

two possible avenues for the interrogation of absenteeism and its subjects. The universal language of art poses a third way: the afterimage not only of fabled nonpersons, but also of *Absentees*.

- 1 Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Absentees: On Variously Missing Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), 9.
- 2 Heller-Roazen, *Absentees*, 81.
- 3 Heller-Roazen, *Absentees*, 159.
- 4 María del Pilar Blanco, Esther Peeren (eds.), *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 310.

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**Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, *Clothing the New World Church: Liturgical Textiles of Spanish America, 1520–1820*, University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2021, 408 pages, hardback, ISBN 9780268108052, \$50.00.**

*Daen Palma Huse*

Maya Stanfield-Mazzi's *Clothing the New World Church: Liturgical Textiles of Spanish America, 1520–1820* is the first broad survey to highlight several essential threads in the social and material history of textile production and usage within the context of the Catholic Church in Spanish America. The publication examines these textiles against the backdrop of Spanish colonial rule and expanding international trade networks. The investigation begins with a

consideration of the various textiles depicted in the seventeenth-century painting *Mass for the Dead and Souls in Purgatory* from the Church of San Pablo de Cacha, Cusco, Peru. Members of the clergy or religious statuary are dressed in cloth (a common practice throughout the colonial era in Spanish America) as well as furniture, altars and walls. Stanfield-Mazzi contends that cloth 'was the single most important material and visual feature of Catholic church interiors in Spanish America' and successfully supports this claim with wide-ranging examples of church textiles' dominant role in colonial interiors.<sup>1</sup> The book's chapters are organised by textile type: woven silk, embroidery, featherwork, tapestry, and painted cotton and lace. Its taxonomic framework is non-hierarchical, placing pieces that are not always categorised as 'fine art' within dominant Western frameworks amongst those more traditionally considered as such. The text's strength lies in its detailed descriptions of textile terminology accompanied by lucid illustrations that exemplify each textile type at a macro-level.

Importantly, *Clothing the New World Church* draws attention to the underlying fact that the manufacture and maintenance of these cloths was a collaborative project shared between Spanish colonisers and diverse groups of Indigenous people across former Spanish colonial territories. Spanish imperial expansion resulted in multifaceted influences on textile design, its material production and its agents. Stanfield-Mazzi expands this history first discussed in her article 'Weaving and Tailoring the Andean Church: Textile Ornaments and Their Makers in Colonial Peru' (2015), which stresses the previously undervalued role of Indigenous people as mediators between regional ancestral

textile traditions and techniques promoted by the Catholic Church.<sup>2</sup> Her argument is underpinned by careful analyses of materials, methods and motifs. The close attention paid to ideological contexts provides an understanding of why certain materials, such as featherwork, were used and developed in the production of Church textiles. The text also explores how individual motifs evolved as a result of native cultures interacting with people of European descent.

Today, colonial era textiles are often displayed in collections of art and anthropological museums rather than in the churches they were intended for. In the museum sphere, textiles still predominantly operate outside of traditional Western fine art categorisations, resisting clear-cut definitions. Traditional divides of art and craft, artist and artisan, have complicated archival practices regarding colonial era textiles. This has been further exacerbated by historically poor access to the material, in part because the textiles are dispersed across many repositories. Stanfield-Mazzi circumvents questions of classification, arguing that the discussion postdates the period of her study. Rather than acting as a constraint, this allows for a multi-media approach which avoids hierarchical views of the materials and their makers.

*Clothing the New World Church* includes a wide range of textile, textual and diverse pictorial resources from both public and private collections in Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Europe and the United States in an effort to address some of the limitations mentioned above. Written records, church inventories and account books are used alongside extant textile fragments and pictorial sources to reconstruct church collections and to analyse the status of individual pieces. These include now-lost textiles and surviving vestments

such as intricate chasubles (a sleeveless outer vestment worn by a priest during Mass), mantles and processional tunics.

The incorporation of a chapter on featherwork, despite the dearth of surviving liturgical textiles made with feathers due to their fragile construction, shows the wide range of case studies presented. Featherwork is established in terms of its pre-Columbian Indigenous origins, with particular attention to central Mexico, the Andes and the Tupinambá in Brazil. The text assesses techniques used in several mitres (a cylindrical liturgical headdress reserved for bishops, cardinals and popes) in the colonial period. The mitres are undoubtedly some of the most intricate textile examples included in the book.

In Stanfield-Mazzi's own words, the publication intends to contribute to 'the preservation of Spanish America's textile legacy' as 'a massive humanist project that requires much dedication and continued support, but is fruitful in the lives of many'.<sup>3</sup> Rather than shying away from a project with such a large scope, Stanfield-Mazzi has compiled an intriguing range of cases, presenting the reader with a breadth of oft-ignored and unseen examples that deserve further attention. Given the issues of preservation and display facing surviving such works, *Clothing the New World Church* provides a much-needed window into the depth and riches of Spanish American textiles.

1 Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, *Clothing the New World Church* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), 3.

2 Maya Stanfield-Mazzi, 'Weaving and Tailoring the Andean Church: Textile Ornaments and Their Makers in Colonial Peru', *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Latin American History*, Vol. 72, No. 1, 2015, 77–102.

3 Stanfield-Mazzi, *Clothing the New World Church*, xxi.

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