

**Alexandra Merle, Éric Leroy du Cardonnoy (dir.),  
Les Habsbourg en Europe. Circulations, échanges  
et regards croisés, Reims (Éditions et presses  
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**Klaas Van Gelder, Ghent**

This themed volume is the first book to appear in the newly established »Studia Habsburgica« series printed by the Éditions et presses universitaires de Reims. Like the series itself, the book is a testimony to the growing interest in Habsburg studies, as remarked by the editors in the first footnote of their preface. To the initiatives they mention, one might also add the Habsburg discussion network on H-Net Commons, which had no less than 1875 subscribers all over the planet as of 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2019. The keynote of the volume edited by Alexandra Merle and Éric Leroy du Cardonnoy (both Université de Caen Normandie) is the question whether or not there was a sense of belonging among the different lands of the polycentric Habsburg monarchies. Building on the host of recent research on the actors of mediation and transfer between Madrid and Vienna, the editors inquire whether it is appropriate to speak of a »Habsburg government model« grafted on a carefully constructed dynastic identity while simultaneously taking into account local and provincial idiosyncrasies, traditions, and constitutions.

The background of the contributors – historians, art historians, linguists, and musicologists – reflects the multi- and interdisciplinary ambitions of the series. In terms of content, topics as diverse as the transfer and exchange of ideas, people, economic resources, manufactured products, art, and techniques are addressed in the book, which raises many questions and points out several paths for further research rather than presenting clear answers to the questions articulated by the editors.

The volume consists of three parts organized around three clusters of research questions, with the first containing chapters dealing with the images of members of one of the branches of the dynasty prevalent in the lands of their cousins. Dynastic identity is among the keywords here. Among other contributions, this first section includes a reflection on the construction of the image of the religious Charles V by supporters as well as antagonists (by Juan Carlos D'Amico), an analysis of the propaganda campaigns surrounding Emperor Ferdinand II in Spain (by Alexandra Testino-Zafiropoulos), a description of equestrian portraits as a kind of Habsburg logo (by Friedrich Polleroß), and an examination of the messages sent by means of musical performances at the court of Palatinate-Neuburg, which was closely related to the Austrian Habsburgs (by Berthold Over).

The second section is assembled around the idea of a common Habsburg policy that came to the fore in international politics,



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usually in connection with the defense of Catholicism. Four excellent case studies demonstrate how difficult it was for the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs to pull together. Sylvène Édouard stresses the divergent patterns of religiosity between the Spanish and Austrian cousins in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when differing domestic political and religious contexts forced the Austrian branch to be more lenient towards Protestantism. Her text also demonstrates the crucial role the female Habsburgs played in maintaining unity. Giulio Merlani's analysis of the career of Francesco Buonvisi, papal nuncio in Vienna, shows how mutual distrust between Madrid and Vienna impeded collaboration in the struggle against the Ottomans. Cristina Bravo Lozano examines the equally difficult attempts to unite against William III's anti-Catholic policy in Ireland. Finally, Roberto Quirós Rosado scrutinizes the remarkably quick unravelling of the »German« or »imperial« faction in Madrid at the turn to the eighteenth century. Taken together, the chapters in this second and very coherent section highlight some of the domestic as well as foreign obstacles for joint action by the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs. In my opinion, this is a theme that definitely merits further analysis in its own right.

The third part of the volume highlights actors of transfer and exchange between Spain, Austria and the Holy Roman Empire. Figures as different as the cartographer and cosmographer Michael Florent van Langren (chapter by René Vermeir) and the painter Gerard Ter Borch (chapter by Diana Carrió-Invernizzi), and groups as diverse as musicians (Miguel Bernal Ripoll), soldiers and courtiers (Étienne Bourdeu), and merchants and financiers (Klemens Kaps) are discussed. Bourdeu also emphasizes the importance of material goods, knowledge and ideas for connecting the Habsburg dominions.

Several contributors put forth provocative arguments that will certainly prompt further discussion and reflection. Guido Braun, for example, asserts that the Peace of Westphalia and succeeding evolutions did not necessarily (or exclusively) weaken the position of the Habsburgs in the Holy Roman Empire – in contrast to a long historical tradition maintaining the opposite. Developments such as the perpetuation of the Diet in Regensburg from 1663 onwards were beneficial for imperial authority. Werner Telesko advances new ideas on the relationship between »center« and »periphery« within the Habsburg lands. Together with the keen analyses in several of the aforementioned chapters, these arguments and their potential for debate constitute the main merits of the volume in my eyes.

Nevertheless – and this is my main point of criticism – despite the high quality of several of the contributions, the editors have not made sufficiently clear what are the novel insights they aim to present. There is a rich body of literature on agents and ideologies that connected the Habsburg lands. What exactly does the present book wish to add to the many monographs and volumes mentioned in its preface's footnotes? The introduction is very brief, and there is only superficial dialogue with previous scholarship. Moreover, few contributors explicitly explain how their analysis relates to the general topic of the volume and what



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their case study adds to our understanding of the workings of the Habsburg dynasty and the government of their sprawling monarchies. Much in the same vein, the book would have benefited from a concluding chapter intertwining the threads woven in the three sections and offering a deeper reflection on the nature of the Habsburg governmental model evoked by the editors in their introduction, or the »sentiment d'appartenance« they mention. A general list of abbreviations used throughout the volume – there are unexplained abbreviations on page 95, for example – would also have been quite helpful.

And yet, this volume is deserving of praise in the first place, most of all due to some very fine contributions based on thorough archival research across Europe – which in itself illustrates the relevance of Habsburg studies for the European continent and for the topic of globalization mentioned in the preface. The first and second parts in particular seem to offer valuable starting points for further investigations – investigations that will hopefully appear in the »Studia Habsburgica« series in the near future. I wish this new book series the best of success.



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