

## Publishing *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* for Richelieu: the Translation of Vera's *El Enbaxador* in Early Modern Europe

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**ABSTRACT:** The central years of Richelieu's government saw a notable increase in the number of political treatises published in Paris after the *Journée des Dupes* in 1630. Such treatises not only reflected the cardinal's ideas on political practice but also served to justify them. *El Enbaxador* (1620) was the first treatise on the ambassadorial office ever written in Spanish, produced at the end of the reign of Felipe III by Juan Antonio de Vera, a nobleman, writer and future ambassador of the Spanish Monarchy. When published in French as *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* in 1635, it resonated with the political debate in Richelieu's entourage. Significantly, the text was addressed to Abel Servien, secretary of state for war and main collaborator of the cardinal minister. The translation operation, which involved remarkable adaptations, reveals the compatibility between Vera's treatise and the aforementioned political debate. The French translation of 1635 was also instrumental to the dissemination of *El Enbaxador* in early modern Europe, since the later editions in French and Italian, five in total, depend on it. Interestingly, the European fortunes of *El Enbaxador* can be explained by its readings as a treatise on political education, a handbook for ambassadors and an outstanding text of the Republic of Letters.

**KEYWORDS:** Political thought; History of ideas; Juan Antonio de Vera; 1<sup>st</sup> Count of La Roca; France; Translation; Education for ambassadors; Political treatises.

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**RESUMEN:** *Un Perfecto Embajador para Richelieu: la traducción de El Enbaxador de Vera en la Europa Moderna.* – En los años centrales del gobierno de Richelieu tuvo lugar, tras la *Journée des Dupes* en 1630, un incremento notable de los tratados políticos publicados en París. Dichos tratados reflejaban la idea de la práctica política del cardenal-ministro al tiempo que la justificaban. *El Enbaxador* (1620) fue el primer tratado sobre el oficio de embajador en castellano, compuesto al final del reinado de Felipe III por Juan Antonio de Vera, un noble, escritor y futuro embajador de la Monarquía de España. Al publicarse en francés como *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* en 1635, el texto concuerda con la singular reflexión política del entorno de Richelieu. Es significativo que se dedica a Abel Servien, secretario de estado para la guerra y colaborador principal del cardenal ministro. La propia operación de traducción, caracterizada por notables adaptaciones, revela la compatibilidad entre el tratado de Vera y la citada reflexión política. La traducción al francés de 1635 será, además, determinante en la diseminación de *El Enbaxador* en la Europa de la edad moderna, pues las ediciones posteriores en francés e italiano, cinco en total, dependen de ella. Así, la fortuna europea de *El Enbaxador* responderá a su lectura como un tratado de educación política, un manual para el embajador y un texto destacado de la República de las Letras.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Pensamiento político; Historia de las ideas; Juan Antonio de Vera; Primer conde de la Roca; Francia; Traducción; Educación para embajadores; Tratados políticos.

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During the early years of the climax of Richelieu's power, following the *Journée des Dupes* (*Day of Dupes*) in 1630, there was an outburst of political treatises published in Paris. They were authored by nobles and writers such as Jean de Silhon, Philippe de Béthune and Henri de Rohan. Officers and courtiers as they were, they took Richelieu's reason of state, which governed domestic and foreign policy, as a working principle. These texts were intended to be read mainly by learned circles, courtiers, and, increasingly, literate aristocrats. They offer a panorama of the ideas that shaped French political culture during the years that saw domestic political life rearranged as monarchical power gained strength and centralization while competing for European hegemony with the House of Austria. A Spanish text fits remarkably well into the whole of this political literature being produced in Paris at the time. Such text is *El Enbaxador* (1620) by Juan Antonio de Vera y Zúñiga, the first treatise on the ambassadorial office ever written in Spanish. *El Enbaxador* was effectively added to the corpus of political treatises in French as *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* (*The Perfect Ambassador*) after being translated with many adaptations.

The European political scene was marked by instability, immersed in a generalized war, the Thirty Years' War, and by a weak peace between France and the Spanish Monarchy, a true *guerre couverte* about to be openly declared. In fact, France declared war on Spain in 1635, precisely the year *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was published. Undoubtedly, the translation of *El Enbaxador* took place in a context of unique political reflection. Richelieu was putting a foreign strategy in place to effectively counterbalance the power of the House of Austria in Europe. As a contribution to this objective, particularly after the *Journée des Dupes*, he encouraged the production of a corpus of literature aimed at justifying his principles of political action and specifically at accommodating the concept of interest, which was developed through works such as Rohan's *De l'Interest des Princes et Etats de la Chrestienté*. The importance of the external dimension of politics emerged through special attention to the notion of interest. It was typically formulated as *the interests of the prince* and *the interests of states* which were considered equivalent. In this line, Richelieu would not be satisfied with elaborations that were purely French in nature like those of Jean Hotman (*L'Ambassadeur*, 1603) but would make use, once suitably adapted, of Vera's work. In turn, this operation would determine the contemporary dissemination of Vera's *El Enbaxador* in Europe, since the subsequent editions in French and Italian, five in total, are based on the 1635 translation. In this new phase of its European journey, the fortunes of *El Enbaxador* can be explained by its readings as a treatise on political education, a manual for ambassadors, and an outstanding text of the Republic of Letters.

This essay argues that *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* (1635) is well aligned with Richelieu's political views as reflected in the literature produced by his circle of collaborators and in the overall effort to leverage the strength of French diplomacy, language and culture. To reach this

point, Vera's treatise will first be presented in the light of its original publication context in Seville. Then it will be demonstrated that *El Enbaxador* was effectively translated and adapted to create *Le Parfait Ambassadeur*. The main reasons for the favourable reception of *El Enbaxador* in France as it resonated with the views generated in Richelieu's entourage will follow. A particular emphasis will be placed on the world of relationships suggested by the sources, authorities, and other cultural aspects implied in *Le Parfait Ambassadeur*. Significantly, the text was addressed to a most conspicuous statesman and Richelieu's close collaborator, Abel Servien. Additionally, the contemporary reception of the book in early modern Europe will be assessed so as to explain its lasting European success. Such reception includes five new editions from 1642 to 1709 and a review of the 1709 edition in *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, one of the first journals of literary criticism in Europe. To my knowledge, such a review has received no academic attention before. The dependence of the five editions on the 1635 translation by Lancelot will be underlined since it effectively triggered the favourable reception of *El Enbaxador* in Europe.

#### AUTHORING *EL ENBAXADOR* (1620)

*El Enbaxador* was published for the first time in Seville in 1620 as a treatise in Spanish on the role of the ambassador, including his rights and duties, the qualities expected in him, and the practical way to excel in his job while staying within Christian morality. The author, Juan Antonio de Vera (1583-1658), was a nobleman and humanist who did not meet the traditional profile of the authors of best-selling treatises on diplomacy (for Vera's biography, see Fernández-Daza, 1995). He was neither a jurist mainly interested in the legal implications of heated topics such as the law of nations (*ius gentium*) nor was he a theologian under pressure to reconcile political practice with Christian doctrine. Unlike other authors of treatises on diplomacy, he wrote *El Enbaxador* before holding his ambassadorial office. Nevertheless, he was no stranger to the art of diplomacy. In 1610, he joined the entourage of Gómez IV Suárez de Figueroa, third Duke of Feria, during the latter's extraordinary embassy to France. Vera was also the grandson of Luis de Avila y Zúñiga, one of the valued Emperor Charles V's statesmen. Moreover, he had read the available political literature on the principles of good government (*buen gobierno*) and the art of diplomacy. Literary writing on diplomacy was a well-established tradition (Sowerby and Craigwood, 2019, pp. 1-24; overview of handbooks for ambassadors up to the 1620s in Hrabar, 1905). Authors of treatises on the role of the ambassador such as Carlo Pasquale, Pietro Andrea Canoniero, Alberico Gentili, Torquato Tasso, Conrad Braun, François Le Vayer, and Frederik Marselaer are mentioned in *El Enbaxador*. Interestingly, diplomacy was never again to be the central theme of any other work in Vera's extensive literary production. Throughout his career as an author, he showed a preference for politics and history, specifically for a genre uniting both: biography.

Eventually, he produced biographies of Emperor Charles V and the Count-Duke of Olivares which found their way into French later in the seventeenth century (Vera, 1662 and 1673).

The political context feeding and framing the intellectual mood in Spain in the 1610s, when *El Enbaxador* was most likely written, was a degraded political internal situation of corruption and decay of the regime of Lerma, Philip III's main minister or *valido* (Feros, 2002, pp. 303-335; Feros and Gelabert, 2005, pp. 76-120). Europe was officially pacified since the Twelve Years Truce (1609-1621) with the Low Countries and the peace treaties with France and England in 1598 and 1604 respectively (García, 2012, pp. 321-364). The Spanish Monarchy was still the leading force in Europe. However, its hegemony was being contested by France and her allies.

The need for the regeneration of Spanish political and economic life was discussed in the active intellectual circles of Madrid and Seville. Vera spent most of his time in this prosperous southern city between the late sixteenth century and 1620 where he held conversations about politics, art, and literature with the cream of the Sevillian society at the vigorous academies in town. His proximity to Gaspar de Guzmán, future Count-Duke of Olivares, who lived in Seville between 1607 and 1615 before settling down in Madrid, placed Vera in an exceptional position to engage in the debate about the need for a thorough internal political reform of the Spanish Monarchy and the safeguard of its international prestige (Montero, 2012; Elliott, 1986, pp. 131-243; Fernández Albaladejo, 2009b, pp. 1-58). The stimulus for Vera to accelerate his political career must have been exceptionally strong. Gaspar de Guzmán would become Philip IV's principal minister in 1621, soon after the publication of *El Enbaxador*. In parallel, Vera moved to Madrid and saw his political, literary, and social career boost at court, always as a close collaborator of Olivares as his political biography of the Count-Duke, finished by 1627, demonstrates. Significantly, Vera joined the highest ranks of nobility only one year later, in 1628, when he was made Count of La Roca.

The debate at the Sevillian academies considered the most recent European political thought arriving in the form of books and works of art (Lleó Cañal, 1979). The teachings of Justus Lipsius were particularly influential in the city and effectively penetrated Vera's thought (Corbett, 1975). Lipsius, who found reconciliation with the Spanish Monarchy after his conversion to Catholicism in 1590, pollinated European politics in two ways: through his own Neostoic thought and his influential edition of the works of the Roman historian Tacitus. Lipsius' Neostoic thought was discussed in two major works which made a big impact in Spain: *De Constantia* (1584) and *Politico-rum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (1589) or *Politica*. The Spanish translation of *De Constantia*, published in Seville in 1616, was an important milestone in the remarkable influence of Lipsius in the city. The lessons from Lipsius become apparent throughout *El Enbaxador* and directly influence Vera's treatment of specific topics such as "civil prudence" and "mixed prudence" (Davies, 1965). Tacitus

was definitely appreciated as a source of political wisdom in *El Enbaxador*: "Tacitus, author in whom is found everything that is enough to teach a Prince, if not by good examples, by the bad examples of those whose lives he wrote (because those who are prudent learn from foreign errors)" (Vera, 1620, II, f. 90r; all translations are my own). The Roman historian guided the discussion on the reason of state in seventeenth-century politics to the point that the political debate resonated with episodes from Tacitus' *Annals* and *Histories* in the academies in Seville, the court in Paris, and the intellectual circles of Venice alike.

Some basic data about *El Enbaxador* made it stand out from the very moment it was published (López-Cordón, 2015). Let us recall that it was the first treatise on the ambassadorial office ever published in Spanish. In fact, before 1620, most of the texts on the subject were in Latin. Additionally, the book was addressed to the Spanish king, Philip III. The official approvals of the text leave no doubt regarding the relevance of this text to the court of Madrid: they were entrusted to the authorized Jesuit Diego Granado and to Antonio de Herrera, a royal chronicler who had translated works of Giovanni Botero and Tacitus into Spanish (Herrera, 1593 and 1615; on Herrera and his book reviews, see Kagan, 2009, pp. 188-189). Finally, the elaborated engraved frontispiece of *El Enbaxador* provides sophisticated indications as to the kind of text we are facing. The Christian faith and the classical virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and mercy) are represented as emblems surrounding Philip III. The king is depicted as a patron of war and literature through a portrait in which he places his helmet on three contemporary widely read political texts: *Tratado de Republica y Policia Christiana* (1615) by Juan de Santa María, *El Governador Cristiano* (1612) by Juan Márquez and *Memoires* (1524) by Philippe de Comynes. *Memoires*, one of the most translated books throughout the early modern age, consisted of examples or stories drawn from Comynes' own experience as a diplomat working for Carlos VIII and Louis XI in France (on the numerous translations of *Memoires*, see Burke and Po-Chia Hsia, 2010, pp. 157 and 168).

*El Enbaxador*'s 280-folio text is effectively a book on education for the ambassadorial office which contributed to the tradition of advice books for ambassadors. Its index is an "Alphabetical table of the remarkable things in this book" (*Tabla alfabética de las cosas notables de este libro*) which directly relates to the tradition of collections of examples, stories, and maxims. Its educational purpose is confirmed by the fact that the text is structured as a dialogue between a master and his advanced apprentice. It contains four chapters or *Discursos* dealing with selected topics. For example, the first *Discurso* delves into the details of the definition, rights, and duties of the ambassador. The second one covers the thorny question of the legitimacy of the use of dissimulation for the practical purposes of the ambassador. In the third *Discurso*, the recommendations for the ambassador on how to proceed from the first day of his embassy to his final report are discussed including matters of precedence related to ceremonial events. The fourth *Discurso* begins by providing

contextual information the ambassador should consider when negotiating at different European courts. The general recommendation is that he should be very well informed about the particular details of each foreign power. In addition, the ambassador should know about the specific political institutions in place and the interests governing foreign policy and overall political actions. To end the fourth *Discurso*, right after briefly considering the best way to finalize peace treaties, Vera provides a collection of exemplary speeches by past ambassadors (called *oraciones*) which may be used by any current ambassador to persuade his audience in different practical scenarios (Vera, 1620, IV, ff. 123-130). To excel in the art of persuading while pleasing, Vera's ambassador should clearly master eloquence (Pineda, 2015).

The main theme in *El Enbaxador* is the prudent ambassador. Most of the classical political texts were written for princes or kings, the actual rulers. Through *El Enbaxador*, Vera extends the responsibility to embody prudence and political pragmatism to the ambassador. At the same time, hierarchy must be respected and obedience is required from all subjects including the ambassador. He describes the aim of his book as: "Not to teach the Prince how to rule, but to teach the ambassador how to obey" (Vera, 1620, III, f. 11v). Vera's definition of the objective of an embassy strongly echoes the language of the reason of state: "If the aim of politics is peaceful growth, the aim of Embassy – I mean its perfect aim – will be just the same" (Vera, 1620, I, f. 19r). Vera draws explicitly on Lipsius when discussing the use of dissimulation to fulfil the goals of an embassy, though setting some limits (Vera, 1620, II, ff. 89r-102v). Such limits are required to respect Christian morality, so that the good reason of state (that is, the Catholic reason of state), always prevails (on the understanding of Catholic reason of state, Gil Pujol, 2000; Fernández Albaladejo, 2009a).

Vera's ambassador is pragmatic, under pressure to act (Bazzoli, 2005, pp. 287-294). He should focus on utility and authority:

In all, always caring after the authority and utility of his King, not exceeding his instruction when introducing himself to Kings, not yielding precedence to competing ambassadors, the first compulsorily, the second with prudence according to the circumstances and necessity of his masters, the ambassador will not err severely (Vera, 1620, III, f. 60v).

Prudence should always guide the ambassador's actions, intended to maximize the prince's utility. Therefore, Vera discusses the knowledge, tools, and practices that a prudent ambassador should master. The many tools include eloquence, dissimulation, secrecy, and a wealth of examples taken from history, leading to virtuous behaviour. Vera was a knowledgeable reader, who merged lessons from the classics (Tacitus, Plutarch, Livy, Sallust, Seneca, Cicero), medieval Spanish authors such as Jerónimo Zurita, and contemporary authors from all across Europe including Lipsius, Botero, Jean Bodin and

Diego Valdés into *El Enbaxador*. The challenge was that the objectives of this very practical ambassador should be achieved while staying within Christian morality. Unsurprisingly, the problematic relationship between politics and morality (*utile* and *honestum*) has long been discussed since the times of Roman moralists such as Cicero.

The ambassador represents the authority of his king, which is essential to ensure the stability of the realm and the obedience of the subjects, all working towards peace and reputation: "As a minister, he must satisfy the authority and the decorum of both the prince and the office" (Vera, 1620, II, f.117r). The authority of the ambassador transposes into precedence over other ambassadors at the visited court. For this reason, Vera devotes many pages to this question, with an emphasis on precedence over French ambassadors. In fact, the ambassador is allowed to go to any lengths to preserve his precedence:

The certainty that there is no superior empire on Earth [...] and for that reason any means he [the ambassador] chooses is acceptable, no matter how tough it is, since it aims at preserving his right and safeguard his justice: and in this case nobody will be entitled to blame him of exceeding the modesty and pacific style expected from an ambassador (Vera, 1620, III, f. 54v).

## TRANSLATING *EL ENBAXADOR*

Drawing on the concepts of utility and necessity, *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* (1635), the first translation of *El Enbaxador*, published in French in Paris, welcomes the readers with the following strong assertion on its title page: "A book very useful and necessary to all Ministers of State, Province Governors, Secretaries of Princes, Agents, representatives of villages and any other persons managing public affairs, and to all those who are curious to know about the functions of an embassy" (Fig. 1). This sentence immediately suggests that the book serves the function of political education for all those supporting the king in his ruling functions, who can be globally considered as his "counsellors."

*Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was addressed to Abel Servien (1593-1659), a statesman and ambassador who played a capital role as Richelieu's advisor (for his biography, see Duccini, 2011). The dedicatory epistle of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* characterized Servien as: "You are powerful with those who hold the reins of this Empire." Ironically, he held the office of Secretary of State for War precisely in 1635 when *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was published and France declared war on Spain. In fact, Louis XIII granted the printing privilege for *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* just a few days before the actual declaration of war on May 19.

Although there is no evidence that Servien commissioned the work, he was its likely patron. Servien lies at the heart of the answer to why the French translation actually happened. *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was sent to the press in 1635 at the highest point of Servien's political career: he was secretary of state and one of the king's



FIGURE 1. Title page of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* (1635). This image has been obtained from the collections of the Library of the University of Gent. The complete book, digitized by Google on 17 May 2010, is available at: <https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog?q=le+parfait+ambassadeur+1635>

counsellors after holding political positions of the utmost importance. In 1633, two years before *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was published, Servien returned from his embassy Savoy after successfully concluding the treaties of Cherasco (1631) that put an end to the Mantuan War of Succession (García and Maffi, 2020, pp. 251-268). This meant peace for Northern Italy, a major arena of confrontation between France and the House of Austria, which was a remarkable diplomatic success for France with Servien as the “hero” to be honoured for it. The fact that Servien was addressed *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* sent a clear message that he deserved to be appreciated as a relevant statesman. Indeed, Servien knew *El Enbaxador* first-hand and it was precisely in Savoy where he connected with Vera. Between 1631 and 1632 they were both ambassadors to the Duke of Savoy, and they very likely shared more than formal diplomatic contacts. Notably, Abel Servien wrote in 1631 that he had learned all he knew about this job as ambassador from *El Enbaxador*: “Monsieur, you are the soul of your discrete book of the Ambassador, from which I have learned the little Spanish I know and also my office.”<sup>1</sup>

Going back to the educational intention targeting a French audience stated on the title page of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur*, it suggests some adaptations were required

when translating which can be confirmed through textual comparison with the 1620 original. In fact, the adaptations made to *El Enbaxador* to produce *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* represented a complex editorial operation in a context of intense translation activity in France (Ballard and D’Hulst, 1996, pp. 23-42; Cioranescu, 1983, pp. 123-182). There was a general understanding that the pursued elevation of the authority of the French language could be achieved by raising the authority and the quality of written production in such language, not only from Greek and Latin but also from sources in the vernacular.

In the 1630s, when *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was produced, a good number of the works translated into French were by Spanish authors, outdoing Classical and Italian authors as well as the Church Fathers.<sup>2</sup> Spanish was one of the most reputable languages in Europe at the time though Italian was still the most widely used vernacular. A few dozen Spanish titles were translated every year from 1630 to 1635 into French, the majority being texts on religion and fiction, Francisco de Quevedo ranking as a preferred author (Cioranescu, 1977, pp. 214-249). A very small percentage of the translations had a political theme. In fact, within these six years, only two Spanish political treatises were translated: *Tratado de Republica y Policia Christiana* by Juan de Santa María (as already noted, this text was featured on the engraved frontispiece of *El Enbaxador*) and *El Enbaxador*. This small number suggests that the Spanish political texts to be translated were carefully selected. The expediency of the translation may be justified by the aim to influence as wider an audience as possible. Should they have been addressed exclusively to French learned and courtly circles where Spanish was generally spoken and understood, there would have been no need for a translation.

If we now turn to the translator of *El Enbaxador*, Nicolas Lancelot, the scarce information about him can be derived almost exclusively from his literary works. He was among the most important translators of Spanish novels of the era and had skilfully translated authors such as Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa, Mateo Alemán and Lope de Vega. *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was Nicolas Lancelot’s last published translation and the only one with a political theme. His former works had all been published in the 1610s and 1620s. Therefore, the commission to produce *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* in the 1630s seems to be a special one. Lancelot’s direct connection with the French court was François Boisrobert, Richelieu’s literary advisor and main contact with writers, with whom the translator had a good relationship.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, Lancelot’s translations had been addressed to conspicuous courtiers such as Roger du Plessis (1598-1674) and women belonging to leading French families.

When translating *El Enbaxador* into French, significant changes were made. Paratextual alterations are perhaps the most obvious. To start with, the title is changed from a brief *El Enbaxador* to *Le Parfait Ambassadeur*, where the adjective “perfect” seems to suggest that the book is closer to presenting an idea of the ambassador than to political practice. In Cinti’s opinion (1966, p. 133),

the new French title including the adjective “perfect” trivializes Vera’s treatise. Maybe the “perfect” qualifier was used to clearly differentiate the work from Jean Hotman’s *L’Ambassadeur* (1603), the earlier French treatise on the role of the ambassador. The index of the book changed, too. In Lancelot’s translation, there is a conventional sequential table of contents after each of the three parts of the book instead of the “Alphabetical table of remarkable things” of the 1620 edition. Notably, this suggests we are moving from the commonplace book of 1620 to a reference book on the ambassadorial topic. When we turn to the side notes, the French and Spanish versions very rarely underscore the same points.

Regarding the text itself, the changes to the Spanish version point towards an interest in simplification, more clarity, and a more concise style. The total length of the book is significantly reduced from the original four chapters to three by taking out sections such as the considerations regarding the different European courts in the Spanish fourth chapter. On several occasions, the translator chooses to reduce the number of examples provided by Vera to illustrate a particular thesis. Additionally, for the sake of clarity, the translator expands the names of people cited to include names and family names whereas they are often shortened in the original Spanish text. All this reflects an interest in making the text more understandable to a wider audience than the original Sevillian edition of *El Embaxador* was.

When it comes to the political tone, all traces of the original anti-French spirit in *El Embaxador* are either softened, removed, or changed to pro-French remarks. For example, the following side note in the Spanish edition, “The French ambassador does not show up at parties so as to avoid yielding his position to Charles V’s ambassador” (“Embajador de Francia no concurre a las fiestas por no ceder lugar al del Emperador Carlos V”), was changed to a “A French ambassador’s judicious action” (“Judicieuse action d’un Ambassadeur François”) when translated into French (Vera, 1620, III, f. 42v; 1635, III, p. 86). Significantly, some examples of Spanish integrity become reprehensible in the French version, such as the episode of Antonio Rincón’s death at the hands of Charles V’s men. Rincón was a Spanish-born ambassador in the service of France which made him disloyal from the Spanish point of view. From the French point of view, Rincón was merely a victim: what appears as a demonstration of justice in the Spanish version is turned into a murder in the French reading.

The virtues and achievements of French diplomacy and King Henry IV’s ambassadors, in particular, are stressed in the intensely adapted section of the third chapter which covers the topic of the precedence of ambassadors. Precedence was the true arena for competition between ambassadors at a visited court. Examples from Henry IV’s most illustrious ambassadors are used to counterattack Vera’s appraisal of Spanish diplomacy as can be appreciated in the following example (Vera, 1620, III, f. 38r; 1635, III, p. 79). When the courtesy due to ambassadors in a visited court was discussed, the existence of a certain hierarchy

among ambassadors was simply noted in the Spanish text. When translated into French, the margin was annotated with an example that does not exist in the Spanish version and reinforces the idea that a certain French ambassador did not hesitate to challenge the Spanish ambassador when the latter was prepared to take his place, making a case for the notable courage of French ambassadors. The ambassador used in the example, Pomponne de Bellièvre, was a purposeful choice since he was one of the most notorious statesmen in Henry IV’s service (De Franceschi, 2014, p. 32).

The opportunities to use French references for political authority are not spared. Bodin, one of the key authors of French political theory, is highlighted on several occasions. In the section on the thorny question of the precedence of ambassadors, Diego Valdés’ *De dignitate regnum regnorumque Hispaniae* (1602) is used in the Spanish version as the authority to prove the rights of the Spanish ambassadors and their precedence over their French counterparts. In French, Valdés is replaced by Bodin and his *Les Six Livres de la République* (1576). Remarkably, when the episode of Rincón’s death is turned into an unjust murder in the French version, Bodin’s arguments in *République* are used to justify it.

Unfavourable comments on French culture and politics are simply suppressed. No wonder a complete section in the Spanish first chapter criticizing Bodin’s comments equating the greatness of Emperor Charles V and the Turk sultan Soliman is absent from the French version. Finally, adaptations to the French official tastes and needs were numerous. For example, the selection of speeches (*oraciones*) to be used by ambassadors to persuade in different situations which ends the book was adapted as a fully-highlighted section entitled *harangues*. Lancelot was an expert translator who had no difficulties in providing such convenient adaptations. To summarize, *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* appears as a complex editorial project aimed at positioning all the content favourably for France.

## UNDERSTANDING THE RECEPTION OF *EL ENBAXADOR* IN FRANCE

Editorial projects like *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* could only add to Cardinal Richelieu’s views on political practice. By 1635 Richelieu was the effective co-ruler of France together with King Louis XIII. The powerful cardinal minister was enjoying the years of his greatest political splendour after the *Journée des Dupes* in 1630. This *Day* is regarded as a crucial moment when Richelieu finally got the unquestionable endorsement from Louis XIII as his principal minister. The cardinal then felt fully empowered to realize his plans which entailed the consolidation of a strong centralized French monarchy and positioning France to counterbalance the power of the House of Austria in Europe. The efforts to regenerate domestic politics, ruptured after decades of internal strife, were intensified, as well as the reorientation of foreign policy to preserve the interests of the French state, which equalled the interests of the French king in the understanding of the age (Keohane, 1980, pp. 168-182).

To support his objectives, Richelieu had always promoted the literary activity of certain statesmen, intellectuals, and writers. The latter in particular saw their collaboration as an opportunity for social recognition (Jouhaud, 1994 and 2000, pp. 217-250). Not surprisingly, there was an outburst of publications right after the *Journée des Dupes* in support of Richelieu's policies and ideas (Church, 1972, pp. 236-282 and Thuau, 2000, pp. 251-280). Such an outburst corresponds to the cardinal's need to justify his political policies with a view to ensure political stability and continuity. Additionally, they fulfilled a need for updated political knowledge in French (Béthune, 2012, introduction by Marc Fumaroli). This literature is usually seen as reflecting Richelieu's reason of state and was refreshed with the vocabulary of interests as the emphasis on foreign policy took virtually all the efforts made from 1634 onwards. The classic early work to elaborate on the concept of interest was Rohan's *De l'Interest des Princes et Estats de la Chrestienté* to be followed by many others (about a contemporary Portuguese-related work, Iñurritgui and Martín, 2020).<sup>4</sup>

Among these publications, exactly when Richelieu was working hard to raise the political profile both within France and abroad, there are two political treatises specifically focusing on public offices: Jean de Silhon's *Le Ministre d'Etat* (1631) and Philippe de Béthune's *Le Conseiller d'Etat* (1632).<sup>5</sup> In fact, they are more than their abridged titles imply: their full titles *Le Ministre d'Etat avec le véritable usage de la politique moderne* and *Le Conseiller d'Etat ou Recueil des plus grandes considérations servant au maniment des affaires publiques* show that they are compendia of the political knowledge at the time. The alignment of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* with these treatises can be appreciated in their main theme (public offices), their intention to support the political practice of the age, and their almost perfect coincidence regarding the place and date of publication. The selection of good counsellors was one of Richelieu's main concerns (Richelieu, 1947, pp. 287-320; Bertaud, 1979). However, the literature on counsel had a relatively weak tradition in France (Reinhardt, 2016, pp. 54-59) which explains why these works were significant. Additionally, the focus on the concept of interest in them can also be perceived. Notably, Béthune bridged the spheres of the reason of state and the logic of interests by declaring: "reason of state is nothing but reason of interest" (Béthune, 2012, p. 504). Vera also masters the vocabulary of interests and its links with reputation: "The ambassador must endeavour to be on good terms with all these ministers [...] because, without a doubt, any diligence that is put into this yields results in terms of interest, rest and reputation" (Vera, 1620, IV, f.74v).

The world of relationships suggested by authors and addressees further reveals strong connections between the political treatises we are considering and the court of Paris. These tracts and others generated in this same context were authored by either statesmen (such as Béthune and Rohan) or writers (such as Silhon and Lancelot) in Richelieu's entourage and addressed to men belonging to the

highest ranks of the French administration, such as the king, Richelieu and the Keeper of the Seal. Though *Le Ministre* and *Le Conseiller* exhibit no dedicatory epistle, the former can easily be read as a panegyric of Cardinal Richelieu (Schneider, 2019, pp. 193-195), and the latter was likely written to serve the purpose of educating the first Duke of Orléans, Gaston's older brother, who died when he was only a child (Béthune, 2012, pp. 65-66). *De l'Interest* was addressed to Richelieu (Rohan, 1638; issued separately in 1639). As we have already seen, the addressee of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was a most outstanding statesman.

Another reason why *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* reads well in conjunction with this corpus of political science generated in Richelieu's intellectual entourage has to do with its sources. Such literature effectively drew on the lessons from ancient authors like Tacitus and modern sources such as Justus Lipsius and the French moralists (Montaigne, Charron). Let us recall that there was a stream of thought, predominant in most European courts, including the Spanish and the French courts, which claimed that the political maxims of Tacitus were a beneficial inspiration for political action. The French interest in Tacitus is perceived in the numerous translations and commentaries on the Roman historian being produced in France at this time. A Piedmontese later naturalized in France, Carlo Pasquale, was the author of the first political commentary on Tacitus (Momigliano, 1947). Pasquale belonged to the group of Italian scholars that made Tacitus' ideas germinate at the court of Catherine de Medici in late sixteenth-century France (Fumaroli, 2011). He had published a very influential treatise on the French art of eloquence, *De optimus genere elocutionis* (Pasquale, 1596), followed by a treatise on the office of ambassador, *Legatus*, published two years later. Significantly, Pasquale was the most cited early modern author in *El Enbaxador*. There are strong similarities between the treatises of Pasquale and Vera in terms of the themes treated and the extensive use of historical examples.<sup>6</sup>

Not only had Lipsius brought Tacitus in a new light with his renowned edition of the Roman historian's works, but also the Lipsian adjustment of Tacitus' ideas to Christian morals and contemporary political needs in *Constantia* and *Politicorum* had an impact on the French literary production of the age, as can be seen in Charron's *De la Sagesse* (De Bom *et al.*, 2010, pp. 309-315). Lipsius' influence extends into the French literary production of the 1630s including Béthune's *Le Conseiller d'Etat* (Oestreich, 1982, pp. 105-109; Soll, 2014). The quality of Vera's book as a "quintessentially Lipsian handbook for diplomats" (Elliott, 1991, p. 26) as described earlier in this essay is preserved in Lancelot's translation.

Richelieu, always conscious of the value of literature to power and to justify his policies while providing the desired political stability and continuity, actively sought writers who could increasingly extract sophisticated lessons from foreign authors. The mere insistence on typically French arguments no longer sufficed to raise the profile of French political writings (Church, 1972, pp. 171-172).

Not surprisingly, the translation of useful texts such as *El Enbaxador* which contained considerable ancient, modern, and foreign knowledge, emerged as an option.

While pursuing political and social stability within France, appropriate management of the relationships with other European powers, particularly with its big rival, the House of Austria, was essential. To repurpose French foreign policy towards proactively challenging the House of Austria, a good understanding of the art and techniques of peacekeeping was required, especially in the tense prewar years before 1635. France highly valued the successful work carried out by famous ambassadors such as Cardinal d' Ossat, Philippe de Béthune, and Abel Servien to name just a few. As we already know, the pride in Henry IV's diplomacy and its great achievements was remarkable. In addition, Richelieu was a great advocate of the benefits of continuous negotiation, to which he devoted a chapter of his *Testament Politique* (Richelieu, 1947, pp. 347-356; Berridge, Keens-Soper, and Otte, 2001, pp. 74-79). The relationship with foreigners was definitely an increasingly important theme in the political literature of the age. As an example, a good number of pages are devoted to this topic in *Le Ministre d'Etat* (Silhon, 1631, pp. 216-371) and *Le Conseiller d'Etat* (Béthune, 2012, pp. 462-522).

However, the French theoretical texts related to the role of the ambassador were not abundant. In addition to the letters of Cardinal d'Ossat, two French treatises completed the panorama of the most recent compilations of French diplomatic knowledge: the aforementioned *Legatus* by Pasquale and the most recent *L'Ambassadeur* (1603) by Hotman (Bély, 2007, pp. 131-154). The latter was a Calvinist diplomat who provided important services to France and skilfully translated the *Basilikon Doron* of James I of England into French. Unfortunately, his *L'Ambassadeur* had been labelled plagiarism of Pasquale's *Legatus* and the controversy may have lessened its status (Bély, 2001). In practical terms, *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* effectively became the updated authoritative advice book for ambassadors during Richelieu's tenure. In fact, there was no other reference book on the ambassadorial role in French until Abraham de Wicquefort published his *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* (1680-1681).

Finally, *Le Parfait Ambassador* matches the concerted effort by intellectuals and the Crown to elevate the profile of the French language and culture. Such effort was one of the conspicuous results of the rise of a refreshed national identity that had been powered by the Wars of Religion in sixteenth-century France. The resulting disruption of all aspects of French life unveiled the importance of a strong order which could ensure a certain degree of stability within France and reposition France among foreign powers (Merlin-Kajman, 1994, pp. 85-87). Richelieu was eager to realize this through his state-building strategy. In the spirit of the language reform, new titles in a renewed and purified French were produced. The aim was to prove that the French effectively had superior or equally as expressive capabilities when compared to the Italian, Latin, and Greek. This included translated titles, that were extremely important as part of literary production of the age.

A good number of intellectuals and writers involved in this cultural renewal we are describing saw themselves as continuators of the reform of the French language championed by Malherbe (Schneider, 2019, pp. 40-46). They actively engaged in conversation societies or private academies that ran in parallel with the savant academies and scholastic discussions. Undoubtedly, Richelieu and Louis XIII soon recognized the benefits of steering such a renewal movement to their advantage. Notably, some of these writers were among the first forty members of the French Academy, founded in 1635 to preserve, purify and potentiate the French language with Richelieu as its main patron or *Protecteur General* (Fumaroli, 1985). The world of relationships of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* suggests a connection with the French Academy too. François Boisrobert, the friend and protector of Nicolas Lancelot, and Abel Servien, the addressee of the book, were two of those first forty members of this most prestigious institution. Most likely, the text confirmed Servien as a patron of the *belles lettres* and reinforced his qualification as a member of the Academy. Additionally, it must have significantly contributed to his desired social rise from his initial situation as a member of the *noblesse de robe* to the *noblesse d'épée* (Lasconjarias, 1999).

In parallel, some elements emphasizing the strength of French culture were highlighted. Heroes in French history such as the Gauls and Jeanne d'Arc were used for the glorification of France. Again, intellectuals were instrumental in this process: they contributed with useful literature including political biographies of exemplary Frenchmen such as those produced by Michel Baudier in the 1630s which included the so-called "lives" of Cardinal Amboise, minister of state Romieu, and even the Spanish Cardinal Ximenes (or Cardinal Cisneros). French authors such as Bodin were purposefully presented as the main sources of political authority. Examples taken from Henry IV's most successful diplomacy were used to illustrate a new narrative of France as a master of relationships with foreign powers. The latter sound familiar since they have been covered as highlights in the adaptation process of *El Enbaxador*. All this worked towards the objective of raising the profile of French culture and building the grandeur of France.

This was happening in combination with extensive cultural encounters and political clashes with Spain stressing the love-hate relationship between these two rivals and neighbours which contributed to the growing French national consciousness (Schaub, 2004, pp. 95-160). The recognition of Spain's strengths coexisted with the desire to fight the Spanish hegemony. Silhon admits in his introduction to *Le Ministre d'Etat*: "She [Spain] understands the art of governing and of commanding men better than any other in the world" (Silhon, 1631, *Advertissement*). Of course, this Spanish strength was seen both as a major threat and a stimulating provocation. That is, *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* is an outstanding expression of the ambivalent relationship between France and Spain which illustrates the richness of cultural transfers and translations.

In all these ways *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was a contribution to the political literature that supported Richelieu's



views, which explains its success in France. Moreover, *El Enbaxador* was a lasting success in Europe. Interestingly, the five further editions of *El Enbaxador* depend on the 1635 translation by Lancelot as we are about to see.

### THE EUROPEAN FORTUNES OF *LE PARFAIT AMBASSADEUR* AND *EL ENBAXADOR*

Both *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* and the original text, *El Enbaxador*, can boast a remarkable success in Europe for almost a century after they were first published in 1635 and 1620 respectively.<sup>7</sup> *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was followed by two other editions in French, in 1642 and 1709, and three Venetian editions in Italian, in 1649, 1654, and 1674 (Merluzzi, 2015). The 1709 edition was reviewed in *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, one of the first journals of literary criticism in Europe with Pierre Bayle, a most conspicuous French exile in the United Provinces, as its first editor.

The 1642 edition of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* is in duodecimo with a simple cover decorated with an armillary sphere. The names of the author and printer are missing, as well as the place of publication. Only the translator's name (Lancelot) appears. The dependence of the 1642 edition on the original French 1635 edition is stated on the cover: "jouxte la copie imprimée à Paris." The 1642 edition is by the Elzeviers, the most important family of publishers and booksellers of the time, with extensive intellectual and commercial networks in Europe. They were originally from Leiden, in the United Provinces, presumably the place of publication of this 1642 edition (Pieters, 1858, p. 193). In addition, Leiden was the location of the famous European university where Justus Lipsius had been a professor and one of the main typographic locations in Europe during the seventeenth century. In the United Provinces, censorship was softer than in the Counter-Reformation world, allowing for the printing of a larger number of books of a political nature. The Elzeviers' catalogue of books on politics is extensive thanks to the editions of French works. Interestingly, *Le Ministre d'Etat* and *Le Conseiller d'Etat* were also reedited by them in 1641 and 1645 respectively (Pieters, 1858, pp. 192 and 195). Therefore, a commercial driver can be seen behind these editions. The 1642 edition would have boosted the European fortunes of *El Enbaxador*: "In one edition or another, probably most often in the fat, ugly, little Parisian duodecimo of 1642, it may have travelled in the saddlebags of more ambassadors than any other treatise of its kind. [...] When the seventeenth century spoke of The Perfect Ambassador it meant De Vera's book" (Mattingly, 1964, p. 181).

When *Il Perfetto Ambasciatore*, the first Venetian edition of *El Enbaxador*, was published in 1649, its dependence on the Spanish and French editions is clearly stated on the title page and the fact that it "came from France" appears in the first lines of the dedicatory letter. This means the translation by Lancelot is its main source. By the end of the 1640s, the memory of the Count of La Roca (Vera always used his title during his embassy in Venice

from 1632 to 1642), whose embassy had been completed five years earlier, was still alive in the city.<sup>8</sup> However, none of the three Venetian editions bears the author's name. The Venetian printing press was coming out of its prostration after a period of heavy censorship, exacerbated during the Interdict of 1606-1607, which notably restricted the number of published works of a political nature (Ulvioni, 1975 and 1977; De Vivo, 2007, pp. 157-199). The Republic of Venice, an important geopolitical power in Europe, although pro-French, had always looked after its independence, and the publication of the work of the former Spanish ambassador could have been perceived as inappropriate during the war between the two greatest European powers.

Venice was enduring its own war against the Turks, which started in 1645, significantly draining the commercial energy of the city. Fortunately, Venice had collaborators such as Hermann Czernin who, during his tenure as imperial ambassador to the Ottoman court, had favoured the arrival of news from Crete, besieged by the Turks, to Venice (Setton, 1991, p. 124 and footnote on page 125). *Il Perfetto Ambasciatore* is addressed, though indirectly, to him. The dedicatee of the book is actually his nephew, Humprecht Johann Czernin von Chudenitz, Italianized as Giovanni Zernin, baron of Chudeniz (Hajná, 2020). They belonged to an important Bohemian family with a history of service to the Emperor. Humprecht made his Grand Tour of Italy between 1644 and 1645 and became an art lover. Later, between 1660 and 1663, he was sent as an ambassador to Venice (Hojda, 2020).

On the cover of the book, Mutio Ziccata appears in large font, a pseudonym for Matteo Zuccati, a specialist in the translation of political works from French into Italian (Melzi, 1859, p. 273). Virtually the only information about him is Villani's brief comment stating that Zuccati is Venetian (Villani, 1689, p. 125) and two mentions in a compendium of members of the Academy of the Incogniti (Bonifacio, 1646, pp. 285 and 300). Three *ex-libris* in the library of a conspicuous military leader, statesman, and writer in the service of the Empire, Nikola Zrinski (1620-1664), also point to Zuccati.<sup>9</sup> The only additional reference to Ziccata are his works: *Il Ministro di Stato* (published in 1639, 1644, and 1647), *Il Consigliere di Stato* (1646) and *Istruzione de 'prencipi* (1647), published in Venice, and *La Santa Corte* (1648), printed in Bologna. They are translations of Silhon's *Le Ministre d'Etat*, Béthune's *Le Conseiller d'Etat*, *De l'Instruction de Monsieur le Dauphin* (1640) by François de La Mothe Le Vayer and *La Cour Sainte* (1624) by Nicolas Caussin respectively.<sup>10</sup> It can be concluded that *Il Perfetto Ambasciatore* (1649) was part of an ambitious translation project of recent French political treatises into Italian led by Ziccata. Since the translation of *Le Ministre* had first been published in 1639, it is reasonable to think that Ziccata worked on the other translations, and specifically on that of Vera's book, in the 1630s, when Vera was still in Venice. Agostino Rossi, Vera's assistant in Venice, as well as a spy for the Serenissima, stated in 1634 that he won the Count's trust by translating his "dialogue" (Cinti, 1966,

p. 90). Such dialogue cannot be other than *El Enbaxador* since it was Vera's only work in this form. It seems, therefore, that the Count of La Roca promoted the Italian translation of his works while he was based in Venice (Gutiérrez, 2016).

The typographer of *Il Perfetto Ambasciatore* was Francesco Valvasense (Barbierato, 2005a, footnote 9). He was the editor of several books of the Academy of the In-cogniti and underwent an inquisitorial process due to his relationship with the Academy in the early 1650s. These years of strong censorship would weigh heavily on the material presentation of the 1654 edition, from which the name of the translator and the mention of the Spanish origin of the book disappeared (the only provenance indicated is the French one), omissions that are preserved in the 1674 edition. The 1649 and 1654 editions have the reference to the theme of the embassy in common through their carefully engraved frontispieces. In the 1649 edition, Mercury, the gods' envoy and patron of ambassadors, and the wise Minerva appear surrounded by their symbols: the rooster and objects related to science and wisdom. This composition which brought together Mercury and Minerva was very popular for illustrating books on the theme of the ambassadorial role. In the 1654 edition, Mercury, now without Minerva, drives a winged chariot drawn by roosters in an engraving by Pecini, an important Venice artisan and a regular contributor to Giovanni Giacomo Hertz, the editor of the 1674 Venetian edition.

Strikingly, a false author is stated on the title page of the 1674 edition: Desiderio Castiglione. The dedicatory epistle of the book, addressed to an obscure Mutio Berretti by the editor, begins with an invocation to Socrates and is written in a cultured and poetic tone, absent from the rather concise paratexts of the other editions in Italian. In his dedicatory epistle, Hertz expresses a special attachment to this book and could be giving himself away as the inventor of the false name: "From my press, therefore, the satisfaction of my desire (*desiderio*) goes out to the World" (Vera, 1674, dedicatory epistle to *Illustrissimo signore*). In the letter to the reader that follows, there is a strong indication that the volume contains the quintessence of politics while emphasizing the readers' taste for brevity and prose both teaching and delighting at the same time, for which some verses from Horace's *Poetica* are used. The letter begins with an emphasis on the political nature of the work written in dialogue form: "In this small volume the most important maxims which give essence to the body of true politics are condensed. A very vast subject in itself, which has been wisely divided into Dialogues" (Vera, 1674, *A chi legge*). Likewise, the interest in empiricism and the sciences which are useful to get to know the world more precisely, such as geography, are pointed out. In all, the book accelerates learning on politics: "being able to learn from it in a few hours of accurate reading what others acquire in the Courts of Princes only after a long time" (Vera, 1674, *A chi legge*).

Regarding the title of the three Venetian editions of *El Enbaxador*, there is an evolution from *Il Perfetto Ambasciatore* in 1649, taken directly from the French title *Le*

*Parfait Ambassadeur*, to *Idea del Perfetto Ambasciatore* in 1654 and finally *Dialoghi storici e politici contenenti le vere massime della Politica et L'idea d'un Perfetto Ambasciatore* in 1674. Moreover, the three Venetian editions have the same index (*Racconto delle materia che si trattano nella presente opera*) which differs from the ones in Spanish and French. It is now an abridged "Table of remarkable things" in the book, a thematic index that underlines the importance of the examples used in the text, as in the Spanish 1620 original. The Italian text is further reduced when compared to the French edition since the *harangues* (speeches) section is now suppressed. The qualification of the work as "political-historical" is included on the three Italian title pages which provides a strong indication that these texts were received as handbooks for diplomatic and political practice alike.

The dedicatory epistles of the three Venetian editions of *El Enbaxador* are signed by the editors, not the translator, even when Ziccata signed some of the dedicatory epistles of the books he translated, for example, those of the aforementioned *Il Ministro* (1639) and *Il Consigliere* (1646). The prominence of publishers and booksellers in early modern Europe was significant, especially in places like Venice, where they were entrepreneurs with a certain independence from political power that allowed for publishing decisions based on commercial criteria. Although the booksellers are different in the three Venetian editions, they all have a German surname and a relationship can be established between them. The publisher of the 1674 edition, Giovanni Giacomo Hertz, who had arrived in Venice in the 1630s, was an apprentice to Wiffeldick, in turn, the publisher of the 1649 edition, and there is a close match with the name of the publisher of 1654, an obscure Giovanni Giorgio Hertz (Barbierato, 2005a, pp. 146-147). While Wiffeldick and Giovanni Giorgio did not publish anything else in Venice, Giovanni Giacomo Hertz was very successful in the city, where he was active for more than fifty years (Barbierato, 2005b). His large bookstore was one of the most attractive for intellectuals and travellers on the Grand Tour with Venice being a mandatory stop. Finally, there is evidence of Wiffeldick's relationship with the Elzeviers, for whom he acted as an agent for book printing purposes (see for example the letter 3447 in Galilei, 1966, p. 33).

A careful comparison of the material presentation of the three Venetian editions leads to conclude that there was probably just one edition with three different sets of paratexts and not three different editions, since everything is identical in all three from the index onwards, including text, paging, typography, and decoration. Significantly, the heading "Del Perfetto Ambasciatore" on alternate pages of the text remains from the 1649 edition, although the title of the work as well as its spelling changes from 1649 to 1674 as previously discussed. By reading the 1654 issue at the British Library it can be verified that the paper on the pages before the index (that is, the title page and dedicatory epistle) is darker and of a different quality when compared to the rest of the book, which may indicate that this 1654 book is actually a rebinding of the previously printed 1649 edition to which the first pages have

been changed to make a new edition.<sup>11</sup> In other words, the same printing press could have stamped the text and the index (*Racconto*) of the three editions. Furthermore, since there seems to be a single impression of the text, we can conclude that there is only one translation, that of Ziccata, made in the 1630s or 1640s of the seventeenth century.

In 1709, thirty-five years after the last Venetian edition, the Leiden bookseller Theodore Haak published *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* in French again. There had not been a new edition in French since 1642. Although the indication “nouvellement traduit en Français” on the title page implies that this is a new translation whose author, in any case, is not mentioned, from the inspection of the text it would appear that it is strongly based on the “old translation”, that of 1635. Rather than a new translation, there has been an update of the language and spelling. The indexes and pagination of the 1709 *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* edition are identical to those of 1635. The editor of 1709 likely had the 1635 translation by Lancelot, or its title page at least, in front of him as can be concluded by comparing the title pages of both editions where the name and titles of the author and the sentence stating the target public of the book are exactly the same (Figs. 1 and 2). Interestingly, Theodore Haak suggests in the dedicatory epistle that the name of the author would have a certain resonance: “The name of the Author can give weight to the topics covered” (Vera, 1709, *Dedicace*).

The 1709 edition is addressed to two “very illustrious gentlemen” of the United Provinces: Henry Ferdinand, baron of Inhuisen and representative of the province of Groningue before the States General, and Charles Ferdinand who, in addition to holding the same titles as Henry Ferdinand, is one of the Directors of the West India Company, therefore a statesman as well as a businessman. Not surprisingly, one of the challenges in the negotiation for the upcoming Peace of Utrecht was precisely American trade (Bély, 2013). This new Dutch edition of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* fits into the context of the Geertruidenberg negotiations (1709-1710) before the Peace of Utrecht (Bély, 2007, pp. 431-464).

Remarkably, there was a review of this 1709 edition in *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (Bernard, 1709, pp. 437-445). After Bayle's death, the publisher of *Nouvelles* was also a French exile, Jacques Bernard. This review is extremely valuable since it offers a look at how *El Enbaxador* was read almost a hundred years after its first publication in 1620. The review begins by comparing *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* with the most recent treatise on the ambassadorial office in French, Wicquefort's *L'ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, to conclude that *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* is still useful and even preferable for its brevity (“it is a lot shorter,” p. 439). This is telling about the usual length of these treatises, just considering that the “shorter” Vera's book consists of 520 pages. It also means that, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* was still useful when compared to the more recent Wicquefort's treatise. Interestingly, the value of *El Enbaxador* was still acknowledged a hundred years after its first publication.

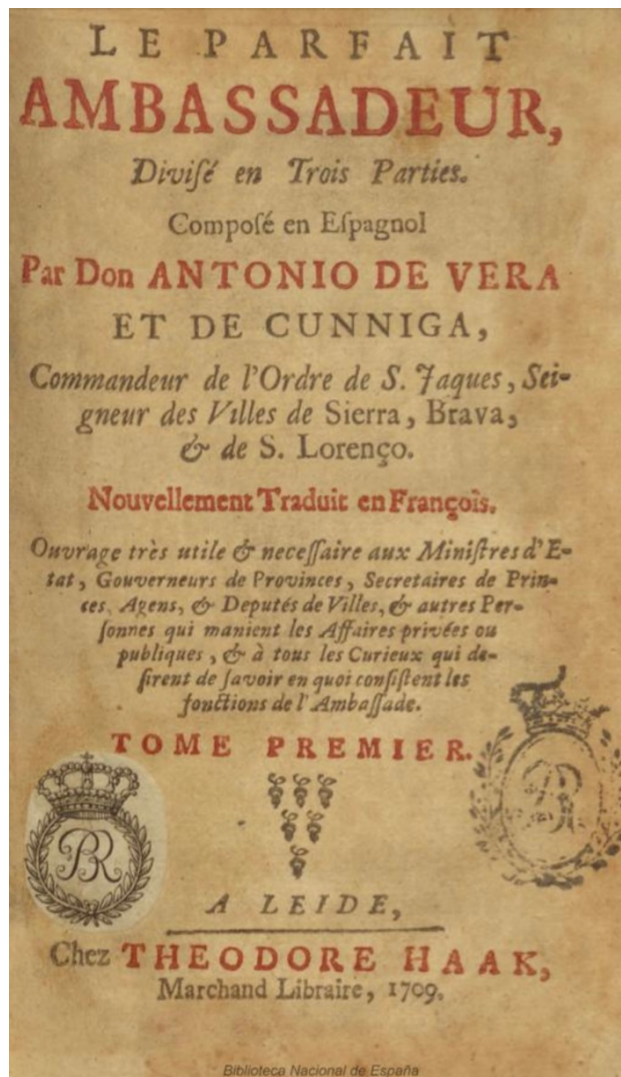


FIGURE 2. Title page of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* (1709). This image has been obtained from the collections of Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE). The complete book is available at Biblioteca Digital Hispánica on <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000221072&page=1>

According to the 1709 review, among the useful questions tackled by *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* are the definition of tyranny (which is linked to the heated debate on sovereignty), the right of retaliation of a prince whose ambassador has been offended, the obedience due to an unfair prince, the suitability of ecclesiastics and merchants as ambassadors and the use of dissimulation in the practice of politics. Recommendations and examples resulting from Vera's erudition in the book are highly valued: “The Spanish Author has judgment and penetration, he seems to understand the subject matter he is dealing with well. He has read a lot, and it is rare that he puts forward something that is not confirmed or embellished by some historical example” (pp. 438-439). Finally, there is a comment on the style of the translation itself: it is classified as “very literal” (p.

444), with twists now in disuse in French, and some misprints and errors in the text. In summary, the book is recommended reading for all those in public office: “It deserves to be read, especially by those who are Public Ministers or who aspire to this Office” (p. 443). The author of the review declares to know of a translation of “approximately a hundred years old” (p. 443) which he has not been able to read that would explain the author’s failure to relate the 1709 translation to that of 1635. By looking at the 1709’s title page (Fig. 2), the strict dependence of the 1709 edition to that of 1635 is clear since it is almost identical, including the title of the original author, Juan Antonio de Vera, and the words to the book’s audience. In this way, 1635’s *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* entered the world of the Republic of Letters, a late but still valuable example of the combination of humanism and diplomacy (Fumaroli, 2013, pp. 200-209; Kugeler, 2006, pp. 27-46).

Up to this point, there seems to be enough evidence to conclude that the two subsequent editions of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur* in French (those of 1642 and 1709) depend heavily on the 1635 edition, the only one printed in France since the other two were published in the United Provinces. Furthermore, taking into account the prologue of the 1649 Venetian edition, saying that the translation is based on both the Spanish and the French texts, and assuming a single Venetian impression, the Venetian editions would also depend on the 1635 text by Lancelot. In other words, it can be concluded that the European fortunes of *El Enbaxador* owe a lot to the French 1635 edition.

Additionally, it has been proved that the edition, translation and distribution projects associated with the joint reception of Vera’s book and other contemporary texts on political thought worked remarkably well. Three texts, Jean de Silhon’s *Le Ministre d’Estat*, Philippe de Béthune’s *Le Conseiller d’Estat* and Juan Antonio de Vera’s *Le Parfait Ambassadeur*, followed exactly the same European journey, starting in Paris towards Venice. All three were published in French in Paris in the 1630s, reprinted in Leiden by the Elzeviers in the first half of the 1640s, and released in Italian in Venice by the end of that decade. The enigmatic Mutio Ziccata translates all three works into Italian, along with other famous political French treatises. An important translation project that cannot be accidental. Finally, a whole network of diplomats, intellectuals, publishers, booksellers, artists, and book collectors jointly enabled the different contemporary readings of *Le Parfait Ambassadeur*. The statesman and ambassador Abel Servien was probably the patron and promoter of the work at the court of Paris. It has not been difficult to link the inspiration for the different editions with the academies or discussion groups on literature, art, and politics that existed in Paris, Venice, and Leiden. Finally, the publishers (most of them, also booksellers) of the six editions are all different, but a relationship between them can be established. They were all very well-connected businessmen, feeding an entire European network of translators, engravers, and bookbinders.

*El Enbaxador* (already turned into *Le Parfait Ambassadeur*) was read as a treatise on political theory and

practice, either as a handbook as the 1635 French edition implies, or as a key reference work on the subject of political thought as the Italian editions seem to emphasize. This means that the readings on the office of ambassador served to inspire the political practice of the time, a time eager to respond to old problems and codify good government practices. In all, the political takeaways from the book were probably as interesting to readers as the diplomatic ones precisely at a time when French was aspiring to become the diplomatic *lingua franca*, a process to which Vera’s treatise likely contributed.

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## NOTES

- 1 Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Estado (Milán), legajo 3336, Nos. 164 y 165, Letter from M. de Servient to Monsieur Le Conte de la Rocque, 24 marzo 1631. The letter with number 164 is in French and the letter number 165 is the Spanish translation of the former (no indication of the translator’s identity).
- 2 Derived from the graphics on Martin, 1969, vol. 2, p. 1071. In the 1630s, we can see 26 Spanish authors, 20 Italian authors, 20 Classical authors and 10 Church Fathers. The data are based on Alexandre Cioranescu’s research as stated there.
- 3 Lancelot and Boisrobert were friends according to the entry regarding Nicolas Lancelot in Michaud, 1842, pp. 440-441. Such relationship seems to be confirmed by the fact that some of Boisrobert’s poems were used in Lancelot’s works.
- 4 *De l’Interest* was first published in *Le Vingtiesme Tome du Mercure François, ou Suite de l’Histoire de nostre temps, sous le Regne du Tres-Chrestien Roy de France & de Nauarre Lovys XIII, continuation de l’an 1634*. Paris: Estienne Richer, pp. 46-126. This tome of *Le Mercure François* was published in 1637.
- 5 *Le Ministre d’Estat* by Silhon had three parts, each first published in 1631, 1643 and 1661 respectively. Only the first part is relevant to the present essay. Regarding *Le Conseiller d’Estat*, the contemporary edition of Béthune (2012) is being used which features an introduction by Marc Fumaroli and a rich preface by François Monnier, the editor. Béthune is generally accepted as the author of *Le Conseiller d’Estat* and it will be taken as a working assumption. However, the book was published without declaring the name of the author and it was considered a work of Eustache De Refuge for some time. Some arguments for De Refuge’s authorship can be found in Church (1972), p. 279, n.296. For the editions of *Le Conseiller d’Estat*, including the first French edition in 1632, see Carnino (2021).
- 6 I have used the recent edition of the work in French: C. Pasquale (2014) based on the 1645 edition of Pasquale’s *Legatus* (1598).
- 7 For a list of appearances of the 1635 edition, see Vian Herrero, 2020b, footnote 8, p. 763; for the Spanish distribution of *El Enbaxador*, see Vian Herrero, 2020a.
- 8 Vera’s confessor in Venice said: “For ten full years the curiosity of the Politicians was tormented by the secret affaires between the famous men the Count de la Rocca and Father Santos.” Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE), VE/1475/12, p. 3. Another significant testimonial is: “the Count della Rocca then Catholic Ambassador in Venice; who, with a beautiful wit, enjoyed attacking with the Virtuous Italians about controversial matters, of which he made fun of, and benefited from, creating them himself, and having them printed in his own House, whether

the Provocations, or the Answers” (Brusoni, 1654, p. 9). Apparently, the Count had a clandestine printing press in his house in Venice (Fernández-Daza Álvarez, 2005). Francesco Baba, the printer who helped him in his clandestine tasks, was severely punished by the Court of the Inquisition for his cooperation with the Count. For a complete overview of Vera's diplomatic and literary activity in Venice, see Cinti, 1966. For his espionage activity, Preto, 2010, pp. 130-134. For Vera's perspective as promoter of his own literary work in Venice, see Gutiérrez, 2016.

- 9 Three books from the Zrinyi Library (BZ308, BZ331 and BZ399), that belonged to Nikola Zrinski are marked with “ex libris Mattheai Zuccati”. This Zuccati is likely the translator Ziccata in this essay for several reasons: the Zrinyi library contains four books translated by him (BZ301 Vera, 1649; reference missing-Silhon, 1644; BZ170 Silhon 1639; BZ303 Béthune 1646), most of the collections in the library are Venetian and it is a contemporary library (the catalogue is dated 1662, two years before Zrinski's death). The complete library catalogue can be found at: <http://www.eruditio.hu/zrinyi3d/rekonst/index.html> [Accessed 11/May/2021].
- 10 The editions of 1639 and 1647 of Silhon's *Il Ministro di Stato* are Ziccata's translation of the first part of Silhon's *Le Ministre d'Etat* (1631). The 1639 edition was addressed to Richelieu and taken out of circulation (censored) right after it was published. The 1644 edition is Ziccata's translation of *Le Ministre d'Etat, Seconde Partie* (1643).
- 11 The 1654 issue I read was British Library (BL), *Idea del Perfetto Ambasciadore*, 1654, 595 F7.

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