

Eucharist, as Swann demonstrates in chapter 3. Because taste might at once intimate a sinful desire and a means for transcending the fallen status of the human condition, Swann argues that its contested status allowed for generative debates along confessional lines regarding a morally inflected act of consumption. These ideological nuances carried over into the period's experimental sciences. Chapter 4 traces the experimental uses of taste in seventeenth-century natural philosophy. Taste is redeemed as a valuable diagnostic and experimental sense primarily through the work of Royal Society members Nehemiah Grew and Robert Boyle. From the rational knowledge of early science, Swann moves to the erotic language of sweetness and its connections with intuitive knowledge in chapter 5. Here, Swann argues that sexual tasting was a language that interrogated the properties of the beloved and their senses. Authors experimented with a type of intersubjective, intuitive knowledge of the desired body through the language of taste in their treatment of the beloved individual.

Although scholars have worked to challenge the supremacy of a Platonic hierarchy of the senses in early modern habits of thought, Swann's historical and literary account of the many valences of taste shows how much more we have to learn. This study tackles some of the more vexing questions about early modern theories of embodiment in the period, particularly in how both literature and science influenced the reader's embodied experience of subjectivity with taste. Swann ultimately offers a convincing historical account of this neglected sense and the knowledge gained through taste.

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Beyond Ambassadors: Consuls, Missionaries, and Spies in Premodern Diplomacy.
Maurits A. Ebben and Louis Sicking, eds.
Rulers and Elites 19. Leiden: Brill, 2020. x + 224 pp. \$119.

The purpose of this book is to examine the role of non-state agents in early modern and medieval diplomacy. The editors admit that such an approach in an age before nation-states and standard diplomacy can be considered anachronistic. Nevertheless, the book has much to contribute to both the history of the state and diplomacy. The essays situate themselves in the tradition of the new diplomatic history of recent decades that has focused on the nature and culture of diplomatic practice—the networks, institutions, rhetorical strategies, identities, personal interests, and cultural exchanges that underlay the negotiations between political systems. Although the title does not indicate this, it is worth noting that all essays focus on European agents.

The first chapter, by John Watkins, examines the historiography of diplomacy in recent decades in the context of international relations. He suggests that early modern historians switch from looking at diplomacy as an institution to diplomacy as a behavior

and process. Dante Fedele's chapter provides a useful nomenclature of diplomatic agents in the Middle Ages. After an examination of sixteenth-century treatises on the role of the ambassador, he concludes that by the end of the century the divisions between public and private diplomatic agents had not yet been determined. Subsequent essays are divided into three categories of agents not specifically linked to a prince or state. The first third look at consuls defined as officers invested with legal authority of a merchant community. These often served as diplomatic agents. Louis Sicking's chapter describes the urban representatives of Baltic merchant communities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (*Vögte*) as the counterparts of consuls active in the Mediterranean. Maurits Ebben's chapter looks at the problems of Dutch consuls in Spanish ports in the seventeenth century as they tried to navigate through a myriad of councils and lower-level officials.

Part 2 includes two chapters on missionaries. Jacques Paviot's chapter ventures outside of Europe to present Mendicant friars at the Mongol court in the thirteenth century. Although missionaries, they were often sent by sovereigns looking for military assistance against their enemies in the Middle East. Nevertheless, without gifts, cultural sensitivity, or the ability to translate, they failed to establish meaningful communication. Felicia Roşu's chapter introduces the reader to Antonio Possevino, a Jesuit missionary, and his (mis)adventures in Sweden, Muscovy, Hungary, Transylvania, and Poland-Lithuania in the late sixteenth century. Despite his fall from grace as a diplomatic agent, he ended his life as a respected intellectual. The final two chapters deal with spies. Jean-Baptiste Santamaria looks at espionage as the counterpart to administrative and bureaucratic systems that hindered the freedom of the prince in fifteenth-century France and Burgundy. Alan Marshall describes an espionage turn in the middle of the seventeenth century, when spying became a professional activity, and intelligence a commodity.

At their best, the chapters zero in on the stories of diplomatic agents in action. Scholar-diplomats such as Antonio Possevino provide us with a glimpse not only into the power politics of the age but also into the character of the actors themselves. They truly served as hinges between states, cultures, religious faiths, economic interests, and social strata. These essays also show that they operated within the poles of collective values and self-interest, as well as of morality and wickedness. There is something compelling about these figures who were powerful and powerless at the same time. Although clearly drawn toward the centers of power, these agents found themselves captured in a web of unseen forces. Seen from this perspective, they might serve as metaphors for any human struggling with agency in the face of life's hidden obstacles.

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