

**2019 Irish Studies Guest Lecture Series**

**Autumn Semester**

**Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci**

**13 November, 14.15-15.45 (Room F-138)**

Dr. James Carney (Brunel University, London), 'A Fire upon the Deep: Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran* and the Romance of Irish Nationalism'

Robert Flaherty's documentary *Man of Aran* (1934) is often cited a key work in the emergence of documentary cinema. To no less a degree, its subjects—the Aran Islanders of the west of Ireland—have been coded as exemplars of 'authentic' Irishness. This makes *Man of Aran* a particularly revealing lens through which cultural constructions of Irish identity can be viewed. In this talk, I shall deliver a semiotic analysis of Flaherty's film that shows how it delineates a process of world creation, where a deficient cosmology (consisting of air and water) is transformed into a sufficient one (with earth and fire) through actions of man. This process of world-creation, I shall argue, would have made the film particularly attractive to the sensibilities of the conservative, Catholic Irish State, which would have seen itself as engaged in a similar process of heroic economic and cultural self-assertion.

**Dr. James Carney's** research sits at the intersection of the humanities, the quantitative social sciences, and computational linguistics. He is particularly interested in using machine learning methods to identify discourse-level semantic structures—with 'discourse' in this sense being understood to take in image and film as well as language. He has published widely across the fields of literary studies, experimental psychology, and cognitive anthropology. At present, he is employed on a Wellcome Trust Fellowship at Brunel University London, where he uses AI methods to evaluate the therapeutic effects of literary texts on individuals with anxiety or depression. Previous to this, he has had appointments at the University of Oxford, Lancaster University, the National University of Ireland (Cork), and the University of Limerick.

---O---

This guest lecture series is a collaboration between the Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci and Filozofska fakulteta (Univerza v Ljubljani), and is kindly sponsored by the Embassy of Ireland in Slovenia and the Embassy of Ireland in Croatia.