

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY: **DR. MICHAEL B. MURPHY**, President, University College Cork on 1 December 2011 in the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Literature, *honoris causa*, on **PROFESSOR MAUREEN O'ROURKE MURPHY**

A Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Professor Maureen O'Rourke Murphy, co-director of the Irish studies programme at Hofstra University on Long Island, New York, has been responsible for the development of Irish Studies in seven countries throughout her distinguished career.



Born in Long Island, New York, to Bernard and Louise Sawner O'Rourke, Maureen's Irish roots stretch back to Counties Leitrim and Longford, whence her grandparents hailed. She graduated with a bachelor's degree from State University of New York Cortland and

subsequently earned Masters and PhD degrees from the Folklore Institute at The University of Indiana. Her PhD thesis explored Irish Folklore. Her period of formative learning included a year, in the mid 1960s, as a Fulbright Scholar at University College Dublin at which time she achieved fluency in Connemara Irish.

On returning to the United States, Maureen became an early member of the American Conference of Irish Studies (ACIS), an American-Irish organization founded in 1962, which meets annually and regionally in the autumn, as a vehicle for the spread of Irish studies in the USA. Its annual week-long conference affords an invaluable exchange between scholars and students, while its review of books, *The Irish Literary Supplement* (of which Maureen has been Features Editor since 1982) is a priceless aide memoire to scholars everywhere. A past President of ACIS, and as past chair of the International Association for the Study of Irish Literatures, Maureen has been tireless in developing opportunities for Irish poets, novelists, playwrights and critics to participate in annual conferences hosted at universities worldwide. She lectures regularly at the Yeats International Summer School and in Irish Studies at the University of São Paulo in Brazil.

Her own publications span the broad spectrum of Irish folklore and literature, Irish and Irish-American history, political science and literature written in Irish. They include *The Irish Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930* (2009) Syracuse University Press; *Irish Literature: A Reader* (1987, ref. ed. 2006) with James MacKillop; *Your fondest Annie: letters from Annie O'Donnell to Japes P. Phelan, 1901-1904* (2005); *Ireland's Welcome to the Stranger* (2002). She edited Asenath Nicholson's *Annals of the Famine in Ireland* (1998) and is currently writing a biography of Nicholson. Professor O'Rourke Murphy was a member of the Board of Editors of the Dictionary of Irish Biography published by the Royal Irish Academy and Cambridge University in 2009.

An educationalist at heart, in 2001, she directed the New York Great Irish Famine Curriculum Project, a statewide, interdisciplinary/interactive curriculum consisting of 150 lessons, for

grades 4 to 12, for the study of the Great Irish Famine. This project won the US National Conference for the Social Studies Excellence Award in 2002.

Murphy was the historian of the Irish Hunger Memorial in Battery Park in New York City and her contribution was crucial to its final elegant form. She is currently the historian of the Mission of Our Lady of the Rosary/Watson House emigration project, which aims to establish a permanent exhibition around the emigration of Irish women after the Great Famine.

Maureen has also enjoyed a "day-job" in academe. A long-serving member of Hofstra University in Long Island, she has at various times held the roles of Dean of Students and Dean of the School of Education, Health and Human Services. Currently the Joseph L. Dionne Professor of Curriculum and Teaching, she serves on the Selection Board of the Senator George Mitchell Fellowships and on the Boards of the Emerald Isle Immigration Center and of The American Irish Historical Society.

A widow, Maureen has made annual visits to Ireland since 1961, traveling to various parts of the country four to five times a year. "Ireland is the centre of my life. It is what has defined me as a person," she says.

Maureen's standing in the international world of Irish history and literature was celebrated earlier this year by the publication, and launches in Brazil and in Dublin, of the book "A Garland of Words for Maureen O'Rourke Murphy". Edited by Muniral Mutra, Laura Izarra and Beatriz Bastos of the University of São Paulo, this collection of articles by 60 historians, Irish scholars and poets is a splendid testament to the esteem she enjoys among all who value our literary tradition.

In one of the chapters "A Great Famine Scholar", my erstwhile colleague Professor Joe Lee wrote of Maureen: "What a scholar! What a teacher! What a life-enhancing human being! As we say in Irish, Go maire sí an céad (May she live to be a hundred!)

PRAEHONORABILIS CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis, hanc meam filiam, quam scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneam esse quae admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in Litteris, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo, totique Academiae.