

A R T I C L E S

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DISPLAYING THE PRINCE'S IDENTITY:
TEXTILE ACCESSORIES AND FINERIES
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DIPLOMATIC
GIFT-GIVING***Abstract**

The language of gifts is plural and part of age-old strategies of soft power, i.e. the indirect representation of and negotiation between sovereigns. Studies by Christian Windler, Harriet Rudolph and Gregor M. Metzig underlined the significance of material culture in diplomacy and its importance for starting economic and cultural exchanges and transfers. This article offers to observe both the official and the parallel gift-exchanges in various diplomatic contexts. It analyses the Spanish mission of the Duke of Grammont in 1659 and the importance given to gloves, lozenges and perfumes before showing how gift-giving is in turn gender-neutral and gender-oriented with a close analysis of gifts given outside official diplomatic events and aimed particularly at women. A closer study of the material environment of the widely discussed 1623 negotiations of the Spanish Match between Spain and England will show what the material language meant in the case of a doomed negotiation. The structure of exchanges may not change a lot, but the meaning of a gift and how it was received varies according to the territory, time, the stakeholders' identity, and the political situation. This means that the study of material details – textiles, cuts, patterns, decorations, qualities, values – or the process of exchanges alone does not suffice to understand the meaning(s) princes gave such gifts. They need to be contextualised geographically, historically, economically, sociologically, and strategically. Such need is made particularly in the final case studies of the article dedicated to the role of

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portrait medallions and finery in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries French and Spanish diplomacy.

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In the early modern era, gifts were of crucial importance in negotiation processes. To open discussions during the first formal meeting, diplomats offered the host prince some of the gifts their master had entrusted them with. In her study of gifts in sixteenth-century France, Natalie Zemon Davis clearly showed the existence of principles of reciprocity and obligation as well as the socio-cultural role of gifts and their exchange value – points already put forward by Marcel Mauss.¹ Felicity Heal's work describes such gifts as part of the symbolic and political communication between sovereigns or States.² The language of gifts is plural and part of age-old strategies of soft power, i.e. the indirect representation of and negotiation between rulers.

Studies by Christian Windler, Harriet Rudolph and Gregor M. Metzsig underlined the significance of material culture in diplomacy and its importance for starting economic and cultural exchanges and transfers.³ Costumes, ribbons, perfumes, jewellery and ornaments for carriages and horses were all used as diplomatic gifts between European courts in the seventeenth century. The nature and the very materiality of such gifts needs to be further analysed by considering the status of the everyday objects exchanged in this specific context. Material considerations give us information about a country's economic production, culture, and

¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Essai sur le don dans la France du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 2003); Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, Quadrige, 2013), pp. 145–276.

² Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); see also *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange*, ed. by Gadi Algazi, Valentin Groebner, and Bernhard Jussen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); and *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Wendy Davies, Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³ *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century*, ed. by Gregor M. Metzsig, Harriet Rudolph (Berlin; Boston, MA: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016).

customs of sociability. They also show States' political interests and reveal the individual nature of the sovereign involved because rulers chose objects to exchange, which were the most likely to represent them. Gifts of clothing or decorative finery fully partake of soft power strategies as they demonstrate the prince's plural identity.⁴ This kind of gift provided a full representation of the prince using a language relying on a pre-existing semiotic system familiar to early modern European courts.⁵

A systematic contextualised study of these objects requires cross-referencing multiple official and private, handwritten, and printed sources. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, gifts of clothing are mentioned in sovereigns' official writings. Diplomatic mission reports and the volumes of the *Présents du Roi* taken from the Mémoires et Documents of the Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de la Courneuve list the gifts offered by the monarch.⁶ Information on the subject can also be found in Théophraste Renaudot's *Mercurie François* and *Gazette de France*, two weekly newspapers printed with royal consent, and in printed envoys' reports archived in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Printed diplomatic mission reports and personal memoirs, particularly courtiers' memoirs, also provide information about these specific diplomatic gifts. This very study gathers French, English, and Spanish examples testifying to a common gift-based culture and analyse them in their political and ceremonial contexts. It aims to use methods of observation and analysis of political branding, material and diplomatic history to bring out the fundamental tenets of what we posit as an early soft power strategy.

⁴ The capacity of clothes and decorative finery to represent a prince has been widely studied: *Se vêtir à la cour en Europe (1400–1815)* ed. by Natacha Coquery, Isabelle Paresys (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Université Lille-3, Irhis, CEGES, CRCV, coll. 'Histoire et littérature de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest', 2011); *Fastes de cour et cérémonies royale – Le costume de cour en Europe 1650–1800* (Paris: Centre de recherche du château de Versailles, Réunion des musées nationaux, 2009).

⁵ See Louis Marin, *Politiques de la représentation* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2005) on the notions of showing and making something or someone known.

⁶ Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de La Courneuve (hereafter cited as AD), *Présents du roi, Mémoires et Documents*, France, vol. 2037–50 for the second half of the seventeenth century, 1662–1715 (we shall use vol. 2037).

This article offers to observe both the official and the parallel gift-exchanges in various diplomatic contexts. It analyses the Spanish mission of the Duke of Grammont in 1659 and the importance given to gloves, lozenges and perfumes before showing how gift-giving is, in turn, gender-neutral and gender-oriented with a close analysis of gifts given outside official diplomatic events and aimed mainly at women. A closer study of the material environment of the widely discussed 1623 negotiations of the Spanish Match between Spain and England will show what the material language meant in the case of a doomed negotiation. The structure of exchanges may not change a lot. Still, the meaning of a gift and how it was received varies according to the territory, time, the stakeholders' identity, and the political situation. This means that the study of material details – textiles, cuts, patterns, decorations, qualities, values – or the process of exchanges alone does not suffice to understand the meaning(s) princes gave such gifts. They need to be contextualised geographically, historically, economically, sociologically, and strategically. Such need is made particularly in the final case studies of the article dedicated to the role of portrait medallions and finery in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries French and Spanish diplomacy.

An in-depth analysis of the composition of diplomatic gifts thus reveals that pieces of clothing or decorative finery partook of soft power strategies combining singular fashionable objects representative of the prince's taste, his cultural model, and the identity of his court. Far from being mere objects of curiosity, they actually conveyed political discourse, became active objects in the negotiation processes and even, in specific contexts, acted as a memento of diplomatic discussions.⁷ Finally, the original or unusual nature of some of the clothing gifts like portrait medallions and a dress in the Spanish style reveals the construction of the prince's identity.

⁷ Leah R. Clark, 'Objects of Exchange: Diplomatic Entanglements in Fifteenth-Century Naples', *Predella – Journal of Visual Arts*, 43, no. 44 (2018), 129–54.

THE DIPLOMATIC GIFT:
A CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC IDENTITY ON DISPLAY

Margaret Scammell pointed out that brands play a vital, valuable role in political communication: they result from the interaction between the production and the consumption of representative objects and influence individuals' consumer choices.⁸ Thus, they become markers of quality. Similar patterns are at work in early modern diplomatic gift-exchanges: Sean Roberts defines the symbols of power represented by luxury and splendour as an essential part of political communication. The circulation of luxury goods often occurred through the exchange of gifts in a diplomatic context. The exchanged goods represented the prince and combined mercantile value and technical quality with a degree of personalization.⁹ Diplomatic gifts can therefore be considered as brands representing not only the prince but the country that sent them. Their finesse or singularity could influence recipients to look favourably upon economic and cultural exchanges.¹⁰ Furthermore, gifts turned the dissemination of tastes into political as much as financial tools as the underlying idea was to influence other nations to adhere to a court's aesthetic preferences and views.

Diplomatic missions enabled a freer free circulation of emblematic objects from one court to another. They were also an effective means to get around the increasing number of sumptuary laws limiting the import of foreign products.¹¹ Gifts reflected their origins and acted as an

⁸ Margaret Scammell, 'Politics and Image: The Conceptual Value of Branding', *Journal of Political Marketing*, 14, nos. 1–2 (2015), 7–18.

⁹ Sean Roberts, 'Luxury, Technology, and the Diplomatic Gift', in Catherine Kovesi (ed.), *Luxury and the Ethics of Greed in Early Modern Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 215–36.

¹⁰ Gregor M. Metzsig, 'Corals, Brass and Firearms. Material Commodities in Cultural Interactions between Edo and Portuguese in Benin around 1500', in *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy*, 29–54.

¹¹ About sumptuary laws, see: Didier Course, "La façon de quoi nos lois essayent à régler les folles et vaines dépenses". Rôles et limites des lois somptuaires au XVII^e siècle', *Littératures classiques*, 56, no. 1 (2005), 107–17; Saúl Martínez Bermejo, 'Beyond Luxury: Sumptuary Legislation in 17th-Century Castile', in Günther Lottes, Eero Medijainen, Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, *Making, Using and Resisting the Law in European History* (Pisa: Plus-Pisa University Press, 2008), 93–108; Michèle Fogel, 'Modèle d'Etat et modèle social de dépense: les lois somptuaires en France de 1485 à 1660',

image of the excellence of a kingdom's production, conveying a formal, aesthetic and technical identity. The quality of their output gave an impression of finesse and abundance, thus advertising the country's robust economic health. Indeed, this led to those offering gifts also informing receivers about the articles' origins.

In 1639, the English court offered the French court a gift it described as 'a casket [...] filled with gloves from England'¹² which was addressed to the Queen of France. Such choice of objects was most frequent when the Spanish court was involved. During his mission as a special envoy to the Spanish court in 1659, the Duke of Gramont received 'gloves from Spain' given by Philip IV.¹³ Madame de Motteville also noted that, in the 1660s, the court of Madrid sent 'gloves from Spain' and animal skins also described as Spanish.¹⁴ In the first half of the seventeenth century, the popularity and use of gloves increased a great deal and courts acted as a showcase for them. This meant that all countries became keener to show that they too produced these precious and distinguished court objects. In this context, geographical details acted as both a certification of the products' quality and a demonstration of the craftsmen's technical abilities.

These fashion goods were markers of the monarch's kingdom and a representation of his cultural model, thus enabling another form of diplomatic relations. As well as these gifts which we may describe as 'national', other objects took on an emblematic status. For example, the Spanish court offered gifts combining lozenges and perfume which were respectively used to freshen the breath and burnt to scent a home, in compliance with the era's prophylactic and hygienic concept of

in Jean-Philippe Genet, *Genèse de l'Etat moderne – Prélèvement et Redistribution* (Paris: Ed. du CNRS, 1987), 227–35.

¹² 'une cassette [...] remplie de gants d'Angleterre': François Bertaut de Motteville, *Mémoires de madame de Motteville. Mémoires du père Berthod* (Paris: par MM. Michaud et Poujoulat, Editeur du commentaire analytique du code civil, coll. pour servir à l'histoire de France, 1838), p. 25.

¹³ François Bertaut, *Journal du voyage d'Espagne; contenant une description fort exacte, de ses royaumes, & de ses principales villes; avec l'estat du gouvernement, & plusieurs traittés curieux, touchant les regences, les assemblées des Estats* (Paris: chez Claude Barbin, 1669), p. 22.

¹⁴ 'gants d'Espagne': Motteville, p. 497.

perfume.¹⁵ The Duke of Gramont received such a gift during his mission as a special envoy in 1659.¹⁶ The fifth Duke of Pastrana, Gregorio de Silva y Mendoza, distributed a quantity of these goods to French courtiers when he came to ask for Marie-Louise d'Orléans' hand for his master, Charles II, in 1679.¹⁷

A similar gift strategy is featured in informal diplomatic relations with European queens and princesses with a prime example being gifts sent by Louis XIV. Between 1662 and 1670, several women received remarkably specific gifts outside of any particular diplomatic occasions. In 1662, Anne Hyde, the young Duchess of York, was delighted to receive 'jewels, perfumes, ribbons'.¹⁸ Such items typified diplomatic gifts for women during that decade. Jewellery was often sent and also 'women's utensils',¹⁹ as shown by the lists of gifts sent to Christine of Sweden in 1665. These utensils were sometimes part of baskets of

¹⁵ Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts...* (La Haye: A. et R. Leers, 1690): 'Composition seche qui rend une bonne odeur, lorsqu'on en brusle dans des cassolettes pour oster le mauvais air d'une chambre, ou pour la parfumer. [...] Il y aussi les pastilles de bouche qu'on mange pour se rendre l'haleine douce, qui ont divers noms, aussi bien que des preparations & des matieres differentes, commes muscadins, conserves ou dragée. Le cachou en peut estre une espece'.

¹⁶ Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), 4-LB37-3304, Anon., *Relation la plus fidèle et ponctuelle de la réception de M. le mareschal de Grammont, ambassadeur extraordinaire pour le mariage du roy, à la cour d'Espagne, écrite à Madrid par un gentilhomme de sa suite, et envoyée à un sien ami en France, le 21 octobre 1659*, p. 2: 'A midy le marquis de Malpica Majordome de sa Majesté, & qui estoit chargé de ses logemens & de son traitement, luy envoya un fort beau present de huit cassettes fort remplies de pastilles à brusler, de pastilles de bouche, de gands de peaux de senteur, de chocolate, de tous les vases d'argent necessaires pour l'accomoder, & de quantité d'autres vases enrichis d'argent & d'or, de tasses de cuir & plusieurs autres gallaneries venuës des Indes, le tout fut trouvé si gallant de Monsieur le mareschal, qu'il le fit remettre de mesme maniere pour en faire un present à Monsieur le Cardinal'.

¹⁷ Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier, *Mémoires de Mlle de Montpensier, petite-fille de Henri IV* (Paris: collationnés sur le manuscrit autographe avec notes biographiques et historiques, par A. Chéruel, Charpentier Libraire-Editeur, 1858-59), vol. 3, p. 404: 'Il [the duke of Pastrana] donna beaucoup de parfums et de pastilles à Fontainebleau'.

¹⁸ 'pierreries, parfums, rubans': A.E., *Présents du roi*, Mémoires et Documents, France, vol. 2037, fol. 144r.

¹⁹ 'ustancille de femmes': *ibid.*, fol. 6r.

wedding gifts and included scissors, embroidery materials, toothpick holders and flasks, namely objects which characterised the occupations expected of women. Other such gifts even included a ‘dressing table’,²⁰ a piece of furniture topped with a mirror dedicated to facial beauty associated with gifts of decorative finery, like the ones received by the queens of Sweden and Denmark 1666. Such gifts, made up of precious stones, jewellery, perfume and mirrors, were intended to enable the women who received them to fashion their material and olfactory beauty according to French canons. Dissemination of specific court’s mores blended with diplomatic activity in a precise strategy. In 1670, we find the last mention of the ‘ribbons, lace, and perfumes’²¹ gift set, which was offered to Queen Marie Casimire of Poland.

Ribbons started featuring in diplomatic gifts to women around 1660 and reflected the French court’s fashion practices of the time. Following on from the development of a French sartorial style from the 1630s onwards, the use of ribbons became more frequent as of the 1640s, reaching its peak in the 1660s when men’s rhinegraves or baggy breeches were abundantly covered with small colourful examples of these. This fashion was noted in European courts, and this was mainly due to diplomatic missions which helped spread a French style of clothing abroad, even in the then most strict Spain where ambassadors offered many such gifts.²² However, in the 1670s, sartorial fashion changed when embroidery replaced ribbons and lace.²³ The presence of ribbons and beauty accessories or objects in diplomatic gifts declined and were gradually replaced by jewellery or expensive portrait medallions. For example, in 1673, Marie of Modena, the Second Duchess of York, received a portrait medallion worth 33,000 pounds from Louis XIV.²⁴

These carefully constructed and arranged gifts were a parallel form of diplomacy and testified to the fashionable forms and practices of

²⁰ ‘toilette’: *ibid.*, fol. 10r.

²¹ ‘rubans, dantelles, parfums’: *ibid.*, fol. 80r.

²² Catherine Désos, *Les Français de Philippe V – Un modèle nouveau pour gouverner l’Espagne (1700–1714)* (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, coll. Sciences de l’Histoire, 2009), p. 48.

²³ *Fastes de cour et cérémonies royale.*

²⁴ A.E., *Présents du roi*, Mémoires et Documents, France, vol. 2037, fol. 146.

beauty in use at the court sending them.²⁵ The prince chose gifts that reflected national production, whether they were intended for envoys or directly for sovereigns. These objects were entrusted to envoys or prominent court figures who could wear them or distribute them to their entourage, thus enhanced the objects' visibility abroad. They were often decorative finery and took on the form of cultural markers of a court's identity generating new trading opportunities. They also signified the power of the prince insofar as they were instruments in a proxy competition through objects of representation. Besides, the fact that the recipients were often women reflects the feminization of fashion in the second half of the seventeenth century.²⁶ Louis XIV also sent a political message by sending ribbons, and indeed this diplomatic strategy involving fashion would eventually help establish his domination over Europe. The dissemination of taste is characteristic of a court and basically demonstrated a prince's cultural and technical power through the exchange of diplomatic gifts. It was a way to circulate and promote an identity, namely that of the French court, as well as a fashion style. The latter signalled the growing supremacy of France on the international stage and tangibly expressed the solidarity and alliances between the princes of Europe. So gifts were marks of both competition and alliance.

DECORATIVE FINERY: NEGOTIATING TOOLS AND GENEALOGICAL MARKERS

In his study of gifts in Franco-Tunisian diplomacy, Christian Windler notes that gifts made it possible to create and confirm social ties while initiating or maintaining a personal relationship between sender and receiver.²⁷ However, these relations evolved according to states' political context and the nature of negotiations. Thus, historians consider that

²⁵ On the systems of decorative finery, see: Catherine Lanoë, 'Les systèmes de parure comme langage technique', *Artefact*, no. 1: *Corps parés, Corps parfumés*, ed. by Catherine Lanoë and Laurence Moulinier (2013), 13–31.

²⁶ Carlo Marco Belfanti, *Histoire culturelle de la mode* (Paris: Institut français de mode, 2014).

²⁷ Christian Windler, 'Tributes and Presents in Franco-Tunisian Diplomacy', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 4, no. 2 (2000), 168–99.

gifts need to be recontextualised. The type of ceremony involved needs to be taken into account because different purposes were sought whether it was a coronation, the negotiation of an alliance or a wedding and the same is true of the diplomatic context in which ceremonies occurred. Exchanges of decorative finery reveal how relationships evolved and testify to princes' diplomatic objectives.

Gifts may mark the conclusion of an alliance, be monetary or, especially here, involve precious jewellery for women.²⁸ In 1666, Louis XIV sent an 'expensive necklace'²⁹ to the Queen of Denmark to go with the gift of money he had sent her husband. And he sent similar gifts to the Electress of Brandenburg and the Queen of Sweden.³⁰ These gifts are examples of diplomacy being practised through women and should not be associated with gifts of textile finery and toiletries as they do not appear in the king's gift records. Their absence can be explained by the context in which they were given since, at this time, France was seeking alliances against Great Britain during the Anglo-Dutch war. Discreet negotiations involving allowances, pensions and gifts helped make new allies favouring Franco-Dutch cooperation. Louis XIV refers to such gifts as 'secret' expenditure.³¹ So, precious objects were offered as markers of a relationship, their acceptance was seen as an equivalent for an alliance, and they corresponded to the rank of the person receiving them. However, they needed to be relatively unassuming to preserve the secret nature of such diplomatic exchanges.

There were intense exchanges of diplomatic gifts during both the negotiations for royal weddings and the nuptial festivities. Diplomatic marriage negotiations and celebration featured the following steps: signing contracts, the arrival of the bride and groom, and then the first stages of the marriage. A noteworthy example of preliminary discussions in preparation for such a marriage is the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Buckingham's journey to Spain in 1623. Negotiations

²⁸ Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), pp. 163–64.

²⁹ Louis XIV, *Mémoires suivis de Manière de montrer les jardins de Versailles* (Paris: Editions Tallandier, coll. Texto, 2007), p. 230.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 229.

for a marriage between James I's England and Philip III's Spain began in the early seventeenth century. Spain, however, engaged in the form of double-dealing by negotiating with France at the same time. It took a decade of negotiations before the marriage alliance between Louis XIII and Philip III was finally signed in 1612.³² However, James I never abandoned the idea of his son marrying a Spanish *infanta* and restarted new negotiations several times. The discussions came to a standstill in 1623, hampered significantly by differences over religious issues. The Prince of Wales, accompanied by Buckingham, thus set off on an incognito journey to try to speed up the contract process.³³

The account of the young Prince's expedition is given in the *Mercure François*.³⁴ The ceremonies, honours and gestures it involved are recorded in great detail – from his visit to Paris to his departure on the English ships that came to Biscay to pick him up and including the entertainment the Spanish court offered him. The Spanish court was in mourning at the time and thus taken by surprise by Charles Stuart's arrival. His presence forced the court to work faster on drafting the marriage contract. The sumptuous receptions and gifts of scents, linen and exotic animals sent by the King and Queen of Spain to the Prince during his stay do indeed testify to their respect for him. Still, the Pope and Philip IV imposed religious clauses in the contracts which the Spanish crown knew to be unacceptable to England. Entertainment and gifts as two forms of diplomatic exchanges were therefore used as negotiating tools to maintain contact with the interlocutor as signs of respect even while the two parties were unable to reach an agreement.

This was a precise and delicate relationship as shown by the long list of various presents Philip IV and the Prince of Wales exchanged when the English party set sails in July 1623.³⁵ At this very moment, both parties exchanged the most numerous and the most valuable gifts. Each country's national products were featured in the exchange.

³² François-Tommy Perrens, *Les mariages franco-espagnols sous le règne de Henri IV et la régence de Marie de Médicis (1602–1615)* (Paris: Didier, 1869).

³³ Michel Duchein, *Jacques I^{er} Stuart* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), chaps 18 to 25.

³⁴ Théophraste Renaudot, *Mercure François* (Paris: Chez Jean et Estienne Richer, 1624), vol. 9, pp. 471–564.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 540, 555–61.

The Spanish offered horses. Saddles and blankets with gold embroidery always accompanied gifts of horses. Clothes in the English fashion were given, and so was decorative finery. The latter conveyed both princes' liberality and wealth. Philip IV and Charles exchanged swords decorated with precious stones and military symbols of nobility.³⁶ The queen and the *infanta* were given pearl and diamond jewellery, including two necklace and pendant sets for the prospective bride. Gifts were also offered to those taking part in the negotiations on both sides, especially diplomatic envoys and favourites. Buckingham thus received a hat decoration and Olivares an earring to represent English fashion with both gifts being made of diamonds.

Besides the nature of the gifts, what is particularly significant is the specific moment chosen for that exchange. There were two reasons why there was such an escalation in presents when the Prince of Wales left. The first is practical: the gifts Charles Stuart had brought to give the Spanish royal family were transported on the ships which would later take him back to England. The second reason is that negotiations had ended successfully because news of the signing of the contracts reached Spain. Giving these gifts thus marked the successful conclusion of the talks, and their quantity and quality reflected the monarchs' mutual recognition and respect – that is why fair reciprocity was, of course, required.³⁷ The gifts reflected the level of investment of each party in the negotiation.

However, the objectives of the English and the Spanish sides may have differed or varied over time with the former wishing to convince the other of the merits of a negotiation, and the latter hoping to dazzlingly impress their counterparts. Such behaviour reveals two opposing diplomatic games and two soft power strategies: an offensive one and a defensive other, both relying on significant material negotiation tactics.³⁸ The full complexity of diplomatic relations lies in the fact that

³⁶ *Visiteurs de Versailles: Voyageurs, princes, ambassadeurs, 1682–1789* (Paris: Château de Versailles, Gallimard, 2018), p. 134.

³⁷ Zemon Davis, *Essai sur le don*.

³⁸ Soft power is the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion. It was theorised by Joseph S. Nye, 'Soft Power', *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990), 153–71 (accessed 17 Oct. 2020); see also id., *Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in World Politics* (DC: Public Affairs, 2004).

material gifts carrying the same message of recognition could serve two opposing purposes, thus raising the question of how contemporaries perceived these presents. Did an exchange of gifts, complying with the recognised standards of distinction and quality, suffice to convince an interlocutor of one's honesty and goodwill when the diplomatic world was well acquainted with attempts to use material or monetary gifts as bribes?³⁹

In 1623, the Prince of Wales put on a metaphorical forced smile when he offered expensive jewellery to Philip IV's entourage upon leaving even though he was dissatisfied with his difficult stay in Spain. In November 1623, the match was abandoned at England's initiative despite contracts having been signed. The Spanish gifts represented attempts to mark the occasion of an alliance being fostered, but these were not enough. When the alliance ended, they were distributed to members of the English court. This may have been done to erase any traces of Anglo-Spanish negotiations while discussions were taking place with France which were to lead to the marriage of Henriette-Marie, the third daughter of Henri IV, to Charles I in 1625.⁴⁰

Conversely, as Leah R. Clark explains it, when princely weddings were celebrated, gifts of finery could play a role as reminders supporting renewed mediation.⁴¹ The offerings expressed the filiations created by negotiations while also facilitating and then maintaining them over some time through recurrent exchanges between the foreign princess and her in-laws. In 1679, Marie-Louise d'Orléans received 'boxes of amber pastilles, gloves and chocolate'⁴² from the Queen Mother of Spain along with 'a watch adorned with diamonds with an admirably well-made gold chain'.⁴³ These objects were intended and designed for

³⁹ Bély, *Espions*, pp. 163–64.

⁴⁰ Duchéin, chap. 25.

⁴¹ Clark.

⁴² 'des boîtes de pastilles d'ambre, des gants et du chocolat': Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, baronne d'Aulnoy, *La cour et la ville de Madrid vers la fin du XVII^e siècle / par la comtesse d'Aulnoy* (Paris: Éd. nouv. rev. et annotée par Mme B. Carey, E. Plon et C^{ie}, imprimeurs-éditeurs, 1874–76), vol. 1, p. 479.

⁴³ 'une montre toute garnie de diamants, avec une chaîne d'or admirablement bien travaillée': Aulnoy, vol. 2, p. 362.

everyday use, but as this usage was scrutinised, they also became material representatives of royal families. They enabled the dissemination of a real or fictional image of harmony at the sender's court, perhaps to prevent any politically motivated exploitation of internal dissent. Moreover, these gifts were intended as reminders of family ties, as shown by Philip IV's gift to his grandson in 1665:

On the 29th, the Spanish Ambassador gave the King, for Monseigneur le *Dauphin*, on behalf of his Catholic Majesty, six horses caparisoned in scarlet with the Coat of Arms of the King his Master in gold embroidery: & as they are extraordinarily small, they were presented in the main *Cabinet* of the Queen Mother who did not admire them any less than the other persons present.⁴⁴

The focus of the report on the embroidery featuring the King of Spain's coat of arms shows the gift was not just intended to express the sender's identity but that it served a second purpose. It acted as a reminder of the *Dauphin* of France's genealogy and, by extension, of his dynastic duties. This embroidery was of importance as it was mentioned in the contemporary reports and it sheds light on two intertwined expressions of identity. As a diplomatic envoy offered these gifts, they were becoming more visible because to present them the diplomat needed to request an audience including the prominent court figures who could then view and widely comment on the offerings. This was a way to ensure that gifts reached a wider audience than originally intended. The material reminders of individual and family identity thus became political messages.

The distribution of precious identity-related objects in diplomacy could be an active demonstration of the prince's power or a negotiating tool aimed at delaying or accelerating negotiations. The demonstration of princely power was thus expressed by the sociability of European princes by traces of varying permanency. Finery and other daily used

⁴⁴ 'Le 29, l'Ambassadeur d'Espagne présenta au Roy, pour monseigneur le *Dauphin*, de la part de Sa Majesté Catholique, six chevaux caparaçonnez d'écarlate, avec les Armes du Roy son Maistre, en broderie d'or: & comme ils sont extraordinairement petits, ils furent présentés dans le grand Cabinet de la Reyne Mère, qui ne les admira pas moins que toute la compagnie': Théophraste Renaudot, *Gazette de France*, année 1665 (Paris: Au bureau d'adresse, aux Galleries du Louvre, devant la ruë S. Thomas, 1666), p. 23.

objects made visible the links uniting the princes or, conversely, the rupture of such links. They were a material representation of the social network built by the prince. Thus, gifts displayed a court's image and the sender's political power, but they could take on a more private dimension through their links to the body. Portrait medallions or personal gifts to future husbands or wives were another more intimate instrument of soft diplomatic power.

MEDALLIONS, CLOTHES, FASHION ACCESSORIES, OR THE PERSONAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PRINCE

With some diplomatic gifts, the economic factor is of secondary importance. The intrinsic value of the object was always carefully regulated and scrutinised. Still, its primary function was not to generate markets or spread a cultural model because it represented the prince himself and his real image. Michael Talbot's study of watches offered in the context of Anglo-Ottoman relations highlights the different facets of diplomatic practice through the analysis of several detailed narratives dedicated to the same object.⁴⁵ This observation requires an even more precise contextualisation of diplomatic gifts. The reason behind some articles of finery such as portrait medallions was to convey a particular representation of the prince. In contrast, others were genuinely unique such as the Spanish-style dress Philip V offered his future wife. What these two types of objects had in common was their aim to reflect the prince's identity.

Portrait medallions were offered to various people involved in international discussions and occupying a special place in material diplomatic exchanges. Meetings of princes were rarer in the early modern era, and thus portrait medallions became essential to show what the prince looked like, mostly when marital alliances were to be concluded. It was also meant to circulate his image and attest of his loyalties, family ties and princely qualities. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, some small portraits painted in enamel and/or set with diamonds were offered to diplomats. Louis XIII offered such a portrait to the Swedish ambassador passing through France on his way back to his country in

⁴⁵ Michael Talbot, 'Gifts of Time: Watches and Clocks in Ottoman-British Diplomacy, 1693–1803', in *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy*, 55–79.

1635;⁴⁶ and in 1639, to the ambassador of Malta leaving his post after having complimented the king on the birth of the Dauphin.⁴⁷ The practice of offering portrait medallions seems to have intensified and become normalised throughout Europe from the 1670s onwards, along with gifts of chains and medallions. These objects were given in large numbers to a wide range of recipients, and their value varied according to the diplomat's title and mission.

Portrait medallions were precious objects that could be carried around on the body. They are categorised as finery insofar as they enhanced a well-constructed coherent way of dressing. Moreover, throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, they continued to appear on people's clothes despite their forms changing. They went on to be attached with ribbons, most often to buttonholes. They are items of jewellery in their own right and testify to bearer's loyalty or attachment to a cause. Portrait medallions also shed light at how diplomats created a staging for their gifts. Such boxes could be exhibited if they were not worn. A late example of this was the box worn by the Count von Dehn, the Duke of Brunswick's special envoy to the French court for almost two years from 1722 onwards. This diplomatic gift involved a portrait in the form of an iconographic representation completed by Nicolas de Largillierre in 1724 and was doubly significant. For the envoy, it marked the successful completion of a diplomatic mission while for the sovereign who sent it the gift helped to circulate his image Europe-wide.

Following on from Talbot's work, Harriet Rudolph stresses the complex links between objects, people and spaces to help understand the meaning of materiality in diplomacy.⁴⁸ A unique gift given in 1701 by King Philip V of Spain to his future wife is a perfect example of this as it showed the prince's political identity rather than his face as was previously the case. Charles II, the last Habsburg ruler of Spain,

⁴⁶ 1635 was the date open war broke out and of the formalisation of the military alliance between France and Sweden in the Thirty Years War.

⁴⁷ Abraham de Wicquefort, *L'ambassadeur et ses fonctions* (Cologne: Chez Pierre Marteau, 1715), vol. 1, p. 290.

⁴⁸ Harriet Rudolph, 'Entangled objects and Hybrid Practices? Material Culture as a New Approach to the History of Diplomacy', in *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy*, 1–28.

died in November 1700 without a natural heir and his will enabled a Bourbon to take the Spanish throne. Thus, on 18 January 1701, the young Philip V arrived in Madrid accompanied by a French entourage. The presence of this *familia francesa* and France's constant interference in Spanish affairs soon provoked the opposition of some nobles who feared a French influence would alter their traditions among other things. In the same year, Philippe V chose Marie-Louise Gabrielle of Savoy as his future wife in agreement with France. A diplomatic mission was sent to marry the young princess by proxy and was soon joined by part of the new queen's Spanish entourage. Renaudot's *Gazette de France* notes:

From Turin, 16 July 1701. Few days passed, the Marquise de los Balbases, daughter of the Duke of Medina Celi, arrived in this city from Milan to assume her duties to the new Queen of Spain. She appeared at court with an entourage of several gentlemen & ladies dressed in the Spanish style: she made several gifts to the Princess, &, among others, a dress of a very beautiful fabric in the Spanish style which she appeared wearing for several days.⁴⁹

The real marriage between Philippe V and Marie-Louise Gabrielle de Savoie was only celebrated with the couple present on 3 November 1701. Studies of seventeenth-century Franco-Spanish weddings show no mention of a gift of a Spanish-style dress. Perhaps it is because there is not a great deal of detail on the contents of wedding caskets. However, more plausibly, the fact that it was an exceptional gift linked to the political context in terms of its actual presence made it less likely to be mentioned.⁵⁰ Yet, it was indeed a tradition for new queens of Spain to forego the style of dress of their court of origin and take on the

⁴⁹ 'De Turin, le 16 juillet 1701. Ces jours passez, la marquise de los Balbases, fille du duc de Medina Celi arriva de Milan en cette ville, pour rendre ses devoirs à la nouvelle Reine d'Espagne. Elle a paru à la cour avec une suite de plusieurs gentilshommes, & dames habillez à l'Espagnole : elle a fait plusieurs présents à la Princesse, & entr'autres d'une robe d'une étoffe tres magnifique à l'Espagnole, avec laquelle elle a paru pendant plusieurs jours': Théophraste Renaudot, *Gazette de France*, année 1701 (Paris: Du bureau d'adresse, aux Galleries du Louvre, devant la ruë Saint Thomas, 1702), p. 356.

⁵⁰ Béragère Chartre, 'La corbeille de Louis Joseph de Bourbon Condé (1753): histoire et significations d'une tradition', *Artefact*, no. 1: *Corps parés, Corps parfumés*, ed. by Catherine Lanoë and Laurence Moulinier (2013), 117–31.

Spanish style of dress. It marked their change of nationality symbolically and changing from one style of clothing to the other only occurred after the queen had crossed the border or, later, once the wedding ceremony was over. In any case, the young queens certainly wore Spanish dress when they first entered the city of Madrid.

However, things were quite different in this case. The lack of any precedent indicates that Philip V offered a Spanish-style dress to his future wife to highlight his court's identity and, more importantly, to demonstrate his desire to respect Spanish tradition publicly. The reference to a 'very magnificent fabric'⁵¹ underlines that this was a court dress, and these were almost always made of the most precious fabrics. Also, the reference to 'a Spanish-style' clothing in the *Gazette* distinguishes this dress from the *grand habit* (grand attire) then worn at the French court. The differences between these two court garments are visible in iconographic representations. Firstly, the large French body of the dress covers the shoulders and pushes them back, while the Spanish whalebone body of the dress uncovers the shoulders. Secondly, the skirt or train typical of a *grand habit* lacked from the Spanish dress. In short, this diplomatic gift was intended for three recipients. Firstly, it was given to the new queen as a mark of her husband's friendship and respect. Secondly, it sent a political message to the Spanish nobles who were opposed to Philip V and meant to reassure them regarding his intentions and his Spanish identity. Lastly, it sent a message to the sovereigns of Europe, who questioned Philip V's legitimacy to claim the Spanish throne.

This example shows that the semiotics surrounding clothes is not limited to what the princely body wore but to all the clothing elements visible in the public space and which are an extension of it. Thus, the presentation of this gift was genuinely staged as an entourage fully dressed in the Spanish style presented itself to the young queen. Whether the clothes given as a diplomatic gift were worn or not, they had the same significance and symbolic force because they were displayed in full view of everyone. Their usage further reinforced this dimension. Visibility was more political than identity-related here, as evidenced by a contextualised observation of the gift. Both case studies of portrait

⁵¹ 'étouffe très magnifique', Renaudot, 1701, p. 356.

medallions and gifted dress emphasise similar diffusion and influence patterns. Diplomatic offerings were the tools that implemented such practices by enhancing the monarch's reputation.

CONCLUSION

All diplomatic gifts are significant whether one focuses on their geographical dimension, their timing, the occasions on which they were exchanged, or the prince's physical and political personality. They were active objects which were at the core of the princes' representational strategies. These case studies show that clothes, ornaments, and jewels were perhaps the most effective means to convey messages because of their easy and regular use. The economic and cultural power of clothing, finery and jewellery partook of bids to influence European courts or even create a dynamic of domination. They provided a complete representation of the Prince and were thus part of official diplomatic strategies. The variety of their material forms reveals a whole symbolic order of expectations intended to enable collaboration, to establish relations with those from other countries, to restore normal relations after a war or diplomatic incident and to keep the memory of inter-state or interpersonal ties alive. The unique form and/or details of certain gifts helps to convey the particular significance they were endowed with by those who gave them. Presents were thus a cross between material concerns, the occasion and the form of the exchange and the diplomatic context. They helped to make the discourse of international gift-exchange more intelligible.

To understand the full significance of these gifts, they need to be studied in a longer perspective exceeding the timeframe of the diplomatic mission. Before being traded on the international diplomatic market, they were part of the courts' cultural and political dynamics which they tended to carry with them abroad. After they had been delivered, gifts benefited from a form of visibility which potentially lasted longer and went further than the diplomatic missions and could both influence taste and create or rekindle memories.

In short, the diplomatic mechanisms and strategies embodied by gifts of finery outside military negotiations and official meetings served to

disseminate models and a particular court's taste. They were not only the representative of a state but also enabled the prince to use special gifts to fashion and circulate his royal self (i.e. his image, his filial origins and his political career). The diplomatic practise of exchanging gifts revealed the construction and circulation of the prince's identity, of his kingdom and his power. We may then see such personal material strategy as a form of soft power way before the latter was even fully theorised and formalised.

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