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**Cruz, Anne J. and Maria Galli Stampino, eds. Early Modern Habsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities**

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perspectives. As if this pious author were the Heliogabalus of English devotional verse, he is sometimes accused of “more than slightly perverse sexuality” as Warnke proposes, or “of something sick or unmanly” as Austin Warren says (cit. Rambuss xxvii, lxviii). But his poetic procedures are means of vertiginous defamiliarization for spiritual purposes, and developments of age-old Judaeo-Christian traditions arising from the Song of Songs and Pseudo-Dionysius among other precursors. Rambuss’s edition includes various helpful illustrations, and among these is a photograph of Bernini’s sculpture *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, wherein she swoons with pleasure as a pretty adolescent angel prepares to penetrate her with his love-dart aimed at her abdomen. Since she is the representative human being here, male viewers perceiving her situation and applying it to themselves become rather feminized. Profound religious art does not comfortably accord with conventional categories and viewpoints. And since all seventeenth-century devotional verse is now bound to be an acquired taste, penalizing Crashaw for his particular differences increasingly seems narrow. For T. S. Eliot he is “quite alone in his peculiar kind of greatness,” a writer of “the finest baroque poetry”: “grotesque and [...] hideous” yet “in its way *beautiful*” (cit. Rambuss, xvii, lx).

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**Cruz, Anne J. and Maria Galli Stampino, eds.**  
***Early Modern Habsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities.***

Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. xviii, 294 + 29 ill, 10 tables. ISBN 978-1-4724-1164-8 (hardcover) \$129.95.

This interdisciplinary collection of essays offers a variety of perspectives on the lives of six women of the Habsburg family who lived between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The focus is mainly on the Spanish branch of the Habsburg clan, although also included are some women of the Austrian branch who married their Spanish relatives and the French bride of Philip IV, Isabel of Borbón. These six figures are relatively little known to the English-speaking world, and their presentation here offers a welcome expansion of our

understanding of the contributions made by women within this pan-European family.

In the introduction, the editors establish the context and themes of the following essays, emphasizing the important roles played by Habsburg women, whether as vehicles of dynastic policy, mothers of future rulers, patrons of art and spectacle, or political players in their own right. Yet also rightly stressed are the difficulties faced by these women, often sent away from home while still young, expected to adapt to new environments with different languages and customs and to balance between promoting Habsburg concerns and pursuing the interests of their adopted dynasty and country.

The first essay, by Joseph Patrouch, provides an overview of Habsburg marriage strategy through an analysis of the weddings of sixty-six Habsburg daughters of both the Spanish and Austrian branches from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. Taking as his point of departure the famous adage that the Habsburgs achieved success not by fighting but through marriage, Patrouch demonstrates how the family used marriage bonds not only to extend their influence in eastern Europe and the Holy Roman Empire, but also to create a European-wide network of connections, and to maintain good working relations between the two branches of the family itself.

Subsequent contributions deal with a wide variety of questions, from the visual and material culture surrounding the crucial but dangerous moment of child-birth (Maria Cruz de Carlos Varona) to the significance of the clothes worn by women in the various phases of their lives. Dress might proclaim the willingness of a foreign bride to adapt to the values of her new home (Laura Olivàn Santaliestra), emphasize a widow's continuation of her husband's political traditions (Mercedes Llorente), or, in the form of religious habits or burial shrouds, express the profound Counter-Reform piety that was a major feature of Habsburg identity (Cordula van Wyhe). On a different note, the essay by Magdalena Sánchez demonstrates that even arranged marriages, such as that between Philip II's daughter Catalina Micaela and her husband, the Duke of Savoy, could develop into loving and mutually-supportive relationships, fed in this case by a stream of intimate correspondence. In fact, a sub-theme within the essays is precisely the manner in which Habsburg women used correspondence as a means to maintain contacts, exercise influence, and achieve their personal goals.

One of the most interesting aspects of the lives of the six women is the political roles they constantly played, even when they might not have desired

political limelight. Félix Labrador Arroyo illustrates the ways in which the queen's household became a site of political jockeying, while Laura Oliván Santaliestra demonstrates how a queen's reputation could become an element in manipulation by court factions. Vanessa de Cruz Medina and Cordula van Wyhe illustrate the political value of a family convent such as that of the Descalzes Reales in Madrid, where Habsburg nuns added lustre to the family's name by embodying the ideals of post-Tridentine female sanctity. Nevertheless, despite regulations regarding enclosure, these religious figures received visitors and lobbied with pope and cardinals, making the convent a centre of political as well as religious patronage. Two of the essays, by Silvia Mitchell and Mercedes Llorente, discuss the political activities of Marianna of Austria, who used her position as mother of the last Habsburg ruler of Spain, Carlos II, to exercise political authority even after her son became officially of age and despite considerable opposition from other interest groups at court. Similarly, other Habsburg women, such as Margherita of Savoy-Gonzaga, actively sought a political role, refusing to retire from the public scene even when their relatives hoped they would. Particularly interesting is the way in which some of the figures employed art to project an image of power, even commissioning equestrian portraits of themselves, when such images were normally reserved for men. The essays also demonstrate that Habsburg women's political influence was judged by contemporaries in very different ways; while some were praised for their energy as regents, others were criticized for the policies they adopted or the direction they imposed on court life. Particularly in these latter cases, a closer analysis of the women's choices and the consequences of their decisions would have helped the reader comprehend the problems facing women as leaders of government.

The quality of the book is somewhat marred by frequent errors in dates, particularly in the genealogical tables, which could create confusion among unwary readers. Several mistakes are evident, for example, in the initial table providing a general vision of the Habsburg clan, but the most egregious is probably the substitution of Philip III for Philip II in the table on page 59, which makes the king's third wife die a decade before his own birth. Such errors detract from the work and could have been eliminated by more careful copy-editing.

Nevertheless, in general this collection of essays demonstrates a high level of scholarship and raises interesting questions regarding the duties and opportunities available to female members of the Habsburg clan. It is a welcome addition to the study of early modern women, and will, hopefully, stimulate further

collective and comparative work on these—and other—still little known but nevertheless important figures.

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**Dane, Joseph A.**

***Blind Impressions: Methods and Mythologies in Book History.***

Material Texts. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. Pp. viii, 218 + 9 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0-8122-4549-3 (hardcover) \$65.

The accomplished and deft bibliographer Joseph A. Dane offers here a new collection of essays, published as part of the “Material Texts” series, that unsettles conventions and challenges clichés in book history. As the punning title suggests, *Blind Impressions* tackles the assumptions that underlie practices of Anglo-American bibliography, using a style that is direct and often with an exasperated amusement at how the academy seems to promote wilful blindness. With elegant wordplay and humility, Dane’s volume offers up twelve distinct and valuable excursions into reimagining the practice of book history. The composition is united chiefly by Dane’s relentless insistence on returning to the sources and questioning interpretative commonplaces. *Blind Impressions* is firmly based in the study of early modern books and book culture, but not exclusively: Dane draws on the medieval, and ranges into the modern era for examples, comparisons, and critiques when it serves his greater purpose of changing the status quo in book history.

Dane’s introduction sets forth the case for rethinking academic practice by engaging with the reality of the material texts as opposed to accepting conventional wisdom or scholarly norms. The book embodies that aim in three sections. The first, “What is Print?” offers three chapters tackling elements of bibliographic interpretation and commonplace. Most valuable may be the second chapter, “Ca. 1800: What’s in a Date?” which questions the convention dividing print history at that year. Dane lays out the arguments for and against that watershed with fresh vigour. His conclusion, that the date retains its importance, is characteristically insightful: we cannot escape the importance of