 9/11, a tragic event to discuss two main concepts with negative or difficult heritage. First, the discourse surrounding difficult heritage is framed through the valorization of achievements that were part of or followed the tragedy. In the 9/11 example, the first responders are discussed in remembrance of the event over other individuals who died, like people who died when the first plane hit the Twin Towers. Second, sites of remembrance for difficult heritage are not inherently associated with negative feelings. People construct and applied those feelings to the sites and remembrances.

There is an infinite number of ways to remember the past, especially if it was contested, negative, or dissonant. As a result some historical narratives are emphasized and others are ignored or silenced (Troulliot 1995). The way communities and nation-states construct heritage around difficult pasts is contextual based on the contemporary social and political climate. Nation-states decide how to engage with their difficult pasts and their approach can change over time. For example, MacDonald (2010) explores Germany’s approach to coming to terms with its Nazi past and not ignoring it, as was the approach before the1960s. In Rwanda, the government removed all history from secondary schools because an ethno-racial migratory model, which was
used as rationale during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, was pervasive in the literature and teaching material. Only recently have archaeologists worked to construct a history that disproves the ethno-racial model in light of a decolonized understanding of Rwanda’s past (Giblin 2012; 2013). Similarly, my research examines the way Ireland has constructed heritage around the Famine, from almost ignoring the trauma to a new embrace of the difficult heritage. However, the ways in which the memories around the Famine were and are constructed are a critical part of the heritage narrative.

Remembering the Past

Communities remember or forget aspects to their lives, including traumatic events. Remembering and memory are the result of social practices that include “recalling, shaping, forgetting, coordinating, and transmitting” (Mills and Walker 2008:4). Communities participate in unthinking activities that are part of remembering how society acts given a time or place. Van Dyke (2019:214) calls this practical memory and it is “the most creative and useful conception of the interplay between repetitive, daily, materialized practices and memory” Taskscapes hold the memory of humans and the material world interacting with each other repeatedly (Van Dyke 2019:214). While performing tasks in a scape, people are interacting with an area that evokes memories, stories, emotions, and a shared sense of identity (Oliver 2007). This is helpful when thinking about how memories as shared within a community in multiple ways and through a taskscape over time. For example, an empty house on Inishbofin is not just an empty rectangle constructed of stones. Community members see it as the former home of neighbors who had contributed embedded meaning in the scape. The empty house evokes memories of the positive and negative aspects of the past, including the reasons for the abandonment.
Memory is an important aspect concerning the struggle for power, especially in a colonial context. When an individual or group controls memory, they are also controlling the experience and knowledge of previous struggles (Foucault 1996:124). Foucault (1977) argues that when communities construct memories, especially contested memories, there is another group that creates memories to counter them because of the forgetting or promotion of certain aspects to the past. Remembering is manipulated for the purposes of constructing a community’s past with a certain idea for the future in mind. It is inherently political because not everything can be remembered and memories may differ (Eyre 2007:455). The Irish 1845-1850 Famine is a contested memory with conflicting aspects to the past. There are multiple voices that wish to be heard through remembrance, however, some are silenced due to the politics of remembering. Remembering a negative experience or event is complex because individuals and subgroups, like different classes and genders, within society experience disaster differently due to the socially constructed nature of disasters (Oliver-Smith 2010:14). There is social agency and political struggle involved in constructing the past connected to disaster memories, and hegemonic powers work to create community identity through a modified, unified remembering despite differential experiences (LeBlanc 2012; Trouillot 1995). New groups in power may create heritage to remember the everyday life of the community or the changes the community experienced since the uneasy period of time (Jones 2015).

People may purposefully forget or transform disaster memories because of the pain associated with them. Forgetting can be about omitting past events and decision from the record for political purposes (Ullberg 2013). Cole (2001) argues that forgetting is an important part of remembering and creating heritage of disasters. However, individuals involved in certain lines of
work, like risk and disaster management, argue against forgetting because they do not want communities to repeat the same mistakes and experience the same disasters (Le Blanc 2012).

Given the colonial context of the Great Hunger and treatment of the lower socioeconomic classes in nineteenth century Ireland, I consider the act of purposeful forgetting in official heritage and unofficial heritage manifestations. Different groups of people forgot about the details of the Famine in varying ways. Using Connerton’s (2008) seven types of forgetting, I identified relevant forgetting in relation to the Irish Famine. First, prescriptive forgetting is usually an act of the state, and the primary goal is to prevent retaliation for a previous act or acts. Memories of past events or actions can result in strict divisions between groups in society. Forgetting is as important as remembering in order to create cohesion in society and to legitimize the state (Connerton 2008:151-154). This was the tool used in official capacities to try and ease tension among the people under British rule and it conflicted with some group’s desires to remember the disaster.

Second, forgetting for political pragmatism plays a role Ireland’s construction of heritage concerning the 1845-1850 Famine. This type of forgetting is “manifest in a widespread pattern of behavior in civil society, and it is covert, unmarked, and unacknowledged.” (Connerton 2008:161). People forget due to a “humiliated silence” (Connerton 2008:161), the collective shame and humiliation brings about a taboo concerning the topic. Shortly after the social upheaval, communities have a desire to forget in order to avoid feeling the shame and humiliation associated with the disastrous event (Connerton 2008:161-164). Connerton does not discuss the forgetting with the passage of time, however, time can contribute to forgetting, rather than an initial movement to forget. Over time, the descendant community may actually forget the event, especially if commemoration was limited or restricted. Forgetting for political pragmatism
can apply to both official and unofficial memories and heritages of past events and is relevant concerning the disaster in Ireland.

While a hegemonic power may try to suppress memories, people can challenge their power by remembering and sharing subjugated or downplayed memories (Foucault 2003:7). Communities may forget due to humiliation or because the governing powers, especially colonial ones, want them to forget, but those groups of people can decide to remember. Groups opposed to hegemony can challenge the forgetting of those in power. While the passage of time is not incorporated into the literature, I incorporate it into the power challenges within forgetting and remember. As society has changed within Ireland, the desire to remember or forget past events can also change.

**Practicalities of difficult heritage.** Difficult heritage sites have become popular destinations for tourism, and this is where the hospitality and heritage industries intersect (Chambers 2009:14). Tourist sites draw visitors to them, and as a result, heritage related tourism is altered to become assets for consumption (Jackson 2012:24; McKrecher and du Cros 2012:2). As with heritage in general, multiple stakeholder groups, with diverse and varying opinions, are involved in the heritage construction. Specifically, when difficult heritage and tourism intersect, authors of the discourse can be limited to aspects of the past that are less uncomfortable than others, like stories of the elite or valiant actions of the past. In this way, visitors are not made to feel uncomfortable by the heritage (Handler and Gable 1997; Chambers 2006:18). However, this approach to the past results in partial explorations and interpretations and a silencing of the past (Trouillot 1995). Many communities who were marginalized in the past are left out of the heritage constructions. Paul Shackel (2003:14) says that underrepresented groups “fight for representation in the public memory” through these approaches.
The best practices for interpretation and heritage tourism approaches are conflicting. The interpretation at Famine-related sites and heritage venues should enhance visitors’ knowledge about different aspects of the 1845-1850 Famine. In theory, people should leave sites associated with difficult heritage emotionally concerned about the past and present given the treatment of the disaster through time and systemic inequality. However, if visitors are only exposed to the positive aspects of difficult heritage, they are not connected to the larger context and lasting implications of the heritage. The intersection of these conflicting approaches will be apparent during the discussions on the construction of 1845-1850 Famine heritage in Ireland later in this dissertation.
CHAPTER FOUR:

METHODS TO UNEARTHING INCOMPLETE INFORMATION

Thinking about community response to disasters and the construction of difficult heritage, considering limited written records by those most impacted by the Great Hunger, I employ archaeological, historical and ethnographic methods to examine my two main research questions. Part one of my project used archaeological and historical methods, along with limited ethnographic data, to examine how people reacted to the calamities of the 1845-1850 Famine, with particular focus on Inishbofin and Inishark compared to other places in rural, Western Ireland. For part two of my project, I use historical and ethnographic methods to examine how the 1845-1850 Famine has been inculcated into heritage over time.

To understand local responses on the islands, I began with an exploration of small-scale changes in the taskscape and access to resources from pre-Famine through post-Famine Westquarter village, Inishbofin. Through my previous survey and examination of historic maps, I observe the changes in land use over time. I use the maps to demonstrate village level changes in the second half of the nineteenth century on Inishbofin. I completed a walking survey with local historian Tommy Burke, where we documented standing structures, recorded oral history, and noted changes between historic maps and the 2015 village. In addition to historic maps, I incorporate ceramic data from excavations which began in 2010 and concluded in 2017. As a member of the Cultural Landscapes of the Irish Coast project, I worked with a team of professors, graduate students, undergraduates, and professional archaeologists to excavate residential structures from before, during, and after the 1845-1850 Famine in Ireland on the
islands of Inishark and Inishbofin (Kuijt et al. 2011; Kuijt et al. 2012; Kuijt et al. 2015; Myles et al. 2013; Myles et al. 2014; Myles et al. 2016), which includes material from an excavation at a residential structure in Westquarter village to complement the map study. I use the ceramic material culture from the islands to understand ceramic consumption by the islanders before, during, and after the disaster. For all of the excavations, researchers manually de-sodded and excavated by hand for all units. We assigned consecutive numbers to all features, fills, and deposits. As is standard in Ireland, we removed sediment based on natural stratigraphy. Excavators screened layers selectively based on artifact frequency using ¼ inch mesh screen. We created breaks within natural stratigraphy while excavating particularly deep strata. In general, we excavated most contexts in a single unit. The crew photographed units and relevant features before and after excavation. We drew plan views of all the trenches and units throughout the excavation process. The crew created section profiles based off the soil stratigraphy visible on each site. Upon completing excavation and documenting of the units, the crew lined and backfilled the units and replaced the sod or planted grass seed. We bagged artifacts separately by context and material type. We did not save non-diagnostic pieces of pottery smaller than a dime, non-diagnostic pieces of metal, or pieces of cloth or leather. Artifacts are currently curated at the School of Archaeology at National University of Ireland of Galway. I provide more site-specific information in the next chapter.

I analyze and compare ceramic consumption to examine the changing use of imported ceramics. I used vessels when possible, however it was not possible with comparative sites from Achill Island, Sligo, and Donegal due to the nature of the published material. These vessels were identified by the ability to mend multiple sherds to one another during the ceramic analysis. Using this conservative vessel count, rather than rims and bases, I ensure I do not overestimate
islander ceramics consumption. I hypothesize that islanders employed short-term migration to facilitate a broadening of the resources along the taskscape. Islanders purchased and brought non-local goods back after seasonal work abroad in nearby locations, like Scotland, where there was a large pottery manufacturing business. Ceramics are a material demonstration of islanders exercising their agency, and since they were purchased as individual pieces while abroad, they are an example of an altered taskscape. If this is the case, I should observe an increased in decorated ceramics, including Scottish spongeware and English transferprints. I rely on decoration and ware for the ceramic analysis because of the well-documented change in decoration technique and popularity in nineteenth-century British ceramic markets. I use Miller’s (1980; 1991) cost indices to determine the value of the goods in the British market.

Miller compiled the indices using historical documents from potters in Scotland and England (1980). Using Miller’s (1980, 1991) pricing index, I am able to apply the approximate cost of vessels in relation to one another. Undecorated were the cheapest refined ware vessels; Miller gives undecorated vessels an index value of 1.00. For the different decorations and sizes he indicates how much more than the undecorated vessel the decorated vessel would cost. In 1814, shell-edge ceramic ten-inch plates were 33 percent more than an undecorated vessel. By 1839, the edgewares were valued at only 20 percent more than an undecorated vessel. A transferprint ten-inch plate was 333 percent more expensive than an undecorated vessel in 1814, but only 270 percent more expensive in 1839 (Miller 1980:26). I acknowledge Miller’s work is decades old; however, it is still useful to place the ceramic data within the larger economic context of Great Britain. I use the cost indices cautiously, as to remember consumer choice while shopping for ceramics in nineteenth-century Great Britain, while remembering consumer choice and agency.
To expand my understanding of how the islanders responded to *An Gorta Mór*, I use the material from the local case study and compare it to previously published studies in Western Ireland. I examine the reports and published material from Counties Mayo, Donegal, and Sligo. McDonald (1998) has been conducting excavations on Achill Island, County Mayo, which provide a comparative island. Orser (2005, 2006, 2010) completed excavations on mainland coastal and inland sites, which allow me to see how island communities reacted to the 1845-1850 Famine and if their island status positively or negatively impacted their disaster experiences. The occupants of these houses were tenant farmers but from differently locations. With this material, I compared and contrasted the different assemblages to understand responses to the disaster.

When I began my research, I hoped to compare local archaeological assemblages to those from other Famine-related sites excavated across Ireland; however, the limited nature of the National Museum of Ireland’s collections from sites of this period precluded me from doing so. Using the National Museum of Ireland’s databases, I searched for Famine-related material culture and excavations reports. There were 18 collections that had a positive match with the search word “Famine.” Ultimately, I examined four of these 18 collections, as I could not access some collections due to curatorial issues, and I excluded collections comprised of human remains. I looked at any historical ceramics included in the collections. I identified the ware, decoration technique, and approximate date if applicable. I used the reports to understand context of the finds. As detailed in the next chapter, there were very few historical ceramics from Famine-era sites in the collection. They were in poor contexts with little diagnostic material. As a result, I did not include them in my analysis. Therefore, I rely exclusively on historical sources and excavation reports to understand the broader response to the Great Hunger.
To supplement archaeological material, I used historical documents to research how communities responded to disaster. I looked at documents that examined resources available to individuals and families during and after the 1845-1850 Famine. I visited and read material from ten libraries and archives in Ireland including the National Library of Ireland, The National Archives, the National Folklore Archives Trinity College Dublin Library, Galway City Archives, County Mayo Library and Archives, National University of Ireland Galway Library, Dublin City Library, University College Dublin library and archives, and the Galway County Council Archives. I a wide array of read literature published after the government-defined famine years to understand the framing of the disaster in text, including: fiction and nonfiction, monographs, school textbooks, nonprofit work, and government literature. I attributed these to the national disaster discourse because few of the resources were place specific. Some sources, like the Schools’ Collection and the Famine Questionnaire from the National Folklore Archive are tagged with location specific information. From these sources I gleaned the different approaches to the tragedy through time, the individuals and groups engaging with the difficult heritage, and the topics included in the conversation about the disaster.

On a local level, I studied letters regarding 1845-1850 Famine relief and subsequent social upheaval from the landlord of Inishark and Inishbofin to the agent who managed the land. Using newspaper articles and archival material I documented community-level response to the disaster. Finally, governmental papers aided my understanding of reactions to the Great Hunger. This includes records from relief programs and the workhouses in Connemara. The relief programs were created on a national scale but executed locally. On regional and national level, I expanded my search to include sites from Connacht and across Ireland that were aimed at alleviating the impact of the disaster.
For the second component of my research, I examined how communities framed and reframe the heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine. I employed historical, ethnographic, and community-based methods to examine heritage through time. I used historical documents and 39 interviews to understand how people on Inishbofin and Inishark framed tragedy generally and specifically. People, like the owner and founder of the Inishbofin heritage museum, shared family documents and books with me.

Between May, June, July, and August of 2017 and 2018, I completed the ethnographic portions of my dissertation to complement the historical record during my examination of heritage through time. The studying up method allowed for an expanded network for interviews in order to understand how communities use the past to construct difficult heritage. My ethnographic study, largely through formal and informal interviews, participant observation, and site visits created the basis for understanding heritage on Inishbofin and in Connemara. I relied on snowball sampling to recruit study participants, and during my ethnographic study I recorded interviews and took hand-written notes on tours and site visits. During some of the site visits and tours, I was not able to audio-record the entire visit. For example, during my tours at the Jeannie Johnston, Doagh Famine Village, and the Dublin Famine Tour, the tours were both outside and inside. I was prevented from recording due to rain and wind conditions. In these instances, I kept detailed notes and followed-up each public tour with private interviews which were recorded using audio equipment. For the ethnographic component of my project, I conducted 16 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Inishbofin islanders, including those with interests in the past and heritage. The participants’ ages ranged from 23 to 75; there were 7 males and 9 females. I participated in heritage events on the island to observe general heritage construction. Stakeholder interactions provided platforms for community members to participate in the construction of
history, provide interpretation of the past, and illustrate how the community uses archaeology as heritage. During community site and laboratory visits, I collected data through participant observation, interviews, and oral histories to add to archaeological data, enhancing understandings of the past. With these data, I was able to compare heritage from the past to heritage in the present day, with a large focus on themes and treatment of difficult heritage. Through this I saw changes in attitudes and constructions of difficult heritage surrounding the Great Hunger.

With an understanding of the local, island-level heritage, I expanded the research to understand how mainland construction of difficult heritage. I conducted eight in-depth, semi-structured interviews with community members in Connemara and people who work in “official heritage” (Harrison 2013) in Galway and Mayo. While these interviewees were located at regional heritage sites, our discussions expanded to exclude national level heritage constructions of the 1845-1850 Famine due to the top down approach of official heritage discourse and regional constructions of heritage to counter national discourse. However, I included interviews in Dublin with national organizations to explain heritage at a larger scale. I spoke with a diverse group of stakeholders which included museum employees, heritage officers, archaeologists, an ambassador, and education focused stakeholders in Dublin, and I conducted fifteen interviews which focused on the nation as a whole. During my interviews, it became apparent that while some people had an official heritage title, they were also involved with education and unofficial heritage in many ways. As a result, many of my interviewees express sentiments about unofficial and official heritage. Further, many interviews provided information about the past, and some of them incorporated oral histories. As a result, I investigated which aspects to the past were important for heritage and why. Throughout this paper, I use first-name-only pseudonyms to
protect the privacy of study participants. The multi-sited, studying up approach to ethnography allows me to understand multi-scalar heritage construction through time.

To accompany the interviews, I visited 38 Famine-related heritage sites around Ireland (Table 3-1), including memorials, heritage centers, and tourist attractions with some Famine-focus. I visited a total of 30 Famine memorials. At these heritage sites, I reflected upon the setting, the overall accessibility, and the effectiveness of any interpretive sign. I also took note of other visitors at the site. My intention was to interact with and talk to people at heritage sites; however, I was the sole person during most of my site visits.

Table 0-1: List of Famine Monuments visited by the author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Famine Monuments in Ireland</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year Built</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Celia Griffin Memorial Park</td>
<td>Galway</td>
<td></td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindred Spirits</td>
<td>Midleton, County Cork</td>
<td></td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td></td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken Heart</td>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Famine Monument</td>
<td>Murris, County Mayo</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clone Famine Graveyard</td>
<td>Clones, County Monaghan</td>
<td></td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doolough Tragedy</td>
<td>Doolough Valley, County Mayo</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doolough Tragedy</td>
<td>Doolough Valley, County Mayo</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ennistimon</td>
<td>County Clare</td>
<td></td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Famine Memorial</td>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo Famine Burial Ground</td>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulligar Famine Memorial</td>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Graveyard</td>
<td>Newcastle West, County Limerick</td>
<td></td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilmallock Famine Memorial Park</td>
<td>Kilmallock, County Limerick</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gárdin an Ghorta</td>
<td>Newmarket, County Kilkenny</td>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killkenny Famine Experience</td>
<td>City, County Kilkenny</td>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Arboretum</td>
<td>Corkagh Park, South Dublin</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Celtic Cross</td>
<td>Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin</td>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuamgraney Famine Graveyard</td>
<td>Tuamgraney, County Clare</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubbercurry Famine Graveyard</td>
<td>Tubbercurry, County Sligo</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbeystrowery Cemetery Famine Memorial</td>
<td>Skibbereen, County Cork</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Memorial at St. Brigid's Church</td>
<td>Anacarty, County Tipperary</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Memorial in Cherryfield Cemetery</td>
<td>Callan, County Kilkenny</td>
<td></td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Memorial</td>
<td>Feakle, County Clare</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Family</td>
<td>Athy, County Kildare</td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Remembrance Park</td>
<td>Ballinasloe, County Galway</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine Memorial</td>
<td>Pulla, Ring, County Waterford</td>
<td></td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's Acre</td>
<td>Tralee, County Kerry</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Children's Strand</td>
<td>Carraroe, County Galway</td>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I went on ten tours or experiences that were Famine-related, including guided and self-guided experiences. During guided tours, I focused on the material culture, language during the
tour, and any interpretive signage. When possible, I interviewed my tour guides and/or founders of the sites to incorporate their perspective and understanding of difficult heritage discourse.

The other heritage site visits consisted of nine museums or museum-like heritage centers. There were not guides or audio tours for these sites, and I focused on the interpretive displays, including the type of material displayed and accompanying signage. Through these visits, I observed what the monument and site creators wanted their audience to experience concerning the past, noted how the general condition of the sites, and gauged contemporary feelings concerning the difficult site.

Overall, I used archaeological excavations, previously excavated collections, historic maps, and historical documents to understand how communities responded to disaster. I compared the islands of Inishark and Inishbofin to mainland communities to see local level responses. I used this to see a changing taskscape, which was largely based on accessing different resources during times of food insecurity which will be discussed in the next chapter. Second, I used ethnographic interviews, historical data, and site visits to observe the construction of difficult heritage surrounding the Great Hunger. Through these interviews I observed changing trends in the discourse with official and unofficial heritage diverging, and the unofficial entities persuading more informed engagement from official groups (Chapters 7 and 8).
CHAPTER FIVE:
SEARCHING FOR THE REMAINS OF A BLEAK TIME: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
THE FAMINE

In this chapter, I discuss my research on the archaeology of the 1845-1850 Famine in order to examine how communities respond to disaster. The 1845-1850 Famine does not leave a clear “horizon” of destroyed architecture and material culture, as one might expect with a singular or even shorter-term event (Orser 1996). Rather, people’s daily lives were changed, sometimes relatively rapidly, but more often, incrementally over the course of several years, and in different ways and at different paces across regions of Ireland (and perhaps even within the same region or settlement). My aim is to track the material footprint of the disaster as a long-term process, rather than an event. Using this approach, archaeologists can look at the continued impact and changes people made to their lives because of social upheaval caused by food shortages and ineffective relief efforts.

To understand response to disaster, I include material excavated from houses occupied before, during, and after the 1845-1850 Famine and Famine Process. I incorporate village survey data with the material culture from Westquarter village, where poor tenant farmers and fishers lived throughout the nineteenth century. Then, I focus on the material culture of the Great Hunger, including existing collections from Famine-related archaeological sites by other researchers, but also materials produced in the course of the archaeological research I completed with my colleagues on the islands of Inishark and Inishbofin. The comparison of island material culture to mainland artifacts from Famine-era sites helps explain how the islanders responded.
differently to the calamity and why Inishark and Inishbofin do not exhibit a robust heritage of the Great Hunger.

I hypothesize that the maps will demonstrate a change in the way land is used overtime, with an expansion from the village core. Some villagers stayed while others left. Through this strategy, villagers were able to farm different and larger plots of land, and they were able to feed less people using more land, allowing them to become less dependent on the potato. Additionally, I hypothesize that islanders practiced seasonal migration throughout the nineteenth century in Ireland. By doing so, they earned money from nearby places, like Scotland. The islanders commemorated their trip with gifts, and they had money to pay rent or buy fishing or farming supplies. I anticipate observing this through a wide variety of ceramic decorations and forms, meaning that islanders shopped for ceramics and chose individual pieces given their preferences. They share these ceramic vessels with the next generation and the ceramic vessel from a difficult time becomes incorporated into heritage as a sign of islander resiliency. Finally, I anticipate observing differences in the types of ceramics available to island and coastal communities compared to mainland communities, given availability to access sea resources, thereby increasing island and coastal peoples ability to purchase new and different ceramics during the disaster.

**Westquarter Village Survey**

The village of Westquarter, Inishbofin is located on the westernmost part of the island around a natural harbor (Figure 5-1). Tommy Burke, a local historian, and I began researching the village in 2012 while working with Ian Kuijt, Ryan Lash and Bill Donaruma on *Island Places, Island Lives*, a heritage book about Inishbofin and Inishark. Burke and I completed a
walking survey, documenting the residential structures, comparing the contemporary maps with historic maps, and recording house histories with lifelong residents of the village.

The earliest map of Westquarter village is Murdoch Mackenzie’s maritime map from 1776 (Figure 5-2). MacKenzie drew one large house to indicate the location of Westquarter village. While this map indicates that islanders occupied Westquarter village by 1776, it does not indicate the locations of specific structures.
Bald’s (1816) Map of County Mayo is the earliest detailed map of settlements on Inishbofin (Figure 5-3). However, Westquater village is not drawn accurately (Figure 5-4). Bald drew a cluster of houses that do not align with the structures or the village layout observed in archaeological survey, ground truthing, or other historical maps (Figure 5-3 and Figure 5-4). However, Bald’s map was highly accurate for other parts of the island, like Knock village. I suspect Bald accurately mapped Knock to provide reference points for seafaring vessels.
Figure 0-3: Bald Map of County Map, Frame 21, Inishbofin, 1816. Reproduced with Permission from the County Mayo Library.
The British government completed the Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) in 1825 while Ireland was under colonial rule, and surveyors produced the earliest detailed map of Westquarter village. Royal Engineers of the British army created this map and others to document all of Ireland at a consistent scale, six inches to one mile (Smith 2007:83). The cartographers translated the Irish place names into Anglicized versions. These maps provide insight into pre-Famine Ireland, but the information they record is selective since the colonial government created the maps as a means to appropriately administrate and tax the country (Smith 2007:84). The first OSI map of Inishbofin was completed in 1838 (Figure 5-5). Westquarter village begins at the border with Fawnmore, a separate district on the island, delineated by the solid red line on the original map. Landlords owned the island throughout the time when these maps were drawn. The landlords, who were known to preserve the best land for their business ventures, restricted where buildings could be constructed.

Westquarter consists of 30 structures which follow an uphill slope from the water’s edge. People appear to have oriented their houses in order to provide protection from the elements, as Westquarter hill blocks some wind and rain from the village. The villagers had easy access to the sea from this location, which was important given their reliance on fishing for both food and
rent. Each house had a nearby plot of land which was used for subsistence farming; islanders grew potatoes in these plots during the nineteenth century.

![Figure 5-5: 1838 OSI Map of Westquarter Village](https://www.orsi.ie/)

The surveyors completed the second OSI map in 1898 (Figure 5-6). There were 26 houses, five more than in 1838. In addition to living spaces, villagers appear to have built sheds to support their fishing and farming. There are 18 sheds on the 1898 map, ten more than in 1838. The Children’s Burial Ground is noted on the map. A common practice in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ireland, islanders buried unbaptized children because the church did not allow unbaptized individuals to be buried in the cemetery. Some unbaptized adults were buried there as well in the late medieval period (Ian Kuijt personal communication 2020). The islanders chose this location because it was associated with St. Sciathin’s medieval settlement and a holy well named for the saint (Concannon 1993:3). In that way, the unbaptized people could still be buried in a space with religious associations. Archaeologists have not dated the burial ground, but it
likely dates from the ninth to twelfth centuries (Ian Kuijt personal communication 2020). It is not clear why cartographers neglected to include it on the 1838 map.

Westquarter village occupied a space smaller than 35,000 m² in 1838 and 1898, including subsistence farming plots for each household. On average, each household would have 1,346 m² for living and farming. Just prior to the 1845-1850 Famine there was an increased in population around Ireland, including on Inishbofin (Browne 1893:339). Rather than expand village boundaries, landlords required villagers to subdivide family plots to accommodate for more subsistence farming and residential structures. While the population for Westquarter village is unknown, there were about 1,200 villagers living on Inishbofin and Inishark (Crosfield 1847). It was not uncommon for 8 people to live in these one- and two-room houses. It is feasible that over 200 people lived in Westquarter village during the Great Hunger, leaving each person with 175 m² of space for living and farming. However, that does not account for livestock, like cattle. Islanders valued their cows and pigs because of the consistent income from milk and meat. These animals stayed inside the homes during winter nights, meaning that the villagers were living in smaller spaces than described above.
After the 1898 OSI, Westquarter village underwent a series of changes. Maps from the mid-twentieth century and early twenty-first century illustrate these changes. The laboring classes supported Irish politicians, like Michael Davitt (1904), in their endeavors to change the landholding system. They launched the Land League and continued social and political movements following the 1845-1850 Famine. These groups facilitated change in the settlement patterns in Westquarter village. Over the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, the government enacted the Land Acts, which dismantled the landlord-tenant farming system and allowed farmers to own the land and houses they occupied. At the same time, farmers were not restricted to living within village boundaries.

As a result of the dispersal, the government documented only 13 standing structures (including sheds) in Westquarter village in 1954 (Freeman 1958). By 2012, residents moved beyond village and built homes near the North Beach in Westquarter (Figure 5-7). The number of residential homes in the village has decreased significantly since 1898, and many of the 1838 and 1898 structures are no longer inhabitable. While village-level changes are observable...
through maps, oral histories provided context and details to the dynamic village. An O’Halloran family lived in Building 23, but with the post-famine period land reforms they opted to leave Westquarter and migrate to Middlequarter village on Inishbofin. Their old home, Building 23, became a shed. Sometime over the last twenty years, Building 23 was abandoned; the windows are boarded, vegetation grows on the inside of the house, and the building is for sale. Building 49 (one of the excavated sites) is located close to the water, and, winter storms encroached on the house, making it a difficult place to live. The house was deserted for a more favorable location, and only the western wall of the building is still standing. These examples of abandonment and movement are common for the village.

There were political and social changes occurring in Ireland during and following the Famine. These changes manifest in Westquarter village and are observable through historic maps. Land reform, including owner occupation removed landlord restrictions on village locations, and people moved. The CDB built new roads and houses in Westquarter village. Villagers were no longer limited to farm within the confines of small subsistence farming plots adjacent to their Westquarter Village homes. By moving to the North Beach or elsewhere on Inishbofin, islanders interacted with new neighbors, farmed different plots of land, and walked the road to the shop. They accessed different parts of the coast to collect seaweed or launch their boats to fish. Islanders that remained in the village repurposed empty houses, expanded their subsistence farming lots, and, renovated their houses. Residents of the village remembered their former neighbors from years of interactions with them, and the memoires were embedded in the scape during daily tasks and exchanges. At the same time, villagers created new meaning in the old village. According to oral history, Building 23 occupants moved beyond Westquarter village, and the villagers remembered the O’Halloran family who had lived there, but attached new
meaning to the building when they repurposed it as a shed to hold fishing and farming equipment for daily work. In these ways, Westquarter villagers accessed new or different resources as a way to respond to food insecurity and sociopolitical inequality.

Figure 5-7: Ariel view of Westquarter village. Red arrow indicates where the village expanded north along a Famine-era road, Loch Bofin, and North Beach in Westquarter.

**Archaeological Research on Inishark and Inishbofin**

The CLIC project, directed by Dr. Ian Kuijt, began in 2008 with surveys of Streamstown, on the mainland in County Galway, and of Inishark. The crew surveyed and numbered all of the standing buildings, as well as the buildings detected underground based on linear impressions, aerial surveys, and historic maps. The field crew measured and documented the architectural features of all standing structures. In 2010, CLIC began excavations of historic buildings. The
CLIC project excavated thirteen sites with nineteenth- and twentieth-century components. Some of the sites were occupied during more than one period (Table 5-1). The CLIC team submitted reports to the Irish government for each season’s excavations, and they are part of Ireland’s archaeological archive and accessible to other researchers. I provide brief descriptions of the excavations for each building.

### Table 0-1: Occupation periods of Inishbofin and Inishark sites included in archaeological study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Pre-Famine (pre-1845)</th>
<th>Famine (1845-1900)</th>
<th>Post-Famine (post-1900)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 9</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Inishark Building 20</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 105</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Medieval Sites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Poírtins Building 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Poírtins Building 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Westquarter 49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Middlequarter 33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pre-Famine Excavations on Inishbofin (Poírtins Buildings 2 and 14)

Located within Knock Village, we began researching the Poírtins structures in 2012 with the intent to excavate the following summer. The Mackenzie map of 1776 shows houses on Inishbofin, but no houses were drawn near the Poírtins. However, Bald (1816) included houses in the Poírtins on his map of County Mayo. For the small cluster of houses, Bald’s drawings align fairly well with the ground survey completed by the CLIC project (Figures 5-8 and 5-9). Where Bald drew two nearby houses north of a row of three houses, on the map there are two adjacent houses north of three neighboring houses on the ground. The Ordnance Survey of Ireland completed the next map of the Knock in 1838. In 1838, the cartographers did not include
Knock village meaning the village was in ruins at the time of their survey. The villagers left Knock due to unknown reasons; perhaps people left due to a big storm, or perhaps the landlord forced people to move.

Figure 0-8: Map of locations of Buildings 2 and 14 in Knock on the east end of Inishbofin.

During the summer of 2013, the CLIC crew collaborated with community members to excavate in Knock village on the southeast corner of Inishbofin. We worked in with community members. This included, most notably, 25 school children (aged 4 to 12), teachers, and parent volunteers from the Inishbofin National School. As part of their curriculum, the students participated in excavations and laboratory work.
We excavated two entire structures and placed a trench between the structures to determine their relationship to each other. The excavations of these residential contexts provided exclusively pre-Famine ceramic assemblages. We recovered 280 ceramic sherds from the two buildings. Undecorated refined earthenwares comprised 56 percent of the ceramic sherds. There are 14 reconstructable vessels, pealware (6) was the most numerous followed by whiteware (4) (Figure 5-10). We recovered 14 sherds of unrefined redware from Knock village. All of the redware sherds were recovered from Building 14, meaning that 70 percent of all redware sherds from Inishbofin were recovered from Building 14 in Knock Village. The redware comprise only 6.43 percent of the all ceramics recovered from the Knock village excavations.
Famine-era Excavations on Inishark (Buildings 8, 9, 14, 20, 28, 57, 78, 105, and medieval sites)

The material culture from nine buildings occupied during the Famine Process will be compared to the pre-Famine material from Knock village in the analysis to understand change through time. The nine Famine-era buildings are from Inishark and Inishbofin. I include historic ceramics from medieval religious sites which were places of pilgrimage for post-medieval individuals, and the historic ceramics from those locations date to the 1845-1850 Famine.
Figure 5-11: Map of Historic Village of Inishark with excavated sites labeled.

The CLIC project conducted excavations at Buildings 8, 9, 14, 20, 28, 57, 78, and 105 on Inishark (Figure 5-11). At standing structures 9, 14, and 20, we placed interior units around the hearth and thresholds. We placed exterior units at Buildings 14 and 20 in order to understand house construction and relationship to other features. Buildings 8, 28, 57, 78, and 105 encompassed the structures themselves, interior spaces, and areas which would have been outside the standing structures.

Building 8 was built prior to 1838 and was still standing during the 1898 survey. Oral history from the island makes no reference to a residential structure in this area. The last residents of Inishark told us they used to play sports in the area. We identified the building based on sod berms and large cornerstones which outlined the buildings structure. In 2012, we excavated a trench the width of the building in order to find the doorways and hearth. We uncovered a large number of artifacts in relation to our previous excavations on Inishark and the
size of the trench. In 2014, we expanded the excavation to include the entire interior and select exterior areas of Building 8. We uncovered many nearly complete vessels dating to the mid- to late- nineteenth century.

The original components of Building 9 were constructed prior to 1838 and were renovated between the 1830s and 1850s. The house was left empty sometime after the 1850s through 1900. After 1900 it was modified and reused as a shed or barn. Adjacent to Building 9, we excavated exterior spaces associated with the partially standing structure. We investigated the areas north of the standing structure, which revealed foundations for a northern room of the building and exterior paving. We recovered material culture associated with the structures original use and reuse.

The Cloonan family was the last to occupy Building 14. The structure was constructed prior to 1838 and expanded between 1838 and 1898. We excavated nine trenches at House 14. The interior structures focused on the hearth and thresholds. The exterior trenches unearthed features like exterior paving and a mound of intermittent ash deposits. Material culture dated to the second half of the nineteenth century.

Building 20 is known as the McGreal House, referring to the last family to inhabit the house according to oral history and the historical record. The house was constructed at some point prior to 1838 and was occupied into the 1950s. We excavated three small trenches within the interior of Building 20. Two of the trenches were opened at the northern wall and a third was opened at the eastern wall. We recovered material culture from a wide range of dates, which was not surprising given the occupation of the house.

Building 28 was constructed prior to 1838. There was no recorded oral history associated with the structure. Due to the building’s location on the present-day cliff’s edge, we had to limit
our excavation of exterior areas of the structure. We recovered few artifacts, but our excavations revealed the western wall, a drain, and a hearth against the wall. The house was constructed using sod bricks, which was different than the other structures on Inishark, making it an interesting case study for the vernacular architecture on the islands.

Building 57, like Building 8, was a pre-1838 structure which we identified through sod berms and cornerstones during our walking survey. It was on the 1838 and 1898 map. The northern end of the structure was destroyed after 1913 when the family moved to a new CDB house (Ian Kuijt personal communication 2017). In 2012, we excavated a trench south of the structure. Our aim was to locate the doors and hearth of the house. Our initial, limited excavation did not uncover many architectural features or material culture. Following our experience at Building 8, we returned to Building 57 in 2017 and excavated the interior and some exterior components of the structure. We recovered material culture associated with the mid- to late-nineteenth century occupation of the structure.

**Famine-era Excavations on Inishbofin (Westquarter 49)**

Westquarter Building 49 is on the OSI 1838 and the 1898 maps. It is on water’s edge, and the building is subject to erosion, especially during winter storms which have been increasingly intense in the past decade (Figure 5-12). Islanders brought the house to our attention in 2014 when winter storms revealed ceramics in the newly exposed edge.
Building 49 is a residential structure with one remaining standing wall, which I used as the starting point for the excavation (Figure 5-13 and 5-14). Tommy Burke and two lifelong resident of Westquarter said that a Scuffle (Schofield) family lived in Building 49. John, one of the oldest people on the island, indicated that his mother told him the family moved because of coastal erosion and exposure to the sea during harsh winter storms.
We excavated two 2-x-2-m units (Trenches 1 and 2), separated by a 2-x-2-m space left unexcavated. This placement was intended to locate the missing eastern wall of the house. Trench 1 showed information about the architecture of the house, including the presence of a unique hearth floor. The hearth was constructed of upright pebbles less than 10 cm in length (Figure 5-12). We unearthed this type of hearth construction in Building 14 on Inishark. Trench 2 identified the eastern wall and doorway of the house. It also revealed that, like many residential structures we excavated on Inishark, there was an exterior paving around the outside side of the house. The purpose of this paving was to keep rainwater away from the house. In Trench 2, a cobblestone floor covered the interior of the house beyond the threshold (Figure 5-13). This may have been a way to keep debris from entering the rest of the house.
Unfortunately, proximity to the water caused a significant amount of material unrelated to the house to be deposited at the building. We encountered large amounts of debris, some brought in by the ocean and other, probably trash, deposited by residents of the village after the home was abandoned. This debris, which included stones of a variety of sizes slowed the excavations. Erosion appeared to have impacted stratigraphy; sherds from a distinctly colored yellow plate were recovered from contexts right under the topsoil and above the cobblestone. As a result, I was unable to draw a clear connection between a particular stratigraphic context or occupation layer with an associated artifact assemblage. However, the house and village were occupied during the 1845-1850 Famine, and I analyze the ceramics to understand life during the disaster.

Figure 5-10: Western doorway and cobbled hearth floor at Building 49 in Westquarter village.
The material culture of Building 49 was a mix of glass, ceramic, and metal objects. While I excavated by context, it was clear that the proximity to the water impacted the provenience of material culture (Figure 5-14). There were 221 ceramic sherds recovered from Building 49. As with our excavations of other residential structures on Inishbofin and Inishark, we recovered more undecorated ceramic sherds (73.3 percent) than those with decoration (Table 5-3). Whiteware was most prominent followed by stoneware and then porcelain. We recovered no shell-edged ware, unlike the Pre-Famine households in Knock. Similar to pre-Famine Inishbofin, the residents in Westquarter village were limited in their resources, purchasing cheap undecorated or plain ceramics.
Description of Comparative Sites from Elsewhere in Ireland

In order to compare Inishbofin and Inishark to mainland communities, I accessed Ireland’s National Museum’s databases in Dublin to search for Famine-related material culture and excavation reports. The post-medieval ceramics in the museum’s collections were from contract archaeology excavations at Ballynacragga, Ballyconneely, and Latoon South in County Clare (99E350) and Celbridge in County Kildare (06E0256), close to Dublin. The post-medieval ceramics recovered from County Clare were included 19 sherds of Rockinghamware, 12 sherds of pearlware from a saucer, and 9 sherds of unrefined red earthenware covered from the topsoil at Ballyconneely, and three sherds of Bristol blackware from Latoon South. With such a small sample and a topsoil context, it was not possible to include these in a comparative conversation about the 1845-1850 Famine or Famine Process. At Celbridge in Kildare, the excavators
recovered one sherd of undecorated whiteware that was about four by two centimeters. As a result, I did not include any ceramics from the National Museum’s collections in my comparative analysis.

Comparison with ceramic collections from Achill Island and the Rural Lifeways projects provide important comparative materials. Achill Island is located in County Mayo, about 21 miles north northeast of Inishbofin (Locations on Figure 1-1). Archaeologists have found evidence of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Medieval and Post-medieval settlements on the island (McDonald 1998:73-75). Like Inishbofin and Inishark, Achill Island was owned by a series of landlords throughout the post-medieval period. The Butlers owned the land until the Clanricards. However, the O’Malley clan took over the island until the O’Donel’s acquired Achill. In 1850 the Achill Mission Estate, a Protestant religious conversion undertaking, became the landlord of the island (McDonald 1998:79-82). Like other islanders, Achill islanders were tenant farmers who struggled for basic necessities during the years of the Famine (McDonald 1998:82; General Relief Commission Report RLFC 3/2/21/33).

In the mid 1990s, McDonald and the crew focused the historic archaeology on the village of Slievemore, which islanders deserted shortly after the Achill Mission estate. The occupiers of the houses were tenant farmers who also relied on fishing economy (McDonald 1998:87). Included in the Achill Island ceramics are material culture from House 36, which was completely excavated. Also included are material from Cuttings A, B, C, and D, which were trenches on the exterior walls of Buildings 36 and 25. Finally, I include ceramic materials from Monk’s Garden, an enclosure located close to the center of Tuar, a settlement on Achill (McDonald 1998:90 italicization in original), published by Davis (2009).
Charles Orser began the Rural Ireland Lifeways Project in the mid 1990s. Irish migrants constituted a major part of the workforce for the canal, and Orser decided to research the birthplace of some of the canal workers (Orser 2010:81). He researched sites that were owned by landlords where poor rural tenant farmers survived on small fields to feed their families and pay rent. He included ceramic data in the reports, and I was able to use the data for Barlow’s field (Sligo) and Brogan House (Donegal), and their locations are noted in Figure 1-1. However, I was unable to use the data provided for the Nary house in Ballykilcline because Orser did not include the necessary decoration information for the ceramic sherds.

Brogan House was an intact residential structure in the Glenveagh National Park in County Donegal. It is at the northern end of Lough Veagh. The artifacts collected date from 1810 to 1865. Local residents told Orser that the area was vacated due to the landlord’s evictions in 1861. Barlow’s Field is a residential structure in County Sligo. The occupants of the site were tenant farmers who rented land from the estate’s landlord. Orser did not find the name of the individuals living at the site in the estate records. The residents of the house abandoned the structure. As is common practice, local farmers removed stones as needed for other building projects. The artifact collection dates from 1795 to 1865 (Orser 2010:84).

I included the Brogan House and Barlow’s Field sites in this research because of the nature of the sites. The people who lived at these sites were a similar socioeconomic demographic to the people on Inishark and Inishbofin. The sites were occupied before and during the 1845-1850 Famine, both the event and part of the process. The tenant farmers were all at the whim of the landlord, and struggling to pay rent. I categorize the Brogan House and Barlow’s Field sites as inland sites, and these tenant farmers cannot access water resources, unlike Achill Island, Inishark, and Inishbofin residents.
Comparison of Ceramic Assemblages: Applying Miller’s Pricing Index

I begin with a temporal comparison of ceramics recovered from Inishark and Inishbofin to compare pre-Famine islanders to 1845-1850 Famine-era islanders. My goal is to understand how islanders reacted to the 1845-1850 Famine and Famine Process through the archaeological record. I hypothesize that prior to the Great Hunger, island communities would have a large number of undecorated whitewares. As social upheaval continued throughout the 1800s, they would increase their access to decorated Scottish and English decorated ceramics through increased changes in taskscape. As a result, islanders would have more decorated ceramics than undecorated. Further, they would have more redware through time, since archaeological and oral history evidence indicates that there were no redware ceramic manufacturers on the island. For the comparison of Inishbofin and Inishark to excavated sites from Achill Island, Donegal, and Sligo, I hypothesize that the island and coastal communities will have different and higher priced ceramics. I attribute this to islanders’ ability to incorporate sea resources into their taskscape. If this were the case, I would find less undecorated ceramics and more plates and platters at island and coastal sites. I would also find more redware at the mainland sites, since they are likely close to the redware production sites, although these have not been well documented.

To understand consumption choices and resource availability, I use Miller’s (1980, 1991) value index of ceramics. I am able to apply the approximate cost of vessels in relation to one another. Undecorated were the cheapest refined ware vessels; Potters priced platters and plates higher than bowls and mugs. They sold teacups and saucers as a set for slightly more than bowls and mugs, but less than plates and platters. (Miller 1980:26). While the index is decades old, the information is still useful because the author compiled prices from ceramic producers, which aids in my understanding of islander’s agency and access to resources. As mentioned earlier,
archaeologists need to consider shopping choices by households as a way for individuals to exercise their agency, and Miller’s (1980, 1991) uses cost of the vessel as the only means for evaluating it. Miller does not include any information on seconds, ceramics that may have been slightly cheaper due to mistakes. Miller’s work was limited by the information available in the archival record, and there are instances where prices were not available for each type of ceramic for each year. Further, Miller did not include an index for every form. As a result, I extrapolate the approximate value of ceramic vessels where I could not see price for a specific year but could see the trend over the decades.

**Comparison of Islanders’ Ceramics**

In the early nineteenth century, islanders in Knock were purchasing undecorated ceramics, the cheapest ones on the market. However, many vessels could have small decorations on portions of the vessels that were not recovered during excavations. From pre-Famine sites, undecorated sherds comprised close to 80 percent of the assemblage (Table 5-2). This was followed by shell-edged and bandedware sherds. Transfer prints and hand-painted sherds were the least common in pre-Famine. Prior to the 1845-1850 Famine, shell-edge wares were 33 percent more expensive than an undecorated vessel. Transferprints were the most expensive vessels throughout the pre-Famine period (Miller 1980:26). We recovered fewer hand-painted sherds than transferprints even though transferprints were more expensive. Islanders appear to preferred the transferprint over hand-painted.

During the Famine Process, islanders continued to consume the cost-effective undecorated ceramics. However, transferprints were the second most common sherd recovered from Famine-era sites, followed by spongeware sherds. Throughout the Famine Process, transferprints were no longer the most expensive decorative pottery on the market; they were 50
percent more expensive than undecorated ceramics. Spongeware was only 25 percent more than undecorated pottery (Miller 1980:26). The data suggest that during the Famine Process, islanders were able to consume more of their preferred ceramic decoration with the change in market.

Ceramic sherds are not as helpful as reconstructable vessels to understand past community’s consumption patterns. Sherds can overestimate islander consumption. Therefore, I work with reconstructable vessels by fabric and decoration. These vessels were identified by the ability to mend multiple sherds to one another during the ceramic analysis. Using this conservative vessel count, rather than rims and bases, I ensure I do not overestimate islander ceramics consumption.

There were 447 reconstructable vessels recovered in the excavations. From pre-Famine contexts, there were 14 reconstructable vessels (Table 5-3). These include eleven undecorated, two bandedware, and one hand-painted vessel. Bandedware vessels are what Miller identified as underglazed lined vessels, and he provided only one year of pricing for these. In 1814 bandedware is listed as 1.67 for a ten-inch plate, which means it was 67 percent more expensive than a plain, undecorated whiteware ten-inch plate. Miller did not include data on hand-painted vessels for 1814 which complicates comparison to bandedware. Though, hand-painted vessels were consistently more expensive than undecorated and cheaper than transferprints (Miller 1980:26).

During the Famine Process, islanders continued to consume undecorated vessels more than other decorative types. This is followed by transferprints, spongeware, color-glazed, and hand-painted vessels. Similar to sherd counts revelations, islanders on Inishark and Inishbofin consumed the transferprints over other more cost-effective decoration types.
Table 0-2: Ceramic sherd counts from Inishark and Inishbofin assemblages by decoration treatment. Compiled from personal research and CLIC databases, used with permission. Grey shading indicates pre-Famine site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Undecorated</th>
<th>Spongeware</th>
<th>Shell-edged</th>
<th>Transferprint</th>
<th>Hand-painted</th>
<th>Salt-glazed</th>
<th>Banded</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Medieval Sites</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 8</td>
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<td>163</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 57</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 78</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 105</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishofin Westquarter 49</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishofin Middlequarter 33</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>75.1%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2169</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 0-3: Reconstructable vessel counts by decoration treatment from Inishark and Inishbofin assemblages. Compiled from personal research and CLIC databases, used with permission. Grey shading indicates pre-Famine site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Undecorated</th>
<th>Spongeware</th>
<th>Edged</th>
<th>Willow</th>
<th>Transfer (including willow)</th>
<th>Transfer (not including Willow)</th>
<th>Bandedware</th>
<th>Hand-painted</th>
<th>Salt-glazed</th>
<th>Color-glazed</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Medieval Sites</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30.6%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 57</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 105</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishofin Westquarter 49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishofin Middlequarter 33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On a household level, islanders are making unique ceramic choices. Prior to the 1845-1850 Famine, islanders consumed undecorated vessels in highest number followed by banded and hand-painted. During the Famine Process, residents of Inishark Building 8, 14, 20, 57, and 78 consumed more undecorated ceramics, but their second most popular ceramics were spongeware or transferprint vessels (Figure 5-15). Some residences chose certain decorative ceramics over others. However, residents of Building 105 consumed more hand-painted vessels while Building 28 residents consumed spongeware and hand-painted equally. Although, these numbers may be skewed by the size of the collections, as some buildings, like 8 and 57, had significantly more artifacts than Building 28 (Figure 5-2). Westquarter residents consumed more color-glazed ceramics followed by spongeware.

Table 5-4: Reconstructable vessels by form for Inishark and Inishbofin. Compiled from personal research and CLIC databases, used with permission. Grey shading indicates pre-Famine site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Saucer</th>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Platter</th>
<th>Teacup</th>
<th>Mug</th>
<th>Jug</th>
<th>Bowl</th>
<th>Teapot</th>
<th>Teapot lid</th>
<th>Redware crock</th>
<th>Stoneware jar</th>
<th>Ink jar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Medieval Sites</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 23%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
<td>1 8%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Pointans Building 2</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 17%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 17%</td>
<td>4 67%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Pointans Building 14</td>
<td>1 33%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 33%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 33%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 8</td>
<td>7 13%</td>
<td>5 9%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>8 15%</td>
<td>9 16%</td>
<td>1 2%</td>
<td>10 18%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 5%</td>
<td>3 5%</td>
<td>8 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 9</td>
<td>1 11%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 11%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 11%</td>
<td>1 11%</td>
<td>1 11%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 14</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 7%</td>
<td>2 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 20</td>
<td>5 50%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
<td>1 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 28</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 50%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 50%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 57</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 6%</td>
<td>7 22%</td>
<td>5 16%</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
<td>4 13%</td>
<td>1 3%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>3 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 78</td>
<td>1 13%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 25%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 50%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>1 13%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishark Building 105</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>3 12%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
<td>9 36%</td>
<td>1 4%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
<td>3 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Westquarter 49</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>2 40%</td>
<td>1 20%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin Middlequarter 33</td>
<td>3 100%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 13%</td>
<td>13 7%</td>
<td>5 3%</td>
<td>21 12%</td>
<td>21 12%</td>
<td>12 7%</td>
<td>42 23%</td>
<td>10 6%</td>
<td>6 3%</td>
<td>8 4%</td>
<td>23 13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To understand response to the disaster, I compare vessel form, as a potential indicator of a change in food consumption practices. I included only vessels whose specific forms could be identified, meaning that vessels which were comprised of a number of body sherds, but whose actual form could not be determined were left out of the count (Table 5-4). This was not the case for reconstructable vessels by decoration counts. At the exclusively pre-Famine household there
were no utilitarian vessels recovered. The majority of the vessels from pre-disaster contexts were bowls followed by jugs, saucers, and then plates. At households occupied during the Famine Process, islanders preferred closed vessels over open vessels. Excavators unearthed more bowls than other forms followed by saucers, then teacups, presumable to accompany the saucers, and then mugs. We recovered very few platters in excavations at Pre-Famine or Famine Process-era households. Bowls may be more common because of their versatility. Myles (personal communication 2013) noted that bowls were consumed for porridge, potatoes with milk, and, potentially, tea, although the practice was not recorded in Ireland. Bowls were less expensive than platters and plates, however teacups and saucers, which came as a set, were more expensive than a plate (Shephard 1987: 182).

Looking at the trends for decoration and vessel form, individual households were exercising their agency while they shopped, and they preferred closed vessel forms like bowls, mugs, and teacups to open vessels like platters and plates. However, Shephard (1987) states that teacups were paired with saucers at higher prices. During the Great Hunger, islanders were purchasing bowls followed by teacups and saucers, the more expensive ceramics. There are a couple of explanations, and price was not the ultimate factor. The explanation could be utilitarian or functional, as teacups and saucers provided two items, which could be used as a set or individually in a family setting. Teacups could be used to consume more than tea, like a small portion of porridge or potatoes with buttermilk. Islanders could have been expressing their gentility, as Brighton (2001) found with immigrants in North America. With the exception of transferprints, most of the decorations on the vessels were unique. I suggest that these variations in ceramic assemblages on the islands reflect the fact that people of the islands had distinct taskscapes and preferences. Many of the transferprints were manufactured in England while
Scottish potters produced the spongewares. These patterns of consumption may reflect seasonal migrations in response to the Famine, and islanders expressing agency during the shopping process.

Figure 5-15: Vessel 57 from CLIC artifact assemblage. The spongeware bowl was recovered from Building 57, context 0027 on Inishark. Image used with Permission from the CLIC project.

The Scottish ceramics from Inishbofin and Inishark are often seconds, ones with mistakes or imperfections. In the images below, the sponge application was inconsistent on the vessels (Figure 5-16). For example, in the middle image some of the flowers are placed under the arch while others overlap with the arch. Islanders purchased imperfect ceramics for their homes while completing seasonal work abroad. While pricing information is not available for imperfect goods, Dutton (1989) found evidence of nineteenth-century shops selling damaged ceramics at discounted prices in Lowell, Massachusetts. This may have been a widespread practice in the nineteenth century.
Figure 5-16: Scottish Spongeware recovered from Building 8 on Inishark. All have evidence of imperfections in the decoration application. Image used with Permission from the CLIC project.

Comparison of Regional Assemblages

Before discussing differences in ceramic assemblages, it bears noting one complication. In comparing decorative types, I include those types that are available for all the sites. For example, in the tables for Inishbofin and Inishark, I separated willow from the rest of transferprint sherds because of the value differences presented in Miller (1980). Orser (2006), Orser (2007), and Davis (2009) did not separate their collections in the same manner; therefore, I combine transferprint for the comparative discussion.

Table 0-5: Ceramic sherd counts by decoration type from island and mainland Famine-related site excavations. Data compiled from personal research and the CLIC databases, Charles Orser’s databases and Davis (2009). Unpublished data used with permission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decorated Type</th>
<th>Undecorated</th>
<th>Spongeware</th>
<th>Edged</th>
<th>Transferprint</th>
<th>Bandedware</th>
<th>Hand-painted</th>
<th>Salt-glazed</th>
<th>Unrefined earthenware</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inishark</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1224</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishbofin (excluding exclusively Pre-Famine sites)</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achill Island</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>3149</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At all of the sites, undecorated ceramic sherds outnumbered other types (Table 5-5). I anticipated this given the economic status of the tenant farmers, the price of undecorated vessels, and the nature of some decoration application (with some decoration like shell-edged wares only being found on rims). The second most common ceramic sherds were spongeware for Inishbofin, Achill Island, and Sligo. Transferprints were second most common for Inishark and Donegal.
Each location had different preferences for the third most recovered ceramic sherds. Donegal has the highest concentration of undecorated sherds (88.9%), and the lowest concentration of unrefined earthenware. Sligo has the highest percentage of unrefined earthenware (14.2%).

Tenants at all three sites consumed whitewares over other wares like pearlwares. Ceramics from the nineteenth century were largely composed of fine, white fabric. As Myles (2013) noted there is a surprising lack of unrefined red earthenware on Inishark and Inishbofin compared to his other excavations of historic sites (Figure 5-17). In Table 5-5, Achill Island and Inishbofin have low counts of coarse redware, a ceramic type identifiable by all archaeologists in Ireland due to its prevalence. In contrast, the coarse redware comprised 14.2 percent of the archaeological assemblage recovered from the Barlow site in County Sligo. The sites with the highest ceramic sherd counts, Inishark and Barlow’s Field, have the highest percentage of redwares.

Figure 5-17: Redware recovered from cut into the exterior of the west wall in Building 14 in Knock Village. Image used with Permission from the CLIC project.
Orser noted the differences in the artifact assemblages from Brogan and Barlow. The Brogan house, located in County Donegal, is a site fairly close to the coast, while the Barlow house is inland in Sligo. Orser does not argue that a clear answer for why there are differences in the assemblage. He merely suggests “a strong reliance on locally made coarse earthenware vessels” due to either the potential distance from a coarse earthenware producer, or local culture not being concerned with earthenware vessels, or a temporal change in preference of ceramics (Orser 2007:37). There is no evidence of pottery production on Inishark, and the lack of evidence for redware at some sites may reflect the durability of the ceramic. There is potential to study the manufacture and production of this ceramic type, as it is identifiable by archaeologists, but little else is known about the coarse redwares.

Discussion

Poor tenant farmers across Ireland felt it important to maintain their home, which included decorated ceramics. While dressers were not found in the excavations on Inishark or Inishbofin or Orser’s work (2010), archaeologists did find evidence of dressers on Achill Island and in rural Scottish sites (Orser 2010; Webster 1999). Scholars (Lynch-Brennan 2014:5; Orser 2010:90) suggest that rural places would have had a dresser, a wood piece of furniture to display ceramics and store other household goods. Having ceramics to display on the dresser was important to the creation of the home.

The desire to maintain a home, despite social or economic conditions, has been documented elsewhere in the nineteenth century (Brighton 2001; Klein 1991; Wall 1991). The Five Points Neighborhood in New York City was called a slum (Yamin 2001:1), and new immigrants, often Irish and German, often found affordable housing. Ceramic data from the excavations in New York suggest that these migrants work aspiring above their social position.
Brighton (2001) argues that they consumed ceramics as a way to express middle-class Victorian values. It was a signal of their “gentility,” contrary to the stereotype of the neighborhood (Brighton 2001).

Like the new immigrants in Five Points, islanders purchased low end of decorated ceramics. While Praetzellis and Praetzellis (1992) observed the importance of similar patterns among immigrant communities, that was not the case with these islanders. They consumed a variety of patterns. Writers, like Asenath Nicholson (1851), discussed the dire state of people living in rural Ireland, but the Irish tenant farmers strived to create a home to express their refinement. The presence of the more expensive pottery suggests islanders and rural Irish tenant farmers invested in their home through the presence of decorated vessels.

During interviews, I asked Inishbofin islanders about the 1845-1850 Famine, how the people survived the disaster, and if the island was vulnerable or not. First, islanders recognize the long standing colonialism of Ireland and the island. At the 2012 Society for Historical Archaeology Conference in Leicester, England, one islander saw a sign for the Cromwell Room at the venue and exclaimed, “Fucking Cromwell! Can’t get away from him.” When asking about the 1845-1850 Famine on Inishbofin, another islander said,

Ireland was ruled by England at the time, and the English weren’t going to give a damn what happened to people in Ireland on the whole, not just [on Bofin]…Ireland had means of staying alive. People on Bofin were lucky because they were surrounded by water; they could catch fish and bury it in pits so they wouldn’t starve if the potatoes failed.

Islanders remember the impact of colonialism on the island, and they have a Cromwellian military fort on the island as a constant reminder of English seizing land throughout the post-medieval period. Cromwell’s fort is at the entrance to the harbor and is visible to all to visit Inishbofin. Islanders link the 1845-1850 Famine directly to English presence in Ireland.
When I asked about surviving the disaster, one islander told me, “Bofin was unusual when it came to surviving the Famine because of the harbor. People still died from the Famine, but our survival is because has been able to be self-sufficient compared to other islands,” said one lifelong Inishbofin resident referencing the natural harbor and neighboring Inishark devoid of human occupation. Others mentioned proximity to the water in general, where people could gather resources that mainland communities could not. Oral history indicates that people sold their boats in order to purchase food during the Famine Process, and they relied on gathering limpets and other food near water’s edge. Islanders collected the ‘famine foods’ in addition to practicing seasonal migration in order to survive during times of want.

Inishbofin had experienced times of hunger before the mid-nineteenth century famine. They had certain ways to survive based on community practices during previous hardship. In 1822, islanders were said to gather sea resources from the beach that they would not normally consume. Due to potato crop failures the population of the islands decreased by a third from the years of 1841 to 1851. There were continued crop failures in the 1870s and 1880s, and the islanders were reported to eat seaweed and limpets during potato crop failures. Government aid did reach the island during some of these events, and islanders participated in Tuke’s sponsored migration (Concannon 1993: 57-60).

During these times of hardship, the islanders changed their taskscape (Table 5-6). When Inishbofin people went to the beach to gather food, like limpets, to survive, they embedded meaning into the area through that task. When potatoes were available again, people would remember the practice of collecting seaweed and other fish resources, but they would resume farming their potatoes, as would their neighbors.
At the same time, islanders supplemented their work with seasonal migration. They would extend their taskscape beyond the confines of the island and travel to Scotland with friends and neighbors to work as tattie hokers. Through the repetitive seasonal migration, they embedded new meaning in their scape. Before departing Scotland for Inishbofin, Inishark, or Achill Island, people would purchase a ceramic vessel or two. They purchased different patterns than the previous year, and they added the new acquisition to their eclectic collection. Based on research in Ballymenone, Glassie suggests that ceramics are a way for the family to remember events in the past (1982:362-263). Overtime, the ceramics on the islands were not associated with the specific seasonal migration.

The ceramic data suggest that islanders were not more vulnerable than other communities during this particular disaster. This questions the increased vulnerability of islands argument used in relation to other disasters (Gaillard 2007; Kelman et al. 2011; Kelman and Khan...
The access to sea resources and changes to the taskscape along with other coping mechanisms of migration and social change indicate that the islanders had the means to survive shortages of their staple crop.

**From gift to heirloom.** During my interviews, Westquarter villagers expressed that their grandparents, parents, and aunts and uncles handed down family heirlooms to the next generation. The younger generations remember the dressers displaying the ceramics. They heard that the vessels used to belong their great grandparents, and they cherish the objects as family heirlooms, rather than signs and memories of hardship.

Islanders incorporate ceramic vessels into their family heirloom collections in different ways. On Inishbofin, gift giving and remittances are long remembered through oral history. Some of the gifts came in monetary form, but ceramics were a common gift among islanders. In Ireland, ceramics are often used to commemorate events (Glassie 1982), and this extends to Inishbofin. During one interview, a Westquarter resident showed me a ceramic plate with John F. Kennedy’s image adorning the vessel, commemorating his visit to Ireland in the 1960s. She said it was a gift from some American relatives. Some of her other ceramic vessels were inherited from family members, but her parents and grandparents refused to speak of the Famine, so if they were acquired during the disaster, that memory was not passed down to the next generation. However, she cherishes the ceramic vessels as heirlooms and family belongings despite not knowing the original purpose or event that led to the purchase.

Moykr and Ó Grada (1982:5) argue that emigration benefited those who left and those who stayed behind. An important aspect to migration was the financial benefit for all parties involved. The migrant individual or group left in order to access new economic opportunities. In Ireland, emigration created regular remittances for many households in Ireland. Remittances
include both monetary and non-monetary gifts to alleviate stress for the receiving community (McLaughlin 2009:241). Most remittances are informal transactions and do not leave formal records. According to available historical documents, remittances in Ireland were high in the mid 1850s, dropped drastically, and then slowly rising throughout the end of the nineteenth-century (McLaughlin 2009:242).

In the next chapter, I move toward the conversation forward with the remembering and heritage of *An Gorta Móir*. I begin with an exploration of the official heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine. The governmental approach to the disaster began using the colonial approach of prescribed silence which resulted in humiliated silence for Irish people for decades. However, as my research will demonstrate, I observed a change in the heritage which moves away from silence into engaged dialogue.
CHAPTER SIX:
AN UNWANTED COLONIAL LEGACY: OFFICIAL HERITAGE OF THE FAMINE IN IRELAND

In Chapter 3, I examined various definitions of heritage, and I described “official” heritage as that which is sanctioned by governing bodies. (Harrison 2013:14). In this chapter, I explore the remembrance of the Great Hunger through official discourse channels. I draw on my research of museum collections, historical documents commissioned by governmental agencies, school textbooks, and famine heritage sites that received financial support from governing bodies. Also, I incorporate information gleaned from interviews with people involved in Famine discourse, in official and unofficial capacities, including past and present museum employees, archivists, employees at heritage sites, archaeologists who have worked on governmental projects, and teachers. My goal is to understand the objectives and themes of official Famine heritage since the upheaval into the present. For context, there were no governmental projects to document the disaster until after Ireland gained independence from England in 1922. I identified seven trends in the construction of official heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine that demonstrate how such constructions marginalize the disaster and those who suffered during the social upheaval.

Problematic Official Heritage Constructions

First, official discourse does not present a clear consensus on when the Great Hunger occurred. During trips to various heritage sites, I noted inconsistencies as to dates of the disaster. The Tubbercurry Famine memorial has a plaque that dates the workhouse graveyard from 1845-
1847, but another interpretive sign indicates that the Workhouse was built in 1852, but the heritage constructors group the workhouse as part of the Famine. The Kilmallock Famine memorial says the Famine occurred between 1845 and 1849. At the Sligo Famine graveyard there is bronze tree and the plaque below indicates that the Famine occurred from 1845-1847. A plaque at the “Famine” sculpture in Dublin uses a quote from 1854 to describe a procession of starving people. At the Famine Remembrance Park in Ballinasloe, County Galway the Famine is limited to the years of 1845-1848. The mass grave sign in the Famine Memorial at Abbesystrowery Cemetery in Skibbereen, County Cork is “In memory of the victims of the Famine 1845-48,” but on more prominent monument sign in the same cemetery the Famine is dated 1845-1850. The Connemara Heritage Centre has a sign referencing the “Great Famine in Connemara 1847-1852”. As of 2019, the national Famine commemoration sites all refer to a Famine that occurred between 1845 and 1850.

Second, official heritage minimizes or ignores the 1845-1850 Famine and Famine Process. I found a history textbook from 1905 in the National Archives. The Royal History of England by Thomas Nelson and Sons (1905) was a standard history textbook for students beginning secondary school; Nelson and sons produced the book in London, and teachers taught with the book in Irish schools, as Ireland was still part of the British Empire in 1905. The copy I examined belonged to Eileen O Malley, a student at Loreto Convent in Dublin. In the book, the authors referred to 1845-1850 Famine as the “1845 Potato Blight,” and they describe the situation; “In 1845 a blight fell on the potato crop, which caused sore Famine and fever in Ireland during the ensuing winter. Generous aid was sent from England and from America; but partly by death and partly by emigration, the population was lessened by nearly two million” (Nelson and Sons 1905:476). In the text that follows, the authors move on abruptly to the discuss
Robert Peel, Prime Minister of England at the start of the Great Hunger, and his change in stance on tariffs, forcing his resignation.

Another history textbook from the early twentieth century, *A Short History of Ireland for Schools B.C. 1300 to A.D. 1992* (Murphy 1922) includes extensive coverage of topics such as the Kings of Ireland and Britain, the saints in Ireland, and the path to an independent Ireland, focusing mainly on elite or unique parts of Ireland’s past. In the chapter covering the mid-nineteenth century, titled “Our own times (1840-1893)” Murphy (1922:153) discussed the potato blight, the lack of appropriate governmental response to the lack of potatoes, human disease, and migration, focusing at least to some extent on the disaster’s effect on people. However, the coverage is brief; Murphy wrote 248 words on the 1845-1850 Famine in the 183 pages of Irish history. While the second history textbook at least acknowledges the tragedy both books minimize the disaster. These early forms of remembrance, or lack of, suggest the government’s denial of the disaster, and the state practiced prescriptive forgetting (Connerton 2008: 151-154) in attempts to prevent further social upheaval.

Under the newly formed Irish Free State, the earliest governmental remembrance of the Famine occurred over eighty years after the potato blight occurred. The National Folklore commissioners created the first remembrance occurred through the School’s Project, completed in 1937-1938. The National Folklore Commission (1935-1971) was a governmental organization that was created to preserve Ireland’s oral history and material culture with the antiquated thought that if they did not record oral history that knowledge would be lost forever as communication technology changed, especially for rural Ireland (Briody 2008:67; Daly 2010:74). Under the direction of the commission, teachers and students from every county in the Republic of Ireland participated in the Schools’ Projects, also known as the Schools’ Collection.
The commissioners sent out a list of questions to the teachers. The teachers instructed their students to collect oral history on places, folktales, legends, past life ways and more. The School’s Project and the Famine Questionnaire (1945) were the earliest governmental documentations of the disaster.

This trend toward sparse commemoration and ignoring the 1845-1850 Famine continued even into the modern era. For the one-hundredth anniversary of the disaster the national government commissioned a book on the Great Hunger. R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (1956) edited a scholarly volume on the 1845-1850 Famine, contrasting this with other writings on the topic which they described as either too political or too literary. Their intention was to write a book that did not focus on political nationalism, giving a neutral but critical perspective of the British government’s role in disaster response (Edwards and Williams 1956). In addition to the obvious naiveté in thinking they could write a neutral perspective on the Famine, the authors’ academic approach to the topic must have been alienating to the majority of Irish people. These early projects were marginal compared to the gravity of the disaster. I spoke with Kate from the Consulate General of Ireland. She described official heritage conversations on the 1845-1850 Famine as:

symptoms of where we are at a time. It was politically problematic [to discuss the Famine]. It happened so long ago, and, for the sake of it, it was best to not be like the British. Additionally, you had this growth toward improving relations between Britain and Ireland…Tony Blair did apologize for it and accepted a degree of responsibility for it. There is no point in bringing it up repeatedly.

The government inherited the desire to downplay the disaster, however, unlike the prescriptive forgetting of the colonial government, the new Irish government selectively forgot due to “humiliated silence” (Connerton 2008: 161), the pain and embarrassment the disaster caused.
The sesquicentennial of the Famine prompted a commemoration, but remembrance was inconsistent following the anniversary. The National Famine Commemoration Day in Ireland did not begin until 2008, after much protest from grassroots organizations. Some examples of the national commemorative events and sites ignore the actual disaster. The 2017 site for the National Famine Commemoration Day was at the Famine Warhouse in Ballingarry. My tour guide told me about the house, which was the site of an 1848 skirmish between English military and an Irish independence group. However, my guide, who learned about the 1845-1850 Famine from the job, the guided tour and permanent interpretive display focused instead on the wealthy landowner, connections to a medieval Irish King, and the creation of the tri-color flag. Indeed, there is very little mention of the disaster in the guided tour of the Famine Warhouse. I left wondering why “Famine” was in its name, as it appears “Famine” is used as referentially for a period of time. Events and places intended to commemorate the difficult heritage barely mention the disaster and focus on other aspects of Irish history which are less painful to remember.

Even at the National Famine Museum, visitors learn about the life and death of Denis Mahon, a landlord who died during the Great Hunger, rather than the larger context of the disaster. While on a tour of Strokestown Park, the Mahon family estate, I learned about Mahon wanting to use his land for profitable cattle raising, and rather than contributing to 1845-1850 Famine relief for his tenant farmers, he sent them away to North America. Visitors and managers of negative heritage sites struggle with how to deal with difficult heritage, as scholars (Chambers 2006; Handler and Gable 1997; Meskell 2002) discuss the negative aspects are lightly discussed or ignored in favor of discussions about elite or privileged members of society to prevent discomfort among the visitors.
Creators of heritage sites make decisions about what to include. Some commemorative sites ignore the 1845-1850 Famine for what the creators must have deemed more interesting information. The Sligo Famine graveyard plaque commemorates those who suffered during the disaster by referencing the “hunger, disease and death.” However, the remainder of the plaque is dedicated to the explanation of symbolism of the lone tree and boulder stones, alluding to prehistoric Irish burial practices. Along the water closer to Sligo City centre, the Sligo Famine memorial does not specifically commemorate those who suffered during the Great Hunger. Rather, the creators use a W.B. Yeats quote about dead people, which is not specific to the disaster, and ask people to visit the Famine Graveyard in Sligo “restored through the generosity of: Sligo Corporation, Sligo County Council, The Peace & Reconciliation Fund, North Connacht Farmers, [and] Coillte.” The constructors of these memorials may have intended to commemorate the 1845-1850 Famine, but like much of the official heritage they ultimately minimize the disaster.

While one of its officials told me that “the Famine is immensely important in Ireland’s history,” the National Museum of Ireland ignores the disaster through an omission of displays or information in any of the museums, an approach that I identify as a remnant from early approaches to the Great Hunger. During our interview, the former keeper of antiquities for the National Museum expressed the importance of Ireland’s post-medieval period, which includes An Gorta Mór. However, the post-medieval period is not discussed in any substantial manner in the main archaeology museum located in Dublin. There was only one mention of the post-medieval in the National Museum of Ireland’s Museum of Archaeology, and, in the temporary exhibit, it referenced a famous person during the Irish fight for independence. When exploring post-medieval Ireland, people are directed to the Decorative Arts and History museum, which
continues the emphasis on elites in the past, or the Museum of Country life in Castlebar, County Mayo. The Museum of Country Life uses the 1845-1850 Famine as a reference point, but does not engage with the material in any way. Everyday people from the post-medieval era, including those who suffered during the disaster, are ignored by the national museums in Dublin, and, as I mentioned before, the museum in Castlebar does not have any substantial conversation on the disaster.

At the National Library of Ireland, I found archival material suggesting that the Taoiseach’s (the Prime Minister of Ireland) office had requested that the National Museum at Collin’s Barracks create an exhibit for the 150th anniversary of the Great Hunger. However, upon contacting the museum, I was told I was mistaken and there was no exhibit. After further explaining what I was searching for, I was granted permission to see the museum’s archival material. I read paperwork and correspondence about loaning Famine-related material to a traveling exhibit in the United States. However, I saw no evidence that the National Museum ever created a Famine exhibit. The current curator and archivist at Collin’s Barracks had no knowledge of such an exhibit; given that these individuals have held their positions for over a decade, I trust that this is not a fault of their memory. The National Museum of Ireland, whose duty it is to preserve and share Ireland’s past with people, repeatedly ignores An Gorta Mór.

Third, official heritage discourse has a limited scope of the Great Hunger, failing to provide the audience and consumers with a broader social, political, and economic understanding of the disaster. The National Folklore commission created the Famine Questionnaire for the one-hundredth anniversary of the catastrophe. They sent out surveys across the country to gather information about the disaster from communities across Ireland. The commission focused the
questionnaire on specific topics. The following are direct quotes from the commissioners’ questions:

1. Are there any local traditions about the manner in which the blight first appeared?
2. Please write down any stories or traditions you can find locally about the following: Famine deaths, burials, graves, graveyards, the Cholera in your district; local fever hospitals at the time.
3. Can you give any accounts of the dissolution of individual local families during the Famine (or soon afterwards) by death or migration (to other districts) or emigration (to other countries)?
4. Local evictions during or soon after the Famine. What was the attitude of local landlords, merchants and shopkeepers, well-to-do families and priests during the Famine: alms, credits, mortgagees on land, seizures, evictions etc?
5. Food During the Famine: Types of food available locally, uses made of special foods (herbs etc.). Food-centres set up by the government and various societies; local soup-kitchens: how run, individuals associated with them; conditions (if any) attached to the receipt of food at some of those centres. Souperism and proselytism in your district during the Famine…
6. Accounts of local relief schemes during the Famine (road-making, drainage etc.) (Folklore et al. 1945).

The commissioners limited the scope of the heritage depicted by providing suggestions for the answers. They asked the participants to,

Write down all available stories and accounts about it [the Famine] under the following heads: condition of the local community prior to the Famine, density of the population, main sources of food supply, how the blight came on the potato crop, attempts to counteract it, the quality of potato and grain crops during those years, special food used by the people (list of herbs, plants, roots, fruits, seaweeds, shellfish, various kinds of flesh, animal blood, meal, and other substitutes used to supplement the ordinary diet). (Folklore et al. 1945).

William Naddy responded to the Folklore Questionnaire, and he wrote about burials, as instructed by the commissioners, saying, “they were buried in bottomless coffins in a large pit in the corner of the present graveyard. These coffins had hinges attached to the bottoms, a trigger was pulled and the body was let to drop into the pit” (Folklore et al. 1945). Naddy may have had more to say about the disaster, stories about the people he knew and how they felt about the catastrophe. In both of these foundational projects, a small group of people decided what was
worth to be preserved for the collective, and they limited the agency of those collecting the information (Dicks 2000; Harrison 2013; Lowenthal 1985; Smith 2006).

More recent explanations of An Gorta Mór continue the limited scope of the Famine Process and broader understanding of the disaster. Authors of school textbooks limit the explanation of the 1845-1850 Famine, relying heavily on the potato blight as the cause of the disaster. In History Alive, a textbook for secondary school, the authors summarize the causes of the disaster as follows:

Overpopulation meant that there were too many people for too little fertile land; Most small farmers subdivided their land among their sons…The sons had less and less land; The cottiers depended totally on the potato as a source of food; the main cause of the Famine was the failure of the potato crop in successive years (Henry et al. 2018:213).

I examined two other history textbooks for an examination of contemporary heritage. The Past Today by Lucey (2009) contained the most comprehensive explanation of the tragedy. The author explains that the landless farmers were descendants of Irish people forced on to plantations by the English and Scottish. However, Lucey (2009:237) still explained the factors that led to the 1845-1850 Famine as “rise in population, subdivision of the land, dependence on the potato, and potato blight.” Students reading the book do not learn about the economy and market at the time, which were major contributing factors to scarcity in nineteenth-century Ireland.

In Time Bound (Delap and McCormick 2018:235), another history textbook, the first page of the 1845-1850 Famine chapter lists the first keyword for the section as “blight.” The chapter continues with an emphasis on the potatoes and arrival on the potato fungus. To their credit, the authors include a suggestion in the teacher’s edition to look back at other chapters that mention British policy in Ireland. However, a student’s first exposure and reference to the
disaster begins with an emphasis on the potato blight rather than the social, political, and
economic policies which created the conditions for the catastrophe. By focusing on the lack of
potatoes, rather than the larger forces which caused the issues, the authors of the textbooks are
teaching students that governments cannot be held accountable for the disaster, despite the
largely state-imposed socioeconomic structures that caused overreliance on a single crop.
Through this limited lens, official discourse on the disaster only superficially addresses the
disaster, again a remnant of colonial influence and humiliated silence.

Fourth, the official 1845-1850 Famine discourse is overshadowed by other events in Irish
history despite the impact the disaster had. I visited three Famine-related monuments that are
quite literally overshadowed by nearby commemorations of other aspects of Ireland’s history,
especially those associated with power and strength. First, in Dublin’s St. Stephen’s Green, a
large public park, the city installed a Famine memorial in 1967. This is the earliest monument to
the 1845-1850 Famine. The Great Hunger monument is located inside the green behind a tall
wall of upright stones. However, on the street facing side of the wall is a sculpture of Wolfe
Tone, an eighteenth-century Irish revolutionary. I noted that the Irish are proudly displaying the
leader of a failed rebellion, and the 1845-1850 Famine monument sits in the shadow of this
valorized man.

Second, the Famine Cross, a Celtic cross monument erected in Glasnevin Cemetery for
the 2016 National Famine Commemoration day (Figure 6-1). Glasnevin serves as the final
resting place of some of Ireland’s most notable figures, including Daniel O’Connell, known as
the Liberator for campaigning for Catholic emancipation in pre-Famine Ireland. O’Connell’s
grave, marked by a 180-foot tower, literally dwarfs the 15-foot 1845-1850 Famine monument
which sits a few feet from the tower (Figure 6-2).
Figure 6-1: Famine cross in Glasnevin Cemetery. During my interview with Blanch, he says his organization helped prompt the construction of the monument. Photo by author.
Figure 6-2: Photo of Daniel O'Connell's grave marker. The 180-foot tower is an allusion to medieval round towers. Photo by author 2018.

My third, and perhaps most obvious example of marginalization of official 1845-1850 Famine discourse, comes, ironically enough, from the National Famine Memorial itself. Located in Murrisk, County Mayo, John Behan (1997) created a large sculpture of a coffin ship—the term for boats used for transatlantic migration during the Great Hunger—so named because many of the passengers died on the journey. Instead of wood for the ship’s body, Behan crafted bronze skeletons to echo the nature of the disaster (Figure 6-3).
The sculpture sits in a well-designed park with a sea view and quiet contemplation area.

However, the memorial is at the base of Croagh Patrick. Named for St. Patrick the patron saint of Ireland, Croagh Patrick is a mountain and site of a religious pilgrimage. I visited the National Famine Monument while dozens of people, both Irish nationals and tourists, climbed the mountain. I spoke with an employee at the closest café, and she confirmed that few people visit the Famine memorial; instead, most people venture to Murrisk for Croagh Patrick.

Fifth, interpretive signage accompanying official discourse is inconsistent or lacking. I was shocked at the lack of acknowledgement of the disaster at a Famine memorial in County Cork. Alex Pentek (2015) created the exhibit “Kindred Spirits” to commemorate the generosity of the Choctaw Nation during the tragedy. The Choctaws donated 170 dollars to the Famine relief efforts (Shane Stephens personal communication 2018), which was remarkable considering the Choctaws were (and remain) a marginalized Native American group. For the exhibit, Pentek designed a bowl consisting of feathers. It is a beautiful sculpture, but one which is
unaccompanied by any interpretation, let alone any connection to the Famine. Indeed, I found only one sign in the park, and this was devoted to the theme of wildlife diversity. I would have had no idea as to the purpose of the sculpture had I not conducted my own research.

The Connemara Heritage Centre creators miss the opportunity to connect *An Gorta Mór* to tangible artifacts from the people who lived it. The mid-nineteenth century pottery on display in one case (Figures 6-4 and 6-5) is placed alongside farming, shaving, and photography equipment, with no apparent connection to theme of the Famine. Without proper presentation of the heritage the importance and meaning of heritage information is lost (Grimwade and Carter 2000:34), and without proper interpretive signage, objects on display are at risk for turning into decoration rather than heritage objects (Keily 2008). In this way, the people who used these objects are not being commemorated in a way that promotes remembrance of their experiences even in cases of pain and struggle (Little 2004:281).
Figure 6-4: Photograph of display area at Connemara Heritage Centre. The display is filled with nineteenth-century material culture, but lacks interpretive signage. Red square is area focused in next figure. Photo taken by author 2018.

Figure 6-5: Mid-nineteenth-century ceramics on display at Connemara Heritage Centre with no context provided. Photo taken by author 2018.
In Dublin, there is 1845-1850 Famine memorial along the River Liffey. Rowan Gillespie (1999) created the sculptures which include depictions of starving people and a dog, all in obviously dire condition. The statues are close to the financial district in Dublin, but, unfortunately, the meanings of the statues are easily overlooked because the signs are embedded in the sidewalk. I sat on a bench by the statues and watched dozens of people walk by them without a glance at the statues. Some people, who appeared to be tourists based on the maps and cameras in hand, did stop and look at the statues. But in general the starving faces blend into the cityscape as people walk by them on their busy days because their interpretive signage is poorly placed and has little information about the disaster.

In these examples, the creators of the monuments overlooked an opportunity. Interpretation using primary documents from the Great Hunger is not easy, as they focus on lives of the elite, rather than life for the majority of Irish people. During my research I visited Westport House in County Mayo, which was home to the Brown family, the landlord of Inishark and Inishbofin during the disaster. Hester Catherine Browne, the second marchioness of Sligo, known as Lady Sligo, wrote letters to her agent addressing food acquisition and the state of the tenants on her family’s land. Some of the letters on display, like the one in Figure 6-6, are unrelated to the catastrophe.
With such little information on the disaster, the creators of heritage sites and museums should use the available material culture and heritage sites to enlighten the audience. With contested memories and the desire to commemorate certain aspects of the past, people construct heritage for the present generation and next generation due to political or social concerns, as described above. In order for heritage to challenge hegemony power or counter dominant constructions of the past, it must be effective at engaging audiences. Tilden (1957:9) crafted six principles of interpretation to engage with the audience:

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based on information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical, or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.

6. Interpretation addressed to children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

Following Tilden’s principles, the language and presentation shared with any heritage should be a way to captivate the audience. This means that objects on display, like those in museums, should have sufficient information, otherwise they risk becoming little more than a decorative features (Keily 2008:38). The audience should be exposed to information that is meaningful, relevant, and personal, and the information should connect with larger concepts (Ham 1992:14; Little 2004:281; Serrell 1996:9-10). Interpretation at difficult heritage sites needs to go beyond the discussing universal experiences of trauma and pain, rather they should provoke audience members with challenging issues about the heritage (Ham 1992:14; Little 2004:281, 2007; Serrell 1996:9; Tilden 1957). Little (2007) elaborates on the purpose of interpretive work to say that it should connect with the audience to right wrongs in the past. Most official discourse on the 1845-1850 Famine neglects to create connections or engage audiences. As a result, the trauma of the past is marginalized in the commemoration.

Sixth, 1845-1850 Famine-related heritage sites are obscured through their isolation and neglect. For example, while driving between sites, I saw a sign for a Famine burial ground in Tubbercurry. This was not on my list of heritage sites to visit, but since there is no guide to Famine-related memorializations, my search was opportunistic. I decided to try and find the memorial advertised. To no avail, I drove past a recycling center and through a housing estate searching the Famine memorial in the direction indicated by the sign. While in a grocery store parking lot, I learned that I needed to park the car and walk through a play area at the housing
estate to find the famine memorial. My experience suggests that a visitor would have to be quite
determined to find the site.

Often in smaller towns, the memorials to the 1845-1850 Famine are located in the
graveyards of the workhouses and are difficult to find. Knowledge of the locations of these
Famine-era graveyards typically passed down through oral histories that, while perhaps known to
locals, are mainly inaccessible to visitors. Some of these memorials are located a kilometer or
two outside town, limiting their appeal to visitors. But even a determined visitor might have
trouble locating them, owing to the lack of advertising or signage. In Newcastle West, I had to
ask three people, and I specifically asked older people, before I could find the memorial. In
Kilmallock, I drove in circles trying to find the memorial. I asked seven people about the
location; I received many bewildered looks and one older gentleman exclaimed, “There’s a
Famine memorial in Kilmallock, are you sure?” One person knew about the memorial, but was
unsure of the location. The seventh person, an older woman, gave me directions to the park,
which was fairly close to the main road. I realized that I had been a block away from the park,
but there was no sign indicating the memorial’s location anywhere in town. I found this baffling
as it is a nationally recognized 1845-1850 Famine site, and Mary McAleese, the president of
Ireland in 1999, opened the park during her presidency (Tobin and O’Connor 2018).

In some towns, visitors to the memorials may see a simple white arrow with black letters
indicating a direction of the memorial from the main street, but those were not available for all
memorials. Frankly, one arrow does not provide help to locate the site. While in Clones, County
Monaghan, I tried to find the site using the map from the Clones Famine Committee Facebook
page. Unfortunately, the GPS points provided did not lead me to the famine memorial. While
sitting in my small rental car, I searched the internet for helpful information on the location of
the memorial. I stumbled across a travel blog that described driving down a winding dirt road. After driving a kilometer down what I hoped was the road, I spotted a brown and white arrow pointing to the location of the monument. After completing my research, I realize that most of the Famine memorials in small towns are located on the former grounds of the workhouses. I have decided that the most prudent to locate many of the 1845-1850 Famine memorials would be to locate workhouses on historic maps.

Maintenance is another issue that limits the effectiveness of many heritage sites, thus contributing to the marginalization of the memory of the disaster. While the government’s desire to honor those who suffered in the Great Hunger is commendable, many of the official heritage sites I visited were in poor condition and in need of repair and renovation. This was especially true of the memorials created by regional or local governmental organizations, like county councils. Often in my observations the inscriptions on the stones are fading and difficult to read. The vegetation at the Tubbercurry and Tuamgraney famine memorials is overgrown, and visitors must clear away growth to view aspects of the monuments. People left litter at the Newcastle and Tuamgraney sites.

In a similar theme, vandalism is an issue for 1845-1850 Famine heritage sites. Shortly after its completion, someone stole the dog from the Famine monument in St. Stephen’s Green in Dublin. The dog mysteriously reappeared a few years later (Kelleher 2014:106). Part of the Newcastle West monument was also stolen, and, unfortunately, is still missing (Prendiville 2016). At the Famine arboretum in Corkagh Park in South Dublin, the informative map’s glass case was broken and the map torn (Figure 6-7). There was graffiti on the Celica Griffith Memorial in Galway, and many of the sites had litter scattered in the area. While committees work to gather funds to create and unveil beautiful commemorative sites, they neglect the long-
term care of these heritage sites, as a result these sites, particularly in urban areas, are at risk of dilapidation due to environmental concerns and vandalism (Jigyasu 2016:59-60). I mention this issue in this chapter, but I found this to be the cause throughout my research at both sanctioned and unsanctioned heritage sites.

Finally, official heritage appears to be focusing on static constructions of the past, which align with policy makers definitions of heritage, rather than the dynamic definition used by scholars. The government has created 38 monuments or parks that have been left largely unattended following the initial unveiling. There are little interactions and few events at the sites to commemorate the tragedy; as a result, people forget the original purpose of the sites. Official heritage leaves the use of dynamic heritage constructions, like recurring walks, demonstrations,
events, or museum displays to unofficial heritage (discussed in the next chapter). In this way, official heritage constructs heritage inline with UNESCO and other governing bodies. The official heritage discourse ignores the way that heritage changes for through time, making a transition from colonial legacy to renewed understanding difficult.

Exceptions to the Trends

I noted four official heritage sites where the 1845-1850 Famine is interpreted more effectively. The Kilkenny Famine Experience, the Celica Griffin Memorial Park, and the memorials in Tuamgraney and Ennistymon were exceptions to my criticism of official heritage; these memorializations address the disaster directly, providing context that the heritage monuments described above lack. In this regard they are more like unofficial heritage sites described in the chapter that follows.

The Tuamgraney monument is located in a graveyard, like many of the official heritage sites described above. However, this memorialization includes a sign that discusses the nature and number of the burials in the Famine graveyard, as well as the significance of the commemorative trees. Further, the Tuamgraney community included a soup pot with accompanying interpretive signage as “a stark reminder of what some of our ancestors depended on for their daily sustenance.”

Next, the 1845-1850 Famine memorial in Ennistymon includes a series of signs with general information about the tragedy, as well as specific details about how the disaster affected people locally. The signage notes that 8,0000 people died in County Claire as a result of the disaster and notes that the “Famine helped establish a pattern of heavy emigration in the county which has lasted almost to the present.” Ciaran O’Murchadha, the author of the panels, used
details from an anecdote about a young boy to connect the visitor to the experience, rather unlike other Famine dialogues which distance the present-day audience from the tragedy.

Third, the Celia Griffin memorial and Park in Galway City contextualizes the death and starvation of a young girl during the Famine. Ceila was a six year-old girl who died during the calamity, and the monument includes the text from a newspaper article which describes the “starvation inquiry” about her death, “caused for want of common necessaries of life.” Dermot Kenny created an app that guides people on a fifteen-minute walk through the heart of Galway City to the memorial park. Listeners hear the story of young Celia Griffin and her tragic, avoidable death. When I asked Kenny about his motivation behind the project he said, “I used to drive past the memorial every day, and many mornings spotted the same old lady leaving flowers. One day the lady stopped appearing…. So it was my turn.” Such narratives of personal connections and suffering are more similar to the interpretation I observed more commonly at unofficial heritage sites.

The Kilkenny Famine Experience stands apart from the other official heritage discourses and sites. Indeed, it is an inspiration for those people working to commemorate the tragedy more effectively. Kilkenny Famine Experience is a privately owned heritage site, and I considered grouping it in the unofficial Famine heritage chapter; however, the administrators have long standing partnerships with the Heritage Council, Ireland’s national heritage body. In addition to private funders, the Heritage Council and Creative Ireland Programme, a government initiative to fund creativity, support the Kilkenny Famine Experience.

The Kilkenny Famine Experience takes place in a shopping center on the former site of a Famine workhouse from the 1840s. Before the shopping center was built, the state mandated archaeological investigation found over 900 burials, the graveyard for the workhouse (Geber
The Kilkenny Famine Experience is a self guided audio-video tour. Visitors walk around the shopping center with hand-held video players and headphones.

I walked around to the different stations and stood or sat watching the video explaining life before and during the disaster, the workhouse experience, and people’s desperation during the Famine. The tour drew on incredible detail obtained from the archaeological excavations. Johnny Geber, the archaeologist who excavated the Famine graveyard, participated in the audio-video tour. He felt it was important to tell people that the archaeologists recovered coffin nails, indicating that the workhouses provided coffin burials and thus debunking a common myth about the Famine.

The Kilkenny Famine Experience uses real examples to humanize the past and provide an actual depiction of what life was like for those experiencing hunger in the 1840s. In fact, this was the only example of an official heritage site that I visited to include the names of individuals who experienced hunger and lived through the Famine. Visitors hear about two brothers, John and Patrick, who entered the workhouse; as visitors sit in spaces the brothers occupied, a connection forms with the past.

I felt strange listening about the extreme poverty and starvation in Kilkenny and throughout Ireland during the 1840s while sitting in a food court in a shopping center. This juxtaposition seems to have been intentional; the creators of the experience recognized the power of placing a conversation about hunger in a setting centered on contemporary consumption, provoking visitors to consider how easy it is for many people in Ireland to access food today (see Figure 6-8). Finally, the Kilkenny Famine Experience is completely free and the shopping center is accessible by public transportation within Kilkenny and from other cities. This makes the interpretation of the Famine available to almost anyone.
Figure 6-8: The second stop of the Kilkenny Famine experience self-guided audio tour. The ruins of the workhouse have been converted into a shopping center. Photo taken by author 2018.

I asked Fin Dwyer, the writer of the Kilkenny Famine Experience video script, why it was so different than other material from the official discourse. Dwyer explained that he was not limited by the government due to the creativity grant. “The National narrative doesn’t talk about individuals, but I had more freedom since the project started out as a consulting job, and there was a lot of support form the community,” said Dwyer. Dwyer elaborated expressing that the Famine experience started as a local initiative, and the government was not involved until later in the process, and politicians were not involved, so contemporary politics did not limit the scope of the discussion. The Kilkenny Famine Experience used is position as an unofficial Famine heritage commemoration to truly tell the story of the disaster, even if it does so in a consumption-oriented space.

Interpretation at sites is key for sharing information and creating a meaningful heritage. Little (2007:1) discusses how interpretation should engage the audience and raise consciousness about the past. Constructors of heritage should connect with the present through specific histories as a way to restore justice to those marginalized in the past. In this way, these examples of
engaging heritage work to give voice to those marginalized in the past, where other forms of official heritage have disenfranchised memories of them. In the next chapter on unofficial heritage, I examine the unsanctioned (by state actors) remembrances of the 1845-1850 Famine that do often imitate official heritage in some ways. However, I provide more examples of heritage constructions which empower the past through better commemorations and connections with contemporary people by addressing social, economic, and political factors that caused food insecurity.
CHAPTER SEVEN:
CONFRONTING THE COLONIAL LEGACY: UNOFFICIAL HERITAGE OF THE FAMINE IN IRELAND

As I explained in Chapter Two, unofficial heritage of the disaster is that which is not sanctioned by the government or governing bodies. Like culture, heritage is constantly changing and reproduced through daily practice and habitus (Bourdieu 1977). However, people can create heritage when the current heritage does not fit their needs (Hobsbawm 1983:8). While the line between official and unofficial heritage is often unclear, I follow Harrison (2013:6) in making a distinction based on relationships with governmental entities. I examined the creators, funders, operators, and partnerships for each entity, and the changing relationship between different stakeholders. Unofficial and official heritage categories are not permanent, and many heritage entities become official through partnerships or financial support from organizations in Ireland like the Heritage Council, a governmental entity. The categories and material I present in this chapter were accurate at the time of writing.

Unofficial heritage of the disaster in Ireland has many similarities with the official discourse. Some unofficial 1845-1850 Famine heritage provides misinformation, focuses on limited topics, and is neglected. As a result, unofficial discourse fails to address the social, political, and economic factors. Heritage creators emphasize the potato blight as the cause of the disaster, rather than the colonial plantation projects and laissez faire economic approaches produced in land dispossession and forced use of poor soils that led to an overreliance on a single crop. Many of these sites predate 1990 or focus heavily on tourism. Although, there are a number
of unofficial heritage sites and entities working to reframe the disaster, confront the colonial legacy, and engage in the political, social and economic causes. In doing so, they do a better job of relating the disaster to broader audiences and creating dynamic heritage, and they are not hindered by contemporary politics, which impacts official heritage discourse in many ways, as one of my interviewees mentioned. These groups are often more activist and educational in nature. Of course, it takes time to transform the Great Hunger discourse, but change is occurring.

In the discussion that follows I highlight many of the positive changes in heritage discourse introduced by unofficial memorializations, but it is also important to acknowledge some problems as well. First, as with much of the heritage discourse, creators in the unofficial sector sometimes interpret the catastrophe in misleading or inaccurate ways by ignoring the larger contexts. They often blame the tragedy on the potato blight and focus on reactions to hunger. In this manner, some official heritage sites and texts perpetuate misunderstandings of the disaster in ways similar to official discourse.

Past Examples of Unofficial Heritage

Unofficial remembrances that imitate official approaches to the Famine began in the late nineteenth century; an example of this are the earliest monographs documenting the tragedy by Reverend John O’Rourke and William P. O’Brien. Both authors lived during the Famine but had comfortable lives compared to the majority of Ireland’s population. O’Rourke was a student at Maynooth, a seminary close to Dublin, and he was active in the Repeal movement, a crusade aimed at dismantling the Act of the Union with England, Scotland, and Wales (Comerford 2014). In his book, *The History of the Great Irish Famine of 1847, with notices of Earlier Irish Famines*, O’Rourke maintained a distance from the disaster by focusing on anecdotes that do little to convey the severity of the calamity. For example, his book includes a report about
millpower in Westport, Newport, and coastal Connemara that was tangentially related to the 1845-1850 Famine (O’Rourke 1875:239). Instead of this tanged, O’Rourke could have included his personal experiences with the suffering people in and around Dublin during the tragedy.

Two decades later, O’Brien (1896) wrote a monograph about the disaster entitled *The Great Famine in Ireland and a Retrospect of the fifty years 1845-1895 with a sketch of the present conditions and future prospects of the Congested Districts*. As a Poor Law inspector in the 1840s, he had firsthand experience of the disaster, and O’Brien’s colleagues and friends urged him to write about the 1845-1850 Famine (O’Brien 1896:iv). However, he included very few personal accounts of the disaster, instead focusing on the reports and summaries found in official documents and newspapers. While the reports and summaries are helpful, as they provide information on the governmental and private relief organization actions and results, they writers of those documents did not engage with people most suffering from the calamity. As a result, readers of the reports saw numbers and percentages, which distanced them from the actual suffering. O’Brien missed the opportunity to show how the colonial approach to land use and poverty impacted the tenant farmers in Ireland.

Both authors stressed the role of overreliance on potatoes and the farming culture of the time. They focus on committees, reports, and legislative acts intended to alleviate hunger, omitting the suffering of everyday people. Narratives such as these constitute another form of subjugation and disenfranchisement for those who suffered (Jackson 2012:15). Additionally, by ignoring the larger structural issues that contributed to the disaster, the authors convey the sense that the Famine Process was unavoidable, in a manner very similar to that of early heritage discourse and even the national discourse on the disaster today.
Contemporary Examples of Unofficial Imitating Official Heritage

Unfortunately, poor contextualization of the 1845-1850 Famine is not limited to the past, but continues in the unofficial remembrance at several contemporary heritage sites, including several memorials around Dublin. One example is the privately owned Jeanie Johnston Tall Ship, a replica ship from the 1845-1850 Famine-era docked in Dublin on the River Liffey. Visitors to the ship pay for a guided tour where they hear about the disaster, with a focus on the potato blight, starvation and the accompanying disease. My tour guide, Annie, stressed how the owner of the original ship, Nicholas Donovan, was unique compared to other business people at the time. Annie stated that he was a man who, unlike other ship owners, thought of the passengers beyond the fare they paid. In one instance, he provided a family free passage to North America. Annie also praised the doctor aboard the ship for providing safe passage for all the travelers. According to the ship’s records, no one died onboard the Jeanie Johnston, unlike other Famine-era ships. Given the prevalence of death and disease on nineteenth-century ships, I doubt the Jeannie Johnston was free from death. Like much of the official discourse, the valorization and reframing of the past is a recurring theme in the discussion of difficult heritage (Meskell 2002), and this unofficial heritage does that as well.

A two-minute walk from the Jeanie Johnston is a second example of refocusing difficult heritage. EPIC is a museum dedicated to the history of Irish migration from all time periods. While museum designers acknowledge the larger socioeconomic issues that caused 1845-1850 Famine-era migration, they reframe migration by discussing all the positive aspects of the movement. EPIC refers to it as “The Irish Influence.” They showcase hundreds of people who have Irish ancestry, like Barack Obama, John F. Kennedy, and 20 other American presidents with some tie to Ireland. The museum also discusses how Ireland has impacted other aspects of
the world, like Bob Geldof’s creation of Live Aid, a concert created to raise money for marginalized communities, Che Guevara’s revolutionary fights in Cuba and Bolivia, and the mascot of my alma mater, the Fighting Irish at the University of the Notre Dame, which I found strange to see mentioned in a museum that also discussed the death of one million people through hunger. This is another example of reframing the disaster through valorization of a few, rather than attending to the many people who suffered, a trend I discussed in the previous chapter on official disaster discourse.

A third example of poor contextualization is the Irish Famine Exhibition, an unofficial heritage exhibit in Dublin created by Gerard McCarthy. This exhibit presents visitors with information about the potato and reliance on the potato before sharing any other information with visitors (Figure 7-1).

![Image of the first display board at the Irish Famine Exhibit](image)

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**Figure 7-1:** Photograph of first display board at Irish Famine Exhibit. Photo taken by author 2018.

While McCarthy, who created the exhibition in reaction to a lack of information about the 1845-1850 Famine in Dublin, contextualizes the disaster to a greater extent than some of the official
heritage sites I described above, visitors are constantly reminded of the potato, potato dependency, and the potato blight. In fact, McCarthy mentions potatoes in 22 of 59 (37 percent) of the visual displays in the exhibit. I left the exhibit remarking his explanation for the tragedy as overreliance on the potato, despite mentions of Plantations, the landlord-tenant system, and the Act of the Union, which addressed social and economic conditions.

These three unofficial heritage sites in Dublin exemplify the manner in which the memory of those that suffered and died during the 1845-1850 disaster is obscured through selective and superficial interpretation that either valorizes individuals who emigrated or focuses on the potato over people and larger structural issues. Another form of heritage with poor interpretation of the disaster is Arthur McKeown’s (1997) children’s book Famine. The book tells the story of a father and daughter to leave County Antrim for America. They are forced to leave their possessions behind, including their beloved dog Sal. Like other difficult heritage manifestations, McKeown valorizes the action of the stranger who adopts the dog and focuses on the happy life the family had in America, romanticizing migration for the reader. (McKeown’s book, McCarthy’s exhibition, and other examples mentioned in this section have many positive qualities as well, which I discuss later.

In addition to reframing, some 1845-1850 Famine-related heritage downplays the disaster to engage visitors with more uplifting memories of the sites. EPIC, the aforementioned migration museum, advertises itself as allocation for private parties, including holiday parties (Figure 7-2). During winter, visitors to the museum can meet Santa. The juxtaposition of a consumer-driven holiday, like Christmas, with the extreme poverty that caused the migration of a million people during the Famine results in a softening of the difficult situations past peoples endured.
Pat Dougherty, the creator of Doagh Famine village, transforms the space into a winter wonderland, also with Santa, during the holidays. This draws the visitors, and is undoubtedly financially beneficial for the museum. However, attending a Christmas party at the Famine village distracts from the serious topics of colonial land dispossession, food insecurity, death and migration. Consequently, the 1845-1850 Famine heritage site becomes less about remembering the famine, and more about capitalism.

The Christmas displays at EPIC and the Doagh Famine Village are not the only examples of what could be construed as sterilization of the Famine. I mentioned above that Westport house was once home to the landlord of Inishark and Inishbofin; it was also home to Grainne Mhaol, or Grace O’Malley, the pirate queen. Much of the heritage site apart from the landlord’s house is devoted to pirate-themed rides and activities for children, like a cannonball slide, a Pirate queen swinging ship, and a pirate plunge log flume ride. The house’s association with the disaster is marginalized in favor of a more exciting past, pirates. The owners and constructors of this unofficial heritage commodified heritage and reframed it for contemporary use in heritage tourism. Heritage tourism is associated with the hospitality industry (Chambers 2009:14), and it
is supposed to draw people to a place to experience the place and its past (McKrecher and du Cros 2012:2). However, by associating holidays with places of negative heritage, the Great Hunger and those who suffered are forced to “fight for representation in public memory,” as Shackel (2003:14) observes for marginalized histories generally.

One final criticism of unofficial heritage sites is that many are poorly maintained and in dire need of improved interpretation. As I noted in the previous chapter, this is too true of official heritage sites, but unofficial heritage interpretative centers do not have a governing body ensuring the quality and accurateness of displays or information. As a result, the quality of information at unofficial heritage sites is even more variable. For example, I noticed that the signage at Doagh Famine village is inconsistent in design; some signs had frames while others did not. Dougherty, the creator, used children’s toys on a miniature farm to depict nineteenth-century rural life, but adjacent to the farm scene he placed a life-size recreation of an eviction with full-sized mannequins; I noted how strange and distracting it was to see the different reconstructions of disproportionate scale and theme placed directly adjacent to each other.

The Jeanie Johnston Famine ship’s cabin is filled with mannequins, many of which have missing body parts and chipping paint. The informative signs were printed on standard printer paper, adhered to the wall with scotch tape, had hand-written clarifications, and were wrinkled or bent (Figure 7-3).
Visitors to the ship pay between six euro (for children under 14) to 10.50 euro (for an adult), while students receive a one euro discount. While most tours are not sold out, my tour guide said that they are busy with school groups and tourists throughout the year. While I cannot speak to the site’s financial status, it would seem that more of the ticket revenue could be directed to updating the interpretive signage.

At the Donaghmore Famine Workhouse Museum in Laois, they reused mannequins from commercial displays. The mannequin has heavy make-up, inaccurate of the poor, starving Irish
people occupying the workhouse (Figure 7-4).

![Mannequin in the workhouse medical wing at Donaghmore. Photo by author 2018.](image)

Figure 7-4: Mannequin in the workhouse medical wing at Donaghmore. Photo by author 2018.

Additionally, the workhouse needed new signs, as they were difficult to read and combined multiple themes onto the same sign (Figure 7-5). These examples of inaccuracies and need for renovation distract visitors from the gravity of the difficult heritage.

![Interpretive sign at Donaghmore. Sign needs to be replaced or repaired as it is difficult to read. Photo by author 2018.](image)

Figure 7-5: Interpretive sign at Donaghmore. Sign needs to be replaced or repaired as it is difficult to read. Photo by author 2018.
Finally, unofficial heritage makes claims that seem fictionalized while presenting them as true, and many audience members accept the claims as accurate. Annie, my tour guide on the Jeannie Johnston, described Donovan, the ship’s owner, as a generous, good-hearted man. Donovan wanted to sell cornmeal to hungry Irish people at below the market rate and return any profit to the relief fund. At the same time, he, as a young entrepreneur, wanted to use this endeavor to insert himself in the transatlantic transportation market (Miles 2013:67). This aspect to Donovan was left out of the tour. In another example, on the Irish History Famine Tour in Dublin, Dwyer said that people were desperate and police records indicate that prostitution increased drastically during the Great Hunger. However, Dwyer does not contextualize the increase. Luddy (1997:486) argues that police would have arrested women they believed to be “bad characters” for vagrancy, theft, drunkenness, and solicitation, and this could explain the frequency of prostitution in the archival record.

A Slow Regeneration of Heritage

I have thus far focused on points of continuity between unofficial and official remembrances of the 1845-1850 Famine, especially how they fail to properly contextualize the catastrophe and are often poorly maintained and lacking directional or informational signage. But as I noted at the start of this chapter, there are also a number of differences between the two discourses on the tragedy. Specifically, there is reason for optimism in the more engaging interpretations offered in some unofficial heritage discourse, especially that associated with activist and educational organizations. In the rest of this chapter, I explore five key ways unofficial heritage diverges from official discourse of the tragedy.

Detailed Remembrances of the 1845-1850 Famine
First, unofficial heritage of the disaster provokes emotion from the audience and visiting public, through effective interpretation that has the potential to transform the nature of both unofficial and official famine discourse. As I noted in the previous chapter, there are isolated examples of the same tendency among official heritage sites. However, the tendency is stronger among unofficial heritage.

First, pre-1990s unofficial heritage attempts to connect the disaster to the audience through fictionalized tales of living through the 1845-1850 Famine, and this continued into the present literary fiction and art. One example of this is a very early attempt to humanize the disaster in novel form. The book *Widow O’Leary*, written during the disaster by an unknown author, presents details about the lives of people that suffered during the social upheaval, as exemplified by the following passage:

“‘How is it Mary,’” said I, ‘that you have become reduced to such an extreme state of destitution, as I thought you were in comfortable circumstances?’ ‘So we war, Sir, ever an always we had full and plenty ourselves, an a bit an a sup to give to a poor body, when they kem the way; but ye see how it is sir, himself had the whole of the farm sot in score ground undher praties, all to give one little patch of grass that we kep for the cows, to give milk to the children. An whin the disease an the Famine came in the praties, sure we couldn’t expect them that got no good of em to pay for what they didn’t get; moreover whin they hadn’t it, an so we war at the loss of the ground be that manes. An though we got an abatement in the rent, still in all it wasn’t o much use to us as we had nothing to look to whin the praties was good. (anonymous 1847:13)

This is not an isolated example. In *Mike*, written a few decades later, Hoare (1878) used the plot device of a grandfather telling stories about the 1845-1850 Famine to his granddaughter to provoke reactions with the audience.

The trend to use fictionalized, but detailed, accounts continues to the present. Some of these stories may be from oral history passed down, the Irish folklore collection, or recorded elsewhere in the archival record. In a more recent work of fiction, McKeown (1997) (mentioned earlier in this chapter) uses the story of a father, daughter, and dog to illustrate to young readers
how people like them suffered not that long ago. While these authors focus on the potato crop failure, starvation, and 1845-1850 Famine, they use first person narrative, relatable characters and scenarios, and include specific details about life during the tragedy that humanizes the past to the reader, even in fiction. As a result, the authors create strong connections between their audiences and the past.

In addition to literary fiction, songwriters and musicians are using detailed stories of the past to engage audiences with difficult heritage. Declan O’Rourke, a singer-songwriter well-known in Ireland, wrote an entire album dedicated to the 1845-1850 Famine and related topics. He felt they needed to be heard. Some of his songs are hypothesized situations from the past while others are based on his archival research. In his song, “Poor Boy’s Shoes (O’Rourke 2017), he sang about a young couple in love and the difficulties of living during the tragedy. He sings about the length people go to when caring for their partner, a tale which is relatable to listeners. All the while, his music is still informative and evocative because he provides the structural context of the Famine Process through the album as a whole.

Many recent heritage entities use fictionalized but detailed anecdotes to capture the audiences’ attention. Lance Daly (2018) created the movie Black ’47 to tell the story of the 1845-1850 Famine through Martin, an Irish soldier who fought for the British during one of their many overseas colonial endeavors. Martin returns home during the disaster to find his mother dead from Famine-related illness, and his brother hanged because he disagreed with the eviction from their family home during the Great Hunger. This story resonates with many Irish people because of their experience moving overseas or having relatives migrate due to job or educational opportunities, as a result many audience members relate with this construction of the tragedy.

Incorporating the Difficult Heritage
Second, some unofficial heritage is unafraid to engage with jarring details. By including such details about the 1845-1850 Famine, unofficial heritage openly explores the disaster, contextualizes it, gives a platform for marginalized members of the community, and discusses the long-term impact of the tragedy more so than official heritage. One example from the past is *The Spectre*, a short collection of drawings and poems about the disaster (1853). The author, who remained anonymous for fear of retribution, discusses the 1845-1850 Famine as a grim shadow, and acknowledges the pain and suffering of Ireland’s people. The author wrote about Protestant churches from the time which required conversion before providing food, which, according to many folklore and oral history accounts, the majority of Catholics refused (Duchas.ie; Concannon 1993:58). These authors tells of the horrors of the relief measures and instances when people were turned away because there were not enough resources available for individuals, including children, to receive governmental aid.

Similarly, musicians and poets have included graphic details about the Famine in their work. Patrick Carpenter (1880), a poet from County Cork, composed the Irish folksong “Skibbereen” (O’Donoghue 1912). It tells the story of a child asking why the family left Ireland; the child describes memories of the blight, eviction, and devastation which caused the family to say “goodbye to dear old Skibbereen.” In Barry Moore’s (1984) song “The City of Chicago,” migrants dream of their homeland, but also remember the harsh reality of hunger and forced migration due to 1845-1850 Famine. “The Fields of Athenry” (St. John 1979) commemorates a young man’s journey to prison for stealing corn for his starving children. Some of these songs have known composers, but the majority of the songs have been passed down through oral history and, then, are remade by various artists, like Sinead O’Connor, Christy Moore, The Dubliners, and Dropkick Murphys. They all include very specific details about the social
upheaval that are relatable to listeners. These songs are a way to transmit social memory of the
disaster, regardless of the accuracies of the details, to the next generation without a governing
body editing or deleting unsavory aspects of the past (Gilbert 2005).

Like songwriters, poets commemorate the gruesome details of the 1845-1850 Famine
without government oversight. I started this dissertation with a poem by Lady Jane Wilde (1847),
a Famine-era example of blunt and blatant poetry, and Egan’s *Famine, a sequence* (1997) is a
contemporary example of poetry which commemorates the disaster. Lady Jane shares the
gruesome details of people dying while food is plentiful in Ireland. Egan expresses the lasting
memory of the disaster all around Ireland and the world, including a reference to survivor’s guilt.
Heaney (1966) incorporates the nineteenth and twenty-first century famine remembrances into
his poem *At a potato digging*. In stanza III he wrote,

Live skulls, blind-eyed, balanced on
wild higgledy skeletons
scoured the land in 'forty-five,'
wolfed the blighted root and died.
The new potato, sound as stone,
putrified when it had lain
three days in the long clay pit.
Millions rotted along with it.
Mouths tightened in, eyes died hard,
faces chilled to a plucked bird.
In a million wicker huts
beaks of Famine snipped at guts.
A people hungering from birth,
grubbing, like plants, in the bitch earth,
were grafted with a great sorrow.
Hope rotted like a marrow.
Stinking potatoes fouled the land,
pits turned pus in filthy mounds:
and where potato diggers are
you still smell the running sore.

Heaney paints a picture of starving, decrepit people who resemble skeletons rather than living
beings. He draws upon the readers’ sense of smell and sight through descriptions like “mouths
tighten in” and “stinking potatoes” to emotionally connect the reader with the material. Interestingly, these three graphic poems are have been used by political leaders in Ireland during speeches for Irish or Irish-American commemorations of the 1845-1850 Famine (see McAleese 2003; Varadkar 2017), and demonstrate how unofficial heritage can influence the official discourse (which I will discuss in further detail later in this chapter).

Like the fictional works, Famine-related heritage tourism is taking advantage of their independent status, as they create sites that focus on themes associated with government oppression or inadequacies. Pat Dougherty, creator of the Doagh Famine village, uses his tours as an opportunity to educate his visitors about the economic drivers that cause trauma in communities. He criticizes past and present governments and describes the economic hardships of small villages in Ireland over time. He speaks explains the economics that dictated why the Famine occurred and how the government marginalized and continues to disenfranchise rural, western Ireland. The tour discusses how people during the Famine had to pay taxes when they had little to no food and why the government’s solutions, like creating work programs, were ineffective because of the rising cost of food and the feebleness of those most vulnerable.

On the Irish History Podcast Famine Tour, Fin Dwyer (who also wrote the Kilkenny Famine Experience script), talks about past and present government ignorance concerning the Famine. While walking around Dublin, he described a party held by Anglo-Irish elites to commemorate the creation of a soup recipe to feed hungry people. He also discusses the politics behind Victorian ideology and the reluctance to provide aid. In a 1997 speech read by Irish actor Gabriel Byrne, British Prime Minister Tony Blair apologized for the 1845-1850 Famine saying, “those who governed in London at the time failed their people.” However, Blair did not include
any details as to how or why the government failed the people. Unofficial heritage embraces these aspects to disaster discourse.

**Education-Based Heritage**

In my interviews with heritage constructors, I asked what drove them to work with difficult heritage. One theme was the desire to better educate Irish people on the 1845-1850 Famine, to counter the diluted version of the disaster taught in schools. Dwyer stated, “I started the podcast and tour because there is a disconnect between what people know about the Famine. No one ever does a famine podcast.” He stress that the national government ignores the causes of the tragedy because of contemporary politics. “Famine doesn’t fit the national narrative. The national dialogue doesn’t talk about the everyday person.”

Gerard McCarthy of the Irish Famine exhibit, expressed a similar sentiment. In our conversation in 2017 he said,

This is the 170th anniversary of the Famine year 1847, and I wanted to do something to commemorate this. I’ve always had an interest in Irish history and feel that the Potato Famine is a neglected subject matter in Ireland. I feel that most people have only a hazy idea of the story, so this exhibition will hopefully help to rectify this.

McCarthy researched the 1845-1850 Famine using resources available from a variety of sources including the National Library and National Archives. Through the material he found, McCarthy contextualizes the disaster through explanation of foreign rule, penal laws, and British attitudes toward Ireland and Irish people. His goal was to give anyone an opportunity to learn about the catastrophe through an easily accessible location. Due to finances, McCarthy is not able to keep the exhibition open year round, which prevents his narrative from being incorporated into heritage consistently.
I found two other forms of 1845-1850 Famine heritage that, despite not having a permanent home, worked to educate the masses on the realities of the past trauma. I spoke with Kieran Tuohy, a sculptor, and Jerry Mulvihill, an author and artist. They both work to include details of the Famine, like the hierarchical social structures of the nineteenth century, which have been omitted or ignored from Irish art. Their works include details that national official heritage ignores. Tuohy created Dark Shadows, a series of sculptures that tell the story of the Famine through inclusion of a wide variety of topics without overlooking any aspects. “I took stories about everyday sufferers, everyday people, and made sculptures of that.” One of his pieces, called “Neither God Nor Trevelyan were listening,” brings attention to the politics and ideology at the time (Figure 7-6). Tuohy’s piece depicts Trevelyan, the British Prime Minister, with his back to kneeling, praying people. Protestants viewed the Famine as God’s punishment on Catholics, even though the lack of potato impacted people from multiple faiths. The response was to pray that the hunger would stop, but after years of hunger, neither prayer nor government intervention worked to alleviate suffering.
Artist and author Jerry Mulvihill noticed pervasive romanticism in drawing and paintings depicting the 1845-1850 Famine, and he felt the desire to create more realistic paintings depicting the nature of the tragedy. He is actively commissioning art that depicts the tragedy. Like Tuohy, he wants to commemorate the disaster as it happened without the forgetting or selective memory due to past and contemporary politics. Mulvihill said, “I felt there were a lot of mistruths and injustices out there, and I wanted to investigate, then share what I learned.” He works with artists, using historical documents, to create paintings that depict the catastrophe more accurately, like the ineffective relief works programs and harsh nature of evictions. In his book, he includes a picture of people in a wagon driving by roofless, empty house with a quote from an English traveler referencing the paradox of the overflowing workhouse adjacent to
empty houses (Mulvihill 2017:123). In another picture, a police officer is questioning a man living in a scalpeen, depicting the desperation experienced by Irish tenant farmers (Mulvihill 2017:121). These two art projects work to include memories in the heritage that are ignored or forgotten in official heritage.

In another form of educationally-motivated heritage, Declan O’Rourke (2017) released an album titled *Chronicles of the Great Irish Famine*, which I mentioned above. O’Rourke touches on major aspects of the tragedy including the structural violence and economic policies which caused the horrendous event. In an intimate concert for the Irish Famine Summer School, which I attended, he played only songs from the album and discussed its motivations. He related that his grandfather passed away, and while he and his family were going through his grandfather’s belongings they found his birth certificate. According to the birth certificate, O’Rourke’s grandfather was born in a workhouse. “I had no idea what a workhouse was until my grandfather passed,” said Declan O’Rourke. Upon researching the topic, he learned about the widespread use of the workhouse as social welfare, the introduction just prior to the 1845-1850 Famine, the amount of extreme poverty that existed in nineteenth-century Ireland, and the structure which kept poor Irish farmers poor and reliant on the upper classes. He transferred this research into songs, like “Laissez faire”, a blunt song criticizing the colonial government’s economic policies. O’Rourke expressed anger at the lack of information on the Famine in his formal schooling, and he expressed that it was only through his own research that he feels he acquired an actual understanding of the event. I noted this trend in some of my other interviews as well. Declan transfers his knowledge about the tragedy in his songs to a global audience, and uses his personal experience to relate and educate the tragedy to audiences.
While Declan O’Rourke may be the only person to create a whole album dedicated to the disaster. Burke and Burke (2016), a father-daughter duo, use bright illustrations and informative text to share information are transforming conversations about the disaster through their children’s book which explores a significant amount of Irish history. In four short animated pages, they tell a well-rounded story of the 1845-1850 Famine that explains why people were dependent on the potato in the first place by discussing penal laws and poverty, limited land access, and ineffective relief programs. “Under Penal Law, the tenant farmer had to divide up his land among his sons. This meant that each plot of land wasn’t big enough for the whole family” (Burke and Burke 2016:42). The authors continue by discussing government aid, “The British Government tried a number of methods to solve the famine crisis in Ireland….A Work Relief Scheme was set up to pay people in exchange for manual labor. This was abandoned, however, as it wasn’t enough pay for people to afford rising food prices” (Burke and Burke 2016:43). The authors connect the larger structural issues and failed relief attempts to the devastation, unlike the school textbooks I discuss in Chapter 3. Additionally, Burke and Burke (2016) give the 1845-1850 tragedy the same amount of care and attention as other periods in Ireland’s past, like Neolithic and Bronze Age times. The authors demonstrate to their audience that the Great Hunger is just as important in the history of Ireland as all other periods.

**Activist Heritage**

Unofficial heritage is influencing the official discourse in other ways, largely through activist work. People and organizations are working to reframe understanding of the trauma. Writers of the unofficial discourse bring *An Gorta Mór* from a place of silences, shame, and embarrassment in Irish history to a more prominent place, where people understand the colonial government’s role in the death of one million people and the migration of another million. This
form of activist work takes place in many media including displays, books, protests, music, commemorative events, and more. They work to undo the sterilizing of the tragedy, and provide a platform for communities to engage with the negative heritage.

I had the opportunity to speak to Joe Murray, coordinator for Afri, or Action from Ireland, a non-profit activist group that began by bringing awareness to marginalized societies. As the organization grew, they became linked to 1845-1850 Famine heritage in Ireland by fighting for truth and transparency with global hunger issues. Murray said that the history books provided a diluted version of the Great Hunger, as I discussed above. The organization works to correct this misinterpretation in a number of ways. First, Afri published a book *Famine is a lie* to draw attention to Ireland’s 1845-1850 Famine, and to address the “trauma and pain which it has left on the Irish psyche” (Murray 1995:3). Murray (1995) stresses that famines in the past and today are caused by societal inequalities which need to be addressed. In our interview, Murray said that it begins with teaching an understanding about the disaster, what really happened, what the social and political state of the country was like. Murray fights hunger today through knowledge about the realities of what we call famine but are often food shortages due to economic interests of the wealthy, which includes an understanding of Ireland’s 1845-1850 famine.

Afri holds an annual Famine Walk in County Mayo to commemorate the Doolough Tragedy. In 1849, 600 people gathered to meet government representatives for food or access to the workhouse. They were told they had to go to the landlord’s house at Delphi Lodge to get clarification. The next day, they walked eleven miles to Delphi Lodge, but were turned away at the lodge. Many people died on the way there and back when trying to receive support during the catastrophe. Afri has organized this walk since the 1970s to remember the struggles and death of
Irish people but also to fight Famine today (Murray 1995). There are two monuments along the path to commemorate the Doolough Tragedy, provide details about the tragedy for those who may stop along the drive and for those unable to participate in the annual walk. Afri works to discuss the structural reasons that a Famine occurred in the past, and why famines still occurs today. Their unofficial status provides the opportunity to openly criticize governments in the past and present and how they deal with hunger (Murray 1995). Additionally, they are recognizing and discussing the ignored trauma of poor tenant farmers in Ireland, which is something the official heritage organizations neglects due to current politics. Afri works to enlighten people on the structural factors. The organization discusses like the construction of food insecurity through the colonial plantation process and economic policies that benefitted the landed elite and ignored the needs of over 70 percent of the population.

While Afri’s emphasis is on the struggle to acknowledge and change the systematic factors behind disaster, the Committee for the Commemoration of Irish Famine Victims (ICCFV) emphasizes remembrance of 1845-1850 Famine victims. Michael Blanch created ICCFV because famine victims were voiceless and ignored on a national stage. Blanch felt that it was strange that the government did not have a national Famine memorial or national famine commemoration day. He decided to engage with the political powers to understand why and correct the omission, by pushing the national government to become more involved in disaster remembrance. Blanch works for recognition rather than denial of the disaster. In this way he identifies the lack of social agency among the disenfranchised groups (Trouillot 1995), including the majority of past Irish populations in the construction of the difficult heritage.
Dynamic, Small-Scale Heritage

While official discourse embraces the governing bodies approaches to heritage through the construction of monuments, unofficial heritage is constructed in a way that allows for changing understandings of the 1845-1850 Famine and heritage needs. Many unofficial heritage entities were tours of sites. Tours at Doagh Famine Village, Portunma Workhouse, Donaghmore Workhouse, and around Dublin’s Famine History can be altered to adapt to new understandings of the disaster. At Portumna, the tour guides learn the history of workhouses and their role to aid the poor, and the long-term marginalization of generations of Irish farmers which caused the Famine Process. As part of their job description, tour guides research what interests them most about the Famine Process, going beyond the years of 1845-1850, and bring those case studies or topics into the larger story. Mary Daly, my tour guide at Portumna, described the on-going introduction of research to her tours as one of the most rewarding aspects to her job.

Beyond tours, unofficial heritage embraces the dynamic definition of heritage. Artists, like Kieran Tuohy, can add to Famine-related displays. When Tuohy learned about another aspect to the famine, he created a new sculpture to incorporate innovative interpretation of An Gorta Mór. During the initial years of Afri’s annual famine walk, the proprietors of Delphi Lodge, where starving Famine-era people were turned away, refused to participate in the annual commemoration. However, Afri continued communicating with the lodge. The group shared information with them describing the process of food insecurity, which resulted in the Great Hunger. As a result the lodge has embraced their role in the past rather than an embarrassed silence. I argue that this change is an example of unofficial heritage groups fighting the colonial legacy of an inherited prescribed silence. These groups are embracing the difficult heritage. The
constructions at smaller-scales in unofficial heritage allows for flexibility and alterations not available in most official Famine heritage.

**Local Remembering of the 1845-1850 Famine**

However, these changes in official and unofficial discourses take time and have not reached every community. Misunderstandings about the 1845-1850 Famine were evident in my research on Inishbofin. There is limited interpretation of the disaster on the island; Inishbofin has a rich history, and Fiona created the Inishbofin Heritage Museum and Gift Shop where she focuses almost entirely on local post-1900 history and heritage. She created the museum in an old boat house on the eastern side of Inishbofin’s harbor. She has a dresser with ceramic pottery on display, nineteenth and twentieth century farming, fishing, and cooking supplies on display, and the walls are filled with newspaper clippings documenting Inishbofin over the years. She also has books, toys, and handmade goods for sale. Fiona includes a range of topics: the abandonment of neighboring island Inishark, where many family members and friends used to live; the traditional connection with sea, which is a symbol of life and death for the fishing community; and their unique and persistent identity as islanders, despite the inconveniences this life holds relative to living on the mainland.

With regard to the Great Hunger, people expressed one of two schools of thought when talking about its effects on Inishbofin. Some people felt that Inishbofin was not impacted by the 1845-1850 Famine because they were able to gather resources from the sea. Other people think that Inishbofin was not special regarding the tragedy, and they suffered just as much as other places in Western Ireland. While disaster theorists often argue that islands are more vulnerable to social and environmental impacts of disasters, some islanders feel that being on island makes them more resilient because islanders have always had to be self-sufficient. Elaborating further,
Mary said that “as islanders, we never know when we are going to be isolated from the mainland because of weather, so we are always prepared to be self-reliant,” and she explains this is how the island survived the Great Hunger. One of my interviewees expressed the latter sentiment, but also acknowledged that the Famine has not been incorporated into local heritage as much as other post-medieval events because of the magnitude of suffering and pain the event caused. “It wasn’t talked about by my mother. People didn't like to talk about the famine because so many people died. People they knew and loved,” said Claire an Inishbofin islander in her 80s. I suggest that the generation that experienced the disaster did not inculcate the Famine into collective memory because of what Connerton (2008:161-164) identifies as “humiliated silence.”

Humiliated silence might also explain why some people feel that Inishbofin did not suffer from the Famine as much as other communities. For example, a younger islander, Paul, who is in his 20s, disagrees with Claire. He sees the island as unique for all the food resources that can be gathered from the water’s edge. Similarly, many contemporary islanders pride themselves on being a resilient community, a perspective at odds with the loss and devastation that characterize many Famine stories. As Le Blanc (2012) notes, it is expected for a community to modify the past in order to create or reinforce collective identity

However, the community remembers the 1845-1850 Famine in subtle ways. Fiona includes artifacts and material culture of the Famine-era in the displays, although these are not explicitly linked to the tragedy. I noted the same lack of connection in people’s dressers and the pub décor; members of the community treasure and proudly display 1830s-1850s platters in houses and pubs as cherished family heirlooms. The pub owners have been handed these ceramics down from their mothers and grandmothers, so the origin of their acquisition is usually unknown and the link to a traumatic time is not pronounced. Still, I suggest that the connection is
implicit and in at least one case, the remembrance of the disaster is even clearer; one popular pub on Inishbofin hangs drawings of Famine-era Inishbofin from the *Illustrated London News* (Figure 2-2).

Islanders may prefer silence regarding the 1845-1850 Famine because of the amount of sadness the disaster brought. But islanders today commemorate other difficult events. In Westquarter, there is a monument to the Cleggan Disaster of 1929, a sudden storm which killed over 45 men, including at least 10 from Inishbofin and Inishark (Concannon 1993:40-41). There is another monument in Westquarter to commemorate the drowning of the Lacey brothers and cousin. The three young men traveled from Inishbofin to Inishark on Easter Sunday in 1949, and died while trying to row back to Inishark (Figure 7-7).
These events are extremely painful and people talk about their family’s involvement with the tragedies. Islanders commemorate the local painful stories through annual masses, built monuments, and continued conversations about the monuments, which I witnessed regularly during my research. The differences may be that islanders field the need to commemorate local tragedies more than the national ones, or that these events are more recent (as everyone knew someone who died during the Cleggan Disaster). Additionally, these were discrete events, in contrast with the prolonged and continued trauma of the 1845-1850 Famine. Islanders use their agency when it came to remembering past traumas.

In sum, I suggest that unofficial heritage does a better job of constructing heritage of *An Gorta Mór* by embracing difficult details, connecting with the audience, and being flexible and
dynamic, the opposite of some early unofficial heritage and some official heritage. Little (2007:13) and Tilden (1957) argue that interpretive sites should engage the audience and provoke them to thought. Since the official discourse tends to omit details and provide information without interpretation, visitors are unengaged and dismissive. Unofficial heritage is provoking their audiences to care about the material and engage with the information about the past. O’Rourke gives voices to past people and shares his personal journey with the audience, Tuohy and Mulvihill give faces to the people who suffered during the 1845-1850 Famine without skirting around issues. Dwyer, Dougherty, and the Jeanie Johnston crew provide a scape for the disaster, so it does not seem like it occurred in a far away space. Blanch and Murray work to ensure contemporary people see the victims of 1845-1850 Famine, past and present, and are unable to ignore the root causes of the pain and suffering. In these ways, unofficial heritage does a better job of capturing and remembering those who suffered during the disaster.

Many of the constructors of unofficial Famine discourse are largely self-taught with regard to the history of the disaster. Pat Dougherty, Kieran Tuohy, Declan O’Rourke, and Jerry Mulvihill did not learn about the 1845-1850 Famine in school, but took an interest for themselves and recognized a need to address the deficiencies in official heritage discourse. The Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna, County Galway epitomizes this type of grassroots knowledge construction. The museum tells the story of those suffering the most during the Famine and the years, but the center is unique because they do not provide a script to their tour guides. Rather, they provide the time and resources for their tour guides to learn about the Famine.

Fiona, of the Inishbofin Heritage Museum, is also self-educated on heritage topics. She told me that she felt her secondary school education taught her very little about nineteenth-
century Ireland, a topic which intrigued her from a young age, and prompted her to create the museum.

There are some instances of unofficial heritage and official heritage overlapping. As mentioned above, politicians use Irish poetry to enhance speeches on the 1845-1850 Famine. Dwyer has worked with both official and unofficial heritage projects. Blanch saw success in his efforts when the government created an annual National Famine Commemoration Day in 2008. The impact continues in the ways official heritage approaches the Famine.

The authors of unofficial famine discourse are giving a stage to underrepresented communities from the past, and detailed, graphic stories cause the audiences to care about the past peoples and their traumas. Audiences engage with the difficult heritage in a more effective way, one that calls them to question the manner in which they were taught about the 1845-1850 Famine. In changing audience expectations, these authors impact the way people think about the Great Hunger today. Examples like the Kilkenny Famine Experience, as discussed in the previous chapter, demonstrate that the tragedy can be explored through the social, political, economic structures that forced a potato blight into the death of a million people.

Irish people suffered during the potato blight because the colonial government created a system where tenant farmers and cottiers lived on small plots of land to support their families. In response to the socio-natural disaster, communities altered aspects to their lives. On Inishark and Inishbofin, islanders changed their taskscape in order to survive. They changed their daily routines and interactions with the environment in order to survive, migrating for seasonal work and gathering foods that were avoided in better times. Islanders who stayed were able to enlarge their plots of land, to grow more variety of foods for less people. They incorporated the changes in the taskscape into heritage. Islanders remember the disaster in small ways, through the referral
of limpets and “famine food,” the illustrations displayed in the pub, and cherished family heirlooms.

Slowly, heritage creators are moving the 1845-1850 Famine discourse away from the colonial legacy of embarrassed silence by embracing the subjugated memories of the Famine Process. There is a renewed interest in the disaster and the way it is remembered in Ireland. The regeneration is slow, but it is occurring through self-education and changing discourse on the Famine Process.
CHAPTER 8:

“It’s Offensive to Call it a Potato Famine”: Conclusions on the Transformation of a Colonial Legacy to a Regeneration of Knowledge

A Google Scholar search of “Irish Potato Famine” results in 45,600 hits, and while not all the search results are pertinent, the first five pages are titles and works that directly refer to An Gorta Mór as a ‘Potato Famine’. One afternoon drinking tea, Tommy Burke, local historian on Inishbofin, said to me, “It’s offensive to call it a potato famine,” and I full-heartedly agreed with him because calling the disaster a potato famine ignores and removes the systemic changes that caused food insecurity for millions of people in Ireland. Referring to the disaster as a potato famine allows people to blame the 1845-1850 Famine and Famine Process on factors completely beyond anyone’s control and is an extension of colonial ideology at the time. Charles Trevelyan (1848:201) called the 1845-1850 Famine an act of God when he said the Famine was a “direct stroke of an all-wise and all-merciful Providence” and that the “Supreme Wisdom has educed permanent good out of transient evil” (Trevelyan 1848:1), exculpating the British government from any blame of the Famine and limiting governmental relief. He blamed the Irish for overreliance on the potato (Trevelyan 1848: 3). Famine scholars were still using “Potato Famine” to describe the disaster well into the early 2000s (e.g. Boyce 2005; Donnelly 2002; Ell and Gregory 2005; O’Neill 2009; Nusteling 2009), and some (e.g. Duggan et. al. 2019; Knaus et al. 2019; Leary and Dagdas 2019; Toufexi et al. 2019), largely scientists studying impact of Phytophthora infestans on the potato, still use the term. Most scholars have moved away from
the term, omitting 'potato' from their titles. However, it is not uncommon to hear people refer to the “potato famine” in everyday conversation.

Egan’s poem encompassed the disaster in his 1997 poem. He said it is “down the line of our landscape,” “in our music,” and “behind our faces.” People across Ireland remember the disaster even though the colonial government ignored it through prescribed forgetting and the survivors of the disaster were humiliated into silence. During the 1845-1850 Famine, tenant farmers and cottiers altered Ireland through their survival techniques. Emigrants left loved ones with memories, empty homes, and ceramic platters when they said goodbye. Communities altered their interactions with the environment with a move from overreliance of potatoes to a preference to them and movements into previously uninhabited places. Across Ireland, people remember the disaster. Musicians passionately sing about forlorn days and a forced migration from home, sharing memories of the Great Hunger with the next generation. Communities embedded their taskscapes with memories of death and migration, which are now memorialized in oral and folk history, such as the Schools’ Collection. Egan concludes his poem notes about the difficult heritage. People are ashamed, and they deal with the remains of it when necessary, but the Famine narrative is not prioritized.

Some aspects to the past are prioritized over others (Lowenthal 1998b:8). In Ireland, this resulted in an archaeology and heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine that is fragmentary and misleading, including ignoring the Famine Process. For over a century, discussion of the disaster has focused on the potato and to a substantial extent the potato is still blamed for the social upheaval in nineteenth-century Ireland. I have documented in this dissertation the specific ways that the public heritage of the disaster has begun to change, largely due to the grassroots efforts of activists and researchers. I argue that the current moment represents a turning point in the
heritage and archaeology of the Great Hunger, and my research is a small fraction of what will become a rich field of study. Heritage constructors engaging with material that explore the broader processes that created vulnerability and disaster, like laissez faire economic policies and colonial land dispossession. I began this dissertation with the presentation of two main questions: How did people respond to the 1845-1850 Famine?; and, How is the disaster incorporated into heritage? I used historical, archaeological, and ethnographic material to answer those questions.

I argue that communities responded to disaster in different ways. The governmental and private aid was not sufficient in alleviating poverty and hunger among the masses because these efforts neglected the structural issues that caused severe inequality in Irish society. As a result, communities were forced to turn to other means to survive the disaster. On Inishbofin and Inishark, islanders expanded their taskscapes while also receiving government aid when it was available. As an island and as part of a larger nation working against centuries of oppression, islanders operationalized their taskcape in order to change the political economy at the time, end colonialism, enhance their subsistence economy, alter land tenure, and engage with the natural environment in new ways as demonstrated by an expanded figure discussing taskscape changes (Table 8-1). Islanders used the sea to access other resources, specifically employment opportunities in Scotland. Further, the islanders took advantage of land reform in the late nineteenth-century to move into areas of the island that the landlord had previously restricted. With the migration and new access to resources, islanders were using more land to support less people.
The archaeology and heritage of *An Gorta Mór* is going through a transformation.

Famine discourse used to focus on a small number of topics, particularly the potato, migration, burial practices, migration, workhouses, and souperism. Conversations about the disaster often valorized a few individuals, subjugating the memory of the many who suffered during the Famine. Unofficial heritage has been pushing official heritage to change its approach to remembering the disaster. Importantly, they are confronting the larger context of the tragedy and there are an increase number of projects doing this. I predict this trend will continue into the middle of the twenty-first century.

**How did People Respond to the 1845-1850 Famine?**

At a national scale, public and private institutions responded to the disaster by providing aid. The government created soup kitchens, imported cheaper foods, developed work programs to employ able-bodied people, and offered housing and food to those unable to support themselves. Many of these governmental programs were legitimate efforts but the social,
economic, and political systems were so broken that these works were ineffective. Irish tenant farmers and their families required much more aid and substantial changes in their lifestyles. In addition, prevailing Victorian ideology frowned upon providing free aid, in the belief that poor people would become permanently reliant on government aid (Donnelly 2002), creating a stigma around relief. Meanwhile, the privileged, landed-elite in Ireland were unwilling to change their lifestyles.

Through the Famine Process and in tandem with the public aid, private institutions offered food and shelter, and in some cases, sponsored migration. Individuals and groups including James Hack Tuke aided the migration from destitute parts of Ireland to other countries which appeared promising to struggling tenant farmers.

Two large-scale responses to the 1845-1850 Famine are difficult to ignore: over one million people died and another million migrated to other countries in the five years the government identifies as the disaster (Ó Grada and O’Rourke 1997). However, if we look beyond these five years to consider the Famine Process, the response is even more drastic. Irish people continued to struggle for reliable food resources, and they fought for changes in their lives. Between 1850 and 1913 more than 4.5 million people migrated from Ireland (Hatton 1993:595), and it is unclear how many people died on their journey. Effective responses to the disaster did not come until social and political changes were enacted in the second half of the nineteenth century, including massive land reforms and Irish independence.

Around the nation, small communities were reliant on the government relief programs. However, some of the landlords responded to the lack of rent in harsh ways. Families were evicted because they were unable to pay rent. There are a number of instances from mainland communities where the landlord evicted masses. In the archaeological and historical record, I
found that evidence that suggests that many mainland communities did not have alternative food such as sea resources or opportunities to broaden their tasksapes to survive the disaster. Mainland communities suffered at the discretion of their landlord. As was the case across western Ireland, Landlords, like Denis Mahon of Stroketown, evicted residents who were unable to pay rent. Landlords did this in order to change the way the land was used, but also, landlords were then no longer responsible to provide aid to their suffering tenants.

On Inishbofin and Inishark, people responded to the 1845-1850 Famine by accepting governmental aid. However, as the papers from Lady Browne indicate, the island did not receive all the help required to survive the disaster. People suffered beyond the five years and throughout the Famine Process. In one response, the residents changed their daily tasks to encompass areas of the North Atlantic that would provide easier access to resources, altering their subsistence economy. They were depicted in the Illustrated London News as gathering limpets, famine food and not considered appropriate for consumption during times of plenty. In doing so, people changed their socially-constructed food habits. While they fished regularly, they adapted their ways and harnessed different sea resources due to the dire circumstances. Also, people would have gathered other sea resources from different coastal areas than the areas used to launch seafaring vessels. This change of taskscape is one that has little evidence in the archaeological record, but I found evidence of it in the historical record and through oral history.

Second, to change their political economy, islanders shifted to a strategy of seasonal migration to Scotland, and oral history and ethnography from the late nineteenth century suggests that islanders participated in this practice (Brown 1893:353), as they were part of the larger community while living on an island in the Atlantic Ocean. They resisted the confines from the landlord and moved throughout the taskscape to obtain resources. This included local
movement to the coast and movement to Scotland. Migrants would also send remittances and gifts, like ceramics, home when they were abroad. The remittances and gifts are signs of islanders’ strength and resiliency during hardships. According to oral history, this was a long-standing practice on Inishbofin, and people who remained on Inishbofin expected the resources from their family members who moved to access new resources.

As the islanders moved around their constantly changing taskscape, they embedded new meaning around them (Ingold 1993). For example, when the islanders picked limpets from the coast, they remember the reason they are picking limpets. The next time the islanders walked by the beach, the memory of the limpet picking in order to survive is there. Similarly, when the islanders moved from the core of Westquarter village, either for temporary or permanent migration, those who stayed remembered the individuals who died and who migrated. While walking by a vacant house to a new subsistence farming area, villagers remembered the islanders in Scotland who would soon be home with new ceramics purchased during seasonal work. The islanders who migrated embedded memories into their changing tasksapes. On the journey to Scotland, it would have been difficult to forget the reason they were travelling for work and that memory would be entrenched into the scape along their journey or in the field while they worked. As Egan (1997) said, “the stink of Famine hangs in the bushes still,” and the taskscape changes are still present and embedded on Inishbofin.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Irish people pushed for political change in order to transform the landlord-tenant relationship, ending a long-standing colonial practice of marginalization through land dispossession. As a result, the villagers of Westquarter changed their space dramatically through a new land tenure system. As I demonstrated through Westquarter maps, once the state purchased the land, islanders accessed new resources and
performed their daily tasks in new parts of the island. They moved beyond the original Westquarter village core toward North Beach. Families worked larger subsistence farming plots. Along with the permanent and seasonal migration, islanders changed their taskscape which enabled them to access more resources locally and internationally as a response to sustained food insecurity in the nineteenth century.

I looked for evidence of temporary migration of laborers from Inishbofin and Inishark, but the records are not there. However, the lack of locally produced ceramics, the amount of Scottish spongeware, and the survival of Inishbofin as a community suggests that people left to obtain resources. Those who left were able to send food or money back to their family members. Those who stayed had one less person with which to share the limited food sources. This is one area of my research that needs further exploration.

**How has the 1845-1850 Famine been incorporated into heritage over time?**

Past famine heritage created an approach to the 1845-1850 Famine that ignored the disaster. The memory of the disaster could have incited more violence for the colonial government, and the shame associated with the event silenced people in the Irish Free State. Some of the earliest remembrances of the calamity came through text, like the monographs written by O'Rourke (1875) and O'Brien (1896). After Irish independence in 1922, there was a shift from in the types of words in the 1930s and 1940s in large part because the National Folklore archive documented the disaster using local manifestations of two national projects. This brought more voices, and non-elite voices, into the Great Hunger commemoration. However, these focused on limited aspects of the 1845-1850 Famine. The scope did not fully address the Famine Process and structural factors which caused the disaster.
These trends continued into contemporary heritage discourse on an official scale. However, there was also a change. People were angry about the lack of information on the tragedy and embraced the research. Historians, economists, geographers, musicians, artists, poets, writers, and others focused on the disaster in their work. With more individuals contributing to the construction of 1845-1850 Famine heritage, the content of heritage changed. People included information about the potato failure, the relief efforts, and the death, but they also included many more details, rather than vague statistics and numbers, and included anecdotes about individuals and families, whether they knew these people personally, heard the story from a neighbor, friend, or relative, or created a fictionalized account.

Through time the 1845-1850 Famine has been commemorated in formal ways much more frequently than before. Initially, the remembrances were sparse, with writings or stories told periodically and in informal manners. The 100th anniversary of the Great Hunger is said to have passed with little pomp or circumstance (Joe Murray personal communication 2018). The 150th anniversary sparked more commemorations across the country, monuments to be built and annual events remembering the disaster and the underlying reasons the calamity occurred. Today, there are more people who write about the disaster and try and bring it to the forefront of Irish history and heritage, and this is where the activism is incorporated. People, like Declan O’Rourke, Joe Murray, Fin Dwyer, and Michael Blanch work to share knowledge about the disaster and try to incorporate the 1845-1850 Famine in heritage in more consistent ways and times for all of Ireland. The past two decades have seen a surge of 1845-1850 Famine heritage presentations, and it appears that this trend will continue for the time being.

In my research, it became clear that there was a disjuncture between official and unofficial heritage. The official, state-sanctioned heritage focused and still focuses on themes
that fail to address the root causes of the disaster. Despite the change in the way the broader community is talking about the disaster, the official heritage on a national scale remains largely static. Unofficial heritage followed the lines of the official heritage for some time, but after the 150th anniversary of the Great Hunger, it appears that it addresses the aspects to the Famine the official heritage neglects. Following the disaster, the colonial government did little to commemorate or remember An Gorta Mór. They limited the duration of the Famine Process to a five-year period, did not acknowledge the disaster history books, and blamed the lack of food on potatoes. Once Ireland became an independent nation, the general public in Ireland followed the Irish government’s methods of commemorating the 1845-1850 Famine. There are common themes and approaches of the disaster that have persisted since the first Irish governmental project to remember the Great Hunger.

In the Famine Questionnaire, the folklore commission, a governmental entity, formulated and asked specific questions about life during the 1845-1850 Famine. They asked about seven main topics: souperism, workhouses, famine food, evictions, mass graves, death, and migration. The National folklore commission included these same topics in the schools collection questions on the disaster. The scholarship on the disaster remarked on these seven topics as well. Today, official and unofficial remembrances of the 1845-1850 Famine draw upon these topics. For example, the Kilkenny Famine experience explores each of the topics in detail through a guided audio tour. The unofficial heritage art in Tuohy’s Dark Shadows, reiterates the same themes even though there was no official heritage entity monitoring the artist’s depictions of An Gorta Mór. In most instances, unofficial and official heritage has not strayed from these themes. Only rarely do people talk about the economic reasons and the social and political institutions that caused the disaster.
Additionally, the 1845-1850 Famine continues to be substantively ignored and avoided on a national stage. When I searched for mentions or old displays of the Great Hunger in the National Museum I found no evidence of a display being created, even for the 150th anniversary of the disaster. The National Museum of Ireland does not mention the 1845-1850 Famine in any of its displays except for referential purposes, as was the case in the National Museum of Country Life. The tragedy was only mentioned in reference to a time period. Activists like the Irish Commemoration and Afri (Murray et al. 1995) push for annual commemorations and substantive explanations of the 1845-1850 Famine in remembrance, but discussed little support and retaliatory action from actors responsible for official heritage. One of my interviewees said that politics played a major role in the subjugation of the disaster because of the contemporary relationship with England and the need to promote open trade and peace. However, that marginalizes the memory of those who suffered, one of the major complaints unofficial heritage creators have with the official famine discourse. With some exceptions in official heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine, the government tends to ignore the root and causes of the disaster, but instead focused on contemporary famines and aid. Speeches by past presidents and taoiseachs, Ireland’s prime ministers, avoid details about individuals who passed and the gruesome deaths they had.

Unofficial heritage takes a different stand and is pushing for the government to acknowledge the truth behind the disaster. Many people I spoke to were upset with the government and official heritage entities for ignoring the details and causes of the Famine Process. O’Rourke expressed anger at not being educated by the national school system as to the basic details of the 1845-1850 Famine. As a result he wrote songs to educate the masses about the disaster. Dwyer refocused his Irish History Podcast exclusively on the 1845-1850 Famine
after realizing how ignored and misunderstood the disaster is. His daily work is now consumed by famine research and education through audio tours, guided tours, podcasts, and written works. Murray the co-organizer of the activist group Afri, uses an annual famine walk and published books to educate the people on the details of what causes prolonged hunger around the world. These works embrace the economic causes of famines and work to change the general public’s understanding of what caused and causes them.

Regional heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine imitates the national approach to the disaster, with small pockets of change in the commemoration. The regional famine heritage tends to include more details about individuals, and, to a small extent, regional heritage officials are starting to be more explicit about the causes of Famine, aligning with discussions about created vulnerability and Famine Process. A good example of this is the Celia Griffith’s Memorial which tells her unfortunate story of receiving aid after it was too late to help her. On the other hand, official heritage of the disaster in a regional context has misinformation or lacks details because there is little oversight, as was seen in the display cases in the Connemara Heritage Centre. Many regional 1845-1850 Famine monuments receive little attention from locals or tourists, and they are often forgotten or visited without reference to their original intent.

On a local scale, the 1845-1850 Famine on Inishbofin has mixed understandings, and there is not a robust famine heritage on the islands compared to other places in Ireland. I spoke with people who thought that the disaster did not impact Inishbofin. However the census data documented a 30 percent drop in population, Lady Sligo’s letters with the island’s caretakers talk about the need for aid, and the Illustrated London News depicted the islanders breaking cultural norms and eating limpets for nourishment. Other people on Inishbofin acknowledged the impact of the 1845-1850 Famine and were quick to point out that grandparents and parents in the early
1900s were too saddened by the disaster to discuss it with the next generation. Because older generations wanted to forget the tragedy, some members of later generations have misunderstandings of the 1845-1850 Famine and island history.

The activist and grassroots constructions of the Great Hunger heritage are creating heritage because they see a lack of it and see the need for it. The national heritage did not see a need for heritage of the 1845-1850 Famine during initial constructions which were designed to protect that which was uniquely Irish (Saris 2013). This trend continues today among official heritage. However, people are frustrated with this construction of heritage by the elites, which does not value the disaster as heritage and marginalizes the memory of those who suffered. Further, they find it frustrating that the national discourse on the catastrophe tells partial and poor interpretations of the disaster. Therefore, these individuals create the heritage that fits their needs and the desire to remember their ancestors.

A deeper explanation for the poor interpretation of the 1845-1850 Famine is the emotional impact of the Great Hunger. Mary McAleese noted in 2002 when she was the president of Ireland that “Ireland was once cursed by starvation and poverty in the same way that so many still are cursed today. The folk memory of our own loss has never faded from the Irish psyche.” Many of my interviewees mention the emotions attached to talking about the disaster. The gravity of the disaster, and the reactions from the government caused “humiliated silence” (Connerton 2008:161). Some scholars (Ó Grada 2001; Rice and Benson 2005; Coll et el. 2012; Pitrone 2013) have said that Ireland as a nation experiences post-traumatic stress disorder from An Gorta Mór. This past trauma impacted how Ireland was seen on a global stage and their self-perception, as they were people who moved all over the world to avoid starvation. Heritage constructors and archaeologists are approaching the topic with new vigor through new projects,
like Cunniffe’s, Brighton’s, and Roynane’s, but also through new constructions of heritage where past people are not marginalized through discussions on elites or poor interpretations of the past.

With the increase in the 1845-1850 Famine commemoration, unofficial disaster heritage is shifting the tone and direction. No longer are people solely focused on the failure of the potato and migration. Rather, they tell the story of An Gorta Mór by including details about the colonial government and lack of action, long standing desire to use Ireland for profit, continued prejudice against Irish people, purposeful harm of the Irish economy for the betterment of England’s economy, and harsh realities of colonialism. As the people push to learn more of the truth behind the Famine, the government is doing more to incorporate unofficial heritage into official heritage, albeit at a sluggish pace.

As Famine heritage is often portrayed, a person’s first exposure and reference to the disaster begins with an emphasis on the potato blight. This approach ignores the social, political, and economic policies which created the vulnerability in Ireland. I would like to offer some applicable outcomes from my research for educators and heritage constructors to consider since many interviewees expressed frustration with the education they received. First, I recommend that heritage on the famine acknowledge a long history of marginalization where farmers were forced onto smaller and smaller plots of land to feed their families. Second, I suggest that economic factors be incorporated into the dialogue in a larger way. This would help visitors understand the state of nineteenth century prior to the Great Hunger. Third, I recommend a conversation about continued food insecurity and the reasons behind food insecurity. At this point, I would insert the potato into the conversation because food insecurity was the result of overreliance on a single crop. With this approach, people learn about the underlying factors that
caused the disaster, which helps them more fully understand why a blight on one crop impacted so many people in Ireland. By further contextualizing the social, environmental, and economic factors that caused the Famine, heritage centers can draw connections to contemporary famines, something many of them already attempt to do.

In a second for of applied outcomes of my research, I propose to create a comprehensive list of all the Famine-related heritage sites. During my research, I found it extremely difficult to identify all of the 1845-1850 Famine-related heritage sites. I hypothesize that more could be found by visiting all of the workhouses or former workhouse sites. I plan to share this with official and unofficial heritage entities in Ireland.

For the people of Inishbofin, I plan to create publicly available informational materials about nineteenth-century island life showcasing highlights from my research in a format that the community finds most useful and recommends. The materials will share information about nineteenth century ceramics, and compare archaeological finds from the islands with ceramics on display in the pubs and in people’s homes. I will also share information about ceramic dating and decoration techniques. I will highlight the choices islanders made when purchasing ceramics in the nineteenth century. I will make the poster understandable to a wide variety of ages and demographics. Multiple copies of the materials can be displayed in the heritage museum and the community center.

In addition, I will write a small book aimed at elementary school children to teach them about the 1845-1850 Famine and Famine Process, including the different factors which led to the disaster. My research demonstrated that there are few educational resources for children to learn about the disaster. I am working on a book to help educate children about the Great Hunger in a way that discusses land dispossession through colonial practices, economic attitudes, and
marginalization of Irish people. I will include a special section about the Famine Process on Inishbofin. I will distribute this book in PDF form to the school and in a self-published hard copy to the Inishbofin children’s library.

The 1845-1850 Famine was ignored and forgotten in mainstream heritage in Ireland. The majority of the people who suffered and died during the disaster were disenfranchised members of society. Since they were unable to read or write, their commemorations have also been marginalized. Learning little about the larger context of the Famine Process, their descendants were embarrassed or ashamed that their loved ones were unable to feed themselves. These sentiments persisted throughout the last 150 years because the majority of people in Ireland did not fully understand the causes of the disaster. They thought the potato blight caused the Famine, not the economic, social, and political realities of colonialism. This research emphasizes the need to commemorate the difficult and negative aspects of human experiences and human past. The long-lasting implications can cause frustration among the generations that follow. It unfairly attributes disaster and death to a fungus rather than the colonial powers.

In this dissertation, I worked to create a way for archaeologists and anthropologists to study the 1845-1850 Famine using material culture extremely prevalent at Famine-era sites in Ireland. While the topic is challenging, I wanted to create a way for other contexts to approach the disaster. By asking researchers, museum specialists, archaeologists, government officials, and teachers about the 1845-1850 Famine, I drew attention to the topic. I joined the activist and education based heritage constructors in wanting to bring the tragedy into the forefront of Irish heritage and archaeology. An Irish civil servant told me that the 1845-1850 Famine is “hugely important” and questioning the way it is presented “is the only way to change our misunderstandings about the disaster.” I hope that bringing together different sources from the
past and present illuminate the creation of socio-natural disasters through colonial contexts. Additionally, through the taskscape lens, the islanders of Inishbofin and Inishark expressed their agency when they responded to the disaster. They were a community that was highly integrated into broader society but were able to resist the total collapse of their community during the disaster by employing island-specific responses.

This approach gives voice to disenfranchised or marginalized communities and also questions the vulnerability of islands during some disasters. The ceramic data suggest that islanders were not more vulnerable than other communities during this particular disaster, as they had Scottish and English seconds in their homes and as heirlooms. This rebukes the increased vulnerability of islands argument used in relation to other disasters (Gaillard 2007; Kelman et al. 2011; Kelman and Khan 2013:1131; Mercer et al. 2009). Additionally, islanders do not see themselves as more vulnerable, rather, they view their island status as a benefit because it allowed them to access food that was unreachable to their mainland counterparts.

The archaeology and anthropology of disaster has focused on floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes. There has been very little research on the archaeology of famines, perhaps because it is hard to do. For the 1845-1850 Famine and Famine Process in Ireland, the memory sparked so much sadness that people did not want to talk about it. However, it appears that enough time has passed for people to confront the injustice that occurred with the disaster. I aimed to contribute to an underdeveloped but deserving field, and I hope that this research sparks interests by more people to studying famines in the archaeological record.
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Costello Maureen <mcostell@mayococo.ie>  
To: "kshakour@mail.usf.edu" <kshakour@mail.usf.edu>  
Thu, Mar 5, 2020 at 5:51 AM

Hello Katie,

Mayo County Library gives you permission to use sheets from Balds’ map.

Just acknowledge the library.

Regards,

Maureen Costello,
Local Historian

Katie Shakour <kshakour@mail.usf.edu>  
To: Costello Maureen <mcostell@mayococo.ie>  
Thu, Mar 5, 2020 at 6:56 AM

Thank you.

Best,

Katie Shakour
[Quoted text hidden]

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Katie Shakour

Doctoral Candidate
University of South Florida, Anthropology Department
kshakour@mail.usf.edu
Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro # 00026097

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:
Community Archaeology and Heritage on Inishbofin, County Galway, Ireland
The person who is in charge of this research study is Katie Shakour. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Thomas Pluckhahn.

The research will be conducted at Inishbofin, County Galway Ireland

Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is to find out more about the history and heritage of Inishbofin.

Why are you being asked to take part?
We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a member of the Inishbofin community and have shown knowledge in the research areas.

Study Procedures:
If you take part in this study, you will be asked to provide stories about Inishbofin’s past and why and how heritage is important to the people of Inishbofin. I will ask versions of the following questions.

1. How do you envision heritage?
2. What does it mean to be an islander?
3. What is an important part of your or your family’s history? Why?
4. What aspects of Inishbofin history are important for local heritage?
5. What aspects of Inishbofin history are important for the tourist economy?
6. How is archaeology linked to local heritage on Inishbofin?
7. How is archaeology linked to the heritage presented to tourists on Inishbofin?
8. How is material culture linked to heritage on Inishbofin?
9. Do you have any questions for us about our study? 
The research will take place on Inishbofin at a place and time of your choosing and will take around 30 to 60 minutes. If permitted, I will digitally record the audio of the interview. I will transcribe any recorded interviews. I am the only person who will have access to these, and I will code the information so only I will be able to identify the informant. The digital recordings will be maintained for 5 years after the final report has been submitted, at which time they will be deleted.

**Total Number of Participants**
A total of 20 individuals will participate in the study at all sites.

**Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**
You do not have to participate in this research study.
You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

**Benefits**
The potential benefits of participating in this research study include:
Documenting history of the island and understanding how heritage is used. Heritage is often used for tourism and parts of this research could benefit the larger community’s heritage tourism.

**Risks or Discomfort**
This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

**Compensation**
You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

**Costs**
It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**
We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator and faculty advisor.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- Any agency of the federal, state, or local government that regulates this research.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

**You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Katie Shakour at +353 085 1563261.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

**Consent to Take Part in this Research Study**

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

__________________________
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

__________________________
Date

__________________________
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

__________________________
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent

__________________________
Date

__________________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent