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The Spanish Presence in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Images of Iberia. Edited by Piers Baker-Bates and Miles Pattenden. Transculturalisms, 1400–1700 Series. Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate. 2015. xiv + 278 pp.

This volume collects together ten essays by historians in various disciplines on aspects of the relations between Spain and Italy from 1474 to the late seventeenth century, examined especially, but not exclusively, from the perspective of the people, leaders and institutions of the latter peninsula; these pieces are arranged in three sections, dedicated respectively to politics and society, religion, and the visual arts. Though the approaches adopted by the authors of the individual contributions vary widely, each essay imparts something of value to our increasing understanding of the reciprocal influences exerted by Spain and Italy in the period, and the diverse cases adduced serve as a salutary reminder of the irreducibility of the early modern Italo-Hispanic cultural experience.

In the first two essays featured in the book, Catherine Fletcher and Nicholas Davidson treat the same question, the idea and image of Spain and the Spanish in an Italian discourse, in divergent ways; the former scholar develops three case studies of Venetian diplomatic sources from which an overweening Italian superiority complex emerges, quite natural when the Spanish can be described as “ugly in body, both men and women, and all full of jealousy” (17), and the latter provides an overview of ‘Hispanophobia’ in Venice in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and outlines some of the inevitable conspiracy-theorizing which created and stoked it. The third piece in this section, by Stephen Cummins, shifts the focus to the urban communities of viceregal Naples, as the Spanish presence becomes more tangible, from demographic change to civic disorder and Neapolitan drinking dens.

The most cohesive of the three parts into which the volume is divided is the second one; here we are shown Spain’s influence on the papacy and the levers of power in Rome, its character and its limitations. All three essays serve to dispel the misconception, highlighted by Miles Pattenden in the first of this trio of studies, of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century papal Rome as a ‘Spanish Avignon’ (65), in which the Habsburgs manipulated successive popes. Pattenden shows the very limited efficacy of Philip II’s “soft” imperialism’ (77) and demonstrates the failure of Spanish diplomatic strategies in coping with the wiliness of popes and a motley cast of cardinals. Paolo Broggio’s piece, on the *de Auxiliis* controversy, which pitted the Jesuits and Pope Clement against the Dominicans and the Spanish monarchy, illustrates uncertain combinations of religious orthodoxy and politicking, as well as exploring doctrinal tensions in the Jesuits’ own ranks. Clare Copeland’s essay on the canonization of four Spaniards—Isidore the Farmer, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier and Teresa of Ávila—alongside Philip Neri in a single Roman ceremony in 1622 offers a re-evaluation of the political significance of this unprecedented act, as well as laying bare some of the actual mechanics by which sanctity was officially recognized.

The final section adds a visual dimension to the collection, furnishing evidence principally for some of the—admittedly modest—ways in which Spanish political and commercial power and cultural assumptions conditioned Italian artistic production. The essays by Piers Baker-Bates on Spanish patronage of Italian artists, Gaston and Gáldy (on Pedro de Toledo's Neapolitan tomb), and Calvillo (on portraiture as 'diplomatic currency') are admirable for their blending of close analysis and deft contextualization, and they represent three more exhibits with which to counteract the pervasive Crocean notion according to which 'the Italian reaction to the Spanish presence has been regarded as entirely negative' (130). The last study in the volume, by Jorge Fernández-Santos Ortiz-Iribas, on the successful tenure of the Marquis del Carpio, first as ambassador to Rome and then as viceroy in the last decades of Spanish control of Naples, though a fine exposition of the way in which culture—in this case, the conspicuous collecting of art—could be pressed into the service of a practical politics, does not sit comfortably with the more material suppositions of the other three essays.

Fernández-Santos Ortiz-Iribas' essay, which examines the years 1677–1687, also highlights the major oddity of this collection: its title, which indicates a focus only on the sixteenth century. Indeed, at least one other piece in the volume, Copeland's, takes as its principal interest the 1600s, while a number of other contributions stray in part beyond 1599. The Oxford symposium from which the majority of this work stems was on 'Renaissance Italy and the Idea of Spain, 1492–1700', and a heading closer to this would have proved more apposite for this book. This minor quibble aside, we can state that these essays are a laudable addition to Ashgate's Transculturalisms series, and it is to be hoped that this list and the others curated by Ashgate survive the company's takeover by Informa.

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