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Journeymen-Printers, Heresy, and the Inquisition in Sixteenth-Century Spain

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Clive Griffin?s study is a major and exciting contribution to the burgeoning field of the history of the book. *Journeymen-Printers, Heresy, and the Inquisition in Sixteenth-Century Spain* provides us with many histories wrapped up in one book: a history of printing and reading; a social and cultural history of the skilled foreign craftsmen who worked the Iberian presses; and a history of heterodoxy, popular xenophobia, and the Inquisition in early-modern Spain. Undoubtedly, Griffin?s greatest success is that he illuminates the previously shadowy existence of the foreign workers whose labour sustained the printing houses of early-modern Spain. The reader can expect surprising details of lives deemed lost to obscurity on almost every page.

Griffin is able to reconstruct the biographies of early-modern working men (and, occasionally, women) because he approaches well-quarried sources with a fresh and inspired focus. Historians have traditionally searched the Inquisition archives, especially the archives of the Spanish Inquisition, for traces of the lives of minorities accused of heterodoxy. The tribulations of converses, moriscos, and of those sympathizing with Lutheran or Reformed ideas have received ample attention. Griffin?s dazzling turn is that he examines the trial-records and correspondence of the tribunals for details of the professional, social and spiritual lives of humble pressmen, pullers and beaters. The supposed heresy of those print workers and their relatives

unfortunate enough to attract the suspicion of the Inquisition serves Griffin as a window into the personalities, attitudes, and beliefs of the mainly French but also Flemish craftsmen working the Spanish presses.

Foreigners had always ranked prominently among those the Inquisition, as well as ordinary Spaniards, tended to suspect of ?Lutheran sympathies? (Spaniards referred to Lutheran and Reformed doctrine summarily as luteranismo). The printing business stood out among the Iberian trades relying on foreign skill and labour for the potential harm a luterano craftsman might inflict?certainly in the view of a society increasingly concerned with protecting itself from doctrinal contamination. In April 1562, a Seville auto de fe passed a death sentence on one Sebastián Martínez, a ?cleric from Alcalá de Henares and a typesetter by trade?, who had travelled across Spain scattering heretical flysheets in his trail. Martínez had been part of a network of clerics and printers committed to disseminating heterodox views. The existence of such a network confirmed the worst fears of inquisitors already deeply suspicious of the subversive power of the printing press. Xenophobia played its part. Griffin discusses the case of one Antonio de la Bastida, a pressman from Albi in Southern France. His Spanish fellow workers accused Bastida of heresy, mainly on the grounds that he was a foreigner. His arrest and subsequent trial are one of many instances making evident that in the mind of inquisitors, as well as that of ordinary Spaniards, religious orthodoxy was tied to Spanish descent.

It is no accident that the men and women whose lives Griffin rescues from obscurity became entangled with the Inquisition during the late 1560s and early 1570s. By the time Martínez was sent to the stake and burned, Charles V?s campaigns against Protestant princes abroad had exhausted his Castilian subjects and fuelled already popular anti-Protestant sentiment and xenophobia. Fernando de Valdés, appointed Inquisitor General in 1547, had by then restored the fortunes of a Holy Office that had been somewhat subdued and starved of resources during the first half of the century. The discovery of luterano cells in Seville and Valladolid in 1557 and 1558 fanned the widely held belief that Spain was under imminent threat from Lutheran ideas, and confirmed the status and objectives of the Inquisition. As Griffin points out, the fact that the majority of the Old Christians were frighteningly ignorant of even the most basic tenets of the Catholic faith did much to inspire the resolve with which the Inquisition tracked down its victims. It did not help the victims that inquisitors appear to have subscribed to a rigid and simplified view of what beliefs and practices constituted luteranismo.

In the autumn of 1569, the inquisitors? simmering suspicion of foreign printing workers as a Lutheran fifth column gained focus and direction. Inquisitors arrested and interrogated two men on suspicion of heresy, Benito Dulcet, a twenty-six year old typefounder from Lyon, and the forty-one year-old typesetter, Guillermo Herlin. Both Dulcet and, especially, Herlin fingered many of their fellow foreign print workers as sharing in their ?Lutheran heresy?. Their denunciations set the Holy Office on the track of a supposed network of heterodox printing workers that stretched from Salamanca to Granada and from Barcelona to Lisbon, and started a cycle of persecution that shattered and dispersed a closely-knit community of expatriates. Griffin unravels the story of this ?dismantling of a network of immigrants working in the printing industry in the Iberian Peninsula during the 1560s and 1570s? (p. 25).

The records of the Inquisition allow Griffin to present the reader with a rich and closely-woven tapestry of the individual lives that fell apart in the wake of the arrest of Dulcet and Herlin. He is only too well aware of the limits and pitfalls of his sources. The papers of the Inquisition provide a distorted view of the opinions and mindsets of the defendants, not least because their experiences, customs, behaviour, and attitudes are at best tangential to what the inquisitors saw as their main business. Griffin is far too familiar with the mechanisms of inquisitional enquiry and interrogation to take accusations or confessions at face value. Chapter Three is as astute an examination of the inquisitional procedures, the legalistic mindset of the inquisitors, and the survival strategies of the defendants as one could wish for. He sets out in lucid detail the cold rationale, the procedures and stratagems with which the inquisitors so often terrified their victims into resignation and collaboration. Griffin concedes that the accused cannot speak but through the voice of secretaries who shared the inquisitors? preconceptions. Yet though we ?see their cases through a glass, darkly?, he pummels and teases recalcitrant records until they reveal the lives of these humble men in

tantalizing detail. Each of the cases he retrieves from the archives of the Holy Office offers us additional insight into the mentalité of foreign printing workers in early modern Iberia.

Griffin takes us through the story of the exposure, flight, and arrest of those print workers as well as their trials and execution. He introduces us to the terrifying odds they had to face defending their freedom and livelihoods, and, in some cases, their lives. Linguistic as well as intellectual difficulties marred their trials. Interrogators and defendants commonly did not share the same language. Many of the prisoners of the Inquisition had an extremely poor comprehension of Castilian, far too primitive to understand the questions put to them. Yet in the vast majority of cases, the records suggest that they conducted their defence in faultlessly bureaucratic Castilian. In the few cases where inquisitors appeared prepared to accept that mutual incomprehension could lead to miscarriages of justice, they could not find competent interpreters. What is more, the inquisitors, as a matter of principle, shrouded their suspicions in secrecy. Exhaustion and panic on the part of the prisoners played into their hands. Ordinary men and women with little or no real understanding of the underlying theological issues were completely out of their depth. No wonder they stumbled while trying to negotiate the perilous boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy on their own. Many, like Isabel Régnier, bold and resourceful as she undoubtedly was, will have gone to the scaffold still perplexed as to what their crime had been.

What can we know about their personal beliefs, then? The investigation is full of potential pitfalls. When confronted about their beliefs, the defendants lied to the inquisitors, the wholesale denial of all accusations usually giving way to partial or complete confession in the course of the trial. Trying to escape, prisoners sought to divine what the inquisitors knew or wanted to hear. It is likely that the attention of the Inquisition exaggerates the importance of religion in their lives, while the interrogators? streamlined notion of luteranismo is equally likely to have glossed over the nuances of individual beliefs and attitudes to religion. Yet Griffin is able to gauge the importance these ordinary men and women attributed to religion. He lucidly describes the process of how their personal beliefs came to be concocted as a ?cocktail of argument, teaching, overheard conversations, church attendance, reading, and observation? (p. 242). Some of the defendants had been born into Catholic families and may have inherited doubts about inherited practices common among Catholics themselves. Travelling across Europe, they had attended Catholic as well as Reformed services, had debated religion on the road, at the workplace, and in taverns, and had come into contact with a great variety of rival claims to religious truth. Their sources of information and medium of debate were mainly oral. They learned by word of mouth, through discussion, by hearing works read out aloud or by singing psalms. Over many years of conversation and discussion unchecked by orthodox authorities, they pieced together their own, often highly idiosyncratic spirituality. When pressed during interrogation, they searched their memories, personal beliefs and practices in vain for what might pass as doctrinal orthodoxy. Neither inquisitors nor defendants were prepared for informed and sophisticated discussion of complex theological matters. Griffin, however, is surefooted, finding his way among the lies, half-truths, denunciations, and confessions extracted under torture that make up his thorny path. The reader reaps rich rewards from his refusal to simplify and generalize the confused and confusing beliefs of these individuals.

What brought these workers before the Inquisition in the first place was their characteristic insouciance and their noticeable disregard for the authority and ceremonies of the Catholic Church. Lack of outwardly-conformist behaviour could take many forms, and was by no means exclusive to foreigners. Doubts concerning indulgences, the veneration of holy images, the existence of purgatory, and the necessity of auricular confession to a priest had long been subject to criticism from Catholic reformers in Spain. By the 1560s, however, articulating or practising such doubts had become very dangerous. The defendants themselves found it difficult to distinguish between orthodox Catholicism, Lutheran and Calvinist doctrine, and the superstition and sceptical attitudes widespread among ordinary Spaniards. A refusal to buy indulgences, for instance, could simply be rooted in poverty. In the minds of inquisitors, however, it could indicate a veiled attack on the Catholic notion of penance?certainly when a foreigner was involved. Many trials reveal practices and attitudes that add up to evidence of heterodox sympathies or convictions. Common among foreign journeymen-printers is a propensity to work on religious feast days and reluctance to hear

Mass, to confess or to partake of the Eucharist. The Fleming Giles Duse and the Norman Pierre Pintamenan considered the veneration of images idolatrous?one of the hallmarks of luteranismo. The singing of psalms in French, too, raised immediate suspicions of heresy. Entirely aware that they were risking their lives, many print workers carried collections of the psalms translated into the French. Many went out into the countryside when they wanted to sing together, a convenient way of communing with God and asserting their identity safe from the apprehensive ears of their Spanish fellow workers. Calvinist divines judged singing of psalms in rhymed French translation as a particularly powerful tool for disseminating and maintaining allegiance to the Reformed faith, and so did the inquisitors in Toledo, Valladolid, and Lisbon.

Griffin provides ample evidence that the printing workers taken up by the Holy Office were fully aware that they would be under suspicion of heresy almost from the moment they crossed the borders into Spain. He also tells us much about the reasons that made them go there nonetheless. Dulcet, Duse, Herlin, and their many compatriots went to Iberia because it offered the possibility of employment. The shortage of skilled labour and high wages in Catalonia and Valencia attracted those who wanted to escape the Wars of Religion and economic decline at home. The absence of the regulations that prevented the semi-skilled from finding regular work in the presses of Geneva and Lyon proved a particular draw to those who had not finished their apprenticeship. Some had chosen their profession; others had been given no choice. These were mostly young men, adventurous, enterprising, and violent. Many had a military background that stood them in good stead during their itinerant life on the roads of Europe.

Once in Spain, foreign print workers tried to stick together, travelling, working, and spending their leisure time as much in the company of compatriots as possible. They shared a perception that theirs was a craft superior to others. Such pride was encouraged and sustained by their respect for the written word and widespread confidence in their own judgement. Journeymen-printers rarely integrated with the local population, but mingled with foreigners working in other trades. The xenophobia characteristic of early modern communities prevented Spaniards from welcoming those few apparently willing to integrate. Antonio de la Bastida considered himself a Spaniard, but, as it turned out, was never accepted as such by his Spanish colleagues who, on account of his strange accent, had considered him a heretic all along. The lack of even the most basic linguistic competence in men who, in some cases, had lived and worked in Spain for more than a decade, suggests that most had no intention or desire to integrate in the first place. When possible, they consolidated communal bonds by actions and through a language that excluded orthodox Spaniards. Thus they might meet to share forbidden foodstuffs, such as pork pies during Lent, or engage in multi-layered banter that revealed and confirmed their religious persuasions and prejudices against the native population. Griffin gives examples even of the jokes they made at the expense of Catholic beliefs and rituals. Comparing the gaily dressed statue of the Virgin Mary carried through the streets of Salamanca with a young woman of uncertain reputation back in Lyon, three French printing workers mocked the idolatrous naivety of orthodox Spanish Catholics and the mercenary nature of the papal church. Humorous innuendo provided mutual assurance of shared origins, experience, and religious persuasions.

Griffin?s meticulous research reveals a small world where time was passed in conversation. During the long hours at work, in the tavern and on the road looking for work, talking about personal beliefs was a way of establishing and consolidating mutual trust. Pierre de Rinz told the inquisitors that his refusal to discuss religious matters with his luterano compatriots working in the same press at Alcalá repeatedly led to violent clashes between them. Invariably, journeymen-printers knew a lot about one another?s lives and convictions. Even those who had never met or had not seen one another for many years were kept abreast of developments in each others? lives by the grapevine. Once the Inquisition trained its sights on them, it turned out that they knew far too much. In some cases, bad feelings and personal animosity fuelled the denunciations. Yet, members of a tightly knit community, many did do their best to protect their fellow workers from the inquisitors. Providing shelter for fugitives, warning those not yet aware that the Inquisition was looking for them, or retracting incriminating confessions, they often fatally incriminated themselves in the process. Friendship became dangerous, often lethal when torture was employed to loosen the strong bonds between men who looked at one another as friends, compatriots, and co-religionists.

Many had kept up their guard for many years. Only a minority, like the journeyman-printer Isac de Ribera

and typecaster Pierre Pintamenan, can be regarded as proselytisers. Lack of caution, over-confidence, or the compulsion to discuss personal beliefs and thus assert their identity finally induced some to give themselves away. Giles Duse told his interrogators about the anguish and physical pain caused by the inability to speak openly about his religious convictions, mingled with the fear of exposure. Calvin?s utter condemnation of Nicodemites would not have helped him assuage his pain. The relief and determination to come clean when he was finally arrested is palpable in the records of his trial. For years on end, many foreign journeymen-printers suffered the stress of having to conceal their beliefs from ordinary Spaniards and of sharing them only with those they trusted. On those occasions of shared identity, they tended to reveal much more than was wise.

Journeymen-Printers tells the stories of the lives of these men and women to their frequently bitter ends. The tribunals that dismantled the network of supposed luterano journeymen-printers during the late 1560s and early 1570s were at the height of their power. Their intention was to deter miscreants, instruct the faithful and supply the galleys of Spain with urgently needed rowers. The elaborately staged auto de fe made an example of the guilty and spelled out the beliefs and behaviours the audience was to shun. Relatively few of those the Holy Office considered unrepentant went to the stake. Many more were given harsh sentences of years of service at the oar. Those who survived their sentence, few in any case, would not necessarily be released. At a time of continual naval conflict, the fleet was loathe to lose trained rowers. Those lucky enough to escape the stake and the galley would still suffer serious economic deprivation as well as public humiliation; public humiliation that was ongoing, and would affect them and their families for the time they lived in Spain.

Griffin writes with great authority, subtlety, and command of the English language. He demonstrates that the Iberian inquisitional archives are a mine of information on the geographical and social origins, educational and professional training, careers, standard of living, and, most strikingly, even the attitudes, beliefs, and ambitions of men and women ordinarily outside the historian?s grasp. He also offers us many insights on output, recruitment, wage levels, and working practices in the Iberian presses. Thus we now know that ?some Spanish presses must have been French- rather than Castilian-speaking? (p. 262)?a fact that does help to explain some of the flaws common in sixteenth-century Spanish books. His lively book provides a highly differentiated and rare perspective from below during a period of radical religious, economic, and political change in European history. *Journeymen-Printers, Heresy, and the Inquisition in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, then, keeps its twofold promise: both to reconstruct ?the lives and fate of otherwise anonymous artisans?; and to provide ?a new perspective on the sixteenth century world of book production in Spain, and, by extension, in western Europe? (p. 25).

The author is happy to accept this review and does not wish to comment further.

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