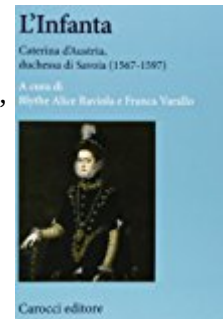


Blythe Alice Raviola, Franca Varallo, eds.. *L'infanta: Caterina d'Austria, duchessa di Savoia*. Studi storici Carocci Series. Rome: Carocci, 2013. Illustrations. 566 pp EUR 62.00, paper, ISBN 978-88-430-5654-5.



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Blythe Alice Raviola and Franca Varallo's essay collection devoted to Catalina Micaela, Duchess of Savoy (1567-97), is imposing in its scope, depth, and heft, coming in at 566 pages (of which 527 is scholarly text). As the inaugural volume of a new series by Carocci devoted to the house of Savoy, it starts filling an important niche in the historiography of early modern Italy, still largely concentrated on Venice, Florence, and Rome, especially in the English-speaking world. Interest in Turin and the areas ruled by the Savoy has picked up only recently in Italy, as well. There are historical and practical reasons behind this situation: scholarship in English was influenced by foundational texts concentrating on Florence as the "cradle of the Renaissance" for ideological and aesthetic reasons; after unification (1861), Italian scholars were interested in writing the history of the entire country, de-emphasizing not just regional differences in general, but also Piedmontese ones in particular, to avoid privileging the geographical area from which the ruling family came. A fire that devastated Turin's Biblioteca

Nazionale Universitaria in 1904 is another reason for this lack of deeper engagement with Savoy history.

There are also ideological complications specific to studying Catalina Micaela, known in Italian as Caterina d'Austria, wife of Carlo Emanuele I. In addition to suffering from the scant attention bestowed on women and gender history among Italian-speaking scholars till recently, she was a foreign-born spouse and regent whose natal family was vastly more influential than the Savoy one, and whose role was always clouded by suspicions concerning her allegiance. It is only fitting that some of the works gathered in this volume uncover a decidedly pro-Savoy stance, even when it meant for her to take positions antithetical to Habsburg's geopolitical interests.

Let us turn to the volume itself. The contributors of these twenty-two essays are among the most notable working on early modern court culture and noblewomen in Italy and Spain. As the editors explain in the essay titled "L'Infanta. Gene-

si di un progetto,” pieces are “organized in sections corresponding to the biological phases” of Catalina Micaela’s life (p. 14): daughter, mother, and model for her children. This is entirely appropriate, as these “biological phases” align with the chronology of events and the layers of Catalina Micaela’s life experience; as a North American trained scholar of early modern Italian literature, this rhetorical foregrounding of biology was, *prima facie*, bothersome, and, happily, completely unnecessary.

José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero’s essay, “L’educazione devzionale delle Infante” (in Spanish, despite the language of its title), bestows seventy pages to an in-depth exploration of how Catalina Micaela and her older, and better studied, sister Isabel Clara Eugenia, were educated at court, by whom, and on what pedagogical, philosophical, and theological bases. Sánchez-Molero considers contemporary treatises on the education of women, but cautions us against overemphasizing their principles, as other elements were at play within a court setting: etiquette, for example, and the influences of other traditions via foreign-born women in the royal retinue. He also underscores the role of women in the education of both girls and boys at court. What we consider as distinct positions conferred on different women (wet nurses or ladies in waiting, just to name two possibilities) were in fact endowed with some continuity. When does a companion begin to be considered a teacher? Only when we have extant documents pointing to her role as tutor for the young princesses’ handwriting? Another element of continuity was the male teacher appointed by Philip II to teach his children, to wit, both *infantas* and their brother: Juan de Zúñiga was selected based on his abilities and excellent reputation, of course, but also on preexisting courtly habits, through what he calls “a courtly-affective tie” (p. 68), which is really at the heart of courtly relationships and activities. It is clear, as Sánchez-Molero underscores, that the two *infantas* needed to be educated, because, in their specific circumstances,

they might indeed rule—something that Isabel Clara Eugenia did in her own right, and Catalina Micaela did as regent during her husband’s lengthy absences from Turin. While devotional concerns were always crucial, the scope of the *infantas’* education included style (such as calligraphy, history, and Latin); the young princesses also read romances, or *libros de caballeria* as they are called in contemporary letters. Sánchez-Molero’s essay concludes that there was no tension or differences between “devotional” and “secular” education (p. 94), by illustrating the lesson the *infantas* learned about the new Gregorian calendar. This is indeed an apt example, as the religious and the worldly are inextricably bound: Pope Gregory XIII was addressing a concern connected to the Catholic calendar, with a power that extended well beyond the church.

One of the ways in which relationships expressed themselves was through objects, studied by Almudena Pérez de Tudela in her “Regalos y retratos: Los años de la infanta Catalina Micaela en la corte de Madrid (1567-1584).” The obvious connection between presents and portraits is that the latter prominently display some of the former, particularly jewelry. In addition, within the culture of collecting that prevailed at the Habsburg court, both were held in the same esteem. Pérez de Tudela details the importance of portraits for marriage strategy and negotiations and ties the prevailing habits in Madrid to the *infantas’* maternal and paternal families. Throughout this essay, familial and emotional connections emerge as crucial, in addition to political dimensions. The latter part of the essay consists of examples of types of gifts exchanged: stones, religious objects, cloth, toys for children, and more. The conclusion is a bit abrupt and it does not dig deeper into what such possessions might reveal.

“Quale dote per un’infanta di Spagna? Il contratto di matrimonio di Caterina d’Austria” by Elisa Mongiano opens the second section of the book, devoted to Catalina Micaela’s years in Turin,

as wife and regent. A legal perspective is deployed here to analyze the wedding contract tying Catalina Micaela and Carlo Emanuele. Mongiano underscores various elements of weakness within this contract when it comes to the infanta's dowry: no land was involved; the funds were pledged, not paid out immediately; and they extinguished all inheritance rights for Catalina Micaela and her children, except in the case of Philip II's line elapsing. All these elements indicate an imbalance in favor of the more powerful Habsburg family; events that occurred after the marriage was consummated also point in this direction: Catalina Micaela's dowry was never paid out, and the consequences played out throughout the seventeenth century, as Raviola's essay at the end of the volume indicates.

Pierpaolo Merlin utilizes his essay to offer a counter to two previous ones of his own, in which he assessed Catalina Micaela's political actions positively. In "Il governo dell'Infanta: Un bilancio tra luci ed ombre," Merlin gathers details and traces of criticism of Catalina Micaela's political decisions. Her regencies, which occurred while her husband was away from court, took place in turbulent times; no matter how well she connected with the house of Savoy and her new culture, she still identified (and was identified) with Spain's interests. The tensions that Merlin's research uncovers between Catalina Micaela as regent and the Consiglio di Stato had negative consequences in particular for Savoy; in the end, according to Merlin, her choices were not always pro-Spain, and her influence was felt in political choices.

Just like Catalina Micaela's actions were nuanced, context-dependent, and individual, Spain was not a monolith, Claudio Rosso reminds us. Relations between Spain and Savoy were more often than not mediated through Milan, a Spanish vice kingdom. In "Milán y Saboya: Lombardia e Piemonte negli anni di Caterina," Rosso examines the letters exchanged between Milan and Turin to

show how political and military situations were discussed, in relation to official Spanish positions; then he dwells on commercial exchanges, underscoring the flow of skilled craftsmen and high-quality goods from Milan to Turin. Rosso's contribution contextualizes Catalina Micaela's political actions within the Italian peninsula, triangulating the two courts in a revealing way.

María José del Río Barredo and Magdalena S. Sánchez bring us back to Catalina Micaela herself in "Le lettere familiari di Caterina di Savoia." This essay again reminds us that personal and political, or private and public, are impossible to separate within a courtly setting, as they existed in a continuum: Catalina Micaela's letters were written to her father and sister, who also happened to be the king of Spain and a daughter groomed for political activity. Although many of her missives are no longer extant, those that are provide a solid basis from which to examine if and how Catalina Micaela's tone and allegiance changed through time. Del Río Barredo and Sánchez do indeed discern a transformation in the tenor of her letters in 1588, when she was first regent; her concern for her children is also paramount. While Philip II's arguments concerning politics are the same whether he was writing to Catalina Micaela or Carlo Emanuele, he was more open and explicit with her. Conversely, Catalina Micaela's letters express the same point of view and arguments as her husband's, indicating that they worked together in preparing their communication to Madrid. Letters from Philip also become shorter and less frequent with the passing of time, while hers express more anxiety about the future. Del Río Barredo and Sánchez offer us an excellent example of archival research and close reading, and they indicate several venues for further research, on the same materials and on more general levels.

Paolo Cozzo's "Intus mirabile magis: L'orizzonte devozionale dell'infanta Caterina" extends Sánchez-Molero's essay in significant ways, as it connects his observations on the infanta's ed-

ucation in religious practices to those she pursued in Turin. There are also interesting connections with the essay by del Río Barredo and Sánchez, in that Cozzo underscores continuities and changes throughout Catalina Micaela's years in the Piedmont as far as her devotional actions are concerned. Cozzo underscores the political underpinnings of religious practices in relation to the Shroud of Turin, Saint Maurice's and Saint Secondo's relics, and the Marian sanctuary at Mondovì. Too brief a mention is made to the objects Catalina Micaela used in her daily devotions, such as relics.

"Le residenze dell'Infanta: Architettura e loisir" by Cristina Cuneo emphasizes Catalina Micaela's role alongside her husband in working with their favorite architect, Ascanio Vitozzi, to transform the city plan of Turin, many buildings within it, and especially the Savoy family's residences on its outskirts. Using letters and other written documents to support her research (given that many urban and architectural features were later erased), Cuneo points out that the infanta engaged in revamping the two residences of Mirafiori and Valentino, following Habsburg's examples. Cuneo's contention is that we should pay attention to Catalina Micaela's patronage of Vitozzi, not to the (male) architect himself; although this essay is too short to bear it out fully, Cuneo's thesis is clearly articulated in it.

The two essays that follow concern poems that we dedicated to Catalina Micaela. Domenico Chiodo ("Bachi, duchi e imenei: L'omaggio di un vassallo piemontese") briefly summarizes Alessandro Tesauro's "Sereide," an incomplete poem concerning silk worms, which can be read in political terms as the author juxtaposes hierarchically ordered bees and self-disciplined, happier silk worms. Patrizia Pellizzari, in "Versi in lode dell'Infanta (qualche sondaggio)," conversely gives us an initial survey of manuscript and printed poems dedicated to Catalina Micaela from Turin's Biblioteca Reale. They are inevitably con-

nected to life events, praise her (feminine) virtues, and tie her to her natal family; some, surprisingly, commend her intellect. The addition of these poems in an appendix is notable and helpful for further research.

Annamaria Colturato's "Musis hospitium concedere": La musica nelle collezioni librerie sabaude al tempo di Carlo Emanuele e Caterina" is likewise enriched by the addition, in an appendix, of the description of the festivities that took place on November 25, 1595. These are significant because they feature the only text set to music still present in Turin's libraries and connected to Catalina Micaela: Pietro Vecoli's intermezzi that accompanied the performance of Federico Della Valle's tragicomedy *Adelonda di Frigia*. In addition to her analysis of the form and content of these intermezzi, Colturato examines the often repeated notion that Catalina Micaela introduced the *zapato*, a show set to music to accompany the gift exchanges on St. Nicolas's Day (December 6); the chronology that she reconstructs does not support this traditional ascription.

The three essays that follow focus on visual arts in Turin during Catalina Micaela's life. Anna Maria Bava offers us a concise and helpful overview of artists at the court of Carlo Emanuele I while Catalina Micaela was duchess in "Artisti alla corte di Carlo Emanuele I negli anni di Caterina." Those were years filled with much work, both in terms of new buildings and of a new tradition of painting, particularly portraits. The Flemish Jan Kraeck (whose name was rendered in Italian as Giovanni Caracca) was particularly crucial at court, as portraitist but also as designer of jewelry and other precious objects. Clelia Arnaldi di Balme ("Alessandro Ardente: Un artista poliedrico per le nozze di Caterina") zeroes in on another artist, the lesser-known Alessandro Ardente, whose activities she traces before and after his arrival in Turin. Well versed in several media, he was responsible for sculpture, medals, and ceramics; worked at the palace of the Valentino; and

was involved with the celebrations connected with the arrival in Turin of the married couple and, later, with the baptism of Catalina Micaela's first two sons in 1587. Maria Beatrice Failla's "*Il cahier delle dame di Caterina Micaela*" concentrates on two small books containing portraits of ladies from Catalina Micaela's time, including some of her ladies in waiting, which were lost in the fire of 1904. On the basis of a copy made in the 1880s, the scholar points out an emphasis on faces, rather than other physical elements, connecting these portraits to a well-established French tradition, which emphasizes a sense of proximity, even intimacy, between sitter and viewer. Arnaldi di Balme's and Failla's essays are accompanied by several images, crucial to their argument. It is also at this point in the volume that twenty-four black-and-white tables are bound, largely reproducing portraits to which some essays make reference.

The last three pieces in the volume's second part concern objects connected with Catalina Micaela herself. Maria Paola Ruffino's "*Vestire l'Infanta: Abiti, stoffe e monili di Caterina d'Austria*" gathers detailed information about Catalina Micaela's dress and jewelry, which were stylistically Spanish throughout her life. She begins with an overview of the places where her clothes were made, then details her clothes, shoes and cloths, accessories, and jewelry. This is a descriptive essay, rich in entry points into a largely unexplored realm. Another such area is embroidery, the topic of Maria Teresa Bianchi Olivari's "*I ricami dell'Infanta*." The genitive in the title is both subjective (Catalina Micaela's own needlework) and objective (embroidered work intended for her). Evidence of the infanta's needlework ability is found in twenty-five of Annibale Guasco's madrigals, in a collection published in Milan in 1605. While these poems are rather pedestrian from a stylistic point of view, they do indicate that Catalina Micaela's work was found in religious locations, such as the chapel of the Shroud in Turin and the Marian sanctuary in Loreto. Given her ex-

pertise with needlecraft, it is not surprising that the infanta charged Caterina Cantoni, a well-known, innovative embroiderer from Milan, with making clothes for Filippo Emanuele's baptism and other works, mostly with religious subjects. Franca Varallo's "*Exotica e oggetti preziosi: Note sull'inventario dell'Infanta*" brings this part to a close, fittingly through a detailed analysis of the inventory drawn up after her death. Varallo begins by outlining the context for her essay, to wit, our relative lack of knowledge concerning Catalina Micaela's activities as collector and patron of the arts. Her will is an important source, as it states what was in her possession when she died. Working with archival resources alongside the will itself, Varallo starts the painstaking work of matching potential extant pieces with the will's inventory, or of imagining where they could have gone or why they disappeared. As Varallo herself avers, this essay is more a suggestion for further research, given the incredible amount of work that needs to be done.

The third, and final, portion of this volume is devoted to Catalina Micaela as "mother and model" (the title of the section), intending to probe her "female inheritance" within a pan-European setting (p. 389). The four essays it includes are chock-full of information and points of departure for other scholars, but not always argued around a clear thesis.

José Martínez Millán's massive essay, in Spanish, is "*La Casa y los servidores de la infanta Catalina Micaela en Turín*." After an opening section that explains why Philip II's court was organized following the Burgundian, rather than the Castilian, style, Martínez Millán explicates that Madrid dictated the composition of the casa to accompany Catalina Micaela to Turin; both courts followed the Burgundian structure. After identifying the holders of the most important offices, the author dwells on the numerous issues that came to the fore after her arrival: in addition to the difficulties integrating retinues, there were chronic

shortages of monies, which came to a head after Catalina Micaela's death. Though most of her court wanted to return to Spain, several complications (including the plague) arose; they finally made it back when Margarita of Austria stopped in Turin on her way to Spain to marry Philip III, in 1599 (almost one and a half years after Catalina Micaela's passing). Martínez Millán's incredibly thorough archival research shines in the portion of his essay in which he ascertains the fate of Catalina Micaela's people who went into service for Margarita of Austria, Anne of Austria in Paris, and Catalina Micaela's sons. If ever we needed to be reminded of the importance of familial networks through female members, these pages offer us a sharp example. Interestingly, Martínez Millán underscores, none of them went to work for Philip II, and he postulates that this was due to a "shared set of political ideas and religious beliefs" that members of Catalina Micaela's casa shared among themselves and with other courts, but not the king's, whose political goals were different (p. 426). Even if this hypothesis is far from proven for me, it is thought provoking and worthy of further research. A long appendix contains the transcription of Philip II's 1575 instructions concerning Catalina Micaela's casa, a valuable document thus far only available in manuscript.

Also connected with the infanta's passing is Luisella Giachino's informative survey titled "Un panegirico per l'Infanta: Le orazioni funebri." In a short introduction, she offers an overview of the role of funerals in the ancien régime and of orations within that setting, and she explains the circumstances of Catalina Micaela's death. She then explores four extant funeral orations, in different languages and from four locations, depicting dissimilar images of the infanta. Giachino's summaries are thorough and informed and they should stimulate further research.

The remaining essays concentrate on two of Catalina Micaela's children. Manuel Rivero Rodríguez's piece, "La Casa del príncipe Filiberto de

Saboya en Madrid," is ideally connected with Martínez Millán's. Emanuele Filiberto was Carlo Emanuele and the infanta's third son, who served as viceroy of Sicily; he died in Palermo of the plague, at thirty-six, in 1624. Against the background of the reasons prompting the Duke of Savoy to send his three oldest boys to Madrid with their entourage after Catalina Micaela's death, Rivero Rodríguez focuses on Emanuele Filiberto and his appointment as viceroy, the importance of such areas Sicily to the Habsburgs, and the court he organized in Palermo, specifically as an extension of the royal one in Madrid. Because Emanuele Filiberto did not rule long, his changes did not take root; he is an exemplar of the many connections between Madrid and regional hubs, and of those between the Habsburg and other noble families. Raviola's "Hija de tal madre": La dote di Margherita" confirms the emphasis on women running through this volume. Margherita was Carlo Emanuele and Catalina Micaela's fourth child (and their first daughter), who married Francesco Gonzaga, son of Vincenzo I, Duke of Mantua, in 1608. He ruled only a few months (he died of smallpox at twenty-six, having been married four years; in this short period, she bore him three children). Later she was appointed vice queen of Portugal (1635-40). Raviola examines her marriage contract with Francesco and its emerging and continuing issues, particularly after his death. Margherita went to bat for her own dowry, even against her brother's interest. Even from Madrid and Portugal, she never ceased her efforts to have her own rights recognized and funds owed her paid. Payment, however partial, was made forty-four years after her marriage; her daughter Maria in turn tried to get some more funds, to no avail. This essay shows how the tendrils of female kinship extended through time, as well as the difficulties that even the most highly placed royal women encountered in having their marriage contract honored by their own families.

In sum, this collection is rich and philologically detailed; the number of archival sources and

so-called secondary studies cited is simply staggering. I regret the deeply ingrained Italian habit of not providing a list of works cited, which would make the wealth of resources much more readily available. Likewise, a contextualizing introduction or conclusion would have been useful in pointing out convergences, divergences, historical trends, and consequences; a family tree would have helped some readers, too. As it stands, it will benefit experts in the field, and its scope and reach will be limited to scholars well versed in the vagaries of early modern courts, Habsburg parentages, family connections in Europe, and tensions among northern Italian rulers. It is a welcome addition to the still sparsely populated sub-discipline of gender and court studies in Italian-speaking circles.

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