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Northumbria University

Department of Humanities

'Irish Convent Schools in Spain and the development of an educational
infrastructure, 1499-1700'.

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*A revised commentary submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Published work.*

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Abstract

At the end of the fifteenth century a group of Irish Dominican sisters travelled from Galway to Bilbao in the Bizkaia region of Spain with the specific purpose of founding a convent there, and to establish a school for girls. This determined action led to a wave of female migration from Ireland to Spain and Portugal. The ambitions of this first group of Irish sisters sparked successive waves of female migration including women who were professed, and those who had an indirect attachment to the Irish Catholic church.

Dominican sisters had a positive, pro-active mission which they successfully introduced into the Iberian Peninsula from the 1490s onwards. Irish Dominican sisters had female education at the heart of their order, and their schools came to be appreciated as excellent models both in terms of structure and curricula. The Dominican order in Ireland had a long tradition migration and settlement in Europe and beyond. The pilgrimage tradition from Ireland was just as prolific as it was to Ireland, with female pilgrims travelling as far as men, including to the Holy Land. What is less well known is the broader history of Irish women who migrated for religious and other reasons, developing permanent roots in several countries, with the express purpose of establishing their own home, culture and mission.

This is a history which has not been written.

What this thesis aims to demonstrate is the migratory experience of Irish women across the Iberian Peninsula from 1499 to 1700, both as distinct groups with shared identities, and as groups or individuals with little common purpose. Irish women chose to migrate as religious groups, family or sept groups and as single women. Their motivations were varied. Their class and status ranged from the most elite Irish women with some autonomous decision-making powers through to middle ranking women with their own finance streams, to Dominican and Poor Clare sisters who intended to establish their order in Europe, and those who were poor, but made the decision to migrate. These women were single, married, widowed, or separated, some had professed, or were novices or pupils, and some were too young to be categorised. Some chose to develop networks with other Irish women, and, or with Spanish and Portuguese women. Others chose to live a more separate existence. The publications which make up this thesis present their history.

Introduction: Irish Women on the move.

When a small group of Irish sisters from the Order of Saint Dominic migrated to Bilbao in 1499 their intention was to found their own Dominican female mission in the province of Biscay, and beyond. The first recorded group of Irish sisters to profess in Spain joined the Dominican convento de la Encarnación, founded initially in 1499 for conventual tertiaries, later in 1523 it included sisters who had taken solemn vows and were fully professed. This was followed by profession in eight other convents across the peninsula. These were the convento del Corpus Christi founded in Valladolid in 1545, the convento del Santa Clara in Esterri d'Àneu in 1560, the convento del Nuestra Señora de las Angustias in La Coruña in 1589, the convento de Santa Clara in Santiago de Compostela in 1590, the convento de Santa María la Real de las Dueñas in Zamora in 1590, the convento de Nuestra Señora Bienventurada de Atocha in Madrid in 1592, and the convento de Nossa Senhora do Bom Sucesso in Lisbon in 1639.

All these convents were Dominican, apart from the two in Santiago de Compostela and Esterri d'Àneu which followed the order of Saint Clare. All had an educational mission. Additionally, there were several convents across the peninsula which Irish women joined throughout the two centuries under examination, where they were a minority compared to the numbers of professed Spanish sisters. Irish women professed at the convento Dominiques de L'Ensenyança de la Immaculada Concepcio in Tarragona, and the convento de Santa Clara in Tarragona, helping to provide and garner funding for educational and medical missions, and developing financial and political networks. Irish sisters also professed at Spanish foundations including the convento de San Salvador de Almonacid de Zorita de la Orden de Calatrava in Madrid, and the convento de la Concepción Reales de la Orden de Calatrava in Madrid, from where they worked as spies for the Spanish crown. Additionally, there is evidence that Irish nuns moved between convents, and even orders during their lives in Spain. All these convents were supported by Irish and Spanish funders, and by successive Spanish monarchs. These Irish women religious made it clear that their settlement in Spain was of a permanent nature, and this facet undoubtedly contributed to their acceptance and success.

Communities of women, particularly Irish women have not previously been mapped against the substantial scholarly historiography dedicated to male Irish migrants.¹ This is a serious

¹ For recent studies which focus upon the experiences of Irish men see Thomas O'Connor, ed., *The Irish in Europe, 1580-1815* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001); Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons, eds., *Irish Migrants in Europe after Kinsale, 1602-1820* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003); Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons, eds., *Irish Communities in early modern Europe* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006); Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons, eds., *The Ulster Earls and Baroque Europe: Refashioning Irish Identities, 1600-1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010); Declan Downey and Julio Crespo MacLennon, eds., *Spanish-Irish Relations through the Ages* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008); Enrique García Hernán, *Ireland and Spain in the Reign of Philip II* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009); Ciaran O'Scea, *Surviving Kinsale: Irish Emigration and Identity Formation in Early Modern Spain, 1601-1640* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Igor Pérez Tostado, *Irish Influence at the Court of Spain in the Seventeenth-Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008) and Óscar Recio Morales, *Ireland and the Spanish Empire, 1600-1825* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010).

scholarly omission both in terms of migration studies and the broader issue of gender considerations. Irish female communities existed, and furthermore, were powerful, particularly in their influence and development of girls' schools. There is an extensive Hispanic historiography which covers girls' schools in Spain, their educational provision and cultural production over a long period of time noting the evolution and many changes in female education.²

However, those female communities were sometimes regarded with suspicion. Late medieval and early modern European societies often viewed marriage as the ultimate goal for women. For some the alternative was to enter a convent. In Spain marriage was considered an important option for women from noble families, although sponsorship of convents was also supported. However, convents as institutions sometimes experienced pressure by church and state to reform in conservative ways. By 1545 the Council of Trent had far-reaching control over all Catholic territories, and its organisation went beyond the reform movement of Isabel and Ferdinand. Tridentine decrees were increasingly issued by the council without the overt agreements of either Charles V (1516-1556) or Philip II (1556-1598), and they expanded enclosure rules to at times limit the lives and actions of both religious and secular women. It is however, important to note that enclosure pre-dated the Council of Trent, and the Council itself took eighteen years to formulate the Counter Reformation. Although canon law called for strict enclosure on Nuns, this was initially reinforced through *Liber Sextus* by Pope Boniface VIII in 1298 with variable success. Later Tridentine reforms were passed in 1545 to 1563 and were also interpreted and acted upon with huge variation. Crucially, there was not a tradition of claustration on nuns in medieval Ireland. In Spain the effects of the Council of Trent were not entirely top down, and there were powerful supports of unenclosed traditions. Pedro Cátedra notes that Cardinal Cisneros, one of the most senior reformers and the man who was made Grand Inquisitor under Ferdinand was a dedicated patron of the unenclosed model of vocations for religious women.³ He supported beatas, founded four tertiary convents and supported their avoidance of strict claustration. He also encouraged active missions, and the education of girls.⁴ Cátedra also maintains that in Spain the promotion of learning included that of women, and that this was seen as evidence of a superior mind and a noble responsibility.⁵

² See Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau, eds. *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in their Own Works*. Trans. Amanda Powell (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989); Anne J. Cruz and Rosilie Hernández, eds. *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World* (Burlington, VT and Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2011); Elizabeth T. Howe, *Education and Women in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2008); Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2005); Isabel Morant, *Discursos de la Vida Buena: Matrimonio, mujer y sexualidad en la literatura humanista* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2002); Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia, 1600-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2006); Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, *La mujer lectora: el mito del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Archivos Vola, 2019); Lesley K. Twomey, *The Serpent and the Rose: The Immaculate Conception and Hispanic Poetry in the Late Medieval period* (Leiden: Brill Press, 2008); Lisa Vollendorf, *The Lives of Women: A New History of Inquisitional Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005).

³ Pedro Cátedra García, *Nobleza y Lectura en Tiempos de Felipe II: La Biblioteca de Don Alonso Osorio, Marqués de Astorga* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y Leon. Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 2002), especially pp. 197-213.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21, pp. 43-64.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-19.

Cisneros was also a sponsor of noble libraries in late medieval and sixteenth century Castile wherein female learning was promoted.⁶

Irish women, Dominican sisters, and their sponsors were directly involved in educational expansion, founding their own schools, entirely independent of boys' schools and male colleges. This independence was forged deliberately and became part of the broad support for female education in Spain. Firstly, Irish women were noted educators, linguists and promoters of female education. Secondly, Irish women religious had no tradition of enclosure, and were unused within Ireland to a tradition of bishops' power. The difficulty in enclosing Irish missions was also further undermined by groups of very powerful sponsors, not least several Spanish monarchs. From Philip I (1478-1506) onwards, Spanish monarchs allowed convents to organise girl's education from the age of seven, including the appointment of their own *maestras* (female teachers).⁷ Female learning in Spain supported the Irish experience forming a considerable infrastructure of schools, libraries and female readership. Arturo Jiménez has highlighted the model of female education in Spain that was already long established by the time of Irish settlement.⁸ Female learning was supported through convent education and libraries sponsored by noblewomen including Leonor Pimentel and María de Zuñiga, reaching a high point by the fifteenth century.⁹ The formation of libraries for and by women is evidenced in the existing book inventories.¹⁰ Books and chronicles setting out women's education proliferated.¹¹ Furthermore, Jiménez points out that the number of women readers in Spain was higher than commonly assumed, and that women were involved in vernacular translations, something that Irish women also had a role in.¹²

Surviving manuscript sources indicate an Irish convent curriculum that sustained a variety of academic subjects, often including contested subjects for girls and women, including Greek and Astronomy. Early convents followed a Classical-medieval curriculum of the *artes liberales*, and later curricular additions often broadly followed the rules of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. This points to an important development within Irish convents, in particular those of the Dominican province who followed a curriculum independent of the Dominican male educational model. The aim of the dissertation, therefore, is to place Irish convent schools and broader mission within the Iberian Peninsula from 1499 to 1700, and to demonstrate their success in assimilation whilst maintaining their own educational infrastructure.

⁶ Ibid., p. 312, p. 567.

⁷ Archivo General de Simancas (hereafter AGS), Cámara de Castilla (hereafter CC), Diversos 1-2. These manuscripts from 1506 contain approval for independent female-controlled education, including convent schools for girls as young as seven. Although Philip I had no direct contact with Irish groups the approval for girl's independent education was extremely important in the history of education.

⁸ Arturo Jiménez Moreno, *Devoción y Cultura Escrita en el Entorno de Leonor Pimentel, I Duquesa de Plasencia (c. 1435-1486)*, (University of London: Papers of the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar, 77, 2019).

⁹ Ibid., pp. 65-86.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 17.

¹² Ibid., p. 45.

The four published works cited, all single-authored which form the basis of the PhD all offer a new direction in Irish historical research.¹³ Each of these four publications highlight and explore the exceptional role played by Irish women who established girls' schools through the Iberian Peninsula. The periodisation I deploy does not follow that of other early modern historians of the Irish in Spain, partly because I have presented a history which foregrounds women. Furthermore, the gendered experience of Irish female assimilation into Spanish and Portuguese societies has received very little scholarly analysis in terms of independent action.¹⁴ For those reasons a number of my publications cover the aforementioned timeframe, rejecting a conventional bisection within British and Irish historiography of medieval and early modern periodisation.¹⁵ I have also taken issue with the frequent academic assertions that Irish migration developed in earnest after the 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607.¹⁶ Though the defeat of Irish forces at the battle of Kinsale, and the subsequent encroachment and colonisation of Ireland undoubtedly marked out a fundamental shift in Irish migration and exile to the continent, there is much evidence that migration existed earlier in the fifteenth century, and that it had a basis in pull as well as push factors. The motivations of Irish women to build lives for themselves in continental Catholic Europe had a draw long before 1607. The survival of sources relating to Irish women migrants allows us to examine female motivations for migration separately from those of men, and alongside those sources used by historians whose focus has been solely upon men. The assumption that Irish women who moved to Spain and Portugal were simply part of a dragnet of females following in the wake of male decision-makers is freighted with patriarchal views of the supine nature of women migrants in this period. Most recently this has been challenged by my monograph, *Irish Women on the Move: Migration and Mission in Spain, 1499-1700*.¹⁷

¹³ Andrea Knox, 'The Convent as Cultural Conduit: Irish Matronage in Early Modern Spain', in *Quidditas: The Online Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, vol. 30 (2009), pp. 128-139, Quidditas.humwp.byu/; Andrea Knox, 'Nuns on the Periphery? Irish Dominican Nuns and assimilation in Lisbon', in *Catalonia and Portugal: The Iberian peninsula from the Periphery*, Flocel Sabaté and Luís Adão da Fonseca, eds., (Bern: Peter Lang Press, 2015), pp. 311-326, ebook; Andrea Knox, 'Her Book-Lined Cell: Irish Nuns and the Development of Texts, Translation, and Literacy in Late Medieval Spain', in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue*, Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara and Patricia Stoop, eds., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 67-86; Andrea Knox, 'The Right Kind of Catholics: Irish settlement in the Crown of Aragon, 1590-1700', in *El Poder Entre La Ciutat I La Regió*, Flocel Sabaté, ed., (Lleida: Pagès, 2018), pp. 369-387.

¹⁴ The only published monograph which deals with the Irish Dominican sisters in Lisbon is Honor McCabe, *A Light Undimmed: The Story of the Convent of Our Lady of Bom Sucesso, Lisbon, 1639-2006* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2007).

¹⁵ In Spain the fifteenth century is considered part of the medieval period in Spanish historiography.

¹⁶ Recent historiography which focuses upon Irish women as followers includes Jerrold Casway, 'Heroines or Victims? The Women of the Flight of the Earls', *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2003), pp. 56-70; David Finnegan, 'Why did the Earl of Tyrone join the flight?', in *The Flight of the Earls: Imeacht na nIarlaí*, David Finnegan, Eamonn O'Ciardha and Marie-Claire Peters, eds., (Derry: Guildhall Press, 2010), pp. 2-12; Ben Hazard, 'More with miracles than with human strength: Florence Conroy and the outcome of calls for renewed Spanish military intervention in Ireland, 1603-09', in *The Flight of the Earls*, Finnegan et. al. eds., pp. 30-37; Óscar Recio Morales, 'What if the Earls had landed in Spain? The flight's Spanish context', in *The Flight of the Earls*, Finnegan et. al. eds., pp. 140-46; Eduardo de Mesa Gallego, *The Irish in the Spanish Armies in the Seventeenth-Century* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2014).

¹⁷ Andrea Knox, *Irish Women on the Move: Migration and Mission in Spain, 1499-1700* (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang Press, 2020).

The motivations expressed by Irish women from 1499 to 1700 focus specifically upon their own missions and projects. From establishing a network of girls' schools, to trade, book production and translations, it is clear from sources that key identifiable projects were part of Irish women's joint and individual aims to assimilate into Spanish society, whilst also defining themselves as powerful agents. One important issue was the retention of the Irish language in certain circumstances, in both spoken and written form. However, it was used alongside Spanish in schools and other institutions as well as in more private spaces. In the areas of religious production and transmission, trade and intelligence networks the Irish language had its uses, not least as a means of hiding information from English officials, and from Spanish Inquisitors. The retention of Irish did not override the daily use of national and regional languages and dialects, which explains why no specific tensions are mentioned in sources relating to Irish women and the take-up of the languages spoken across the peninsula. Put briefly, the speedy acquisition of Spanish and local dialects meant that no overt criticism could be made of Irish women who continued to utilise Irish. This continued as part of Irish educational tradition with a gendered element. Whilst several scholars of Irish women in this period have emphasised the high quality of educational provision for women and girls, it was also the case that a considerable amount of translation work both in Ireland, and later in Spain, was undertaken by females as part of a long-established translation culture.¹⁸ Not only was assimilation thorough, but existing Irish linguistic and translation culture was never jettisoned during the period under consideration.

The educational context existing in Spain which supported this has been cited by Jiménez who has noted the broad support for female reading, schools and the role of cardinal Cisneros's reforms as well as the support of confessors and monarchs of female learning and female communities.¹⁹ The reforms of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436-1517) supported and encouraged female education through nuns and convents, beatas, or lay women, and through girls' schools.²⁰ Crucially, this also filtered down to local confessors, who through the use of the aforementioned chronicles setting out female education and diverse religious texts spread the infrastructure of female learning for both lay and religious women throughout Spain. By the fifteenth century there existed a large corpus of texts, many devotional and spiritual, although some involving the defence of women debate, which appear to have been widely known and widely utilised.²¹ Queen Isabel was also cited as a supporter of female education.²² Confessors and spiritual directors were central to the support and guidance of female religious by the fifteenth century. It is into this culture that

¹⁸ For girls' education and schools in late medieval and early modern Ireland see Marie-Louise Coolahan, *Women, Writing and Language in Early Modern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Dianne Hall, *Women and the Church in Medieval Ireland, c.1140-1540* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), especially pp. 159-190; Margaret MacCurtain, 'Women, Education and Learning in Early Modern Ireland', in *Women in Early Modern Ireland*, Margaret MacCurtain and Mary O'Dowd, eds., (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 160-178.

¹⁹ Arturo Jiménez Moreno, 'Propuestas de Lecturas y Prácticas devotas para Mujeres en el Siglo XV', *Hispania Sacra*, LXXII, (2020), pp. 105-114.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 106-107.

²² Ibid.

Irish women moved, proving to be a considerable pull factor for Irish women both lay and religious.

'Irish Convent schools in Spain and the development of an educational infrastructure, 1499-1700', and the four publications are built upon detailed knowledge of a vast array of primary manuscript sources from archives across the peninsula. Many of these sources have not been examined in any systematic way in terms of analysing the experiences of Irish migrant women.

The Archivo General de Simancas (AGS) holds several vital collections of primary source manuscripts relating to the history of Irish communities throughout the peninsula.²³ The *Cámara de Castilla* collection includes *Diversos* which covers aspects of female learning, including educational provision for girls, the duties of the *maestras* (women teachers) and royal provision for girls' schools. The *Cámara* manuscripts also include a wealth of fiscal and notarial records, as well as money left to convents, and *dotes* (dowries) and their value. Women's wills are included and are a vital component in measuring the power women had to sponsor their own projects. In the *Cámara* collection legajo 353 includes records detailing cultural production and book ownership of *monjas, maestras y puellae* (nuns, teachers and pupils), and include their vernacular collections recorded in bursars' accounts of Irish alphabets, catechisms and other works. The *bibliotecas* (libraries) in convents included substantial book collections, many of which are cited in the audits contained in the *Cámara*. The *Estado* collection includes records of building work and construction, electoral rolls of Irish convent communities across Spain, financial management, the role of *beatas* and *beaterios* (lay-sisters or dedicatees who did not fully profess with all of the solemn vows, and their unenclosed homes within the convent compound), and information about printing presses developed or used by convents, many of which date from the 1470s. *Estado* legajo 946 details notarial and other fiscal records which reveal the central roles of Abbesses and bursars in the procurement and payment for manuscripts, books and equipment such as desks. The *Estado* collection also includes the 1608 statute of naturalisation of the Irish.

The Archivo Municipal, Valladolid (AMV) holds information about early Irish communities in Valladolid, and in the province of Old Castile. The Archivo Diocesano, Valladolid (ADV) holds information on nuns *dotes* (dowries), and the early foundational documents of medieval and early modern convents in Valladolid. The *Actas Carpetas* include funding from Irish donors, including *donatrices irlandesas* (Irish women donors).

The Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (AHN) contains the *Órdenes Militares, Santiago*, which include manuscripts detailing the acceptance of the Irish into Spanish military and religious orders. This included the membership of Irish women in convents with royal sponsorship, and Irish women who had positions at the Spanish royal court. The *Clero* collections include nuns dealing with complex translations, book production and teaching. The *Inquisición* legajos deal with legal cases of women who were tried for the crime of

²³ Titles of the document collections are given in the footnotes of all four publications, as are the numbers of collections. Where folios exist, they are expressed, however, many collections are not numbered consistently, and many pages are not foliated.

'heresy of the mind', and the possession of contraband books and articles in the period post 1545 and the establishment of the Council of Trent. Trial manuscripts also contained cover the period following 1559, and the introduction of the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, arguably the most stringent of the indexes, and which prohibited vernacular translations as well as expanding upon the pre-existing list of prohibited texts.

The Arxiu Històric Arxdiocesà de Tarragona (AHAT) contains two important manuscript collections previously unused in relation to Irish women migrants. These are las Dominicanas de la Ensenyança de la Immaculada Concepción de Tarragona and las Clarisas de Santa Clara de Tarragona. Several Irish women professed in both convents, and the *nexes economiques* (a vast array of fiscal records) which contain some of the fullest surviving convent financial planning, including dowries, mortgages, investments, loans and financial links with Irish merchants throughout the province. Both convents acted as rentier groups as well as developing educational missions. In addition, they were responsible for the rebuilding of an important women's hospital. Their cultural production included expansive libraries, writing and translation, as well as the expansion of girls' education. Manuals detailing teaching reveal the subjects on the curricula, and teaching methods.

The Archivo Histórico Provincial de Cadiz (AHPC) holds the *Protocolis Cadiz* collections which include the wills, testaments and other financial support of Irish women for convents, schools and the women's hospital in the city. Irish noble women, including a number married to Spanish men were buried in the churches and chapels they had sponsored. Many Irish women made living wills stating their financial intentions. The Archivo General de Indias, Seville (AGI) contains the *Contratación* manuscripts which cover independent Irish women traders. The *Santo Domingo* collection includes Irish women's wills, and money donated to hospitals, including the lazar house. The *Ultramar* manuscripts hold cases of Irish women who used the Tribunal de Justicia to sue in their own right. All three collections also detail Irish women who traded and sometimes moved to Mexico, Peru and Havana, taking part in the colonial expansion of Spanish territories and spheres of influence.

The Archivo Histórico de Protocolos Ilustre Colegio Notarial de la Coruña (AHPICNC) holds collections which deal with Irish women who entered and professed in convents, those who became lay-sisters, and *donatrices* who left wills, some substantial, to convent projects. Additionally, many of these manuscripts also demonstrate a substantial Irish community based in La Coruña, with women organising their own financial projects, including investments, money for girls' schools, hospitals, and some involvement in spying. The Archivo Histórico Universitario de Santiago de Compostela (AHUS) also contains manuscripts generated by the local Irish community. The *Hospital Real, Libro de Testamentos* includes detailed wills from a group of wealthy Irish women who lived in the Dominican convent, or sponsored it, as well as funding the Royal Hospital in Santiago.

Taken as a whole, and used for the first time, these archival sources enable a picture of the history of Irish women migrants in late medieval and early modern Spain to be constructed.

Commentary: 'Irish Convent schools in Spain and the development of an educational infrastructure, 1499-1700'.

The 1490's witnessed Irish Dominican female migration from Galway to Spain in order to establish a convent in Bilbao. This was the first wave of Irish female migrants to establish a permanent and successful independent community. This has been demonstrated in my chapter, 'Her Book-Lined Cell: Irish Nuns and the development of Texts, Translation, and Literacy in Late Medieval Spain'.²⁴ Before this publication in 2015 there had been no systematic academic study of Irish women, both religious and secular, and their migration experience to Spain during the fifteenth century. Furthermore, there had been no examination of educational models developed by Irish women for both Irish, and later Spanish girl pupils. As such, this was, and remains ground-breaking published research. The volume in which the chapter is published, *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue* is part of a three-volume series drawn from three conferences which focused upon various aspects of nuns' literacies in medieval Europe, and brought together the works of global specialists in order to create a dialogue about the Latin and vernacular texts nuns read, wrote, translated and exchanged throughout Catholic Christendom.²⁵ All three volumes present new work which is drawn from evidence which is both literary and historical and is interdisciplinary in nature. Additionally, the editors have been expansive in both their and our interpretation of the term 'medieval', expanding the time frame of chapters into 1550, a period conventionally described as 'early modern' in Britain and North America.

Consequently, 'Her Book-Lined Cell' overarches a long time frame. The editors were keen to point out that my chapter has brought the experiences of Irish women in the Iberian Peninsula into discussions of women religious and their literary and cultural production.²⁶ Additionally, they have highlighted that the chapter demonstrates that convent book collections and teaching methodologies went far beyond religious instruction, and included works banned by the Inquisition.²⁷ This chapter aimed to map the history of girls' schools against those of male institutions, including schools and colleges, which frequently had their literary collections examined, censored or even destroyed.²⁸ Until recently academic studies of male orders dominated, not just in Irish studies or migration studies, but also published academic work on religious orders. 'Her Book-Lined Cell' examines the previously unexplored intersection of female power, learning, and subversion at a point in time when female education, while making significant advances, was still a highly contentious issue.

²⁴ Knox, 'Her Book-Lined Cell', pp. 67-86.

²⁵ See also *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara and Patricia Stoop, eds., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Antwerp Dialogue*, Virginia Blanton, Veronica O'Mara and Patricia Stoop, eds., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).

²⁶ Blanton, et. al. eds., *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue*, p. xxxiii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

The other most challenging and influential facet of this chapter is that it breaks with academic tradition over the timing and the reasons for Irish migration to Spain. Conventionally, historians of Irish history have repeatedly posited that migration followed the 1607 'Flight of the Earls', previously discussed. Migration has also often been understood to have followed the events of the Henrician reformation when from 1536 onwards, the dissolution of monasteries and church property as well as numerous statutes against Catholics, the dispossession of many of the Catholic population and atrocities carried out against them provided undoubted push factors resulting in widespread migration to parts of Catholic Europe. However, female migration and settlement of a permanent nature in Spain and Portugal was much earlier than has been previously determined. 'Her Book-Lined Cell' firmly establishes the first wave of permanent Irish women migrants to have taken place in the late fifteenth century. There had been Irish migration previously, and pilgrimage routes, as well as trading routes had been established, however, communities of Irish women have received no historical attention, resulting in a glaring oversight in the historiography of Irish migrant experience in Spain. Whilst not denying the push factors that made up what I term the second and third wave of Irish women's migration, I focus also upon pull factors which were observable before the mass migration caused by Henry VIII and the events following the dissolution and the penal laws against the Irish.

The first wave of Irish women migrants to establish permanent settlement chose Bilbao, in the province of Bizkaia because they knew something of its history, and its existing relationship with Ireland. North-central Spain was relatively easily reached from several of the southern ports of Ireland. Several historians of Irish migration have maintained that Spain and Portugal were Ireland's most important trading partners during the sixteenth century.²⁹ However, the most important reason for Irish Dominican women to establish a permanent settlement was to found their own Irish mission in Spain. Manuscripts including contemporary accounts of Irish foundation make clear the choice of Spain as an ideal site for the development of an Irish female foundation because women's foundations were well supported and had a degree of autonomy. Jiménez maintains that women in fifteenth century Spain had considerable autonomy over the texts they used, both of a religious nature and many others of more diverse themes.³⁰ Other accounts utilised in 'Her Book-Lined Cell' include the work of the Dominican chronicler Father John O'Heyne who recorded the active mission of the Galway Dominicans, and their development of Irish mission throughout Spain.³¹ Through a triangulation of these sources the chapter demonstrates that Spain was perceived to be an attractive country because of the large number of convents throughout the Peninsula, and the relative wealth and power of female monastics in

²⁹ See Thomas O'Connor, *Irish Voices from the Spanish Inquisition: Migrants, Converts and Brokers in Early Modern Iberia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Ciaran O'Scea, *Surviving Kinsale: Irish emigration and identity formation in early modern Spain, 1601-40* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015). Both studies focus mainly upon the male experience, and both assume the first wave of migration to begin during the sixteenth century.

³⁰ Jiménez Moreno, 'Propuestas de Lecturas', p. 108.

³¹ John O'Heyne, *Epilogus chronologicus* (Leuven: St. Anthony's College, 1706), also printed as *The Irish Dominicans of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. and trans. by Ambrose Coleman (Dundalk: Tempest Press, 1902).

medieval Spain. Additionally, the Dominican and Poor Clare Orders were well established throughout the Peninsula, and those were the two orders who migrated as a group from Ireland.

'Her Book-Lined Cell' is also the first British academic study to consider the role of royal sponsorship of Irish women's mission and foundations in Spain. Whilst royal support for male orders from Ireland has been covered in recent publications, no attention has been paid to support for Irish women.³² However, support was demonstrated by monarchs from Isabel and Ferdinand through to Philip IV who donated funds for the dowries of poor Irish girls. Jiménez has noted that during Isabel's reign special focus upon the provision of education for girls and women became established within educational infrastructure, and was seen as a marker of status.³³ Furthermore, Irish nuns as well as the Irish in military orders in Spain were accorded the title 'special friends', and the Irish mission was described as 'an enterprise of God', by Philip II.³⁴ I maintain that this special and unusual relationship, along with later legislation granting equal citizenship, was based upon an understanding that Irish Dominican sisters would prove to be loyal religious with assumed orthodox behaviour. Lu Ann Homza has pointed out that in Spain Mendicant orders of Dominicans and Franciscans were sometimes deployed as Inquisitors.³⁵ Thomas O'Connor has noted that Irish male religious and lay men on occasion operated with the Inquisition in order to convert incoming English Protestant settlers.³⁶ However, Irish women were not active within the Inquisition. Homza has indicated from original sources that the Inquisition was multi-faceted and changed over time.³⁷ It was not a static movement and its targets and penalties changed over time, as well as its prosecutions. Heresy gradually came to denote a theological error, as opposed to doubt. Sometimes it was interpreted as a denial of some aspect of orthodox Christian theology or religious practice. As Christian orthodoxy changed over time, so did definitions of heretics.³⁸ Consequently heresy of the mind came to include books and teachings.

Between the 1490s and 1559 Irish sisters were used to their unenclosed tradition, and older sisters had a powerful social memory of their previous unenclosed foundation and mission in Ireland. This was to lead to later conflict over issues such as enclosure and censorship of book collections and other convent material production. Homza has also noted that the period between 1480 and 1504 witnessed a move from the initial peripatetic nature of the Inquisition to a number of centres across the peninsula.³⁹ Later in the 1520s the Inquisition broadened their prosecutorial efforts to include alumbadism, Lutheranism and Erasmianism which were all perceived as ambiguous deviations from the Catholic faith and

³² Both Thomas O'Connor, *Irish Voices from the Spanish Inquisition*, and Ciaran O'Scea, *Surviving Kinsale*, discuss support for Irish male ecclesiastics.

³³ Jiménez Moreno, 'Propuestas de Lecturas', p. 109.

³⁴ Knox, 'Her Book-Lined Cell', p. 72.

³⁵ Lu Ann Homza, (ed. and trans), *The Spanish Inquisition, 1478-1614: An Anthology of Sources* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2006), p. xiii.

³⁶ O'Connor, *Irish Voices in the Spanish Inquisition*.

³⁷ Homza, *The Spanish Inquisition*, pp. ix-xxxvii.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

practice.⁴⁰ However, historians of late medieval and early modern Spanish convents have also noted that many of the convents were porous rather than strictly enclosed sometimes attracting the attention of orthodox authorities.⁴¹ Atienza López emphasises that even one century after Trent, King Philip IV was reduced to deploying a new political offensive to affect the imposition of enclosure.⁴² The continued lack of consent and undertaking of strict enclosure within convents provided a broader context of convent subversion throughout the peninsula.

'Her Book-Lined Cell' uses a wealth of primary sources to argue that enclosure, the Council of Trent, and the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, also known as the Index of Fernando de Valdés, passed in 1559 with the intention to eradicate vernacular translations of the Bible and other works often prompted a constriction of educational opportunities in convents.⁴³ This meant that there was not a linear progression of academic development within convents, and furthermore, many convent collections became targets of the Inquisition, placing Irish convents at the centre of institutional subversion. Evidence of the development of convent *bibliotecas* (libraries) and *scriptoria* (writing rooms) emerges from convent building plans. I have also examined bursars' account books which detail the ownership and creation of convent texts, as well as translation activities. Far from producing and consuming works approved by the Inquisition, convent collections appear to have constantly diverged from orthodoxy. In specific terms this is evidenced in the proliferation of languages recorded apart from the approved Latin. Surviving convent collections record texts and other material in Irish, Spanish, Catalan, Greek and Hebrew.⁴⁴ Because Irish Catholics in Spain were allowed to organise their own elementary education, this provided convents with the initial ability to control curricula and teaching methods, meaning that between 1499 and 1559 an independent educational model was created. My research demonstrates a slippage between Inquisition regulations albeit complex and changing, and

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. xxix.

⁴¹ See Ángela Atienza López, 'Las grietas de la clausura tridentina. Polémicas y limitaciones de las políticas de encerramiento de las monjas...Todavía con Felipe IV, *Hispanica*, vol. LXXIV, no. 248 (2014), pp. 807-834; Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, *Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2005).

⁴² Atienza López, 'Las grietas de la clausura', pp. 815-834.

⁴³ The Valdés *index* banned Spanish translations of the Gospels, as well as vernacular books relating to prayer and more secular subjects. Additionally, women teaching doctrine could also be accused of being *alumbrados*. *Alumbrados* developed in Spain and like the Cathars in France and Italy in the twelfth century believed amongst other things that the soul could reach perfection and union with God by intense meditation and also by rejection of goods of the material world. The *alumbrados* in Spain were never a large group, however, the Inquisition investigated them well into the sixteenth century. The *index* also extended in practice to works aimed at a wider audience not trained in theology and Latin. Some individuals took it upon themselves to extend this still further and focus upon religious groups and individuals who worked on translations. This group included Melchor Cano, a Dominican and author of *Censura del Catechismo Cristiano de Carranza* (1563), a work that critiqued Bartolomé Carranza's *Catechismo* on the basis of the use of some expressions that sounded heretical such as the *fe viva*. See María José Vega Ramos, 'Heresy and the language of Catholicism in sixteenth-century Spain (1558-1560)', in *Rethinking Catholicism in Renaissance Spain*, Xavier Tubau, ed., (New York and London: Routledge, 2023), pp. 119-161. The censure pivots on theological language and in particular words tainted by Lutheran polemic (see p.123). Certain critical themes including justification by faith, and the nature of faith, *fe viva* drew particular attention. Cano in particular pinpointed this language and Lutheran modes of speech in his *censura*.

⁴⁴ Knox, 'Her Book-Lined Cell', p. 73.

Irish female educational practice. This included disallowing entry to men (apart from the convent confessor and the occasional use of a surgeon). Inquisition forces on the other hand were allowed into male schools and colleges to scrutinise, sanitise and in some cases eradicate manuscripts, books and other materials. Within convents this could not be operated because the libraries and writing rooms were private rooms and were not accessible by men. This, I demonstrate, was the reason that many convent collections survive intact, without even a *visus* mark scoring out any unapproved text. Conversely, the Valdés *index* and enclosure rules operated as a tool of preservation within convents, very different from the experience of male orders, and the ultimate destruction of some of their book collections.

Central to the educational mission are powerful Irish abbesses and other religious who developed an educational model which preserved many of their Irish traditions, whilst developing a distinctive educational model. I consider in detail the case studies of a number of powerful and influential Irish educators such as Abbess Mary O'Halloran who moved from Galway to profess at the convent of Santa María la Real de las Dueñas in Zamora.⁴⁵ I demonstrate that not only was Abbess Mary held in very high regard within the Irish community, she was also praised as an exceptionally learned woman by Spanish male religious contemporaries, including Father Pedro Moral who was the prior of the Dominican fathers in Zamora.⁴⁶ The establishment of such networks by Irish women supported their assimilation into Spanish society whilst also reinforcing their own influence. This development in turn supported the relative level of independence in Irish convent schools both in terms of the texts used in teaching, and the teaching methodologies used by Irish sisters. The evidence provides an insight into what was taught, and how it was taught and challenges the prevailing view that Dominican sisters simply emulated Dominican brothers in their educational missions.⁴⁷ The relationship between Abbess Mary and Father Moral demonstrates what Jodi Bilinkoff has cited as a tradition of collaboration in Spain between female and male religious in terms of co-operation and penitential biographies.⁴⁸ Bilinkoff expands upon male confessors and chroniclers of women in religious orders as a supportive culture in medieval and early modern Spain. A large part of the male community especially confessors encouraged nuns and beatas, and often maintained close relationships, as well as producing hagiographies of these exemplary women.⁴⁹ Bilinkoff maintains that reciprocity was a feature between male and female religious, most notable from the fifteenth century onwards which she emphasises places hagiography as a medieval and

⁴⁵ Knox, 'Her Book-Lined Cell', p. 73-4.

⁴⁶ O'Heyne, *Epilogus chronologicus*, p. 167.

⁴⁷ The Order of the Dominican Sisters came into being alongside the earliest formation of the Preaching Order. Over the period 1220 to 1259 various revisions of the sisters' order-specific constitutions were written. St. Dominic produced the first of these, and it was to be observed in conjunction with the Rule of St. Augustine. The assignment of the Augustinian Rule was unusual for a women's monastic order at that time and was a choice that aligned the sisters' vocation with that of the friars, thus facilitating an independent educational mission.

⁴⁸ Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and their Female Penitents, 1450-1750* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 2005).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

early modern phenomenon.⁵⁰ By the 1480s women were lauded as pious exemplars throughout Spain.⁵¹ This resulted in a literary genre of spiritual autobiography and hagiography. This was not entirely new but the development of the printing press expanded the quality and widespread reception of texts about women, including beatas, and other laywomen who were not enclosed. In practice this continued even after the Council of Trent and its prohibitions of anything apart from the cloister.⁵² These are important first-hand accounts by men of women they had known. Abbess Mary O'Halloran and the other Irish abbesses became part of this culture. This formation of a penitential culture involving both women and men included senior Irish women incomers. Female piety often earned the admiration of clerics. Confessors also became confidants. Bilinkoff maintains that the fifteenth century was a crucial transition period in which the traditions of confession and spiritual direction were fused.⁵³ Although women's spirituality could come under scrutiny, priests needed to spend increasing time with spiritual women. This resulted in many interactions between confessors and their penitents becoming nuanced and reciprocal even if they were not equal in terms of power.⁵⁴ Many male religious writers and priests assisted in the development of writings of religious women, from biographies to autobiographies. Bilinkoff cites evidence of a growing market of sales of these books.⁵⁵ Many women wrote or dictated spiritual autobiographies or memoirs. Some did this in tandem or under advisement of their confessors. There is also evidence demonstrating comparable spiritual relationships in both Irish and Spanish religious women and men and across these two communities.

Irish girls' schools in Spain were dominated by the Dominican Order. What is remarkable in terms of the organisation of the curricula and teaching methodology implemented during the 1530s is that Dominican sisters decided to use Jesuit teaching methods, and focused upon using vernacular languages, including their own Irish.⁵⁶ Dominican sisters were adept at co-opting the literary skills of other Orders. Texts produced by Irish sisters included chronicles of their own history detailing their early years in Galway, and their move to Bizkaia. Abbess Mary O'Halloran encouraged girl pupils to record the history of their Order in Spain in both Irish and Spanish. A copy of this history was taken back to Ireland in 1680.⁵⁷ Kate Lowe has made the point that convent chronicles in the vernacular ignore classical rules governing the composition of history, and forge a collective past for their community on their own terms.⁵⁸ This was true of Irish Dominican sisters, furthermore, they used their

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵² Ibid., p. 9.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 17.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

⁵⁶ This can be mapped against the experiences of Spanish women religious whose orders also often adapted Jesuit teaching methods. See Antonio Gil Ambrona, *Ignacio de Loyola y las mujeres: Benefactoras, jesuitas y fundadoras* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2017).

⁵⁷ A copy of the History of the Irish Dominican Sisters in Spain is conserved in the Irish Dominican Nuns Archive, Sion Hill, Co. Dublin. It is also referred to in O'Heyne, *Epilogus chronologicus*, p. 168.

⁵⁸ K. J. P. Lowe, *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 8.

own history for pedagogic purposes throughout their schools, both in Ireland and in the Iberian peninsula.⁵⁹ Teaching their own history and curricula meant that this Dominican history included the account of their resistance to English colonial authority, and their history in Spain and Portugal, as well as their central contribution to European Catholic faith and mission. Many of the Dominican and Poor Clare accounts reveal their long-term plans as well as their past and current history.⁶⁰

I identify two groups who supported Irish women's missions. Both Royal support and the sustained role of *donatrices* underwrote many Irish projects. Irish sisters were allowed to found and create their own missions, including schools. The consistency of Royal support stretched from first wave migration during the fifteenth century through to the payment of dowries for poor orphaned Irish girls who exhibited a true vocation by Philip IV.⁶¹ Direct monarchical sponsorship was abiding proof that Irish women religious were considered to be loyal Catholics devoted to their new nation. This was due to *limpieza de sangre* as opposed to less well-regarded Jewish or Muslim converts. Additionally, an assumption that Dominican sisters might act as a holding process, ensuring that orthodoxy was upheld became more nuanced. First wave Irish female migration, unlike Irish male migration, and the subsequent establishment of schools and medical missions pre-dated the Council of Trent and the Spanish Inquisitions' passing of Indexes banning books and translations, culminating with the passing of the Valdés *index* in 1559. However, within sixty years of permanent settlement the Valdés *index* had such far reaching consequences, particularly in relation to religious works translated into vernacular languages that potentially every convent could be investigated and punished. Works could be destroyed, and ultimately nuns on rare occasions could be executed as heretics at an *auto-de-fe*.⁶² Far from being safe female religious were on occasion made an example of if they were caught with banned books outside of the convent. This meant that books and libraries, central to the Dominican order, were kept in the libraries and in dormitories and cells in order to stymie Inquisition authorities. However, we know that male orders were sometimes tasked by the Inquisition to examine, confiscate, destroy, or use the *visus* mark to eradicate or sanitise works on the banned Valdés *index*. Equally, there were many who did not respond by limiting learning, translation and discussion. Xavier Tubau notes that there was a wide spectrum of ideas in both theological and canon law, as well as ecclesiastical disputes in dialogue with the Council of Trent, at times mitigating against repression.⁶³

⁵⁹ There were at least two copies of the History in circulation.

⁶⁰ Poor Clare histories taken back to Ireland include The Annals and Memoirs of Abbess Cecily Dillon, Archives of the Poor Clare Nuns of Ireland, Nuns' Island, Co. Galway. Archives of the Poor Clares in Spain include those conserved in the Arxiu Històric Arxidiocesà de Tarragona.

⁶¹ AGS, CC, Casa Real 310; Diversos de Castilla, legajos 37-38.

⁶² Six nuns were burned to death in an *auto de fe* in Valladolid in 1559 although this was not the norm. This case appears to have been related to broader accusations of Protestantism. The years between 1558 and 1560 were a period when Protestant groups were discovered in Valladolid and Seville. During the 1559 Inquisition trials in Valladolid most of the accused were condemned as Lutherans. See Lehfeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain*, p. 199.

⁶³ Xavier Tubau, Introduction, in Xavier Tubau, ed. *Rethinking Catholicism in Renaissance Spain* (New York and London: Routledge Press, 2023).

Approved books were the male Dominicans' chief weapon against heresy and unbelief. Female orders often retained their now banned translated works. The ban included vernacular catechisms, fourteen works by Erasmus, books on history, medicine and botany, and technically affected all religious houses in Spain. Strikingly, female orders retained their translated works, one example used consistently being an Irish catechism, beloved of Irish sisters, and produced throughout the period of the Inquisition in direct defiance of its orders. This opposition to the Inquisition, and even the male clergy of their own order was not accidental. At a time when Irish sisters should have been obedient to the strictures established by their male contemporaries and undertaking rigorous efforts to assimilate into the wider Dominican network, their actions were in fact oppositional. In my article, 'The Convent as Cultural Conduit: Irish Matronage in Early Modern Spain', I discuss the various ways and means this subversion of authority was achieved.⁶⁴ Heresy of the mind, *libri pestiferi* (noxious books), and vernacular texts and materials were retained in convents by the simple but effective expedient of not allowing inspectors and Inquisition functionaries into convent private rooms.⁶⁵ This meant that apart from the convent chapel, and the place where convent confessors would hear confession, all other areas were off-limits to even the most senior male clergy. This resulted in convent buildings becoming uniquely feminised spaces, and Abbesses were able to enforce this after Tridentine reforms that all convent production could, if necessary, be hidden from male authority. 'The Convent as Cultural Conduit' has cited surviving book and manuscript collections from Irish convents which clearly fell into the category of banned literature.

A variety of humanist texts survive from several Irish convents, including a History of the Jews, and Latin and Greek grammars, as well as natural history collections, animal studies and pharmacological works.⁶⁶ Humanist works were contentious because they were a perceived challenge and threat to orthodoxy, although some liberal Catholics and writers engaged with the works of philosophers such as Erasmus. Greek was also a contentious language for women and girls as one criticism was that it led to girls' brains becoming overtaxed, or even resulting in the brain exploding. Nevertheless, individual convent collections were retained and even built up during the period of extreme censorship and repression. Additionally, both Irish and Spanish *donatrices* gifted money to Irish convent schools, purposefully funding vernacular grammars, including new grammars in Irish, and a Latin grammar with Irish instructions, as well as dual-language botany texts to be used in missions to Latin America.⁶⁷ In many ways Irish sisters and their *donatrices'* actions and cultural production display strong similarities to those of Spanish women religious. María del Mar Graña Cid has demonstrated how vernacular works were increasingly relied upon in convents and girls' schools, with the standardisation of grammar and the development of print ensuring that vernacular works had their central place in teaching even during periods

⁶⁴ Andrea Knox, 'The Convent as Cultural Conduit: Irish Matronage in Early Modern Spain', *Quidditas, Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association*, vol. 30 (2009), pp. 128-140. This article was the Delno C. West Award Winner in 2009, in the USA. The West Award recognises the most distinguished paper given by a senior scholar at the annual conference.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 132. AGS, CC, 353.

⁶⁷ AGS, CC, 353.

of Inquisition investigation.⁶⁸ Additionally, the evidence presented by Arantxa Mayo demonstrates the widespread collections of books and libraries owned by women, many of them detailed in lengthy and complex inventories.⁶⁹

The Dominican convent in La Coruña received money from *donatrices* who stipulated that it be used for teaching and missionary purposes.⁷⁰ Individual Irish *donatrices* were fully cognisant that their actions ran counter to the stipulations of the Inquisition. This appears to be equally true of most Irish abbesses who recorded gifts, will and testimonies, as well as other financial streams provided by female sponsors. Irish convent collections in La Coruña and Santiago de Compostela held banned works by Erasmus, including the *Enchiridion* (1513), one of the prohibited books on the Valdés *index*. I maintain that this was provocative as Erasmus continued to remain a writer who was increasingly linked to heretical ideas. However, this was subverted in practice by many educated women as well as women of the royal household who read and discussed Erasmus and Thomas More, another writer and thinker whose works were banned by the Valdés *index*. Mary I of England (Mary Tudor, and the daughter of Catherine of Aragon) read and discussed Thomas More's *Utopia* and Erasmus's *Institutio Principis Christiani* in preparation for royal duties and theories of governance.⁷¹ Working together, Irish Dominican sisters and their *donatrices* obliquely critiqued Tridentine reforms and censorship. However, at the same time they demonstrated a variety of resistance and subversion, often deploying strategies of stonewalling archbishops, regional bishops and inquisition functionaries, rather than displaying direct confrontation. This involved hiding books on the Valdés *index*, and secreting other banned objects including scientific instruments such as astrolabes. Irish catechisms were kept in libraries, writing rooms, dormitories and cells where they could not be discovered. All the Irish convents, and convents with Irish sisters followed similar linguistic traditions, alongside the swift adoption of Spanish. The convents of Saint Dominic and Saint Clare in Tarragona, and Saint Clare in Esterrí d'Àneu adopted Catalan, and owned *catecismes gaeile* (Irish catechisms).⁷² Abbess Mary O'Halloran who professed at the convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary of las Duenas, Zamora, was a noted linguist, historian, and *co-operatrix* (disputation partner) of Father Pedro Moral.⁷³ This was an impressive roster of skills. Additionally, she appears to have been involved in the design of a curricula for girls that made up an early baccalaureate, Latin and vernacular languages, geography,

⁶⁸ María del Mar Graña Cid, 'Mujeres y educación en la Prerreforma castellana: los colegios de doncellas', in *Las Sabias mujeres: Educación, saber y autoría (siglos III-XVII)*, María del Mar Graña Cid, ed., (Madrid: Asociación Cultural Al-Mudayna, 1994), pp. 117-146.

⁶⁹ Arantza Mayo, 'Los libros religiosos como posesiones personales en el Siglo de Oro español', in *Materia Crítica: Formas de Ocio y de Consumo en la Cultura Áurea*, Enrique García Santo-Tomás, ed., (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2009), pp. 149-165.

⁷⁰ Santiago de Compostela, Archivo Histórico Universitario, (hereafter AHUS), Hospital Real, Libro de Testamentos, 172, fols not numbered.

⁷¹ For a concise account of Erasmus' correspondence with learned women, see Anne M. O'Donnell, 'Contemporary Women in the Letters of Erasmus', *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook*, vol. 9 (1989), pp. 34-72.

⁷² AHAT, Dominicanas, Carragamens Entrada, Capsa 4; Confradias de religiosas de Santa Clara de Tarragona, Eutradel, Carpeta 1.

⁷³ AGS, CC, 353.

plant studies, writing, mathematics, the history of the Dominican order, its Irish history, and the development of their own religious texts, plays and poetical works.⁷⁴ In addition, an *alfabete gaeilge* (Irish alphabet) and *catechismos gaeilge* were recorded in the bursar's accounts.⁷⁵

These developments can be observed through the period of second-wave Irish female migration. Through a slightly more nuanced periodisation of Irish migration it is possible to locate the female experience. Additionally, second wave female migration to Spain has also been largely ignored or reduced to an assumption that women followed their menfolk. The two early studies which briefly cite Irish women as part of the movement named 'the Wild Geese', include that of Micheline Kerney Walsh who focussed upon women who accompanied their menfolk, and accepted that they were small in number.⁷⁶ A later chapter by Gráinne Henry focuses upon the wives and accompanying women of those men who migrated to join European armies.⁷⁷ Whilst the 'Flight of the Earls' was a watershed moment in Irish history, the majority of existing historiography minimises the role of independent women migrants, and posits Irish migration as a 'push' response due to both religious and political reasons. It is essential to recognise the 'pull' reasons for migration, and the earliest wave of migratory movement beginning in 1499. The second wave of Irish female migration also pre-dates the 1607 'Flight of the Earls'. My chapter 'The Right kind of Catholics: Irish Settlement in the Crown of Aragon, 1590-1700', not only posits the second wave of migration to the earlier date of 1590, but it also analyses both 'pull' and 'push' factors which attracted Irish women to Spain.⁷⁸ Additionally, Spanish monarchs, advisers and senior clergy specified that Irish Catholics were special, and were welcomed as particular favourites, as opposed to Catholics from elsewhere in reformed Europe. During the 1590s convents were founded and Irish sisters professed in these across the peninsula. They already knew of Irish sisters permanently established in the Iberian Peninsula. Additionally, 'The Right kind of Catholics' also notes that by the early 1590s much of Ireland was under royal control making the move to Catholic Europe a positive choice for many.⁷⁹

The special privileges granted to Irish communities both before and after the 1608 statute conferring equal citizenship upon all Irish migrants in Spain who had ten years' residency

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Bursars' accounts generally include the cost, or the detail relating to materials and furniture made or purchased by the convent. Items such as ink, quills, fabric, sewing needles, and even desks are recorded in these accounts.

⁷⁶ Micheline Kerney Walsh, 'Some Notes towards a History of the Womenfolk of the Wild Geese', *Irish Sword*, vol. V (1961-2), pp. 98-106. This accepts the limited numbers of women and their activities independent of their husbands, and over relies upon census data that did not numerate women. The census taken in Castile in 1574 numerated only men and is indicative only of Castile. The census taken in Castile in 1561 numerated about eight hundred Irish in the province, however, it is unreliable because it counted those taking confession. See AGS, CC, legajo 2150.

⁷⁷ Gráinne Henry, 'Women 'Wild Geese', 1585-1625: Irish women and migration to European armies in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', in *Irish Women and Irish Migration*, Patrick O'Sullivan, ed., (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), pp. 23-40.

⁷⁸ Andrea Knox, 'The Right kind of Catholics: Irish Settlement in the Crown of Aragon', in *El Poder Entre la Ciutat i la Regió*, Flocel Sabaté, ed., (Lleida: Pagès, 2018), pp. 369-387.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 369.

appears, I argue, to demonstrate an experience unique among non-Spanish nationals.⁸⁰ Furthermore, a prevailing Spanish discourse highlighted an appreciation of a loyalty culture evidenced by Irish communities. A preoccupation with status and lineage was a crucial feature shared by Irish and Spanish societies. Major studies by James Casey and Henry Kamen pinpoint Spanish pride in ancestry as a central feature not just of nobility, but of loyalty.⁸¹ Casey maintains that pride in ancestry in Spain amounted to a clan network that stretched across the entire Spanish empire.⁸² Spanish lineages were headed by a chief kinsman, not necessarily the most powerful man within it. The clan functioned as a network of patronage and honour in Spain. Irish septs functioned in a similar way, and this appears to have supported a degree of reciprocal understanding, and assimilation. As septs were made up of a group of people bound by a shared name, not a blood tie, this meant that identification centred upon a common named ancestor who was admired, as opposed to a biological ancestor. Septs were also united by a common language, and in Ireland a culture and a secular legal system. Most importantly, the dynamics of a sept covered ties of voluntary alliance. Bonds of influence were reciprocated by the granting of lands, and protection, in exchange for loyalty and armed service. Irish migrants in Spain recognised the ethos of loyalty to their new nation. In Spain, loyalty ennobled a person. For Irish women loyalty was not borne out by military service, but by religious mission, establishing convents, teaching and medical missions, and by their acts as *donatrices*. Additionally, some Irish women who professed or joined the royal convents in Madrid were made full members of the Military Order of Calatrava as thanks for their services as spies for Spain against England.⁸³

The date of admission in 1592 is significant as it supports my contention that permanent second wave Irish migration established by women was undertaken in this decade. This permanent settlement led to the programme of naturalisation already mentioned and focussed upon in 'The Right Kind of Catholics'. By 1606 this programme was underway, and I maintain that the Irish were singularly successful in securing equal citizenship, confounding the view often stressed by historians of late medieval and early modern migration history that the experience of migration was often negative.⁸⁴ Not only have I demonstrated that

⁸⁰ AGS, Estado, legajo 840. This statute passed in 1608 consolidated the previous programme of naturalisation, culminating in this legal statute. See Knox, 'The Right kind of Catholics', p. 371 for the original wording of the statute, and the translation of it.

⁸¹ See James Casey, *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* (London: Routledge Press, 1999); Henry Kamen, *The Duke of Alba* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

⁸² See Casey, *Early Modern Spain*, pp. 194-5 for a discussion of how the Spanish clan functioned as a network of both patronage and honour.

⁸³ This group included Sister Juana de Nibrien and Sister María de Nibrien who were both admitted into the Convento de San Salvador de Almonacid de Zorita de la Orden de Calatrava in 1592 and were acknowledged and paid as spies for the Spanish state. AHN, Ordenes Militares, Expedientes 230 and 231. I discuss these Irish women spies along with other case studies in *Irish Women on the Move*, chapter five, 'Irish Women and Espionage', pp. 147-187.

⁸⁴ See Knox, 'The Right kind of Catholics', p. 371. Historians who focus upon the lack of acceptance of Irish migrants include Mary Ann Lyons, *Franco-Irish Relations, 1500-1610: Politics, Migration and Trade* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003). Lyons maintains that the Irish in France faced prejudice and were disallowed the ability to compete for senior posts with indigenous French. Furthermore, Lyons demonstrates that the Irish were viewed as distinct from other European settlers in an entirely negative way with attitudes

Irish migrants were endorsed as *bona fide* Spaniards, but they did not have to prove or satisfy the lengthy criteria of several generations of strictly observant Catholics, or *limpieza de sangre*. They were understood to have 'uncontaminated' Catholic lineage, and this was of primary importance for acceptance into their new nation. What were the reasons for this positive experience in addition to a comparable loyalty culture, and the perception of the Irish as the right kind of Catholics?

There are several other features I have analysed in 'The Right kind of Catholics'. Spanish monarchs, in particular Philip II and Philip III were mindful of the huge contribution the Irish had played in the Spanish military and navy, and particularly the Spanish Armada.⁸⁵ Though the English were ultimately successful in vanquishing the Spanish during the naval Armada of 1588, many Irish regiments had served during a period of shortfall of military numbers. More broadly, Irish migrants supplemented employments and professions across the whole of the peninsula where there was a very low population. Spain's population was often low enough to cause concern in relation to the military, but also in areas such as farming, and the provision of education across the peninsula. The need for *letrados* (lettered clerks or legal recorders) was high in some places and educated Irish who were talented linguists were highly placed in this respect.

The continuity of Irish educational institutions including schools and dedicated Irish colleges were well regarded and well supported. The relative freedom awarded to the Irish allowing them to run their own institutions including elementary education was unusual, if not unique for incomers. English and Scottish Catholic settlers were not accorded the same level of support and freedom.⁸⁶ Furthermore, within the Crown of Aragon the two convents founded in Tarragona, the Dominicanas de la Enseñanza de la Inmaculada Concepción de Tarragona, a Dominican convent founded in 1660, and las Clarisas de Santa Clara de Tarragona, a Poor Clare convent founded in 1574, recruited several Irish females mostly from either wealthy, influential and merchant families.⁸⁷

Links between the port of Tarragona and Irish merchants fostered not just important trade networks, but also bolstered the settlement of Irish communities in and around Tarragona. Whilst Tarragona can be considered an international port, and by no means remote from international connections, the same could not be said of the Pyrenees. Four Irish convents in remote areas were referred to by Fr. O'Heyne.⁸⁸ The convent of St. Clare in Esterrí d'Àneu in the Pyrenees was certainly considered to be remote. Moreover, the religious authorities in Aragon viewed the population of Pallars Sobirà as at times reluctant to conform to orthodoxy. This led directly to Irish sisters being allowed to found and run their own

displayed proving similar to English attitudes. See especially pp. 170-3 where accusations include being termed 'base people'.

⁸⁵ Knox, 'The Right kind of Catholics', p. 371.

⁸⁶ There was a Scottish Catholic seminary established in Salamanca and the English College of St. Albans in Valladolid, however, these only accepted male clerics, preparing them for the priesthood. They were also both affected by Inquisition bans and censorship of material. Collections of books at St. Albans still show the *visus* marks where information was scored out and pages irrevocably damaged.

⁸⁷ Knox, 'The Right Kind of Catholics', p. 374.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 374, and O'Heyne, *Epilogus chronologicus*, p. xviii.

missions with the implicit understanding that they would operate as a holding process and ensure against all forms of heresy. This faith in Irish orthodoxy proved to be misplaced however, when in 1592 the Abbot of Gerri de la Sal communicated with the Abbess asking why astronomy was on the curriculum when it was not an approved subject, given its association with humanist scientific explanations.⁸⁹ What is significant in Abbess Clara's response, that the study of astronomy reminds everyone in the convent of their small place in the universe was a deft stonewalling technique which was subversive in that it avoided a head-on conflict which may have led in turn to a strict enforcement of a more limited curriculum.⁹⁰ Again, the resistance to male clerical attempts to direct is clear, albeit subtle. In this way Irish sisters of both the Dominican and Clare orders effected a considerable degree of control over the direction of their missions.

The final piece of my published work considered here, 'Nuns on the Periphery? Irish Dominican Nuns and assimilation in Lisbon', deals with Irish Dominican women migrants who made up what I maintain is the third wave of female migration to the Iberian Peninsula.⁹¹ Third-wave Irish female migration built upon earlier waves, but also included women driven out of Ireland in increasing numbers. The period 1639 to 1700 saw Ireland experience increasing religious and political aggression with the Civil War between Ireland and England, Cromwellian settlement, and the expulsion of several thousand indigenous Irish. Later Williamite settlement further encroached upon those Irish Catholics who remained in Ireland. Continuing policies of Catholic expulsion and the dispossession of Catholic Irish from their lands meant that greater numbers were leaving Ireland, and many of them with little money or moveable goods. This wave can certainly be seen as economic and religious migrants, with push factors dominating their motives to migrate.

'Nuns on the Periphery? Irish Dominican Nuns and assimilation in Lisbon' is one of the few published studies concerned with the experience of Irish Dominican sisters in early modern Portugal.⁹² The importance of the Irish convento de Nossa Senhora do Bom Sucesso, founded in 1639 is crucial to the experience of Irish Dominicans overseas.⁹³ From its inception Bom Sucesso, founded in the Belém district of Lisbon operated as an educational mission, and established two schools. Despite having to flee Ireland, the sisters already had network connections both Irish and Portuguese. Their most committed lobbyist was Father Dominic O'Daly, the most senior Irish cleric in Lisbon, and a figure of influence at the Royal Court. Fr. O'Daly then convinced Iria de Brito, Countess of Atalaya to provide the funding for

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 381.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Andrea Knox, 'Nuns on the Periphery? Irish Dominican Nuns and assimilation in Lisbon', in *Catalonia and Portugal: The Iberian Peninsula from the Periphery*, Flocel Sabaté and Luís Adão da Fonseca, eds., (Bern: Peter Lang Press, 2015), pp. 311-326. The chapter is an extended work first delivered as a conference paper at the second International Medieval Conference, Lleida University, 26th June 2012. The conference organisers requested the inclusion of this chapter as they had never come across Irish migrant women in the Iberian Peninsula.

⁹² The other study of Irish Dominicans in Lisbon is McCabe, *A Light Undimmed*. McCabe translates the Convents name into English as Our Lady of Good Success, see p. 26.

⁹³ Permission was granted by the Provincial of the Portuguese Dominicans, Frei João de Vasconcellas for the foundation of an Irish Dominican convent in Lisbon on 15th June, 1639. Bom Sucesso Archive, Lisbon (BSAL), MS 01/2, part 3.

the convent, which she did.⁹⁴ Later sponsors included Queen Luisa de Gusmão and her daughter, Catherine of Braganza.⁹⁵ Close involvement by Countess de Brito and Queen Luisa saw them attend masses and ceremonials in the convent, with many Irish girls professing with the names of their *donatrices*.⁹⁶

Independent Irish women travelled from Ireland and from Spain in order to profess at Bom Sucesso, demonstrating how widespread knowledge was about this distinctive convent. Although many Irish women from this wave of migration had been forced to flee Ireland, they nonetheless emphasised their elite status.⁹⁷ I emphasise the ability of this group of Irish nuns to manage their own dowries, as well as the monies provided by the most elite Portuguese *donatrices*.⁹⁸ Additionally, I place the development of an academic curriculum within the broader context of book production within the convent.⁹⁹ As well as translating and consuming books, it would appear that convent book production across the peninsula primarily involved two groups of women; nuns and widows.¹⁰⁰ Irish women religious, both sisters and their *donatrices* had networks with the Cromberger and Plantin presses, and the Plantin press, based in Antwerp and Leiden, as well as the Franciscan press in Leiden. This is an important point, because it demonstrates two issues: firstly, that Dominican women were adept at dealing with other orders and secular institutions, and secondly, that they were able to carry the cost of book production, printing and translation themselves, indicating financial skills and management. This is critical as it displays sophisticated knowledge of early capitalism, and a way around the strictures of the solemn vow of poverty which all fully professed nuns took at the point of profession. Put at its simplest. Both Dominican and Clare sisters interpreted the vow of poverty as an individual order, and not a collective one. Their ownership of 'worldly goods' was allowable if they were for the whole of the convent community.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Knox, 'Nuns on the Periphery?', p. 315. As a *donatrix* Countess de Brito had the right to move into the convent compound and she appears to have adopted the Dominican habit and the head-dress.

⁹⁵ Spain ruled Portugal from 1580 until 1640. Philip II of Spain ruled as King Felipe I of Portugal. In 1640 the Spanish were overthrown, and the seventh Duke of Braganza was proclaimed King João IV. Successive Spanish monarchs had been supportive of Irish convents; however, it was not until 1639 that the Irish convent was licensed. After that point the Portuguese Royal family, especially Queen Luisa de Gusmão and Catherine of Braganza became involved in the life of the convent.

⁹⁶ Knox, 'Nuns on the Periphery?', p. 316.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

¹⁰¹ Today, the convent of Bom Sucesso is the only Irish Dominican convent to survive and continues to operate as a school and college.

Conclusion.

The four aforementioned publications constitute a major contribution to women religious and their educational history, Irish migration studies, late medieval and early modern gender studies, and female subversion. These publications will change the way Irish migration to Spain is viewed because of the focus upon the lives of women as independent actors rather than as silent, largely inactive accompanying family members. Never before has academic focus centred upon groups of women religious and their independent *donatrices*. My publications are organised in a thematic rather than a chronological way in order to represent the reciprocal relationship between Ireland and Spain, and in particular the histories of Irish women activists. The case studies of groups of women, and individuals who formed both small and substantial networks span the dates 1499 to 1700. Whilst census data is notoriously poor in measuring female populations across the peninsula, convent communities, by contrast, were determined in their accuracy. Additionally, surviving convent collections, and these have proved to be reasonably substantial, detail a phenomenal amount of material from professions books to bursars' accounts and other economic measures which all give a holistic picture of their many activities, including subversion of the various Inquisition indexes, increasing enclosure rules of the Council of Trent, and the vagaries of their own senior male clergy. The academic publications all demonstrate that Irish women religious have proved to be excellent historians, recording their own histories themselves, thus avoiding the use of male editors or redactors. This has meant that their sources are largely untainted by male power and censorship. The three waves of female migration intersect, and whilst it is clear that there are differences between certain groups in terms of material wealth, or lack of it, this does not appear to have dented their aims, missions and enterprise.

Additionally, my findings allow Irish women's experience to be mapped against that of Spanish women religious. Irish women assimilated into a country where they chose permanent settlement, whilst continuing to preserve many of their own traditions, Irish language customs and Irish history.

My publications fit into the broad area of Irish studies, whilst demonstrating for the first time that not only did late medieval and early modern Irish women have a history in the Iberian Peninsula, but that it was often a powerful and dynamic one, driven by their own initiatives, and separate from men's. This has broadened the area of Irish migration studies, previously dominated by an exclusive address of male experience. Therefore, these publications have expanded the academic scope of Irish studies, migration studies and the history of women in the Iberian Peninsula between 1499 and 1700. Furthermore, this collection of publications will provide a basis for future studies of Irish women's assimilation, systems of education and female mission.

Peer esteem of my publications has included invitations to present papers at academic conferences including The European Social Science History Conference, The History of Women Religious in Britain and Ireland Annual Conference, Leeds Medieval Conference,

Lleida Medieval Conference (the Catalan Pyrenees), and The Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association Conference (USA). This culminated in the current year in an invitation to give the Keynote address at the 5th Glenstall Abbey History Conference, Co. Limerick, Ireland.¹⁰²

¹⁰² The Conference, 'Brides of Christ: Women and Monasticism in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland' has been delayed due to the Corona virus pandemic.

Appendix of Published Work.

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I declare that no outputs submitted for this degree have been submitted for a research degree of any other institution.

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