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DOMINIQUE CARDON, *The Dyer's Handbook: Memoirs of an 18th-Century Master Colourist*. Oxbow Books, Oxford and Philadelphia, 2016. xii-164 pp, 67 illustrations. £48. ISBN: 9781785702112 (hbk). ISBN: 9781785702129 (digital).

Historical dyeing records with dyed textile 'patterns' offer rich, often attractive, material evidence for textile history. Yet the historical significance of these so-called dyers' handbooks can be limited when examined in solely technical, economic or social contexts. The author of *The Dyer's Handbook*, Dominique Cardon, a renowned historian of textile production, shows us how the complexities of such sources can be negotiated by connecting these different perspectives. Her interdisciplinary research on the original *Memoirs on Dyeing* by a French **eighteenth-century** dyer forges a new link in the chain of past textile trade, revealing what dyers did to keep their businesses alive with fashionable colour palettes, timely delivery, reputation built on colour quality, and economics of manufacture. This three-section book is an English translation of Dr Cardon's critical edition of the French text, with a reorganised third section for more cohesive discussion of the dye choices and colour quality. It is informative, thought-provoking and academically inspiring for textile history.

The Dyer's Handbook focusses on the privately-owned four-part *Memoirs* that the author chanced upon. The water sources for dyeing mentioned in the text helped her locate the dyeworks, and from further evidence she concluded that the handbook was most likely written post-1762 by Paul Gout of the Royal Manufacturer of Bize, France. Gout managed a workshop producing quality woollen broadcloths for an extensive industry in France and Britain that exported to the Levant markets, a trade that has interested textile historians since the 1930s, with primary source accounts, mainly in French archives, being studied and published. The author re-examines and re-evaluates these in section one to contextualise Gout's cloths alongside her own studies of an **eighteenth century** Languedocian dyed cloth inspector and government-directed dyeing experiments, and those of original and scholarly studies of similarly-dated English broadcloths. She explains the cloth names, adding important facts like the coarse dark blue threads in the selvedge of cloths marking a specific quality called Londrins Seconds, and that scarlet broadcloths were dyed after napping and fulling to reduce the amount of mordants and costly cochineal dyestuff required. A degraded pattern in Gout's *Memoirs* allowed Dr Cardon a rare opportunity to study a broadcloth's weave structure. Technical data for different cloths in similarly-dated historical handbooks are presented in four manageable and meaningful tables.

Gout's *Memoirs* are rare recordings of common knowledge that he and his contemporaries applied in dyeing broadcloths, detailing dyestuffs and mordants, dyeing for the Levant market, testing of 'false' (unpermitted) dyes, and creating the desired colours. These are transcribed and translated in section two, offering clear and fascinating insight into Gout's practices, understanding and judgements. The publisher should have provided full-page images to the accompanying 46 colour photos of the *Memoirs*' pattern pages, for clarity of the original texts.

The author comes into her own with her expertise in the third and final section of the book, explaining the relationship between the dyes, mordants and colour quality. Here, Dr Cardon relates and discusses Gout's choices relating to his pattern shade names, like daffodil, spiny lobster and wine soups, and presents her scientific spectrophotometric measurements of the patterns to study their colour quality and consistency. The results reveal great colourist skill, supporting Gout's writings about the personal and regulated standards and consumer expectations that governed his workshop practice. While the mordants and dyestuffs were important, Gout's colour quality ultimately depended on the water. Its seasonable variability was a frustration, which Dr Cardon empathises with.

A wealth of knowledge is conveyed in this compelling, rich narrative of dyeing practice and the real challenges faced by historical dyers. Dr Cardon's passionate writing makes the text and information dense at times, ~~which~~ more subheadings would have helped ~~with~~, and there are some complex sentence structures, perhaps arising from the English translation of the original French *Memoirs*. But these are minor distractions when too few publications exist that address the interdisciplinary relationships between dyes, dyeing, cloth type, quality and production. Importantly, this book highlights the pressing need for preservation and study of dyers' handbooks as enduring and accessible textile history resources.

ANITA QUYE
University of Glasgow