

Review

**AMENEDO COSTA,
Mónica**

New York: Peter Lang. 2012.

185 pp.

ISBN 978 1 4331 1589 9

*La población
británica e irlandesa
en el Ferrol de
la Ilustración.
Análisis de fuentes
demográficas
gallegas y
documentación de
estado británica*

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Mónica Amenedo Costa's detailed archival study of the Anglo-Irish population of Enlightenment Ferrol and their legacy in the city is a welcome addition to the growing critical literature about connections between the British, Irish and Hispanic worlds. Ferrol itself is, of course, a familiar name in the historiography of Anglo-Hispanic relations. We might think, for example, of the failed 'Ferrol Expedition' in August 1800, when the British Army and Navy under General Pellew and Admiral Pulteney combined to try to take the city, by now a crucial hub in Spain's maritime imperial network (the Brits lasted two days before getting back on their ships). Or we might remember the early twentieth-century, when the Sociedad Española de Construcción Naval —a British investment company, despite its Spanish name— brought thousands of British clerks, engineers, mechanics and their families to settle in the city between 1909 and the Civil War.

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Amenedo Costa's study adds a valuable new chapter to this history. More than a century before the Edwardian influx, Bourbon investment had transformed Ferrol into Galicia's largest city. As a key hub in the maritime networks of the Spanish Empire and the site of one of the empire's principal arsenals, it was also a cosmopolitan place, attracting residents from across Europe. *La población británica* aims to assess the place of the eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish community in this history, following the migration lifecycle from departure (why did they come?) through settlement (how did they get along with their fellow *ferroláns*? Did they integrate or keep to themselves?), to its aftermath (what is their legacy?). The book is divided into five chapters, giving a rounded account of the community in its historical and social context. While the shorter first three chapters provide context, outlining respectively the bibliographical, archival and historical background to the project, it is in the more extensive final chapters that the meat of the project is to be found.

Chapter four provides a detailed analysis of Ferrol's Anglo-Irish community by place of origin, gender, and occupation, although the author reminds us that all conclusions should be considered partial given the idiosyncrasies of eighteenth-century record-keeping practice. A key problem Amenedo Costa has had to counter is the absence of women's names –and sometimes even acknowledgment of their existence– from many civil records. For example, the annual census of foreign residents during the period under discussion admits women only in two specific years: 1791 and 1792 (51). Sometimes, too, there is so little verifiable information or names have become so corrupted through transcription (a constant hazard in tracing migrant communities) that potentially interesting individuals have had to be left to one side so as not to compromise the conclusions. This is the case, for example, for the cavalry officer 'José Connock', who in 1782 witnessed an Irishwoman's claim for 'limpieza de sangre,' but whose own country of origin is never stated; or for the naval lieutenant 'Diego Morgan', who witnessed several English marriages in the 1750s, but whose own personal information is too conflicting to be of use (49). As both of these examples show, the Spanish convention of translating foreign forenames (think of 'el Príncipe Carlos' and 'la Reina Isabel') creates additional obstacles to identification. Most notably, it prevents us from distinguishing between individuals given a Spanish forename, perhaps as a result of family connections, or who adopted a new name on assimilating to a new country, and those whose forename was simply translated by the parish priest or notary as a matter of course.

Amenedo Costa's primary source, parish records, can provide a more comprehensive picture of women's lives that includes newborn girls and the female dead alongside wives, mothers, and godmothers. However, as the author notes, parish records too have their limitations. After all, a project based largely on parish records requires an individual to have been baptized, married or buried, or to have been a formal witness at one of these ceremonies, in order for their presence to be recorded, and clearly that will not have been the case for everybody (48). Nonetheless, through extensive cross-referencing and a detailed process of elimination, Amenedo Costa succeeds in establishing that the Anglo-Irish community in Ferrol was perhaps in the region of 100-120 adults at any given moment.

The final chapter delves deeper into the structures of Anglo-Irish family life in eighteenth-century Ferrol to reconstruct families, kinship and social networks from records of baptism, marriage and burial. For

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example, marriage records include the names and biographical details not only of both spouses, but also of their parents, and several witnesses. So the record of marriage between 'Luis Meagher' and 'Margarita Loughnan,' in October 1779, records that the groom was a bachelor, British vice-consul in Ferrol, the legitimate son of 'Dionisio Meagher' and 'Maria O'Brien,' both deceased, and originally of Co. Limerick, but who had lived in Ferrol before their deaths. Similar information is given for the bride, with the additional note that, since her parents' deaths, she had lived in the home of 'Juan Hughes' and his wife 'Catalina Roche.' The three witnesses are also described in detail, including 'Nicolás Hogan,' who states that he had known Margarita since she was a child and had also known her parents (95).

Similarly, a baptism record tells us more than simply that a child was born and baptized. Spanish baptism records are notoriously thorough—in addition to the name of the child and its parents, they include the names of grandparents and of godparents or sponsors. In the case of the latter, these were sometimes relatives, but might equally have been friends, neighbours or co-workers. Luis and Margarita would have at least five children between 1783 and 1793, and while their older children's godparents were exclusively Anglo-Irish, by the time the younger ones came along, they were increasingly turning to Spanish friends—or at least, friends with Spanish surnames—to do this trusted job (104; 110). As Amenedo Costa shows, these records can provide vital insights into shifting relationships and lasting friendships, a determination to stick to one's own community or a gradual acclimatisation to *ferrolán* society. Nowhere is the latter clearer than in the records of a handful of adult British converts to Catholicism, such as 'Tomás Williams', whose burial certificate in 1783 recorded that he had been baptized into the Church by no less a dignitary than the Bishop of Lugo (108).

La población británica e irlandesa en el Ferrol de la Ilustración is a data-rich study, whose most valuable contribution to our knowledge of Anglo-Irish settlement in Spain may well be the central place it affords the women who accompanied their much better-documented menfolk, and who shopped, cooked, worshipped, brought up children and socialized in the city while their husbands and fathers were at the arsenal, the docks, or the parade ground. The meticulous documentation in the indexes, which catalogue the archival traces of 128 distinct individuals, will be a boon to future researchers of Anglo-Irish settlement in Ferrol and, from a methodological perspective, of foreign settlement in Galicia more generally. The relatively small size of the corpus, and the author's meticulousness, mean that we encounter the same names, married couples, parents and friends again and again, so that by the end of the book, the Rooth and Meagher families, Catalina Morris and Nicolás Hogan feel like old friends.

The author suggests in the introduction that her research 'se encuentra enmarcada dentro del ámbito de los estudios culturales' (xiv), but its emphasis on data and family reconstruction means it can perhaps be more fruitfully read as a contribution to the social history of the economic and professional networks connecting eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland with Galicia, and, more broadly, to the intertwined histories of migration and family life. As such, this data-rich history has much to offer not only to academic researchers, but to family history and community historians on both sides of the Celtic Sea.