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IRIS Summer Fieldwork Report (2019)**

In June and July of 2019, with support from the IRIS Summer Fieldwork Award, I travelled to Madrid to carry out archival research for my dissertation project, “Perfidious Liaisons between New and Old Christians in Early Modern Spain.” My dissertation project aims to uncover stories of mixed couples during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The project compares literary representations of mixed unions between new and old Christians with inquisitorial cases of individuals known to have participated in such liaisons. Recent publications examining this phenomenon have proven that there were far more mixed couples than previously assumed (Deardorf 2017, Bernabé 2019). However, scholars have yet to examine the partnerships nor their specific temporal and geographic circumstances in detail. My research reconsiders the degree of assimilation and separation of new and old Christians in the heterogeneous communities throughout Spain.

During the summer of 2019 I carried out my preliminary research in Spain in both national and provincial archival repositories. During my pilot study, which lasted for two months, I uncovered some 25 cases of mixed unions. During that time, I was able to critically analyze about half of the cases that I encountered, most of which were tried in the Inquisition of Toledo and Valencia between the years 1609-1611.

While in Spain I also attended a graduate student workshop on research in historical studies of *Moriscos* at the University of Alicante and received feedback from prolific scholars. These scholars helped me to designate a methodological framework for my study and overcome challenges related to archival research on *Moriscos*. The opportunity to discuss my preliminary findings with experienced scholars and other graduate students was foundational in developing my project and setting a methodological framework.

My dissertation is interdisciplinary as it combines the methodologies of literary analysis with those of historical research. Literary examples of such unions have offered more information about the social, cultural, and political realities surrounding these partnerships. My goal is to do justice to the complex and many-sided dynamics of these engagements that tailored and tugged at stubborn “we/them” binaries in early modern Spain. In order to better understand the construction of group identities and alterities we must examine these relationships and their abundant complications.

My archival research allowed me to examine the conflicts and anxieties surrounding mixed couples, which helped to elucidate my understanding of the construction of difference in Spain. By studying mixed marriages and their abundant complications my research aims to better comprehend the construction of *Morisco* identities, which were anything but simple. My archival research has allowed me to understand the process of the construction of *Morisco* identities which were sometimes generated from within the *Morisco* communities themselves and often ascribed to them by old Christians.

Literature from the early modern period is fixated on the theme of marriage and partnerships of equal social stations. It was a task of proportion and balance for many authors to create suitable spouses for their characters. Narratives often attempt to explain and rationalize which two people would make suitable partners. These pairings reveal how authors negotiated identity and power dynamics in romantic unions. My research which suggests that mixed partnerships were not exclusive to one social class. However, due to intense censorship of literary production during the inquisition I have found as much or more detailed information about these partnerships in historical documents as I have in literary productions. People from the lowest and highest social strata took part in these relationships (the degree to which

individuals consented and willingly participated must be studied on a case-by-case basis).

This year I have applied to present my research at two professional conferences, Renaissance Society of America and the International Congress on Medieval Studies. My research will also figure in to the first chapter of my dissertation which I hope to publish in an academic journal.