

The Renaissance and Reformation

González Tornel, Pablo.

Roma hispánica. Cultura festiva española en la capital del Barroco.

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Pablo González Tornel's recent book joins a growing body of scholarship that brings together social history, art history, and material culture to evoke and define cultural and political contexts in the early modern period. Displaying the craft of an accomplished art historian, González Tornel evinces an eye for detail and recovers long neglected sources while providing his readers with an overarching narrative steeped in cultural history. Scholars who work on early modern Rome will be grateful for this intricate portrait of the city and the papal court and its ceremonies. It is a welcome addition to the work of Maria Antonietta Visceglia and Martine Boiteux; it also complements recent scholarship on the Spanish presence in Rome in the period, joining the ranks of works by scholars such as Thomas Dandele, Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro, Alessandra Anselmi, Diana Carrio Invernizzi, Máximo Barrio Gozalo, David García Cueto, and Piers Baker Bates.

The book treats its readers to a fascinating and well-documented overview of how the Spanish crown used festive culture, ephemeral art, ceremony, and its political weight to display its power and influence in the court of Rome and, from that vantage point, the world. Divided into six chapters, the book chronicles Spanish festive culture in Rome from its apogee in the seventeenth century to its decline in the nineteenth. Tellingly, the author situates the final curtain at the 1819 funeral for María Luisa of Parma, the mother of Fernando VII and exile in the Eternal City for some years. Throughout, he painstakingly chronicles multiple examples of the Spanish presence in the city—basing his work on abundant research in Italian and Spanish libraries, on primary sources in many cases understudied and unconsidered for centuries, as well as on

extant art work in Roman churches and palaces. The centuries come to life as González Tornel offers his readers a portrait of a city: Rome, in the transition from the baroque period when Spanish power and festive culture was at its zenith to the neoclassical period. It is as much a portrait of the city and the Spanish presence as it is of the Hispanic monarchy itself from its apogee as a crown with territories the world over, able to project its power in the eternal city under the Habsburgs, to its waning influence under the Bourbons, bereft of its Italian possessions after the War of Spanish Succession and, later, the greater part of its American ones after the wars of independence in Hispanic America.

González Tornel evokes the many places in which the Spanish nation fashioned itself as the most important Catholic power on the Roman stage in its national churches, the embassy, which finally occupied a fixed place and quarter in 1654, the national churches of its Italian territories, and the many other churches, palaces, and religious buildings that were linked to Spain throughout the centuries under consideration. He also abundantly describes the manifold ways in which the Spanish crown fashioned the image it crafted of itself in Rome through public celebration, symbolism, and the creation of Spanish saints, all carefully orchestrated and planned by the Spanish crown and its many representatives. His book presents the many people involved in carefully constructing this image of Spain in the city—diplomats, monarchs, cardinals, noblemen, and clerics, both in Spain and in Rome—and the many telling ways they went about it. He vividly reconstructs funeral and festive processions, ceremonies, and celebrations as though they were taking place before the eyes of the reader.

Throughout the book, well-chosen illustrations, many of them taken from the works cited, abound—adding to its evocation of the context. Along with an up-to-date and exhaustive bibliography, which takes into account the major contributions on the subject, the book presents a very useful list of ceremonies and celebrations in chronological order, and the kinds of ephemeral art used. In addition, the author provides a list of all the festive accounts or *relaciones*: short, published works that describe processions, ceremonies, and ephemeral art and monuments. These are often hard to come by, hidden away in obscure libraries, and here González Tornel has done scholars a great service, conveniently listing them in a separate bibliography section. The book is of undoubted value for scholars interested in Rome, Spain, the Hispanic monarchy, festive culture, and ceremony in the early modern period, and should be rightly hailed as a major contribution to art and cultural history.

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