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Roma Hispánica: Cultura festiva española en la capital del Barroco.

Pablo González Tornel.

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That Rome, the “theatre of the world,” functioned as a ritual space for political negotiation between the European powers in the early modern period is a well-known topos in scholarship. The many books and essays on festival culture, national churches, and the politics of space that have been published in recent decades attest to the diplomatic significance of ritual in early modern Rome. Indeed, the Spanish monarchy was well aware of the political relevance that ceremonies and feasts had for the negotiation of its power, as much in the territories under its dominion as in the papal court. For the Spaniards established in Rome, rituals were central for their social, political, and symbolic identity, as a foreign community. In his richly illustrated study, Pablo González Tornel contributes to this field through a discussion on the construction of the Spanish monarchy’s image in early modern Rome through its festival culture, which he defines as the synchronous combination of all the arts that were at the service of the political power (15). Through this overarching label, this study deals with the political uses of ritual and celebration, of ephemeral constructions and perdurable buildings, of pyrotechnical artifices and funerary catafalques, of paintings and sculptures, of portraits, engravings, and texts.

González Tornel carries out a formal and iconographical analysis of the monumental artifacts that were erected by the Spanish monarchy in early modern Rome

throughout three centuries and confirms the close connection of ephemeral art and power at the papal court. Working within the premises of the established historical narrative of the political decline of the Spanish monarchy, the author describes the rise and fall of the monarchy's festive culture in the early modern period. Readers will learn how the Spanish Habsburgs built on the ceremonial precedents that were established by Charles V and the papal court to develop a magnificent and politically charged festive culture, which achieved its apex in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After the War of the Spanish Succession, with the arrival of the Bourbons and the monarchy's loss of power in the Italian territories, Spanish festive culture underwent a steady decline in both artistic terms and in its political and diplomatic relevance. As the author shows, the once new buildings became old, and what had once been artistic invention turned into repetitive forms.

The book is organized into six chapters. The first two chapters, "Roma y España" and "Los espacios de la nación española en Roma," function as an introduction to the book. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the complex political relationships of the Spanish monarchy with the papal court, while the second chapter shows its extensive spatial presence in the city's urban space. The author goes beyond the traditional spaces of diplomatic representation, such as the ambassador's palace and the national churches, and presents a more inclusive topographical perspective.

The core of this book resides in chapters 3, 4, and 5, each one devoted to the chronological development of a specific type of feast from the sixteenth to the turn of the nineteenth century. As the author rightly points out, every early modern ceremony, feast, and ritual possessed political intentionality (85); however, his categorization of "political" feasts may mislead the reader to regard these as dissociated phenomena from rituals of canonization or royal funerals, whereas they were all part of the same politically charged festive reality. "La fiesta política" presents a long third chapter, which focuses on the celebrations that were organized by the monarchy, from the ritual of the *Chinea* to the commemoration of royal weddings and births. Of special interest is the author's analysis of the implication of the Spanish monarchy in the celebrations following the election of the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand III as Holy Roman emperor in 1637. The engraving of the pyrotechnic machine on the volume's cover was part of this event, and it underlines the far-reaching diplomatic significance of festivals in Rome. Chapter 4, "La fiesta religiosa," analyzes the iconography of the machines that were constructed for the Spanish celebration of the feast of the Resurrection in Piazza Navona and for the feasts of the canonization of Spanish saints. The development of a visual language of self-referentiality in the monuments that were built for the Spanish kings' funerals is the focus of chapter 5, "Los funerales regios." Organized as an epilogue to the volume, chapter 6 "A modo de telón: La muerte de la fiesta," deals with the funerals of Spanish queens and women of the royal family to show how both the festival culture and the political relevance of the Spanish monarchy in Rome came to an end in 1819.

In the reviewer's opinion, the highlight of this volume is its accurate restoration of the visual memory of a myriad of ephemeral constructions that have been long lost. González Tornel draws on a variety of primary material that includes, printed and manuscript sources such as chronicles, *avvisi*, and *relationi*, as well as from little-known archival documents that have been preserved in the archive of the Obra Pía de España en Roma, which since 2011 has been inaccessible. At the end of the volume, a bibliographical appendix provides the interested scholar with a list of festive *relationi*, which will prove useful for future investigation. The author's attention to detail is clear in the impressive number of engravings that represent the festive artifacts that he has uncovered and collected. Reproduced in color and b&w plates within the text, these outstanding engravings provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of the formal and iconographical evolution of festive artifacts that were built in Rome by the Spanish monarchy throughout the entire early modern period.

This volume raises important questions about the way in which foreign nations displayed their image at the papal court and may inspire future research dealing with ritual and celebration from a comparative perspective. Of course, the scope of the study does not permit attention to be given to each aspect of Spanish festive culture in early modern Rome. In particular, the viewers' response to, and participation in, these festivals remain to be explored. This book will prove useful to the informed scholar, and will also be of interest to the wider public who has a particular interest in early modern Rome.

