

Lisa

Dia dhuit! [Hello!]

This is Podcrawl Podchroal, the podcast from the McClelland Irish Library. I'm your host, Lisa, the Assistant Librarian, with Dr. Marie Leoutre. Dr. Marie is a historian and archivist with a special interest in Diasporas who currently works for the Royal Irish Academy. Dr. Marie has published 2 monographs related to Huguenots in Ireland and is currently working on the Dictionary of Irish Biography entry for Arizona's own Hugo O'Connor. Prior to her current position, Dr. Marie has worked in a number of libraries like the National Library of Ireland, Marsh's Library in Dublin, and the McClelland Library in Phoenix, Arizona. Thank you for joining us, Marie.

Marie

Thank you for having me.

Lisa

What is the Royal Irish Academy?

Marie

So, um, it's an academic body that promotes study in the sciences, humanities and social sciences, and it's Ireland Premier learn society. And, um, it's there to host, uh, all of the sciences and humanities. And I see having benefits about in general and it's very, very prestigious demand.

Lisa

What is the process to have an entry in the dictionary of Irish biography?

Marie

So you kind of have to have done a little bit of research before it. So in my case, I looked at Hugo O'Connor and I realized that there was a gap in scholarship. So Hugo O'Connor is a very good, um, case study in 18th century immigration to America and the fact that he was an imperial agent for the crown of Spain is also commonly unique. So, um, he was interesting in his own respect. So, I contacted the, um, person who's in charge of the dictionary of Irish biography, Dr. Owen Kinsler that I've known for years, and brought to his attention that there was a gap in scholarship. Um, also the fact that Hugo is related to, um, one of, um, the Irish, uh, language most regarded, um, scholars. for the 19th century, um, Charles O'Connor of Belanagare, kind of made him also a good, um, a good case to be included in the Dictionary of Irish Biography.

So after I contacted Owen, um, it was just a matter of making sure the biography was short enough so it can't run by four pages, it has to be concise. The idea with the Dictionary of Irish Biography is that it's for free, online, um, and, and the previous person who was in charge made sure that it was available to the public because it's publicly funded, so it's important that there is access.

Yeah, so, it's a very, very good, uh, very good source. Um, the people who write the entries are usually historians who are experts on these people. Um, all have to... considerable research. And, um, so I'm currently working on actually reducing the amount of material I have to a manageable 2,000 words about Hugo. And then I'm going to send this to you all and hopefully you will approve it and it's going to go live on the, on the website. So usually once you write this, um, there's also a little bit about the sources that you use. So that anybody that wants to do further research can actually come straight to me. So I'm really excited about this. Um, I've been working with Hugo for so long that it's nice to finally, um, Um, see him in a dictionary of Irish biography.

Lisa

Yeah, that's really cool. Can you tell us who the Huguenots were?

Marie

Yes, so, um, because I have French as a language as well, it was really good for me to work on the Huguenots in Ireland because they were French Protestant refugees.

Lisa

Okay.

Marie

So a lot of the sources that you would find are biographical. So that's kind of why I started research on that. Um, and... They fled from France, um, when Protestantism became, uh, illegal, essentially. There had been an, an edict of toleration that was passed, um, in the 16th century [...].

So it meant that France was one of the first countries in Europe to have officially two religions. Um, but Louis XIV decided in 1685 that he just wanted capitalism to be the religion of state Um, and Protestants were, um, forced to either convert or flee if they could. So, by Huguenots it's usually, that's what we mean. We mean French Protestants. who fled, um, and, um, a lot of these people ended up in, uh, Switzerland or the Swiss cantons, um, and you can see the pattern if you look at the map of Europe. So then they went to, um, Germany, the whole European empire. They went to the Netherlands, and then England, Ireland, and then from there, the Americas as well. And, um, South Africa as well. So, you know, they went everywhere. They weren't just refugees. Um, I think they, they settled, um, in, um, what's the name of that state? Virginia.

Lisa

Oh!

Marie

There's a few settlers there in Virginia.

Lisa

Interesting.

Marie

So they went everywhere. So that's good that you know where, and obviously a few settled in, um, in Ireland. I hope I've answered your question.

Lisa

What is the history of them in Ireland?

Marie

So... Ireland in, like, at the end of the 17th century was officially a, um, protestant country. So, the religion of state was the Church of Ireland, which in the equivalent in the U. S. would be probably Episcopalian. Um, so Huguenots were Calvinist, which is closer to Presbyterianism, if that makes sense.

Lisa

Yeah. Okay.

Marie

Um, but because you had about 5, 000 Protestant families that ruled over Ireland while the rest of the population was mainly Catholic. Um, there was an incentive for the government to have Protestant settlers come to Ireland. This is why they welcomed, um, Huguenot refugees from France.

Lisa

Oh, okay.

Marie

So yeah, that's kind of really interesting about, um, So they were granted, um, so they were still dissenters. They were technically not, um, in this state, Calvinists. They were not part of the Church of Ireland. But they were granted, um, special concessions in order to settle a little bit more easily. Um, so you would be granted, say, the freedom of the city or the right to be in the guilds much quicker. Um, things like that. Um, their history in Ireland, they contributed quite a lot to, um, the military. So, you know, when [...], the Battle of Orpheum, all of that. Um, they were Huguenots amongst the, the people who fought in these battles. Um, the first book that I wrote was actually about a man called Henri de Ruvigny, [...] um, and he ended up de facto governor of Ireland, and he was the only person who was not born in England or Ireland to ever have that post, so.

Lisa

Wow.

Marie

So yeah, so they contributed in everything, and then later, um, the La Touche family, um, became the first governors of the Bank of Ireland. Um, and then there's also a few streets that are named after Huguenots so, [...] Street is named after, um, a goldsmith that had a similar

name in fact. Um, and then a few of the buildings were also designed by Huguenots and [...]. There's one such building. So they kind of had an impact on a lot of things, and even in literature. So there's a few more, and also, obviously, the first public librarian in Ireland was actually from La Rochelle in France.

Lisa

Oh, wow.

Marie

And he left, he was in Marsh's Library and he left, um, he brought from France about 2, 000 books, mostly on, um, medicine, theology books, um, so they kind of, it's a unique collection. There's also a collection of these, um, manuscripts that document the persecution of French Protestants, um, at the end of the 17th century. So there's lots, lots going on in Dublin, especially. Um, but there's, there's a few other places where they settled, so you can find traces of them.

Lisa

Why is it important to know about the Huguenots?

Marie

Because it did have an impact, um, in, in Irish history. Um, especially when you think that they were so prominent amongst the, um, in the military. Um, so they, they essentially secured... Um, Ireland for William III, um, at the time.

And, um, I suppose culturally, you can still see, um, their legacy here and there. And some of the, the, the monuments, the architecture, was built by, by Huguenots. Um, and it's also, I think, important to, um, just as a reminder that nobody, uh, comes from just one place.

Immigration, uh, happens all the time. It's also a very good reminder that, um, religious persecution happens. Mm hmm. Um, and I think it's, it's, it's, um, it's also a tribute for, you know, remember then that, um, Ireland was, was a refuge.

Lisa

One of the projects you worked on here at McClelland Library was the Hugo O'Connor exhibit. What can you tell us about him?

Marie

What can I tell you about him? He was born in Dublin in 1734, so during an era that's known as, I suppose, the penal era, so if you were born Catholic. It's also a little bit... simplistic to say Catholic versus Protestant, so it's mostly about your allegiance in terms of politics, um, because, you know, if you have a strict religion, you know, if you're not, if you don't belong to that, you're always suspected of not being loyal, um, and, and, and Catholics at the time were seen as, um, potentially rebellious and supporting the Papacy which the Papacy also has temporal power, it's not just spiritual, um, and also they were very much associated with the Stuart dynasty, which William III, um, obviously, um, replaced.

Well, technically he was married to a steward as well, but you know, we don't have that settlement, so. And, and, um, for some people, you know, the [...] was never seen as the legitimate king. And that's perfectly understandable, it depends on your opinion. So, if you happen to be Catholic, you were seen to be, yeah, potentially, you know disloyal to the crime. And Hugo came from a family of Catholic landowners. They actually managed to retain a lot of their property. And a family of scholars as well, because I mentioned John O'Connor of Banagher, who was an expert on the Irish language. And I was lucky enough to go to their family estate where some of the papers are kept, um, and they have absolutely amazing, um, manuscripts that I wish went to the National Library or the National Archives because of their significance.

Um, so Hugo was born in that context and, um, at the time, in order to, inheritance was, was, um, controlled by some of that penal legislation. So the idea was to essentially prohibit Catholics from inheriting property. If the eldest son converted to the Church of Ireland, um, then the system of primogeniture came into play. So it meant only that person inherits. And all of the siblings after that don't inherit or, you know, sanctifying this, obviously.

Um, but then, um, if you are Catholic, you, the system of gamble kind is what, um, comes into play. So it means that the, the land... is divided between the male heirs that are there. So somebody like Hugo, who is the second son, if he's not in the country, then that gives a better chance for his elder brother to inherit the property without having to convert. Right. Um, so, you know, there were ways of going around penal legislation. It's well documented. Um, and, um, there's also, um, a tradition for some families of going into Foreign Service. And Hugo's family was definitely like that. Um, he had his grandfather who had served in Spain. His uncle Thomas was, uh, settled in France, um, in the army, behind the Irish Brigades. And one of his cousins, who, um, is very famous as well, um, was serving in Spain at the time, Alejandro O'Reilly. He ended up being governor of, um, Spanish Louisiana. So, prominent careers, um, abroad. So, the Irish were, especially in the 18th century, um, Catholic sons could go and have a military career.

So when Hugo, Hugo O'Connor, um, left Ireland when he was 15. So there's not that much about his life in Ireland that, that remains. And he essentially, his life was shaped by what was going on in the world. Um, you know, he could have just stayed in Spain. Right. But because of the seven years' war, um, and all of the implications that these were in Europe had for the colonies that all these European powers had in the new world, he ended up going to Cuba.

Um, which is where things started to become interesting. Yeah. Most people stayed in Europe. Goes to Cuba when, um, Spain regains it. And, uh, from there he's sent to, um, Mexico City. And from there, sent to the northernmost frontier of, um, New Spain. So, the Spanish Empire in America. And once he gets there, his, his job is essentially to...fight the native population, so mostly Apache, but also other, other groups. Um, so it does have, um, it does have a military impact, to say the least. And his job is to make sure that frontier remains under Spanish control. So, there are these places called presidios that are essentially fortified places that, um, are all along the frontier from the Gulf of Mexico to the other side.

Yeah. Um, and so he spends a lot of time simply making sure these Um, and after a number of years, I think it's 12 years altogether, he decides that he had enough, it's too tiring, and he asks for a transfer, and he becomes governor of Yucatan, and he dies there in 1779, only age 45. So that's how, in a nutshell, that's really his life. Um, in a very small nutshell.

Lisa

Okay. As someone who has worked in libraries in Ireland and the U. S., what are some of the differences?

Marie

One of the things that surprised me at first, um, is the different classification system. Mm hmm. Um, I suppose because I did, um, a lot of my training here, this is probably where I became aware of how important access is, and how, yeah, in America it's really about...Access about everything else. And I think librarians are superstars. And I think keeping access to knowledge for free like that is one of the best things that can be done. And also I find there's a lot, perhaps maybe it's the McClelland Library, but there's a lot more activities going on in libraries. Um, there's the Children's Hour also there's genealogy. Um, but I think it might be because... The place where I worked in Ireland, um, Marsh's Library, that is a, um, an 18th century library. It's very specific, it's kind of niche.

Lisa

Right.

Marie

Um, and the National Library I was in the, um, manuscript department, so I was working there as an archivist. I hope I answered that.

Lisa

Can you teach me and listeners any slang Irish words?

Marie

Oh my god, that's a hard one. Um, there would be one, um, Having a crack. It's simply just having fun. Um, yeah, so. And when you meet people, you probably ask them like, what's the story? Or, what's the crack? You know, you're asking how you're doing. Yeah, that's what it is. Um, there's a million other things that I can[not think of.]

Lisa

Okay. No, that is fun. Is there anything else you'd like to share with everyone?

Marie

Not particularly. It's great to be back here. Um, and it's fabulous to see the McClelland Library flourish. And since I was here last, I've seen so many things. Popping up, uh, in the permanent exhibit, uh, new staff, um, and it, it really is a fabulous place, and I think it's a gem that needs to be known, um, you know, everywhere.

Lisa

Thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you all so much for listening. We hope to see you soon at McClelland Library. Slan!