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Jakob Perschy, Harald Prickler, eds. *Die FÖ¼rsten Esterh&#224zy: Magnaten Diplomaten and MÖ¤zene.* Eisenstadt: Amt der BurgenlÖ¤ndischen Landesregierung, 1995. 420 pp. ISBN 978-3-901517-01-3.

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The Esterh&#224zy Princes: Magnates, Diplomats, and Patrons

Art exhibition catalogues have always figured prominently in source references among scholars of art and art history, but only recently have history exhibition catalogues become a significant component of the scholarly literature in Habsburg studies in general and Austrian history in particular. Over the years the number of exhibitions held in Austria has grown, and their accompanying catalogues have become increasingly lavish productions. Moreover, many have proved significant additions to the scholarly literature on the Habsburg Monarchy. The level of scholarly sophistication still varies a great deal in these catalogues, but on the whole they are seldom uninteresting and invariably contain fascinating details and engaging illustrations, which make their acquisition worthwhile.

In retrospect, one might look back to the great Maria Theresa and Joseph II exhibitions of 1980 as a watershed in the ever-growing exhibition industry of Austria. The enormous Maria Theresa exhibition in Schoenbrunn Palace and the equally gargantuan Joseph II exhibition in the Monastery of Melk set new standards of munificence, and their accompanying catalogues, new standards in size. The Maria Theresa catalogue exceeded 600 pages, while the Joseph catalogue approached 800 pages and, at nearly 6 pounds, could serve any scholar as a formidable work-out tool! Walter Koschatzky, the scholarly director of the Maria Theresa exhibition, opted for the traditional dual approach of publishing a very straightforward descriptive catalogue [1] and a separate commemorative volume of scholarly essays.[2] Karl Gutkas, the scholarly director of the Joseph exhibition, on the other hand, combined catalogue and essays in a single volume [3], and this was the trend followed by the lesser, thematically related, exhibitions held that same year at Halbturn castle in Burgenland ("Maria Theresia als Koenigin von Ungarn")[4] and at the Schallaburg in Lower Austria ("Adel–Buerger–Bauern im 18. Jahrhundert").[5] In these three instances, the appended essays covered the entire publication gamut–from popularized introductions to very specialized reports on research based in archival sources. The resulting mixture was at once frustrating and enlightening.

Since 1980, this has tended to be the pattern in the catalogues accompanying the ever-increasing number of exhibitions, sponsored by federal, provincial and local authorities in Austria. In some instances–as in the "Prinz Eugen und das Barocke Oesterreich" exhibitions in the Marchfeld castles of Schlosshof and Niederweiden in 1986–the catalogue portion proper predominated over the slight introductory essays; while in other instances–such as the Carinthian provincial exhibition, "Schatzhaus Kaernten" held at the monastery of St. Paul im Lavanttal in 1991, and the Styrian provincial exhibition "Lust und Leid: Barocke Kunst–Barocker Alltag" held in Trautenfels castle in 1992–very original and scholarly essays indeed dominated both the catalogue and the exhibition items.[6]

The catalogue under discussion here falls somewhere in the mid-point of these two approaches. It documents an exhibition held last year at Esterhazy castle in Eisenstadt, jointly sponsored by the federal government of Austria, the provincial government of Burgenland, and the municipal government of Eisenstadt, and devoted to the subject of the princely house of Esterhazy. It is fairly evenly balanced between catalogue proper and introductory essays, and the essays themselves are of a sufficiently scholarly level to justify the catalogue's being included as a Sonderband (16) in the "Burgenlaendische Forschungen" series. The contributors are for the most part professional researchers: archivists, librarians, and museum officials.

Yet of the seventeen articles presented, only four can be said to be really substantial pieces based on unpublished primary sources, and all of these are not so much on the Esterhazy princes themselves as on their estates and court. These include Harald Prickler's essay on the

entrepreneurial management of the Esterhazy demesnes, "Die Grundherrschaft als wirtschaftliche Basis des Fuerstenhaus Esterhazy," which, though limited to the estates in what is now Austrian Burgenland, gives extended revenue series (as percentiles of total income) in wine, grain, forestry, and animal husbandry. Eva Fulop delineates the actual estates owned by the princes in "Angaben zur Besitzgeschichte des fuerstlichen Zweiges der Familie Esterhazy in der Feudalzeit," showing them to be among the most extensive landowners, not only in Hungary, but in the entire Habsburg Monarchy. Felix Tobler surveys the evolution of the enormous administrative infrastructure of this estate complex in "Die Hochfuerstliche Esterhazysche Zentralverwaltung vom Ende des 17. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts," and manages to go into considerable detail on personnel employed. Finally, Ingrid Haslinger's "Vom fuerstlichen Speisen: Tafelkultur und Tafelzeremoniel im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert" details the culinary gamut and meal etiquette of the Esterhazy table. There are no particularly surprising revelations here, and, for the most part, these essays simply serve to document in detail the material basis and dimensions of Esterhazy wealth and power in a manner not unsimilar to Rebecca Gates-Coon's earlier *The Landed Estates of the Esterhazy Princes* [7], yet without Gates-Coon's subtler historiographical contextualizations. A good essay on the Esterhazy sponsorship of the seven small Jewish communities in what is now Burgenland by Roland Widder might also be mentioned in this context.

However, for a catalogue (and exhibition) entitled: "The Esterhazy Princes: Magnates, Diplomats and Patrons," the collection is disappointing, above all, for its lack of new information on the twelve princes of the house themselves. Jakob Michael Perschy's "Die Fuersten Esterhazy–Zwoelf kurzgefasste Lebensbilder" is neither particularly critical nor analytical and often verges on an unbecoming filio-pietistic tone. The rise of the Esterhazys in the seventeenth century from relative gentry obscurity to primus inter pares of the Hungarian aristocracy was, as R. J. W. Evans has already pointed out [8], primarily due to the political, fiscal, and marital astuteness of Count Nicholas (1583-1645) and his son, Prince Paul (1635-1713)–classic practitioners and beneficiaries of what Evans has called the "triple guarantee of latifundium, Catholic orthodoxy, and fairly unswerving dynastic loyalty."[9] Both men, of course, figured prominently in the exhibition (with a room devoted to each), but their careers are certainly inadequately treated in the catalogue's essays. Paul, in particular, like his father palatine of the Kingdom of Hungary, founder of the princely line, and of the *Fideicomissa* that were to be the basis of all future Esterhazy prosperity–as interesting a cultural figure as he was a political one–certainly merits more analytical attention than he is given.

What is more, Paul Esterhazy represented not only the starting point of the princely line, but also the apex of his line's political significance. Paul's sons and successors, Michael (1671-1721) and Joseph (1688-1721), played only minor roles in the public life of the monarchy, while the two princes who ruled the house through most of the eighteenth century, Joseph's sons Paul Anton (1711-1762) and Nicholas "the Magnificent" (1714-1790), already owe their historical renown more to their patronage of Franz Joseph Haydn than to any political, military, or diplomatic contributions made to the Habsburg Empire.

Paul Anton's career high-point was his appointment as ambassador to the Court of Naples at the same time that Wenzel Anton Kaunitz was envoy in Paris (1750-1753). These appointments were part of the initial gestures of reconciliation with the Bourbons that were in due course to result in the Diplomatic Revolution of 1756, and hence Paul Anton's mission was certainly worthy of an essay in this collection. However, Janos Kalmar's "Die diplomatische Mission des Fuersten Paul II. Anton Esterhazy" is disappointing in the extreme, failing to come to terms with any of the fundamental issues at stake, and contenting itself with a superficial court gazette account.

The next three Esterhazy princes, Nicholas "the Magnificent," Anton (1738-1794), and Nicholas II (1765-1833), all pursued military careers, and, thanks to their social positions, achieved high rank in the imperial armies. They were, successively, commanders of the Royal Hungarian Bodyguard. None, however, had particularly distinguished military records, and all have, for good reason, been investigated more by music and art historians than by political historians. The essays devoted to Esterhazy patronage (by Norbert Frank, Gerhard J. Winkler, and Georg Heilingsetzer) summarize the findings of this literature succinctly. Solid essays on the construction of the Eisenstadt palace (Gottfried Holzschuh), on the palace gardens (Franz Prost), on the valuable collection (Andras Szilagyi), and on the feudal hunt (Wolfgang Meyer) round out this picture in similar fashion.

The final Esterhazy prince to receive detailed attention in the introductory essays is Paul (III) Anton (1786-1866), assistant to Metternich in Paris, successively ambassador to Dresden (1810-1813) and to London (1815-1842), and briefly "foreign minister" in Lajos Batthyany's short-lived 1848 government. Unfortunately, the essay

devoted to his career–Imre Ress's "Der Diplomat Paul III. Anton Esterhazy (1786-1866)"–is also too uncritical and too ready to bypass the hard questions (on Esterhazy's reactionary politics and his relative failure as ambassador to England) to serve as anything more than an elementary introduction. In short, the scholarship of the introductory essays of this catalogue is variegated and the subject selection unsystematic, but the collection is a worthwhile, if occasionally irritating, compendium nonetheless.

The catalogue proper is organized into 25 chapters. These describe some 260 items that were exhibited in 23 separate rooms of the palace itself. The bulk of these items were from the private collection of the family, and include paintings, engravings, books, knightly orders, medals, dishes, weapons, and the like. Some of the items were on loan from various museums, including several Esterhazy treasures confiscated by the Hungarian government. The stables of the palace were organized into a 24th venue displaying the gala coaches and some of the souvenirs the nineteenth-century Esterhazys brought back from their travels (including a collection of miniatures of the great monuments of India in ivory). A small related ancillary exhibition held in one of the rooms of the Haydn museum in Eisenstadt, and included in this catalogue, is devoted to fourteen items related to music. These include scores of composers such as Werner, Haydn, Pleyl, Beethoven, and Hummel, but also the luxurious edition of Paul Esterhazy's own "Harmonia Coelestis"–a charming and accomplished work of Baroque Marian piety much in the spirit of the equally impressive musical creations of Paul's imperial master, the Emperor Leopold I.

In total, more than half of the items which were on display at the exhibition are illustrated in the catalogue, some seventy in full colour. The production values (picture quality, layout, and text) are excellent. As in this case, such exhibition catalogues are usually sold at a relatively modest cost by Austrian standards. The mushrooming exhibition business in Austria, now a vital component of the tourist industry, seems to have settled on a reasonably successful catalogue formula. The scholarship may vary, but the catalogues have become an integral part of the historiography of the Habsburg Monarchy. In the final analysis, however, everything still depends on well-chosen subjects and on the scholarly talent of the contributors.

Notes

[1]. Walter Koschatzky, ed., *Maria Theresia und Ihre Zeit: Zur 200. Wiederkehr des Todestages.* Katalog der Austellung der Republik Oesterreich, Wien, Schloss Schoenbrunn, 13. Mai - 26. Oktober 1980 (Vienna and Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1980).

[2]. Walter Koschatzky, ed., *Maria Theresia und Ihre Zeit: Eine Darstellung der Epoche von 1740-1780 aus Anlass der 200. Wiederkehr des Todestages der Kaiserin* (Salzburg and Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1979).

[3]. Johannes Gruendler, et al., eds., *Oesterreich zur Zeit Kaiser Josephs II., Mitregent Kaiserin Maria Theresias, Kaiser und Landesfuerst.* Katalog der Austellung des Landes Niederoesterreich, Stift Melk, 29. Maerz - 2. November 1980 (Vienna: Amt der Niederoesterreichischen Landesregierung, 1980).

[4]. Gerda Mraz and Gerald Schlag, eds., *Maria Theresia als Koenigin von Ungarn.* Katalog der Austellung des Landes Burgenland, Schloss Halbturn, 15. Mai - 26. Oktober 1980 (Eisenstadt: Amt der Burgenlaendischen Landesregierung, 1980).

[5]. Johannes Gruendler, et al., eds., *Adel–Buerger–Bauern im 18. Jahrhundert.* Katalog der Austellung des Landes Niederoesterreich, Schallaburg, 1. Mai - 2. November 1980 (Vienna: Amt der Niederoesterreichischen Landesregierung, 1980).

[6]. Karl Gutkas, et al., eds., *Prinz Eugen und das barocke Oesterreich.* Katalog der Austellung der Republik Oesterrich und des Landes Niederoesterreich, Marchfeldschloesser Schlosshof und Niederweiden, 22. April - 26. Oktober 1986 (Vienna: Kuratorium zur Veranstaltung der Ausstellung, 1986); Johannes Grabmayer and Guenther Hoedl, eds., *Schatzhaus Kaernten. Landesaustellung St. Paul 1991: 900 Jahre Benediktinerstift.* Katalog der Austellung des Landes Kaernten, Stift St. Paul im Lavanttal, 27. April - 27. Oktober 1991 (Klagenfurt: Universitaetsverlag Carinthia, 1991); Ileane Schwarzkogler, ed., *Lust und Leid: Barocke Kunst–Barocker Alltag.* Katalog der Austellung des Landes Steiermark, Schloss Trautenfells/Ennstal, 1. Mai - 18. Oktober 1992 (Graz: Verlag fuer Sammler, 1992).

[7]. Rebecca Gates-Coon, *The Landed Estates of the Esterhazy Princes: Hungary during the Reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). Reviewed by Peter Hidas in HABSBURG Reviews 1995/4.

[8]. R. J. W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550-1700: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 241.

[9]. Ibid., p. 205.

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