



*Early Modern Hapsburg Women:  
Transnational Contexts, Cultural  
Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities,*  
Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli  
Stampino (eds.)  
(Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

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*Early Modern Hapsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities*. By Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli Stampino (eds.). Farnham, Ashgate, 2013. 312 pp. ISBN:978-1-4724-1164-8. £67.50.

The Hapsburg dynasty ruled Spain during its ‘Golden Age’ period and dominated European politics during the Early Modern period. Noted for its piety (*pietas austriaca*) and devotion to the Roman Catholic Church, in a period when Catholicism was facing perhaps its greatest challenge, and its increasingly endogamous matrimonial politics, the House of Hapsburg has left an indelible mark on this era both politically and culturally. This collection focuses particularly on the women of the dynasty, offering case studies which examine both natal and marital Hapsburgs, illegitimate and legitimate offspring of the dynasty, and various geographical contexts. All of these women experienced a major transition in their lives, either moving across Europe to make strategic marriages from France or the Empire to Iberia or from Austria and Spain to Italy, being recalled to Iberia to serve as regents or moving from the worldly context to the cloister.

The introduction highlights the key themes of the volume: transnational and transcultural ties through the House of Hapsburg, epistolary and spatial power, the importance of fertility and the power of motherhood, and finally visual and sartorial politics. All of the papers stress the importance of maintaining or assuming a Hapsburg identity and the agency of these women as queens, duchesses, vicereines, regents and nuns.

The first paper, “‘*Bella gerant alii*’? Laodamia’s Sisters, Hapsburg Brides: Leaving Home for the Sake of the House’, by Joseph F. Patrouch, provides an introductory survey of Hapsburg matrimonial strategies, noting how the Austrian dynasty famously rose to become a European power through their well-placed marriages. Patrouch’s study runs from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries and encompasses the marriages of sixty-six Hapsburg princesses, which makes it a useful overview, particularly for those unfamiliar with the history of the Hapsburg dynasty. However, the chapter lacks a map to chart the various marriages and highlight where the matches were concentrated; this would have been extremely beneficial to strengthen the arguments of the piece.

The next three papers all examine Hapsburg women who married into the Italian sphere in order to further Hapsburg dominance on the peninsula. The first is an attempt to reassess the controversial career of Maria Maddalena of Austria, Grand Duchess of Florence (1589–1631). Maria Galli Stampino examines the entertainments held in the court during the regency as a means of understanding Maria’s influence on Florence and her attempt to bridge Hapsburg and Medici cultural practices. The following two papers

are related case studies; the first is Blythe Alice Raviola's 'The Three Lives of Margherita of Savoy-Gonzaga, Duchess of Mantua and Vicereine of Portugal' and the second, by Magdalena S. Sanchez, focuses on the voluminous and affectionate correspondence between Margherita's parents, Caterina Micaela of Spain and Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy. These papers demonstrate that both Caterina Micaela and her daughter considered themselves to be Spanish princesses and Hapsburg representatives, regardless of whether they were living in the Iberian or Italian peninsula.

The fifth paper, by Vanessa de Cruz Medina, is a study of an illegitimate Hapsburg daughter, Ana Dorotea, who journeyed from Austria to profess as a nun at Madrid's famous *Descalzas Reales* foundation. This paper has close links to the last paper in the collection, Cordula van Wyhe's 'The Making and Meaning of the Monastic Habit at Spanish Hapsburg Courts.' Both Cruz Medina and van Wyhe highlight the transition by young Hapsburg princesses who decided to join the *Descalzas Reales*; the Archduchess Margaret, who spurned the chance to become Philip II's queen to take up a monastic life, and the opportunity taken by Ana Dorotea to embrace her Spanish Hapsburg family by going to Madrid to follow in the footsteps of Margaret and other Hapsburg women in taking the veil. These papers emphasise how Hapsburg women publicly demonstrated the *pietas austriaca* by adopting monastic dress, both inside the cloister as nuns and at court in Madrid and Brussels. The authors reinforce the arguments made in Magdalena S. Sanchez's *The Empress, the Queen and the Nun: Women and Power at the Court of Philip III* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) that female political and cultural agency could be enhanced within the cloister and that the adoption of a religious habit at court reinforced their authority, particularly as widows.

Félix Labrador Arroyo's study gives an incredibly useful and richly detailed examination that traces the evolution of the queen's household in Castile over the course of the 'Golden Age' period, noting resistance to the influence of the Burgundian model at the Castilian court. Following on are two papers on 'birthing Hapsburgs' which focus on maternity and maternal power. The first paper by María Cruz de Carlos Varona looks particularly at pregnancy and childbirth, noting items which were gifted to expectant mothers or religious commissions that were intended to protect and aid a woman through the difficult and often dangerous rigours of childbirth. Next, Silvia Z. Mitchell provides an examination of the much-maligned regent Mariana of Austria that highlights her power and the intense competition arising between 'mother and monarchy' when Carlos II was forced to decide whether to continue to submit to his mother's authority in respect for her maternal care and love, or to shake off his minority and assume the rule of the kingdom personally. Mariana of Austria is also the subject of the following paper, by Mercedes Llorente. Llorente's analysis of the portraits of the regent by

Juan Carreño de Miranda and Claudio Coello demonstrates how Mariana's authority was underlined by her monastic dress and in the careful depiction of her carrying out the duties of regency in the traditionally male-dominated setting of the *Salón de los Espejos*.

Laura Oliván Santaliestra contributes a fascinating study of Isabel de Borbón and her difficult transition from French princess to Spanish queen. Her marriage, like Isabel de Valois' in the sixteenth century and the reciprocal marriage of Anne of Austria and Louis XIII, was designed to defuse the conflict between France and Spain, the great powers and rivals of the period. Oliván Santaliestra describes the 'hispanization' of the young princess, through the adoption of restrictive Spanish dress and the elaborate protocol of the court, in order to satisfy the expectations of her subjects. While she faced a considerable challenge from the favourite, Olivares, Isabel ultimately triumphed and became a successful regent and beloved queen.

This collection is an excellent contribution to extant scholarship on the Hapsburg dynasty, combining a number of disciplines and approaches including gender studies, art history, literature and drama, court studies and political history in order to produce a volume replete with strong studies. The scholarship is generally of a very high calibre; however, there are a few frustrating errors in the genealogical charts, including the wrong date of death for Isabel la *Católica* in Table 1.1 (facing p. 1) and Philip III being erroneously named as Caterina Micaela's father in Table 3.1 (p. 59). There is also an odd mix of footnotes and in-text citation in some of the papers. However, these are minor detractions from what is otherwise a wonderful collection which is highly recommended for both students and scholars of the Hapsburg dynasty, queenship and gender studies, and the period itself.

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