

Questioning Women's Lives: Famine, Migration and Memory in Evelyn Conlon's *Not the Same Sky*¹

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Abstract: This article focuses on Irish writer Evelyn Conlon's most recent novel, *Not the Same Sky* (2013), which fictionalises the story of 4,414 Irish girls orphaned by famine who were shipped to Sydney, Australia between 1849 and 1850 to satisfy the demand for domestic servants in the colony. Since Australia also needed marriageable young women, many orphan girls ended up seeking security in marriage. This historical episode is under-explored in Irish literature and it is most unusual to find an Irish author writing about mid-nineteenth-century emigration, not to the US or Britain, but to Australia. Here we examine how Conlon uses five different 'functions' of the rhetoric of inquiry to connect issues of famine, choice, migration, and feminist considerations, and to what effect she does so. In doing so, we attempt to show that Conlon honours the orphans' memory and recovers their lives by opening up an ethical and political inquiry and disturbing complacency.

Keywords: Evelyn Conlon, rhetoric of inquiry, migration, Great Famine, memory