

O'CONNELL AND HIS LEGACY

CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 22 November 2025

**Venue: Seamus Heaney Lecture Theatre, G114,
St Patrick's Campus – Dublin City University,
Drumcondra, Dublin 9**

Register via Eventbrite

Programme

Registration from 10am

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 10.30am | The Liberator's legacy: questions and challenges around the life of Daniel O'Connell
<i>Patrick Geoghegan (Trinity College Dublin)</i> |
| 11.20am | "I went to catch part of a Mass this morning at the new chapel – church I should say – in Westland Row": towards an architectural history of Daniel O'Connell
<i>Dr. Niamh NicGhabhann Coleman (University of Limerick)</i> |
| 12.10pm | A reluctant sitter? Daniel O'Connell and the power of portraiture, 1810-47
<i>Ben Casey (Maynooth University)</i> |
| 12.45pm | Lunch |
| 1.30pm | Black abolitionists and the moral imperative of emancipation in Irish antislavery
<i>Dr Fionnghuala Sweeney (Newcastle University)</i> |
| 2.20pm | O'Connell in the twentieth century: <i>The Standard</i> on the man and his legacy
<i>Dr Daniel Carey (Dublin City University)</i> |

- 3.10pm The current day relevance of Daniel O’Connell’s life and legacy and lessons for the future
 Maria Watson (The Bar of Ireland Liberator Scholar)
- 4.00pm Concluding remarks

SPEAKERS

Patrick Geoghegan, Professor in TCD’s School of History and Humanities and Director of Trinity Long Room Hub, is recognised nationally and internationally as an expert on the changing nature of the Anglo-Irish relationship in the early nineteenth century. His scholarship on the Irish Act of Union and its aftermath, the rebellion of Robert Emmet, and the political and legal career of Daniel O’Connell are widely acknowledged for their contributions in reshaping our understanding of the changing relationship between constitutional nationalism and republicanism. Patrick’s acclaimed two-volume study of Connell completed his examination of the tensions and conflicts which emerged following the abolition of the Irish parliament. The first volume provided a new analysis of the winning of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 while the second discussed the attempts to repeal the Union which failed so dramatically in the 1840s. His current work explores how Edmund Burke both succeeded and failed in using oratory to change the nature of imperial debate in the eighteenth century. As presenter of the award-winning ‘Talking History’ on Newstalk radio, Patrick has made an invaluable contribution in bringing the discipline of history to a wide popular audience.

Dr. Niamh NicGhabhann Coleman is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Limerick. Her research interests include the dynamics of urban public space and festivity; the history of respectability in Irish culture; the histories of public space; Irish art history; public history; and interdisciplinary research practices. She also writes on aspects of contemporary art. Niamh has published extensively in these areas and is currently working on a monograph titled *Ambition and Magnificence: Roman Catholic Architecture in Ireland, 1829-1936* (under contract with Liverpool University Press as part of their Reappraisals in Irish History series). She has led the Religious Spaces in Transition project, which focused on new and changing uses for religious architectural heritage in Ireland and internationally (funded by the Irish Research Council under the New Foundations scheme). She also convenes the MCHRI - Material and Cultural Heritages of Religion in Ireland research network and is a Committee member of the Catholic Historical Society of Ireland.

Ben Casey is a third year PhD student of History at Maynooth University who is interested in material culture, representation, commercialisation, professional classes and art in Ireland during the long eighteenth century. His doctoral research project, titled ‘Picturing the Irish professions, 1760-1830’, interrogates the various contexts in which depictions of the professions in Ireland were created and disseminated through image and text. Ben has been awarded several prestigious prizes and scholarships, notably a Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship (2024), a John & Pat Hume Scholarship (2023), the Thomas Dammann Junior Memorial Scholarship (2023), the Maiben Gilmartin Travelling Scholarship (2022) and an MU History Department Taught Masters Scholarship (2022).

Dr Fionnghuala Sweeney, Reader in American and Black Atlantic Literatures at Newcastle University, specializes in African American literature; black book history, especially in the UK and Ireland; Black Atlantic autobiography/slave narratives; afromodernism; anti-colonial radicalism in diaspora; Slavery and Post-slavery Studies; Irish writing about slavery and Empire; transatlantic studies, especially of fugitive and former slaves in Ireland and Britain; and Afro-diasporan art history and visual culture. She has published extensively across these areas. Of particular interest are her articles on Moses Roper, the first fugitive enslaved lecturer in Ireland, the Act of Emancipation in the art, culture and politics of the Black Diaspora, and positioning Ireland within studies of slavery, antislavery and Empire. Her publications also include *Frederick Douglass and the Atlantic World* (Liverpool & Chicago, 2007). Among other roles, she is Co-Editor-in-chief of the *Irish Journal of American Studies* and a member of the organizing committee of the Irish Association of American Studies.

Dr Daniel Carey completed his PhD at Dublin City University where is now a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral researcher working on a two-year archival project titled ‘The Standard: ideological cornerstone of Catholic Ireland’ which explores the history of this newspaper produced between 1928 and 1978. Before that, Daniel I was an Assistant Professor of Journalism and Visual Communications at the University of Limerick, and spent a year on the Coastal Uplands: Heritage and Tourism (CUPHAT) project at University College Dublin.

Maria Watson is a practising barrister in both civil and criminal law, with a particular specialism in medical law. Called to the Bar in 2016, she has since established a broad and dynamic practice and is a regular contributor to the *Medico-Legal Journal of Ireland*. Most recently, Maria was named the 2025 Liberator Scholar by The Bar of Ireland, a highly competitive award commemorating the 250th anniversary of Daniel O’Connell’s birth. This provided her with a fully funded place at the prestigious Harvard Programme on negotiation.