



Spanish Fashion at the Courts of Early Modern Europe

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and little spots of red wax leap off the page, partly thanks to the excellent idea of photographing the whole of the binding against a black background. The tiny threads that reappear on the edges of the binding could well have been edited out, but their retention makes the photography hyper-real.

The accompanying essays are masterfully researched yet wear their erudition lightly, giving the book the unusual advantage of being able to function on multiple registers. The silk samples, photographed at half their actual size, are so beautiful and various that any aesthete would enjoy it just for the pleasure of looking at the textiles and the wonderful portraits with which Lesley Miller has illustrated her essay on costume. This essay — which explores the types of costume into which these silks could be made and who wore them — makes specific links with the samples yet still manages to give a broad overview of the use of French silk in costume in the eighteenth century. Miller's essay on the manufacture and sale of Lyonnais silks is again something that can be read and understood by the layman, but this accessibility is only made possible by Miller's frankly encyclopaedic knowledge of Lyon and its eighteenth-century silk trade.

The explanation of how the book was able to be dated securely — thanks to an inscription containing a design number from Galy and Gallien — gives Miller the chance to introduce the partners of that

enterprise and explore the lives of two silk merchant manufacturers and a silk designer, whose partnership produced four of the samples. This detailed analysis, using archival sources, of three of the myriad contributors, scrutinises their varied backgrounds and professional trajectories in the silk trade in Lyon, and in so doing, brings the silk trade and its protagonists to life.

The dedication the author and her predecessors at the V&A have shown to this sample book is epitomised by the four-page concordance of samples on wrong pages — a brilliant exercise in identification and taxonomy that may be too detailed for the layman but which textile historians will find enthralling.

The appendices, which lurk unassumingly after such a dazzling parade of silks, are where the scholar will rejoice. In them are technical analyses of the different types of textiles, a wonderful glossary, which includes some definitions of eighteenth-century terms that I have never seen properly translated, biographies of identifiable merchant manufacturers represented by samples in the book and a summary catalogue of the surviving designs on paper by L. Galy, Gallien et Cie, whose archival numbering enabled this sample book to be securely dated and hence identified. The author's persistent perusal of this sample book's secrets triumphs in its generosity of spirit and scholarship.

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JOSÉ LUIS COLOMER AND AMALIA DESCALZO eds, *Spanish Fashion at the Courts of Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, Madrid, 2014. 844 pp., 405 col. illus. £50. ISBN: 9788415245445

This publication has been a long time coming, literally and intellectually. As I hoped when reviewing the 2007 conference from which the two volumes derive (*Textile History*, 39(1) (2008)), it is indeed a 'landmark volume', and worth the wait for its

publication delays. Concerted scholarly consideration of the importance of Spanish dress in the elite early modern world has previously been lacking both within and outside the country. Spain has often been treated as ‘a case apart’, as a contributor notes (p. 319). These essays, with a refreshing bias *towards* Spanish sources, collectively re-place Spanish-ness transmitted through fashion at the centre of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century court cultures, from an apex under Philip II to the decline into absurdity and archaism as the ‘Anglo-French hegemony’ ascended to fashionable dominance by the 1700s. The simultaneous English and Spanish editions ensure the wider reading audience the volumes deserve.

As befits a European phenomenon, the twenty-nine assembled authors and their subjects are pan-European, considering how Spanish dress entangled with major courts across the Continent. A variety of methodological approaches come with this breadth of scholarship, integrating literal and more conceptual analyses, art history, curation, documents and, most especially, the rich surviving material culture, to explore the network of practitioners and practices around Spanish dress — a kind of comprehensive introductory handbook lacking for British or French dress of the same period. The authors have taken advantage of the gap between conference and publication to update their published research, making the book contemporary in its information and intellectual outlook. The first volume focuses on the Iberian peninsula, covering the garments themselves, the textiles comprising them, their storage, colours, styles, historiography, sources and legislation, lyric poetry, urban spaces, veiling, monastic habits and fashion reportage, loosely starting with the ‘what’ and moving into the ‘why’. Readers are guided through the stylistic and moral elements of Spanish court dress. These especially turn

on the colour black as a synonym of courtly power, an abnegation of the body’s natural shapes and textures for both sexes and a deep, luxuriously austere religiosity, reinforced in article after article.

The books start with outlines of Habsburg dress based on dress historian Carmen Bernis’s foundational 1991 articles on men’s and women’s late sixteenth-century fashion. They are key texts in Spanish and it is excellent to have English versions available. However, the editorial approach here is unevenly mediated. The male article is updated throughout with information from Descalzo’s PhD thesis, while the female article is pure Bernis for the sixteenth century with information on the later century’s styles added after a clear break, a disparity that may be problematic for future Anglophone scholars not using the original texts. Many of the subsequent articles promote accessibility to make a large number of sources available in English for the first time, from snippets of Golden Age poetry, to press reports, to letters and accounts in appendices. The bibliography found in the articles is invaluable, although it would have been useful to also collate the sources in a single cumulative end reference. Treatment of such academic apparatuses are the books’ only weak point. The excellent translations, for example, are sensitive to their subject and retain topic-specific Spanish words. Yet although specific glossaries appear in various essays there is no aggregate set of definitions, and the index is solely to people. The author biographies are also short for a volume of this magnitude. Conversely, the images form a luxurious reference. Court portraiture is a key source for envisaging Spanish style and its spread elsewhere. Well-known and obscure paintings are employed judiciously as illustrations to the texts without repetition, so that by the end of the books they are a set of comprehensive visual dress sources, including images only rarely reproduced.

Much surviving European élite dress is Spanish or Spanish-influenced. The artefacts included here from a variety of vaults are of a breadth and quality not possible with, say, British or French sources, which demonstrates the importance of looking at Spain as a sphere of fashion construction. Focusing on the empire as the subject makes it easy to see its influence as the unifying point of most late sixteenth-century dress. Even in areas where the clothing is not as influential, notably Germanic regions, the identifications of Spanish-ness in dress this publication provides, finally allows for a proper analysis of 'Spanish style' in foreign courts.

The second volume explores this spread and reception of Spanish dress amongst the courts of England, Florence, Milan, Turin, Mantua, the Low Countries, Vienna, Bohemia, Hungary and Sweden — all the Habsburg realms and the other major powers, except, curiously, France, although the 'Hispanicisation' of the French princess Elisabeth de Valois through her clothing upon marriage to Philip II is a fascinating read. It also highlights one of the major themes of the books, the role of royal and noble women's bodies in displaying and transmitting not only Spanish dress but the Spanish manners and etiquette with which the clothing was worn, characterised by an aloof dignity. Fashion was a powerful medium for Habsburg propaganda and way of manipulating perceptions. The

movement of women such as Catherine of Aragón, Eleonora de Toledo and Philip II's daughters Isabella Clara Eugenia and Catalina Micaela in diplomatic marriages across Europe established Spanish dress as a political power tactic, affirming allegiances and identities. Until Spain's powers declined, the origins of Spanish women demonstrated through dress are repeatedly shown to be more powerful than the sartorial identity of their destination culture. Conversely, Spanish-ness, with its stiffness, formality and farthingales, closed in around princesses marrying into the empire, erasing their bodily display of national tastes. Such feminine cases are contrasted by the sole male body examined closely here, Charles, Prince of Wales (the future Charles I) whose unofficial courting visit to Madrid in 1623 demonstrated the diplomatic value of tactically adopting Spanish dress, as well as his masculine autonomy and status in being able to choose the degree of his hispanicisation. The articles in the second volume are equally useful as a discussion of fashion negotiations in each of these courts and the nuances of local tastes, a specificity of topic not often directly engaged with.

In short, this publication is a beautifully executed, timely and necessary handbook on Spanish court dress that should enrich all scholarship on the subject for a long time to come.

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ANNE GERRITSEN and GIORGIO RIELLO eds, *Writing Material Culture History*. Bloomsbury, London and New York, 2015. 352 pp., 86 b/w illus. £19.99. ISBN: 9781472518569

Described by the editors as a 'guide for students and teachers to understand the role played by material culture in history' (p. 1), this volume includes contributions from a wide range of disciplines including history,