**Social imaginaries of the dead**

The first in a series of workshops in the project
Living Well with the Dead in Contemporary Ireland

[https://livingwithdead.wixsite.com/website](https://livingwithdead.wixsite.com/website)

CACSSS Seminar Room ORB G27, O’Rahilly Building, University College Cork

19 September 2018

This day-long workshop will explore how un/cared-for dead bodies have been variously conceptualised and researched in the medical humanities and social sciences, focusing on forensic archaeology, cultural history, militant anthropology and feminist and post-humanist social theory. Particular emphasis will be placed on explanation and discussion of Laqueur’s (2015) concept of ‘the work of the dead’ and Derrida’s (1993) ‘hauntology’ and ethical project of ‘learning to live with ghosts’.

Presentations will be made by Margrit Shildrick, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Thomas Laqueur and Niamh McCullagh on social imaginaries of the dead, followed by lots and lots of exploratory discussion. As workshop participants may not be familiar with the work of these scholars, readings will be circulated in advance. The presenters have been invited to focus primarily on conceptual and methodological tools they think may be of use to the project Living Well with the Dead in Contemporary Ireland. We aim to develop a new research vocabulary, and recognise that this requires firstly becoming literate to some extent in each other’s disciplines.

**Programme**

9.00 Welcome and introduction
Òrla O’Donovan, School of Applied Social Studies, UCC

9.30 – 11

*Death investigation in Ireland: the role of a forensic archaeologist*

Niamh McCullagh, Forensic Archaeologist

Discussant: Mary Donnelly, School of Law, UCC

11-11.30 Coffee

Chair: Joan McCarthy, School of Nursing and Midwifery

11.30 – 1

*Rethinking the temporality of death: some bioscientific and philosophical considerations*

Margrit Shildrick, Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies, Stockholm University

Discussant: Heather Laird, School of English, UCC
1-2  Lunch

Chair: Róisín O’Gorman, Department of Drama and Theatre Studies

2 – 3.30  Why and when do we live with the dead? a historian’s perspective
Thomas W. Laqueur, Department of History, University of California Berkeley
Discussant: Barra Ó Donnabháin, Department of Archaeology, UCC

3.30 - 4  Coffee

4 – 5.30  Angel Babies: Holding on and Letting Go
Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Department of Anthropology, University of California Berkeley
Discussant: Nuala Finnegan, Department of Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies, UCC

Speaker profiles

Niamh McCullagh
Niamh McCullagh is an independent consultant Forensic Archaeologist specialising in the search, location and recovery of human remains in a forensic context. As a Forensic Archaeologist, Niamh has worked nationally and internationally on both current and historic casework and also provides input to training capacity for Forensic Archaeologists. Niamh is Senior Forensic Archaeologist to the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims Remains, Forensic Archaeologist to the Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation and Director of the Expert Technical Group for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Niamh also regularly assists An Garda Síochána in the investigation of criminal cases and missing persons. Niamh is an alumna of University College Cork with a BA Major in Archaeology (2001) and an MA in Archaeology (2002). In 2007 Niamh specialised in Forensic Archaeology and Crime Scene Investigation via an MSc from Bradford University and has been engaged exclusively in forensic case work since this time. She is recognised as a Professional Member of the Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences, an Expert Witness in Ireland and is a member of the Irish Association of Forensic Practitioners.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes
Nancy Scheper-Hughes is Chancellor Professor (Emerita) at UC Berkeley where she taught since 1982, co-directing the doctoral program in Critical Medical Anthropology. As a militant anthropologist she developed an approach to ethnographic research that it is intimate and politically engaged. A central theme in her writings is how violence comes to mark the bodies and psyches of the vulnerable, poor, and the dispossessed. Her book, Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland (in three
editions), was a study of madness among bachelor farmers in County Kerry, for which she received the Margaret Mead Award in 1980. Her book, *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday life in Brazil* (1993) won several book awards and is also a life’s work as she returns constantly to Northeast Brazil to see the changes bearing on infant mortality, death squads, hunger, and politics.

In 1999 she co-founded Organs Watch, to map and study in the field the spread of global criminal networks involving human organ trafficking and she was a consultant with the WHO, the UN, and a co-signer of the Istanbul Declaration on Organ Trafficking. In additions to hundreds of scholarly articles and essays, she is the co-editor of a number of other books such as *Violence in War and Peace* (Blackwell/Wiley). She is also recipient of the Tikkun Award, the William Sloane Coffin Award, the AAA Public Policy Award, and the Premio Internazionale di Studi Etnoantropologici (the Pitre Prize) Palermo, Sicily.

**Margrit Shildrick**

Margrit Shildrick is currently Guest Professor of Gender and Knowledge Production at the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies at Stockholm University, and Adjunct Professor of Critical Disability Studies at York University, Toronto. Her research covers postmodern feminist and cultural theory, bioethics, critical disability studies and body theory. Her books include *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, (Bio)ethics and Postmodernism*, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* and *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Sexuality and Subjectivity*.

**Thomas Laqueur**

Thomas Laqueur is Helem Distinguished Professor of History at University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* which earned Thomas the 2016 Cundill Prize for Historical Literature. The *Work of the Dead* has been described as a ‘compelling, richly detailed account of how and why the living have cared for the dead from antiquity to the 20th century. It draws on sources from mortuary archaeology, medical tracts, letters, songs, poems and novels to painting and landscapes’. His other books include *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* and *Solitary Sex*. He is also a regular contributor to the *London Review of Books*. 