

Early Modern Italians in Ireland

Humanities Institute, UCD

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Rathfarnham castle (1583), a fortified house built from published plans by Sebastiano Serlio

'I gave them [...] my English translation of 'Ariosto', which I got at Dublin ...'
(Sir John Harington, on a gift to the sons of Hugh O'Neill in autumn 1599)

What significance has Italy – and Italians – to the history and culture of early modern Ireland? What perspectives on Ireland and its inhabitants are offered by soldiers such as Alessandro Bertone, or Anglicized Italians such as Lodowick Bryskett? What does it change of our understanding of early modern Ireland to know that one of the earliest fortified houses constructed in the period was built to an Italian design (as Jane Fenlon has contended), or that Italians drew several of the most popular published maps of Ireland?

In a 2019 essay describing their plan to 'enrich and complicate the Anglo-Irish narrative' of early modern Ireland by identifying and mapping a wider, multilingual corpus of texts and cultural actors at play, David Baker, Willy Maley and Patricia Palmer point towards the possibilities by outlining what they call 'the Italian connection' (*Dublin Review of Books*, July 2019). The fruits of their labour have recently been unveiled in the [MACMORRIS project](#), led by Prof. Palmer, an exciting new database and deep map of Munster hugely expanding our knowledge of the texts, cultural actors and criss-crossing connections between them in early modern Ireland. While arguably its biggest achievement is to demonstrate the richness and reach of Gaelic culture, even into 'New English' communities, the project also offers significant new insights into the multilingualism and polyvocality of early modern Ireland. As for the 'Italian connection', while the 2019 essay points to a number of Italians posted to Ireland in English service (among them John Florio, Lodowick Bryskett and Petruccio Ubaldini), Italian connections and contacts with Ireland had a longer history than that, from Lombard bankers and traders to papal nuncios and cartographers.

This symposium is an exploratory one, aiming to bring together and build on what we know of early modern Italians in Ireland, both people and texts. All are welcome, particularly early career scholars! To participate or to attend, please email jane.grogan@ucd.ie

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