

## 'Early Modern Italians in Ireland' Symposium Report



Our symposium on Early Modern Italians in Ireland took place on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 in the Humanities Institute seminar room. Scholars came from Rome, Brighton, Cambridge, Dundalk as well as more locally. We also had a speaker and a small audience in Scotland, who attended by Zoom. Papers discussed visitors and travellers to Ireland, be they papal nuncios, cartographers, colonial administrators, poets and independent travellers. We also had a paper on the occlusion of the Irish beloved of one of the most influential Petrarchan sonnets of the period, by Dr Deirdre Serjeantson, examining the well-known connections between the Geraldines of Kildare and the Gherardini of Florence, and a moment of Irish cultural capital earlier in the sixteenth century that tends to be forgotten with the glut of anti-Irish English writings by the 1560s and 1570s.

One highlight of the day was a workshop on the Italians to be found in the exciting new MACMORRIS digital humanities resource, led by the PI Prof. Pat Palmer and the Project Manager, Dr Evan Bourke (a graduate of UCD). Their research found evidence of Italians in Ireland in surprising and marginal places, whether a rowdy group in Roscommon, or soldiers in west Cork. Those in attendance were inspired and encouraged to delve more deeply into the MACMORRIS resource, both network map and 'deep map'.

One figure who attracted much discussion throughout the day was Petrucchio Ubaldini, a Florentine calligrapher and translator who has long been thought to have been present at the massacre at Smerwick in 1580, following his long MS description of it. But the scholars assembled debated the possibility that Ubaldini's source was, in fact, the hostages from Smerwick held in England in 1581-2, and we were able to develop that point within the symposium. In fact, the question of whether or

not some of the important sources on Ireland and Irish history had, in fact, been in Ireland, turned out to be one of the recurring questions of the day; Dr Annaleigh Margey, for example, discussed the influence of Baptista Boazio's famous 1599 map of Ireland – and the archival evidence of other hands having surveyed the lands, even where he drew this and other Irish maps. Prof. Dan Carey discussed the challenges of identifying a set of paradigms for discussing travel to Ireland by any European or English travellers; within the scholarship of early modern travel – and indeed within the sources – travel to Ireland by English travellers (in particular) is simply not treated as travel. Prof. Carey identified a series of possible approaches to this issue, include taking in the category of military travel, or placing travels to Italy and Ireland alongside one another, a large enough contingent of English travellers having travelled to both. Our plenary speaker, Prof. Andrew Hadfield, addressed an Italianate Englishman and an English Italian. The former is Sir John Harington, translator of Ariosto and the proud hero of a well-known story about a visit to the house of Hugh O'Neill and his sons, copy of Ariosto in hand. The latter is Lodowick Bryskett, whose family were Genoese merchants, but who travelled and worked within the English colonial administration in Ireland (as well as on a grand tour with Sir Philip Sidney in the 1570s). Hadfield's reading of Bryskett's *Discourse of Civill Life* pointed out the ways in which it advertised *both* its Italian nature as well as its hostile Irish setting, in a manner not found in comparable translations of Italian courtesy treatises.

Some of the papers from the day are early versions of articles to be submitted to a co-edited collection of essays (co-edited by Jane Grogan and Iolanda Plescia) for Routledge's Anglo-Italian Encounters series. A proposal is currently under review with readers at the press. It was particularly valuable to be able to introduce and discuss the work of those papers, and to bring together a company of scholars – classicists, historians, literary scholars – to survey the archival documents and critical arguments from multiple angles. We are very grateful to the Humanities Institute for hosting us, and to the 'Transnationalizing the Humanities' research strand for supporting the symposium.