

[Eat, Drink & Be Merry? The Politics of Food & Drink: Famine](#)

Discussion published by Marian J. Barber on Friday, November 25, 2022

Please join British, Irish and Empire Studies at the University of Texas at Austin for the penultimate session of our **virtual series**, "Eat, Drink & Be Merry? The Politics of Food & Drink." Scholars **Janam Mukherjee** of Toronto Metropolitan University and **Niamh Ann Kelly** of Technological University Dublin will discuss the role of famine in the politics of food and drink. Kelly will explore "**Expanding Archives of Food Insecurity: Commemorative Visual Culture of Famine in Ireland.**" Mukherjee will examine "**The Uses of Famine: Starvation and Society in 1940s Bengal.**" Food aid expert **Erin Lentz** of UT's Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs will chair. Please note that this session is scheduled for an unusual date and time: **Thursday, December 1, at 1 p.m. Austin time, 7 p.m. GMT.**

Please register in advance using this link:

<https://utexas.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlkcuorzMpHtOXBBZJe49DCIKle1db8igt>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Questions? Email BIES staff at Marian.Barber@austin.utexas.edu.

The speakers offer more about their presentations:

Kelly: Analysing the representation of famine on the island of Ireland through commemorative visual culture highlights geo-specifically inscribed grievous histories of dispossession that, while conditioned by a subsistence precarity which was predicated on the colonization of economic life through the expansion of the British Empire, were subsequently, for most of a century and a half, re-marginalized in mainstream historical practices. The excuse of apparent lack of material and artefactual remnants, has since been recuperated as this mid-nineteenth century famine is now mediated through diverse representational practices, often triggered by declarative commemorative time periods. Exemplars of visual and material commemorative cultures render the sustained significance of this historical famine and so offer ongoing potential to comprehend the devastation of lives lived and lost in ruinous contexts of food insecurity.

Mukherjee: The primary scholarly focus on colonial famines is most often dedicated to questions of mortality and causation. How many many people died? Who were the victims? And who is to blame for mass starvation? Much less studied are questions about the *impacts* of famine on social, political and economic structures. What changes does mass starvation broker in terms of social identification, political mobilization and economic relations? This talk will focus on the "after-life," so to speak, of the Bengal Famine of 1943, examining how famine in mid-century Bengal radically altered the sociopolitical landscape of India on the very eve of independence and partition.