

Thomas O'Connor. 2016.  
*Irish Voices from the Spanish Inquisition:  
Migrants, Converts and Brokers in Early Modern Iberia*  
Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.\*

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Irish Studies enjoys a privileged position in the current historiographical renewal of the study of foreigners in early modern Spain and Spanish America. However, no monograph or collection has been dedicated to the relationship between the Irish “nation” (using the term of the period) and the Spanish Inquisition. This book attempts to fill this gap by including the twofold experience of those individuals who suffered the persecution of the Holy Office (*Santo Oficio*) and those who worked for its institutions such as interpreters, translators, informers, family relatives, and theological experts. The research findings are extraordinary.

The three main achievements of this work are the following: first, the balance between the historical context and the fragmentary, yet rich, variety of inquisitorial cases. On the one hand, the dozens of cases examined are perfectly integrated within a narrative where “great international politics” succeed in determining, in many cases, the trials’ outcomes and their consequences for the accused; at the same time, inquisitorial sources enable us to study the personal life and professional career of the accused, which endows the narrative with an extraordinary liveliness. The second achievement is the extensive use of documentary sources from Spanish and Portuguese archives, as well as the handling of multilingual or, if one prefers, Continental bibliography. This would seem obvious in this scholarly endeavor, were it not for the fact that there are still English-speaking authors who misuse the fragmentary and dated *Calendar of State Papers* when referring to Spain, and others who only make use of sources and studies written in English. Third, the presence of Portugal—especially of Lisbon—in this book is especially

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\* Review translated by María J. Sánchez-de-Nieva.

noteworthy, since Irish Studies related to the Iberian Peninsula have tended to focus almost solely on Spain and Spanish America.

This work is divided into three chronologically organized parts (sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries) in a *long durée* perspective which proves appropriate to address such a complex issue for the first time. The first part (sixteenth century: Chapters 1, 2, and 3) examines the first steps taken by the Irish in acting as *go-between*s between the British and the Spanish empires, as well as their ability to elaborate an *ad hoc* discourse in their relationship with the Inquisition. This “persecution narrative”—which would repeat itself over the next two centuries—emphasized the Catholic nature of Ireland and the forced conversions of individuals to the state Anglican Church, either by force or by necessity (to practice a profession). According to the Thomas O’Connor it was therefore a superficial conversion to Catholicism rather than a sincere act. This was the standardized narrative Inquisition judges expected to hear. The Inquisition was aware of Ireland’s ethno-religious complexity, but decided not to deal with it (neither did it question the spaces of religious freedom left in London, where many Irish people lived before they moved to Spain). Thus judges did their job, there was room for reconciliation, and usually the criminal process did not pursue matters further. It was only when this standardized discourse was broken that the accused was in real danger. This is what happened to one John Martin, a native of Cork, who had been living in Mexico for many years. He did not use the usual intermediary translator, he defended himself in Spanish, and he was stubborn in his answers. What seemed like a clear example of acculturation and earnest collaboration ended in tragedy: he was executed in 1575.

The formal entry of Irish clerics into the structures of the Inquisition did not take place until the institutionalization of a network of Irish colleges in Spain and Portugal, as noted by the author. However interesting this thesis may be, it means a significant qualitative leap which would have benefited from a more detailed explanation: the internal disputes between Franciscans close to the Gaelic world and Old-English extraction Jesuits were unlikely to be the best combination through which to collaborate with the Holy Office. Nor were some well-known cases of theological dispute in the Castilian universities that ended up involving some Irish

teachers. Although quite well known, the case of the teacher at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Patrick Sinnott, could have led the author to a further examination of the conflict between the new academic perspectives and the Inquisition (82–83).

In the second part of the book (seventeenth century: Chapters 4, 5 and 6), the Holy Office's practical need for Irishmen is clearly established: some merchants worked as interpreters for Inquisition officials on the inspection of foreign ships (73–76), while clerics and other members of religious orders reconciled Irish Protestant recruits who arrived in Spain in numbers in the 1640s. The last part of chapter 4 (*Reconciling Irish Muslims*, 83–86) is particularly interesting as it deals with an unheard episode in the Mediterranean history of the Irish. In chapter 5 (devoted to America), it is also fascinating to learn of the relationship between the Irish Jesuit Michael Wadding, rector in 1628 of the college San Jerónimo de Puebla (Mexico) and theological examiner for the Inquisition, and the famous reformer bishop and *visitador general* (inspector) of New Spain, Juan Palafox y Mendoza (1600–1659). Mexico was also the setting of one of the key cases of the Inquisition, that of William Lamport, a creature of Gaspar de Guzmán, the count-duke of Olivares (1587–1645), King Philip IV's right-hand man. The author provides new information on the case up to the execution of Lamport in 1659, this case demonstrating once again that an open, outright confrontation with the Inquisition could only harm the accused: occasionally even, as was the case with Lamport, the process could turn into a political trial.

The third and last part of the book (1701–1713) opens with the new possibilities that the Spanish War of Succession (1701–1713) offered the Inquisition thanks to the presence of foreign soldiers in the peninsula, and specifically Irish Protestants. It highlights the founding of the *Casa de Catecúmenos* by the Inquisition commissary in Madrid, where English and Irish clerics monopolized the reconciliation of heretics. In chapter 8, devoted to the golden age of Irish merchants in Spain, the author reveals an interesting thesis on the close collaboration with the Inquisition in order to explain part of their business success: during the War of Succession the Irish occupied the place of English merchants in Spanish ports and this collaboration with the Holy Office secured them a privileged place in Málaga, Bilbao, the Canary Islands and Cádiz. In chapter 9 it is

interesting to note the potential threat that the Inquisition posed to talent mobility and the incorporation of foreign scientists into the industrial and military modernization programs in Spain. Although many Irish benefited from being Catholic, many of mixed origin or married to followers of a different religion were subjected to the same reconciliation process as foreign soldiers were. Finally, chapter 10 examines the twofold role of Irish women in their relationship with the Inquisition as subjects of reconciliation, on the one hand, and as denouncers, witnesses, and interpreters, on the other. Women suffered from the Inquisition's social control, but they also learned to take advantage of it, especially denouncing husbands accused of bigamy and abandonment in marriage. Testimonies of a group of Irish women sexually molested by an influential Irish cleric at Court, John Lacy, resulted in his definitive exile from Madrid in 1754, the loss of all of his titles and honors, and compulsory rehabilitation in a local religious house, Lacy was also ordered to pay all costs.

In conclusion, we have here a reference work on a topic that, as noted by the author himself, opens new research opportunities on other groups of foreigners in Spain, such as the English and Scots. Unfortunately, it is a shame that such an outstanding monograph, advancing as it does interest in Irish Studies in Spain and making use of so many institutions and public archives, is somewhat expensive, and perhaps beyond the reach of many scholars interested in it.

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