

Masculine Virtue in Early Modern Spain. Shifra Armon.

New Hispanisms: Cultural and Literary Studies. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. xii + 144 pp. \$104.95.

Shifra Armon's book introduces de la Gasca's *Manual de avisos para el perfecto cortesano* (Advice manual for the perfect courtier) (1681) as a guide for royal advisors, a tradition going back to Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), Guevara's *Aviso de privados* (Advice to favorites) (1539), or Quevedo's *Discurso de las privanzas* (Discourse on favorites) (1606–08). The first of these texts departs from the rest by advocating decisions achieved by rational selection, following a process based on circumstance rather than on precept. Furthermore, it provides an example of a viable belated masculine courtly model. Therefore, it becomes proof against the belief held among masculinity scholars that the political and economic decline suffered by Spain in the seventeenth century runs parallel to a crisis of masculinity. This study is in line with current gender-studies theories, such as Judith Butler's, which perceive masculinity as a repertoire of acts that changes over time. By situating gender in the realm of action rather than cognition or production, these views fit well with post-Tridentine doctrine, which defined a person's character before God in terms of good works, hence linking identity with ephemeral performance.

Since Armon finds the binary dynamic of the contrast with the "opposite sex" limiting, and since men followed since 1548 a Burgundian set of rules of etiquette at court while women maintained Castilian protocols, her study centers just on men in order to forge a genealogy of masculine conduct as set forth in secular print culture during the period from 1500 to 1700. Her method of analysis is based on J. Hillis Miller's three-fold distinction: first, writing literature is a form of conduct that, in this case, implies that texts teaching the art of masculine self-display are also seen to display themselves; second, literary conduct can be understood to include representations of human conduct; and third, literature induces or conducts readers to behave, potentially, in a new way. Once Miller's distinctions are applied to the literature of manly self-presentation, Armon finds that "a stunning range of writerly strategies delivers Renaissance conduct literature from the generic dungeons of the didactic treatise and helps to account for the genre's ferocious appeal to early modern readers" (14).

In fact, this focus on all the levels implied in conduct writing allows Armon to draw her analysis from a diverse number of discourses, such as those of poetry, drama, courtesy treatises, emblem books, and prose fiction. The selected texts not only cross generic boundaries, but in the process they also attest to the broad appeal of masculine conduct books. Titles are added throughout the book, in a sweeping array of works of Spanish literature ranging from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Armon focuses mainly, though, on works by Gracián Dantisco, Saavedra Fajardo, de la Gasca, Quevedo, Lope, and Gracián. Chapter 1 sets to establish how empire and power

changes created the centralized Spanish court, with the emergence of surging visions for the new servant of this state: the Spanish courtier.

Through the rise and fall from preeminence of the early modern Spanish court, Armon attributes the generic atomization of courtesy literature to the emphasis on form at the expense of function. Taking the concept of “strategies” from Michel de Certeau, her work identifies three masculine virtues—fame, dissimulation, and adaptability—that the man of court will adopt. These virtues are the main focus of the book, and the search for unity in the different texts analyzed by Armon is both fructiferous and thought provoking, although at times she forces into the same category texts that were obviously intended for different publics—as in her pairing of the socializing advice of *El Galateo español* (The Spanish gallant) with Saavedra Fajardo’s political emblems. At the end, Armon relies on Elias’s notion of change through repetition of acts, while criticizing his reliance on French examples, consequently advocating for the importance, originality, and transcendence of Spanish courtly models.

Armon perspicaciously decouples the political and economic notion of imperial fall after 1640 from its unwarranted extension to a crisis of masculinity. Finally, she employs another novel strategy in gathering texts from different genres under the common rubric of their attention to masculine conduct. As a whole, this study constitutes a welcome contribution to the history of masculinity in early modern Spain.

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The Crown of Aragon: A Singular Mediterranean Empire. Flocel Sabaté, ed.
Brill’s Companions to European History 12. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xiv + 564 pp. \$257.

While the origin of the Crown of Aragon can be traced back to the dynastic union of the Kingdom of Aragon and the County of Catalonia, in 1137—giving birth to the Catalan-Aragonese Confederation—this Brill Companion to European History begins in the post-Carolingian period and ends in the early eighteenth century. The majority of the nineteen essays focus on the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the longitudinal approach effectively circumscribes a nationally centered narrative. This, as Flocel Sabaté rightfully points out, has led to a “teleological view of history” that has obscured, and even erased, the history of even as powerful a player as the Crown of Aragon (vii).

The Crown of Aragon was not technically an empire—only Byzantium or the Holy Roman Empire had the right to the title—but its expansion certainly qualifies it as such. At its largest, it included the Principality of Catalonia, the kingdoms of Aragon, Valencia, Sicily, Naples, and Sardinia, and the Balearic Islands, and it had control over the duchies of Athens and Neopatra in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its singularity