

Madrid as an urban nexus for seventeenth-century diplomacy*

The aim of this special issue seeks to rethink the international status of the *villa* of Madrid. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the city's diplomatic community multiplied dramatically. Lope de Vega, described Madrid as an "archive of nations," as it included representatives of all the territories that made up the Hispanic monarchy. The number of legations steadily increased in conjunction with the consolidation of structures for international relations mediated by the national churches (García García and Recio, 2014). The evolution of this diplomatic city was shaped by the foreign representatives (with various official grades and status as diplomatic representatives) along with legations sent from the diverse territories that made up the monarchy. The *villa* was a "natural" residence, albeit a transitory one, for all those who had dealings with the monarchy's government entities or the sovereign himself. As a result, a dense network of diplomats, delegates of all sorts, financiers, merchants and officials emerged, whose complexity and oscillating population reflected historical developments and the political junctures they gave rise to. However, irrespective of the date, these envoys had to confront a growing problem: the restricted and extremely regulated access to government bodies, and above all the king himself. The chronological framework addressed in the articles that make up this special issue chart the seventeenth century by encompassing the reigns from Philip III, Philip IV and Charles II, which permits an analysis of this and other key elements of change.

The contributors, drawing on the extensive corpus of studies devoted to Madrid's court, reframe the city within the recent debates that have emerged in diplomatic studies and urban history. The origin of the work presented here was the seminar "Madrid, urbe diplomática del siglo XVII. Transferencias culturales y artísticas entre embajadas," which was held on 19 and 20 September 2019 at the Museo del Prado in Madrid. It marked the conclusion of the UNED's R+D+I ADIPLO research project *Poder y representaciones culturales en la época moderna: agentes diplomáticos como mediadores culturales de la Edad Moderna (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, HAR2016-78304-C2-2-P, and the work of the research group *Poder y representaciones*: <http://transfers.education/>.

The area of research initiated by Daniela Frigo and subsequently taken up by other scholars such as Marika Keblusek and more recently Tracey C. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (Frigo, 2000; Keblusek and Noldus, 2011; Sowerby and Hennings, 2017) has explored how the activities undertaken by ambassadors were not restricted to their strictly political competences, and these were in turn often affected and conditioned by the cultural, sensory and artistic activities they participated in. From the 1580s onwards, Alberico Gentili recommended that ambassadors "should assume" the personality of the rulers they represented, as if they were performing a part in play on the stage, and the comparison between the ambassador and the actor went on to become a commonplace in the treatises written by Jean Hotman (1603), Abraham de Wicquefort (1680) and François de Callières (1716). The performative aspects of the range of ceremonies and receptions that ambassadors took part in has become a subject of increasing interest for historians studying diplomatic encounters (Carrió-Invernizzi, 2016; Gómez López, 2016), and especially transcultural ones (Mokheri, 2012), and this is a theme addressed in the studies that follow.

With regard to the second critical perspective addressed here, urban history, studies such as those by Doreen Massey (2007) on urban space and Saskia Sassen (1991) on global cities offer a framework to think about the city as a living space, a product of complex interrelationships and a site for numerous heterogeneous narratives (Massey, 2007; Sassen, 1991). This special issue engages in an analysis of Madrid from these two perspectives and addresses themes such as the collaboration between official ambassadors and their local agents, as well as prominent members of the nobility and the women who acted as diplomatic intermediaries. It explores the city's spaces of international sociability and traces the influence exerted by the performative and material dimensions of embassies, and also addresses the debates concerning ambassadorial residences. Attention is likewise devoted to the degree of flexibility granted to ceremonial which became a feature of Madrid's court.

THE VILLA OF MADRID

The opening article of this special issue is by Alejandra Osorio and it examines the work of the chronicler Núñez de Castro (1658), firstly, to rethink our understanding of Madrid within the wider context of the other courts and cities that formed part of the political-cultural dimension of the Spanish Habsburg empire. It then turns to explain why Madrid, despite having been the empire's principal political-administrative centre since 1561, only attained a low profile in documents issued in the New World, for example. Set amidst its modest urban backdrop Madrid's monumental aspirations might be deemed merely episodic, but the *villa* established close ties with diplomatic agents of all classes and forged connections which are analysed from a range of angles over the course of this special issue.

The *villa* of Madrid was an urban space with a series of clearly defined idiosyncrasies. It was not a see which meant that the king's power was free from the constant state of rivalry posed by archiepiscopal power, which was an issue in other large cities. Within the *villa* the court exercised a powerful presence through its diverse forms of ceremony, whereby according to María José del Río (Del Río, 2000) the city was absorbed into this royal dimension. The final four decades of the sixteenth century laid the foundations for the hotbed of diplomatic activity that took root within the city, and this led to an increase in population which the *villa* was by no means prepared for. Subsequently the return of the court to Madrid in 1606, following its brief (and traumatic) transfer to Valladolid, led to the definitive implementation of the practice of diplomacy in Madrid's streets and palaces.

It was during the seventeenth century, the focus of this special issue, when the diplomatic dimensions of Madrid were consolidated. Prior modes of activity were reinforced, and new ones were introduced in tune with this small *villa's* transformation into a grand royal and imperial city. The monarchy's size, its diversity and its pre-eminence in the world was alone sufficient for the city to receive more ambassadors and diplomats than other courts, including the French court. In terms of the city's physical space, it was extended and demarcated by the new city wall introduced by Philip IV in 1625, which restricted both house building and the number of inhabitants until the second half of the nineteenth century, whereby the city became still more densely populated. On the other hand, new architectural landmarks emerged, while others were developed to provide a setting for court activities, including diplomatic ones, and also to accommodate those who took part in them (Madrado and Pinto, 1995; Del Río, 2000). The creation of a new royal residence in the east of the city, the Buen Retiro palace, the gradual restoration of the neighbouring sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin of Atocha created a definitive ceremonial, symbolic and festive axis that structured this *Urbs Regia*, while also reviving the residential area inhabited by the upper echelons of Madrid's society. Likewise, Madrid's principal royal palace, the Alcázar, where the state councils met, underwent an

intense period of renovation; firstly, its main facade and the royal chapel, then the king's apartments, where he received ambassadors and advisers, were all adorned with decorative programmes and messages extolling Habsburg power (Aterido and Pereda, 2004; Aterido, 2006). Furthermore, the urban feature, that above all proclaimed the sought-after identity for the centre of the Monarchy's government, was the Plaza Mayor, a magnificent culmination of Philip II's original project (Escobar, 2004) that served as both a market and theatrical setting for the most grandiose celebrations. It functioned as a form of nexus along the city's transversal axis and was frequently addressed in the descriptions of Madrid written by illustrious visitors, and these literary representations are discussed in Osorio's contribution to this special issue.

The articles by Agüero, Quiles and Franganillo also address the royal palaces of the Alcázar and Buen Retiro as spaces of diplomatic sociability, while Manuel Rivero underscores the importance of the aforementioned axis established by the Alcázar and Buen Retiro palace on either side of Madrid. A highly original contribution of this special issue is its discussion of the role played by convents and religious sites as a further dimension of Madrid's diplomatic sphere; González Cuerva discusses the convents of La Trinidad Calzada, San Jerónimo, Las Descalzas, La Encarnación, Las Calatravas and Capuchinos de la Paciencia; then Quiles Albero focuses on the Convent of Las Maravillas; Agüero's article turns attention to the convent of Los Mostenses; and finally, Franganillo returns to the convents of Las Descalzas and La Encarnación. A canvas attributed to Jan van Kessel III represents another privileged space of diplomatic social encounter, the Prado Viejo, whose long avenue was an ideal location for a daily cavalcade of carriages, and it was one of the places most oft frequented by ambassadors. The painting can be dated circa 1680 on the basis of the women's garments which emulated the fashion established by María Luisa de Orleans. In the lower left-hand corner is the villa built by the duke of Lerma, which undoubtedly established a precedent emulated by other members of the nobility when they commissioned their own residences in the city.

The studies that make up this special issue provide an opportunity to assess Madrid's relationships with other political communities, such as those from across Italy. Drawing on an analysis of the unpublished diary of Fernando de Valenzuela—*regente* of the Council of Italy—, Manuel Rivero examines how the Italian embassies in Madrid in conjunction with the Council of Italy (which represented the three Italian states of Naples, Sicily and Milan) oversaw the administration and management of the Hospital of San Pedro y San Pablo. The hospital not only provided medical care but also served to represent Madrid's Italian communities; a facet of its activity which was overseen by pre-eminent authority of the nuncio. Unlike other civic diplomatic corporations, this one institution managed to bring together the whole Italian community irrespective of whether they came from the monarchy's vassal territories. The Italian hospital emerged as a space for communication, and it projected the idea of

Italy being an equilibrium of both the territories under Spanish rule and those that were not; a concept rooted in the 1454 treaty of Lodi, and the reason why the papacy acted as arbitrator and the other Italian powers strove to maintain a state of mutual concord. This space was also a point of entry for highly important devotions, as well as religious and intellectual ideas into the *villa*.

Although Madrid had a privileged relationship with Vienna, where the other branch of the Habsburgs has established their court, the contemporary chronicles demonstrate that Madrid was always compared to Rome, rather than the city on the Danube, and this is demonstrated in the articles below by Osorio and Rivero. The Italian communities in Madrid attained a degree of pre-eminence and influence that is hard to compare with any other political community, not even that of the imperial representatives; hence considerable attention is paid to them over the course of this special issue. During this period the sources distinguish between embassies from crowned and uncrowned sovereigns, while an ambassador's pre-eminence in Madrid was defined by his entitlement to attend the royal chapel. The privilege of attending this symbolic site within the Alcázar was reserved only for the nuncio, the imperial ambassador, and the ambassadors of France and Venice. Indeed, Potting, the imperial ambassador, referred to Madrid as «this court of chapel ambassadors». However, it is recorded that wider access was granted to the royal chapel in accordance with the political concerns of the day (Carrió-Invernizzi, 2019). David Quiles's study is also devoted to the Italian Madrid and through his analysis of a case study of an embassy “de capilla,” the Venetian embassy, he explores a very different and often problematic aspect of the diplomatic world: the king's assignment of either a residence to be rented by ambassadors, or a *casa de aposento*. This singular feature of the Spanish court blurred the still nascent diplomatic neighbourhoods, despite the fact that, as in other courts, ambassadors had the right to diplomatic immunity within the restricted space of their residence, but often not beyond it. The problematic issue of the residences provided for ambassadors is also explored by in Rubén González Cuerva's article, which is discussed further below.

The different agents deployed in Madrid always sought a location for their residences that was deemed fitting for their status, and on occasions the issue of the *casas de aposento* was a source of conflict, even amongst the *villa's* own residents. During the reigns of Philip IV and Charles II, the Venetian representatives, for example, used the negotiations over the choice of their residences to exert their influence and guarantee their supremacy in the *villa*. An illustrative example is that of the Venetian ambassador, Giorgio Corner, who initiated a series of lawsuits in mid-1662 having failed to gain access to the Casa de las Siete Chimeneas in order to have a groom in his service released from imprisonment; for the duration of the ensuing legal battle, he decided not to attend any public ceremony until his servant was freed. David Quiles argues that the success of the symbolic and ceremonial gambles played by the Venetians must also be understood

in the context of the campaign underway to secure Philip IV's assistance in the war waged in Candia against the Ottoman empire (1645-1669), which calls into question the traditional historiographical vision of the Spanish monarchy's poor relationship with Venice during the second half of the seventeenth century.

While Quiles's study provides an opportunity to explore how ambassador's exploited negotiations concerning their residences in greater depth, Agüero's article offers a detailed analysis of another equally interesting subject: the advantage diplomats sought to gain by participating in banquets and festive occasions, which was an activity recommended in the treatises of the period, such as that by Callières; these authors understood the symbolic potential of these occasions with regard to attaining political goals.

The traditional rivalry between Spain and France had numerous consequences across the diplomatic terrain. For example, in 1625, Spain followed the example set by France by implementing the position of *conductor de embajadores* [introducer of ambassadors], who was responsible for attending to the foreign delegates at court (Loomie, 1975; Martínez Navas, 2014). The same rivalry had led France to establish diplomatic ties with the Ottoman empire from an early date, whereby the Spanish monarchy automatically did the same with the Persian empire. Significantly, the tenth admiral of Castile organised a banquet «a imitación de los persas [in imitation of the Persians]» in his residence in Madrid to which he invited Ambassador Gramont's French delegation. Álvaro Cubillo de Aragón published an account of this event in Spanish, which went on to be translated into Italian. Agüero contrasts this literary account with French sources in order to analyse the relevance of the oriental elements deployed at the banquet. Agüero's contribution also sheds light on the close relationships that existed in Madrid between the foreign delegates and the principal agents of the *villa's* nobility, as well as the use of the residences of prominent noblemen as sites for diplomatic meetings. We will return to Agüero's study below to consider how it also engages with the debates on material diplomacy.

THE CULTURAL TURN IN DIPLOMATIC STUDIES

Over the last few decades, the study of diplomacy has undergone a cultural shift and today greater attention is paid to its material, artistic and performative dimensions, concerns which Norbert Elias underscored in his groundbreaking research. Diplomatic studies are today more deeply embedded in a global and less nationalistic approach to history, and they share concerns with the history of cultural transfers (cross-cultural studies). This special issue engages with this ongoing historiographical development and responds to the resulting shifts in perspective. However, in many senses diplomatic studies continue to be indebted to Mattingly's classic study (1950), which argued that modern diplomacy was born in Italy amidst the flourishing art and Humanism of the Quattrocento.

This foundational alliance has been identified as exerting a modernising influence on diplomacy, one that shaped the transition towards a “balance of powers” following the signing of the Peace Treaty of Lodi (1454), and also the establishment of permanent embassies and the increasing regulation of ambassadorial duties. Needless to say, these theses have a clear Eurocentric perspective (Anderson, 1993) and display a tendency towards teleology: the inevitable progress of diplomacy towards what it became in the nineteenth century.

This historiographical trend, indebted to Mattingly, is based on two beliefs that have since been called into question: diplomacy is the antithesis of political conflict and art only flourishes at times of peace. Both views have since been disputed, as in the Early Modern Period a great many artworks were exchanged during periods of conflict, and likewise the use of ceremonial and festive spectacle could itself become a source of conflict, and, in addition, as Machiavelli indicated diplomacy was an inherent part of violence and an instrument of it. Furthermore, recent studies have called into question the primacy of European and Italian diplomacy through the study of the sophisticated networks of mercantile and political alliances that extended across China under the rule of the Ming and Qing dynasties, as well as Mughal India, Safavid Persia and the Ottoman empire, in each case long before Europe came to global prominence. In these geopolitical regions there were systems of diplomatic negotiation that were as regulated and codified as those that were later developed in Europe.

The transformation of diplomatic studies owes a great deal to the contribution of comparative cultural studies, which have demonstrated that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century emissaries operated within local and global networks. Furthermore, the study of literature in particular has revealed how a range of texts were used to construct new diplomatic models during the Early Modern Period. Over the course of this special issue the authors explore a range of literary sources, such as Agüero’s aforementioned discussion of the dramatist Cubillo de Aragón’s account given of the banquet organised by the tenth admiral of Castile. Agüero, along with Franganillo, also engages with another field of study that has proved to be especially insightful for diplomatic history (Bernstorff and Kuberski-Piredda, 2013; Biedermann, Gerritsen and Riello, 2018): the exchange of gifts and the immense influence they exercised as an element of diplomatic negotiation.

The new history of diplomacy, having distanced itself from the traditional history of international relations with its view of diplomacy as a practice monopolised by states, has instead addressed the role of “non-state or informal actors” and examined ambassadors as go-betweens or cultural brokers operating in a transnational world (Cools, Keblusek and Noldus, 2006, pp. 9-16). In addition, consideration has been given to their role in the processes of knowledge transfer (Windler, 2002). Daniela Frigo has used the title of the “new diplomatic history” to refer to the renovation of diplomatic studies and it has since gained

currency in international academic circles (Frigo, 2000). For some historians this title has since become somewhat redundant (Watkins, 2008), but it has prompted reflection on the emergence of a promising interdisciplinary space for studies offering a deeper insight into the complexity of early modern diplomacy, while also engaging with the question of gender (Sluga and James, 2016) and other issues that merit greater scrutiny, such as cross-confessional diplomacy (Van Gelder and Krstić, 2015). The latter two key lines of enquiry are also addressed in the articles presented here, and in particular those by Franganillo and González Cuerva.

This special issue’s engagement with the issue of gender provides reveals how this provides a valuable perspective for the analysis of early modern Madrid as a diplomatic city. Franganillo moves beyond the traditional study of the queen’s circle of diplomatic influence to analyse the role played by other women at the Madrid court during the reigns of Philip III and Philip IV. In particular she examines women who had ties to the Duchy of Tuscany. They acted as diplomatic agents and developed their own strategies as political and cultural mediators, above all as ambassadorial informants. They forged numerous bonds of loyalty and in exchange for the information provided they received gifts, prebends for male members of their family, and economic rewards. As a rule, these women were motivated by the promotion of family interests, as well as a concern to strengthen existing ties of loyalty within their family’s client networks. In November 1632 the Council of State debated the risks posed by the fact that the wives of some of the monarchy’s advisers revealed sensitive information during meetings they held with ambassadors. In response to this claim the king sought to prohibit these women from receiving visits, which proved fruitless. Callières, in his treatise *Negociando con príncipes* [Negotiating with Princes] (1716), went on to defend the benefits an ambassador could gain by dealing with noblewomen, and he argued that they should never neglect to win their favour. According to Callières, who considered all tactics to be good, even the discreet delivery of gifts (especially to women), the French ambassador D’Embrun confessed that he gave women gifts to obtain information from them.

As this special issue demonstrates through various case studies, the modes of early modern diplomacy that emerged during the sixteenth century were not founded on an idealised vision of the international community, but rather it was seen as a “competitive and functional community.” Diplomacy was not intended to consolidate national identities, nor ideas of equality or social progress. The reformation had put an end to religious unity in Europe (the *respublica christiana*) and with it the ideal of a common diplomatic community. As a result, the traditional respect shown to the representatives of supranational authority and diplomatic arbitration, such as that undertaken by the Holy Roman Emperor and the pope, was shattered. New states, as well as dynasties that claimed legitimacy for new degrees of sovereignty, such as the Medici in Florence and the Bragança dynasty in Portugal

post 1640, in addition to the creation of new Protestant states, meant that the rituals of diplomacy became more important and more carefully codified in order to address the new conflicts of precedence and legitimacy.

On the one hand, the market, and the expansionist aspirations of the church, on the other, in addition to the integration of Portugal into the web of the Habsburg monarchy for a period of sixty years, multiplied the possibilities of diplomatic contacts with the rulers of Africa and Asia. Thus, European and extra-European powers had to invent new protocols to organise these increasing mutual relationships (Osborne and Rubiés, 2016). The impact of these developments in Madrid is explored in the studies by Rocío Martínez and Rubén González Cuerva.

Rocío Martínez focuses on the diplomatic relationships between Bavaria and the Spanish monarchy during the reign of Charles II. When the elector's envoy arrived at the court there had been no prior diplomatic representation, and he had to create a significant network of influences to work on his ruler's behalf, although, his legation did receive assistance from Queen Mariana of Austria. The need for improvisation encouraged ingenious strategies and diplomatic tactics and demonstrated the leadership that small states could on occasions play when it came to the diplomatic and cultural affairs of the early modern state; in contrast the established major powers tended to develop less imaginative practices. In our view this invaluable insight opens up an extraordinarily promising field of study, which has been pioneered in a number of studies by Paola Volpini on the relationships between the monarchy and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany amongst other less prominent embassies of the Early Modern Age (Volpini, 2014).

Madrid's diplomatic community became more global as time went by, and this is discussed in Martínez's article with regard to the need to put new regulations and practices in place to meet the new demands this international development gave rise to. Madrid's global dimension was above all consolidated following the incorporation of Portugal into the monarchy in 1580, and after that date delegations from the Congo, India and Malaysia arrived in the capital. Up until 1580 the only non-European presence was the Maghribi envoys who had an ambiguous status and no significant diplomatic presence. The global dimension that arose from the Iberian union greatly enriched the international reputation of the Catholic king, above all with the pope. To comprehend the *villa's* expanding international dimension, it is essential to take into account the considerable network of convents, which increased in number as the century advanced, and steadily became key players on the diplomatic chessboard as sites of diplomatic sociability, and this is explored in depth in the article by Rubén González Cuerva. Attendance at these convents by members of the royal family, as well as the presence of the papal nuncio in his role as a prelate, during the principal celebrations of the liturgical calendar attracted many members of the court and the diplomatic sector. However, what is still more extraordinary is the convents' degree of integration into the diplomatic fabric of *villa*, for exam-

ple, González Cuerva discusses how they were used as temporary accommodation for certain "exotic" non-European embassies. Instead of being given accommodation in a *casa de aposento*, these individuals were hosted in monasteries, where they were granted a temporary form of accommodation in accordance with their dubious diplomatic status, as a result, problems of public order and decorum arose due to the challenge posed by their living amongst monastic communities. This was the case for the 1585 Japanese mission, which was hosted by the Jesuits; the Congolese mission, which resided with the Mercedarians in 1608; the second Japanese mission which was hosted by the Franciscans in 1615; and then in 1701 the Algerian mission which was hosted with Trinitarians. At a court with as strictly a confessional character as that of Madrid, the complementary use of both palaces and convents as residences for embassies paradoxically demonstrates how a degree of flexibility was developed towards ceremony, one that seemingly bordered on tolerance.

PERFORMATIVE AND MATERIAL DIPLOMACY

As has been discussed, in recent years the new diplomatic history has taken numerous steps towards developing a deeper understanding of the plurality of agents, both formal and informal, who were involved in the practice of diplomacy at early modern courts, including Madrid. Furthermore, increasing interest has been devoted to exploring ambassadors' capacity to integrate themselves into the local social milieu. However, it remains to be seen how this conditioned ambassadors' political activity within the spaces they operated in. In a similar vein, and even though the so-called "performative turn" has given rise to interesting findings concerning the material and ceremonial aspects linked to court spectacle (Goulet, Domínguez and Oriol, 2021), to what extent the use of performative elements became more global remains to be studied.

Considerable research has been devoted to the question of language and performativity, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of "symbolic capital," from the perspectives of semiotics, symbolic communication and material culture (Fletcher, 2015, pp. 15-58). Likewise, there is a long tradition within literary studies, above all published in English, that has analysed early modern diplomacy from the perspective of the dialogue it established through the medium of theatre (Charry and Shahani, 2009; Rivère De Carles, 2016). From the Renaissance onwards, numerous works of theatre began to depict and even establish new diplomatic concepts and practices, which gave rise to what Hampton has termed a "diplomatic poetics" (Hampton, 2009). Diplomacy itself was understood by jurists as a practice that depended directly on a legal fiction (*fictio iuris*): ambassadors were inviolable and was guaranteed safe conduct as if in their own country. It was precisely this fiction that made the maintenance of an embassy possible, as well as the practice of peace negotiations (Hampton, 2009, p. 11).

Musicologists have taken a broad interest in the alliance between music and diplomacy, a theme Castiglione

discussed in *Il Cortegiano*. Similarly, in his *Emblemata* Alciato cited the laud as an allegory of the alliance and harmony sought between rulers, while, Neoplatonic philosophers devoted thought to the music of the spheres and the biblical idea of the “heavenly choir,” as well as the correspondences between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Kircher, in his *Musurgia universalis* published in 1622, also alluded to political music, and he discussed the “sonic control” used by spies, for example, in the form of devices and architectural spaces that served to control the dissemination and exchange of secret information. According to some authors, the seventeenth century witnessed an authentic musical diplomacy (Ahrendt, Ferraguto and Mahiet, 2014). Soundscapes had a clearly defined purpose in diplomatic ceremonial, and this subject is also explored by Agüero: music was performed during the receptions held by ambassadors, and at the start and end of each banquet, and the members of court would wear their finest clothes to welcome diplomatic delegations, and treaties would be celebrated by staging dances, music, theatre and poetry recitals.

This special issue demonstrates how allegorical ballets, dances and masques, tourneys and plays, opera performances and firework spectacles provide a rich vein to consider how they were frequently used to evoke subjects such as war and peace, as well as international unity, in addition to the much more frequent disputes between opposing diplomatic parties. Bernardo Buontalenti created a space within the Villa Pratolini where musicians could be placed out of sight, and this created an illusory effect whose visual impact and sound effects would beguile and cause wonderment amongst spectators. In Central Europe music was also performed from “concealed rooms” in order to create a mysterious effect. A visual record of this practice is conserved in the ceiling of the Southern Gable room (also known as the Queen’s Room) of Rosenborg Castle, which includes a depiction of the royal musicians of the Danish court. Christian IV welcomed diplomats to this pleasure palace and enchanted them with invisible concerts, while simultaneously striving to project an image of himself as a pacifying force amongst the Protestant rulers (Spohr, 2014).

In 1682 Ménestrier published his treatise *Of Ballets Ancient and Modern*, in which he defended the use of music and ballet for politics and diplomacy, and he argued that they could communicate more effectively and overcome the limits of spoken language. Furthermore, he argued that dance and music were more capable of stirring the emotions than painting and other static objects. France had been a pioneer in the diplomatic use of the performing arts ever since Catherine de’ Medici imported the extensive Florentine tradition of court spectacle. She developed a court ballet that was especially effective for diplomatic purposes and French went on to substitute Latin as the lingua franca used by ambassadors (Welch, 2017). A great deal remains to be learnt about the importance of the musical soundscape of the diplomatic sphere of Madrid, and we are confident that this special issue will encourage further research on this subject.

Although, Castiglione argued that the courtier should know how to paint, diplomats generally wrote history (Guiccardini), political treatises (Machiavelo, Seychelles, Bodin) or wrote plays or novels (Machiavelli, Sir Philip Sidney), but as a rule they did not paint. Nonetheless, they were well informed about art and shared a common artistic culture. With regard to this issue, two landmark texts on the relationships between art and diplomacy in Italy and the Spanish Habsburg Monarchy were published around twenty years ago (Cropper, 2000; Colomer, 2003). Since then, and despite the major historiographical shift witnessed in diplomatic studies, no similar research has been published with the exception of the work of Poleroß (2010). While Colantuono attempted to establish a theory of early modern diplomatic art, he argued that the analysis of the use of art within diplomacy must be separated from the study of collecting, as they were activities with wholly distinct motivations (Colantuono, 2000). However, within art history methodological reflection on this issue, such as has been undertaken in literary studies, remains to be pursued.

More recently, research has been undertaken by Olin on performative diplomacy and the visual arts in seventeenth-century Rome and Europe (Olin, 2012), while Jacobsen has addressed the material world of the English ambassadors at the end of the seventeenth century. Together these studies clearly illustrate the ways in which the arts played a key role in diplomatic life (Jacobsen, 2012). Shortly afterwards, 2016 proved to be an important year for research on the history of art and diplomacy. Duerloo published a valuable historiographical review that argued for an interdisciplinary dialogue that encompassed the history of political thought, iconographic analysis, social history and the history of material culture (Duerloo and Smuts, 2016). Likewise, that same year Clark and Um, who drew on Colantuono’s theoretical ideas, engaged with Watkins’s call for an interdisciplinary diplomatic history (Watkins, 2008; Clark and Um, 2016). For these scholars a focus on the visual and material provides an imperative point of departure for any study of early modern diplomatic exchange.

Furthermore, Rudolph has analysed the dimensions of material diplomacy as part of an enquiry into the agency of diplomatic objects and artefacts. He scrutinises both their use and the benefits they provided as elements of diplomatic negotiations (Rudolph, 2016). The study of the relationships between art and diplomacy, or, in other words, material diplomacy, has provided a framework to problematise the chronology of the so-called new diplomacy, and it has revealed that the latter’s roots may in fact be traced back to the Middle Ages, which in turn offers a framework to question the Eurocentric perspective that has long dominated diplomatic studies. In the context of diplomatic studies devoted to Madrid, and in particular for its extensive engagement with the realm of art, a final consideration must be given to the recent collective volume edited by Jorge Fernández-Santos and José Luis Colomer (2020), which focuses on a wide range of embassies in Madrid during the reign of Philip IV.

This special issue demonstrates how material diplomacy is a highly promising field. With regard to the extraordinary embassy to Madrid led by the duke of Gramont, this event foregrounds the relevance of the ceremonial practices of the local court nobility, and how the latter would take advantage of the celebration of diplomatic festivities to deploy their own tactics of self-promotion. The written accounts devoted to banquets such as that organised by the tenth admiral of Castile and other documentary registers (letters, announcements, etc.) constitute essential sources to trace how material culture was integrated into a symbolic space of “interlocking gazes” for which the rhetoric of gesture was a vital mode of communication for the diplomatic ceremonial enacted in Madrid.

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NOTES

* The text has been translated by Jeremy Roe.

1 A *villa* is a term that dates back to Middle Ages and was used to refer to urban settlements that were granted certain rights and privileges, so we have decided to keep it in the text. While the international and global dimension of Lisbon has been the focus of recent studies (Jordan Gschwend and Lowe, 2015), the international sphere of Madrid continues to be a somewhat marginal theme in studies devoted to the *villa* and its court.

2 This is precisely one of the aims of the UNED’s E-Sens project, PID2020-115565GB-C22 (Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación de España) which the three editors of this special issue form part of.

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