

# A Tribute to Roy Foster

**Tom Dunne** is Emeritus Professor of History, UCC. He is best known for his work on 1798, on literature in both English and Irish, and on Irish and British art from 1760-1860. His book, *Rebellions: Memoir, Memory and 1798*, published in 2004, was a ground-breaking combination of personal memoir and historiographical masterclass. He wrote the opening essay, "RFF, A writing Life" in Roy Foster's *Festschrift, Uncertain Futures* (ed, Senia Paseta, 2016).

**Fearghal McGarry** is Professor of Irish History at Queen's University, Belfast. He is author of *Frank Ryan* (2003), *Eoin O'Duffy - A Self-made Hero* (2005), *The Rising: Ireland: Easter 1916* (2010), *Rebels: Voices From The Easter Rising* (2011), and *The Abbey Rebels Of 1916: A Lost Revolution* (2015). He has been a leading participant in the activities generated by the Decade of Centenaries.

**Erika Hanna** studied for her doctorate with Roy Foster at Hertford College, Oxford, between 2007 and 2010. She subsequently held positions at Leicester and Edinburgh before taking up her post as Lecturer in Modern History at the University of Bristol in 2015. Her first book, *Modern Dublin: Urban Change and the Irish Past, 1957-73* was published by Oxford University Press in 2013.

**Matthew Kelly** completed a DPhil in Modern History titled 'Irish Separatism, 1882-1914' under the supervision of Roy Foster at Oxford University. It was later published as *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916* (2006). In recent years he has tried his hand at Polish and family history (*Finding Poland: From Tavistock to Hruzdowa and Back Again* (London, 2010)) and has focused mainly on British environmental history (*Quartz and Feldspar. Dartmoor: A British Landscape in Modern Times* (London, 2015)). His Irish interests remain very much alive, however, as forthcoming work will show.

**Catherine Fahy** retired as Acting Director of the National Library of Ireland in 2016 after 41 years' service. Highlights of her career include over a decade spent in the Manuscripts Department of the Library where she dealt with the papers of W.B. Yeats, John B. Yeats, James Joyce, Hugh Lane, Roger Casement, the O'Briens Earls of Inchiquin, the Butlers, Dukes of Ormond among many others. As Keeper of Outreach and Preservation she oversaw the production of two major exhibitions, 'James Joyce and Ulysses' which ran from 2004 to 2006, and 'Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats', which opened in 2006 and is still running.

**Sandra Collins** is the Director of the National Library of Ireland. Sandra is originally a mathematician and has worked in digital innovation and cultural heritage over 20 years in the public and private sectors. She was previously the founding Director of the Digital Repository

of Ireland in the Royal Irish Academy and she serves on the Irish Government's Open Data Governance Board and the Irish National Open Research Forum. She is a member of the Chester Beatty Library Board of Trustees, the Board of the Irish Manuscripts Commission and the Council of the Library Association of Ireland.

**Paula Meehan** was born in Dublin where she still lives. A playwright and poet, she has received many awards for her work. She has been Ireland Professor of Poetry, 2013 – 2016. Her public lectures from the Professorship, *Imaginary Bonnets with Real Bees in Them*, were published in 2016 by UCD Press. *Geomantic*, her latest collection of poems was published by Dedalus Press, Dublin in November of 2016.

**Joseph M. Hassett** is a lawyer and literary scholar residing in Washington, D.C. He is a graduate of Canisius College and Harvard Law School, holds a Ph.D. in Anglo-Irish Literature from University College Dublin, and was a visiting scholar at St. John's College, Oxford. His conversation with Chief Justice John Roberts appeared on C-Span television. He is the author of *W.B. Yeats and the Muses*, published by Oxford University Press in 2010, and *The Ulysses Trials: Beauty and Truth Meet the Law*, published by Lilliput Press in 2016.

**James Ryan** is director of the Creative Writing Programme at the School of English, Drama and Film in University College Dublin. He is the author of four novels, *Home from England*, *Dismantling Mr Doyle*, *Seeds of Doubt* and *South of the Border*.

**Myles Dungan** is a writer and broadcaster. He presents the weekly *History Show* on RTE Radio 1 and is the author of a number of works on Irish and American history. He was a Fulbright scholar at the University of California, Berkeley in 2007 and 2011. He was awarded a PhD by Trinity College, Dublin in 2012 and is an adjunct lecturer in history at University College, Dublin.

**Catriona Crowe** is former Head of Special Projects at the National Archives of Ireland. She was Manager of the Census Online Project, which placed the Irish 1901 and 1911 censuses online free to access. She is editor of *Dublin 1911*, published by the Royal Irish Academy in late 2011. She is Chairperson of the Irish Theatre Institute, which promotes and supports Irish theatre and has created an award-winning website of Irish theatre productions. She is an Honorary President of the Irish Labour History Society, and a former President of the Women's History Association. She presented the RTE documentary, *Ireland before the Rising*, which was shown in February 2016.



Leabharlann  
Náisiúnta  
na hÉireann  
National Library  
of Ireland

## Director's Introduction

Scholars, writers, teachers and thinkers have been central to the work of the National Library since it was founded in 1877. Through our collections, generations have explored, interrogated and illuminated the story of Ireland. It is my very great pleasure to welcome a distinguished audience to celebrate the career of Roy Foster, and the tradition of informed enquiry that is so much a part of the National Library's own history.

*Dr Sandra Collins, Director of the  
National Library of Ireland*



**Roy Foster** is one of Ireland's most distinguished historians. His career has spanned 25 years as Carroll Professor of Irish History at Hertford College, Oxford, and before that in Birkbeck College in London. In this case, the exile of a talented historian was Ireland's gain as well as England's. Foster almost single-handedly created the idea of Irish history in Britain, both through his influential publications and his assiduous and legendary teaching, as his students can testify. Over here, we got the benefit of *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, which caused all kinds of interesting trouble when it appeared in 1988, the many books of scintillating essays telling us things we needed to know about ourselves, and the wonderful biography of WB Yeats, which is part of the reason we are here today in the National Library. And two years ago, we got *Vivid*

*Faces*, the book which has done more than any other to humanise the revolutionary generation.

We owe Roy Foster a great deal, not least for his constant interest in the Irish public realm and fearless capacity to espouse positions he sees to be important. His firm stance in the middle of the Irish Sea, halfway between "us" and "them", has made him an unblinkered observer of both sides. There is no-one else like him that I can think of: enormously talented and productive, highly original, a beautiful prose writer, a passionate believer in the importance of history, a wonderful teacher, immensely good company, and eternally youthful in every way. Today is a small attempt to pay tribute to him, in a building where he did some of his greatest work.

*Catriona Crowe*

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National Library of Ireland

29 September 2017



9.45	1.00 - 2.00
Sandra Collins: welcome	<i>Lunch</i>
Catriona Crowe: opening remarks	
10.00 - 11.00	2.00 - 3.00
<b>Historian</b>	<b>Biographer</b>
Tom Dunne	Paula Meehan
Fearghal McGarry	Joseph Hassett
11.00 - 11.40	3.00 - 3.30
<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Friend and Inspirer</b>
Matt Kelly	James Ryan
Erika Hanna	
11.40 - 12.00	3.30 - 4.00
<i>Coffee</i>	<i>Coffee</i>
12.00 - 1.00	4.00 - 5.00
<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Interview</b>
Catherine Fahy	Roy Foster
Sandra Collins	by Myles Dungan