

2021-10

# Gender and Materiality in Early Modern English Gloves

Daybell, J

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/14831>

---

Sixteenth Century Journal: journal of early modern studies

The Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc.

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*

## Gender and Materiality in Early Modern English Gloves<sup>1</sup>

This is the author's accepted manuscript. The final published version of this work (the version of record) is published by Truman State University in *Sixteenth Century Journal* available at: [DOI TSCJ-D-18-00041R1]. This work is made available in accordance with the publisher's policies. Please refer to any applicable terms of use of the publisher.

*James Daybell, Svante Norrhem, Susan Broomhall, Jacqueline Van Gent and Nadine Akkerman*

January 1578: 'By the Lady Mary Sydney, one peir of perfumed gloves, with twenty-four small buttons of golde, in every of them a small diamond'.

January 1579: 'By Mr. William Russell, a paire of gloves, garnished with gold and sede perle'.<sup>2</sup>

Elizabethan gift rolls feature frequent presents of elaborately decorated and perfumed gloves given to the queen by both women and men in highly ritualised New Year's gift-giving ceremonies at court. These new possibilities for conspicuous European consumption of exotic products and new materials were opened up by European settlement in North America beginning in the sixteenth century and spreading over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as by expanding trade between Europe and Asia. At the same time, royal and aristocratic courtly culture contributed to a growing demand in luxury items such as art, porcelain, jewellery, textiles and clothing. These changing patterns of early modern consumption in Europe could both reinforce existing social patterns and shape new ones, including gender relations, as consumables interacted on various levels with human actors.<sup>3</sup> Gloves became part of this increase in demand for

---

<sup>1</sup> This article derives from an AHRC network 'Gender, Power and Materiality in Early Modern Europe' led by Daybell and Norrhem. We are thankful to the following for comments and assistance: Angela McShane, Joanna Norman, Mike Redwood, Lyndal Roper, Ulinka Rublack and Merry Wiesner-Hanks. All errors remain our own. We are also grateful to the Worshipful Company of Glovers, Susan North, Curator of Fashion at the V&A, and to the staff of the V&A's Clothworkers Centre, and to Timothy Long, Curator of Fashion at the Museum of London.

<sup>2</sup> Jane A. Lawson, *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges, 1559-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Wouter Ryckbosch, 'Early Modern Consumption History. Current Challenges and Future Perspectives', *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, 130/1 (2015), 57-84 (p. 75); Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent, 'The gendered power of porcelain among early modern European dynasties', *Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1400-1800*, ed. by James Daybell and Svante Norrhem (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 53-63; Maxine

conspicuous consumables, met by trade in previously unexploited North American fur supplies and importation of increasing quantities of Chinese silk. These global commodities added to the materials for glove manufacture that had since the Middle Ages been imported from Spain and Italy. Gloves in the early modern period saw a major expansion of their production and consumption.<sup>4</sup> Gloves are well suited to elucidate the connections between gender and materiality since they were interacted with by both women and men, the elite and the marginalised, and people across the world including indigenous and European hunters in North America or Siberia, silk weavers in China, traders, tanners, perfumers, embroiderers, master glove-makers, and consumers – who might have made them, bought them, worn them, displayed them, visualised them, or passed them on as gifts to others.

This article explores the complex interactions of gender with the materiality of these processes of becoming and being a glove in the early modern period. We argue that gender and materiality act in dialogic ways to produce power relations. Furthermore, we argue that one cannot study how material things function and what they can do in a given society without consideration of gender and materiality. We employ gloves as a case study with a rich history, extant examples, and diversity of available sources, in order to explore this conceptualisation, a way of thinking about the gendered nature of power relationships constructed by and through material artefacts, that might be applicable for analyzing many other things, such as shoes, rings, porcelain or books.<sup>5</sup> However, the choice of the early modern glove is particularly interesting

---

Berg, 'In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, 182 (2004), 85-142.

<sup>4</sup> Mike Redwood, *Gloves and Glove-Making* (London: Bloomsbury Shire Publications, 2016), pp. 30-31.

<sup>5</sup> For studies of early modern gloves and glove-making, see on collections: *A Handful of History. Catalogue of the exhibition of decorative gloves from the Spence Collection, arranged by the Worshipful Company of Glovers and the Museum of London at Austin, Reed, Regent Street, London* (London: Austin Reed, 1980); E. Gibson, 'Collections Visited: Some Gloves from Mr Robert Spence's collection: Part I and Part II', *Connoisseur*, LV and LVIII (October, September) (1919 and 1920); Judith Doré, 'Elizabeth Hammond's Collection and the Kent Costume Trust: An Appreciation', *Costume*, 49/1 (2015), 3-7. On famous gloves see, Claire Robinson, "'An old and faithful servand": A Pair of Early Seventeenth-Century Gauntlet Gloves given by King Charles I to Sir Henry Wardlaw', *Costume*, 49/1 (2015), 8-31; P. Byrde and P. Brears, 'A Pair of James I's Gloves', *Costume*, 24 (1990), 34-42. On the early history of gloves see, S. William Beck, *Gloves, Their Annals and Associations: A Chapter of Trade and Social History* (London, 1883); Valerie Cuming, *Gloves* (London: Batsford, 1982); William Beales Redfern, *Royal and Historic Gloves and Shoes* (London: Methuen, 1904); National Association of Glove Manufacturers, *The Story of the Fabric Glove Industry of Great Britain* (London: National Association of Glove Manufacturers

to utilize for this analysis because of its gender ambiguities, as museum curators often find determining whether a particular glove was intended for use by a woman or a man challenging. We consider how gloves — in various phases of its becoming in the early modern period — could act as social agents. We analyse how gender and materiality operated to produce forms of power embedded within gloves as things embedded in early modern social practices and cultural processes of production, consumption and exchange. Using the glove as an indicative point of exploration, the article offers a new gendered interpretative methodology for analysing other material artefacts in an early modern European context across their many itineraries from commission to conservation.

### I Theory and Methods

This article investigates how gloves, glove parts, and their ephemeral presentation (through leather, embroidery and perfume) in the early modern era constructed new networks and established new hierarchies of power within the labour market, the household, and the political sphere. In offering a new interpretative lens for studying gendered power from the perspective of materiality it firstly brings together several areas of recent scholarship concerning the gendered nature of politics, the political and gendered hierarchies within the labour market and households in the early modern world, in which gender is always one of several factors that informs its operation. To be clear, our particular focus here is on gender, but we understand this as an intersecting dynamic with other identities and experiences shaped by class, faith, race, age and so on. Secondly, it builds on analyses suggesting the significant political implications and import of early modern material culture. Research concerning early modern English gloves suggests that gendered power

---

London, 1948); P. Rigden, 'Gloves', *Costume*, 3/1 (1969), 28-29; B. Eldred Ellis, *Gloves and the Glove Trade* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1921); William Hull Jr, *The History of the Glove Trade...*(London: Effingham Wilson, 1834); C. Cody Collins, *Love of a Glove: The Romance, Legends and Fashion History of Gloves...* (New York: Fairchild Publishing Company, 1947); Rudolph Presber et al., *Der Handschuh: Ein Vademecum für Menschen von Geschmack* (Berlin: R&P Schaefer, 1914); Berent Schweineköper, *Der Handschuh im Recht Ämterwesen, Brauch and Volksglauben* (Neue deutsche Forschungen, 5, Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1938); Wanda Foster, "A Garden of Flowers": A Note on Some Unusual Embroidered Gloves', *Costume*, 14/1 (1980), 90-94; *Hands & Their Handicraft: Gloves - Being a Brief Outline of the History & Manufacture of Fabric Gloves* (London, n.d.); Redwood, *Gloves and Glove-Making*.

relations inform every mode of their existence and significance, from conceptualisation, component source and physical production, to consumption, display and exchange, and finally, destruction, preservation, conservation or memory from family archives to modern museological settings. The article argues that gendered operations of power, invested in material artefacts such as (but not limited to) gloves, are complex, multiple and ever-changing, enacted in sometimes subtle and obscure ways — often ‘gloved,’ as it were, from historiographical analysis — but that these are vital to elucidate for a richer and more meaningful understanding of the relational nature of gender, power and materiality.

In recent years, scholars from various disciplines have sought to understand the gendered structures of early modern politics in Europe. Much has been done to reconstruct men’s and women’s roles, to rethink categories and definitions of what constituted ‘power’, ‘politics’ and ‘agency’, integrating the personal and informal, with the public and formal, and analysing gender as a dynamic at the state, family, and wider society level.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the last two decades or so have witnessed the ‘material turn’ in history, borrowing approaches from the vast fields of material culture, anthropology and archaeology which lend a sophisticated theoretical understanding of the ways in which material artefacts and groups of things function.<sup>7</sup> Scholars have studied the relationship between power and materiality, and materiality and gender.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> James Daybell and Svante Norrhem (eds) *Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: OUP, 2002); James Daybell, *Women and Politics in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Wiesner-Hanks, Heide Wunder, *He Is the Sun, She Is the Moon: Women in Early Modern Germany* (1998); Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (eds), *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-Waiting Across Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Jessica Munns and Penny Richards (eds.), *Gender, Power and Privilege in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Daniel Miller, *The Comfort of Things* (London: Polity Press, 2009); Victor Buchli, *The Material Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002). For early modern studies influenced by the ‘material turn’ see Renata Ago, *Gusto for Things: A History of Objects in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Sven Dupre, *Silent Messengers: The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2012); Paula Findlen, *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800* (London: Routledge, 2012); Joachim Frenk, *Textualised Objects: Material Culture in Early Modern English Literature* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012); Anne Gerritsen and Girolgio Riello (eds), *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2015); Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> T. Bennett and P. Joyce, *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn* (London: Routledge, 2010); J. Styles and A. Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in*

Among early modern historians, material studies have looked at gendered patterns of production, consumption and taste, or households and related objects as sites of material meaning and display.<sup>9</sup> Less well studied, however, is the degree to which power was shaped by the interplay of materiality and gender ideologies and practices in the early modern period.

Thus the ‘material turn’, a turning away from author to ‘things’, prompts various unanswered questions about materials and artefacts as expressions and operations of gendered and materialised power relations, as they are produced, consumed, owned, collected and so on.<sup>10</sup> Interdisciplinary work on gifts and gift-giving has studied the exchange of the material and textual as one way of understanding social and political relationships, although scholars have little examined the gendered dynamics of gift-exchange.<sup>11</sup> However, Igor Kopytoff argues that things are not finished just because they are produced, in fact they are part of a process of becoming throughout their existence, a process he terms ‘commoditization’.<sup>12</sup> From this perspective, we can follow how a specific artefact or material component is transformed from one condition to another, and from one situation to another. Things can thus be said to have a biography, including

---

*Britain and North America, 1700–1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Cf. H. Greig *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) for the eighteenth century.

<sup>9</sup> M. Overton et al (eds), *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London: Routledge, 2004); L. Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in England, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge, 1988); J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Tara Hamling et al (eds) *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*; Chris Gosden and Y. Marshall, ‘The Cultural Biography of Objects’, *World Archaeology*, 31 (1999), 169-78; Bill Brown, (ed.), *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004); Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (New York: Clarendon Press 1998); Daniel Miller, (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press 2005); Bruno Latour, Bruno, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1993); Carla Nappi (2012); Naguib Saphinaz-Amal and Bjarne Rogan (eds), *Materiell kultur & kulturens materialitet* (Oslo : Novus forlag 2011); Alex Preda, ‘The Turn to Things: Arguments for a Sociological Theory of Things’, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 40/2 (1999), 347-66; Camilla Mordhorst, *Genstandsfortællinger: fra Museum Wormianum til de moderne museer* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press 2009). On thing theory see Bill Brown, *A Sense of Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> On early modern gift-giving see Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: OUP, 2000); Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008); Svante Norrhem and Peter Lindström, *Flattering Alliances: Scandinavia, Diplomacy, and the Austrian-French Balance of Power, 1648-1740* (Lund: Nordic University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Igor Kopytoff, ‘The Cultural Biography of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective’, in Appadurai, (ed.), *Social Life of Things*, pp. 64-90.

different stages from production, consumption, exchanges and alterations. One way of describing this is to say that things are unstable, rather than anchored in historical aspic. Carla Nappi develops this further, arguing that there are no such things as transhistorical objects – their instability makes them elusive and evasive.<sup>13</sup> A part of this instability is the changing context that surrounds an artefact: they are never isolated from other things and they follow a different temporality from humans.<sup>14</sup> Thus, conceptually, we adopt the language of specific material artefact and categories of things, in this article. As the anthropologist Tim Ingold argues, an object ‘implies an entity that is already thrown, already cast, in a fixed and final form. It confronts us, face-to-face, as a *fait accompli*. When we talk about materials, on the other hand, they are always becoming. Everything is something, but being something is always on the way to becoming something else. Materials, if you will, are substances in becoming.’<sup>15</sup>

The early works of object theorists such as Bjarne Rogan emphasised that there is an on-going interaction between humans and objects: ‘objects do not just provide a stage setting to human action; they are integral to it’.<sup>16</sup> Objects are thus agentic. Alex Preda argues that ‘both human actors and things appear as active entities involved in the production of social order’.<sup>17</sup> We assume in this article that there is an interaction between objects and human actors, that gloves and their component parts had different meanings in different contexts, and varied capacity in these forms and contexts to exert, establish, stabilise or disrupt power relations. Our approach to materiality prioritizes the material alongside the human, influenced by Ingold, who advocates that ‘we take a step back, from the materiality of objects to the properties of materials’.<sup>18</sup> More specifically, he argues that ‘if we are concerned with the properties of materials, ... [we might] think of these

---

<sup>13</sup> Nappi, ‘Surface Tension’ in Findlen (ed), p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An Archeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell 2012), pp. 1-6.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Ingold, ‘An Ecology of Materials,’ in Susanne Witzgall and Kerstin Stakemeier (eds) *Power of Material/Politics of Materiality*, Zurich/Berlin: Diaphanes, 2014, ebook: <https://www.diaphanes.com/titel/an-ecology-of-materials-3064>

<sup>16</sup> Gosden and Marschall, ‘Cultural Biography of Objects’; Daniel Miller, ‘Materiality: An Introduction’ in Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 1-50; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2010) have similar ideas about human object agency.

<sup>17</sup> Preda, ‘The Turn to Things’.

<sup>18</sup> Tim Ingold, ‘Materials Against Materiality’, *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14/1 (2007), 1–16 (p. 9).

properties as belonging to the knowledge of practitioners that comes from a lifetime of experience of working with them. And this means that when we talk about the properties of materials, they are really stories of what happens to them.<sup>19</sup> Our approach to the processes of becoming that are at work in the glove considers the material alongside the human. Following philosopher Gilbert Simondon, Ingold conceptualises making as a process of contrapositions and conversations between forms and specific matter, which come together in the generation of things.<sup>20</sup> This shapes our desire to see gloves not simply as finished articles but as both materials and ideas embedded together in a series of processes that move these components through multiple hands, and gendered and materialized power operations, as they become and are gloves.

Methodologically our study of the materiality of gloves demands that we draw on a wide range of documentary and visual materials in addition to examples of the objects themselves in order to reconstruct their forms and meanings during the early modern period. The study is based on several hundred examples of historic gloves surviving in collections across the country, which are read alongside contemporary accounts, shopping lists, bills, correspondence, gift rolls, recipe books, sumptuary laws, plays and paintings.<sup>21</sup> These sources prompt us to consider the distinctive nature of these objects in these narratological contexts — the ‘museum glove’, the ‘archival glove’, the ‘archaeological glove’, the ‘textual glove’ and visual and literary representations of gloves — each of which contribute to the different gendered meanings of power for gloves in these interpretive contexts, such as the glove as gift situating women and men in relational networks of power, the glove as a powerful ‘relic’ or *memento mori* that sustains an individual or group identity and status; or the glove as participant in wider social and cultural practices of power associated with the hand, touch and glove-wearing. Moreover, the meanings associated with the physicality of gloves, their texture, colour and of course smell, are often lost over the course of time as they present themselves to us today in a museological context. Thus the

---

<sup>19</sup> Ingold, ‘An Ecology of Materials’.

<sup>20</sup> Ingold, ‘An Ecology of Materials’.

<sup>21</sup> For a much fuller analysis of early modern gloves, see the forthcoming book by Daybell and Broomhall, *Glove Culture in Early Modern England* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming).



full sensory experience of a glove in particular phases of its historical contexts can be extremely difficult to analyse from surviving examples since the colour may have faded and original meanings associated with particular colours used are lost; shrinkage may occur over time and gloves might suffer wear and tear; perfume is no longer immediately detectable, and often gloves are detached from the maker, giver or gift-bearer, and owners, and from other corporeal and contextual features of its presentation. It is possible that perfume could still be detectable with scientific molecular testing but as Bruce R. Smith has argued in his development of historical phenomenology, sensing and feeling also have a history so that these smells, or sensory experiences more broadly, need also to be understood as embodied in particular times, spaces and cultures.<sup>22</sup> What we perceive in the present then is not what the glove was at another time in sensory terms, or historical context, and in attempting to reconstruct these broader aspects textual sources are crucial; therefore, we need to be alert to the textual and rhetorical when analysing things, and consider, as Smith argues, words as ‘indexes, signs with a natural or metonymic connection with somatic experience.’<sup>23</sup> Additionally, recent conceptualisations of performativity in gender and material terms offer a useful analytical lens for how we understand these sources. The scholarship of new materialisms in particular has shifted emphasis from representational to performative frameworks in which processes of documenting, experimenting and intra-actions between humans and non-humans enact forms of knowledge.<sup>24</sup> In doing so, spatial and material theorists have argued for the agentic role of the material realm.<sup>25</sup> Thus we employ a highly diverse range of original sources in an

---

<sup>22</sup> Bruce R. Smith, ‘Pre-Modern Sexualities,’ *PMLA* 115, 3 (2000), p. 318–29.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce R. Smith, ‘Pre-Modern Sexualities,’ *PMLA* 115, 3 (2000), p. 326.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Barad, ‘Posthuman Performativity: Towards an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,’ *Signs* 28/3 (2003), 801–31; Judith Butler, ‘Gender as Performance,’ in Peter Osborne (ed.), *A Critical Sense: Interviews with Intellectuals* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 109–25; Lucas D. Introna, ‘Performativity and the Becoming of Sociomaterial Assemblages,’ in François-Xavier de Vaujany and Nathalie Mitev (eds), *Materiality and Space: Organizations, Artefacts and Practices* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), pp. 337–9.

<sup>25</sup> Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Daniel Miller (ed.), *Materiality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). Bennett’s theory has not gone unchallenged, particularly in terms of its limited engagement with aspects of power dynamics and processes at work in her theory of vital materialism. See for example, Thomas Lemke, ‘An Alternative Model of Politics? Prospects and Problems of Jane Bennett’s *Vital Materialism*,’ *Theory, Culture, Society*, 35 (6) 2018: 31-54.

analytical framework that considers knowledge production mechanisms, and the role of materials in them, in order to ‘unglove’ the complex becoming of the glove.

One of the challenges of working with historic gloves is their refusal to be situated in a single moment in time or space, which makes the ‘object biography’ of a particular glove or even a certain pair of gloves often unattainable. It is quite rare for gloves to be passed down with a provenance; they are often catalogued with very little ‘biographical’ information, an ‘anonymity’ that means they are usually divorced from the historical contexts of their ‘material existences’, associated with human agents and specific places. Rather than studying a single glove, and embarking on a ‘thick description’, this article takes what might be described as a collective prosopographical approach, which studies a range of gloves across the early modern period.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the everyday nature of gloves, the fact that they were worn and made of perishable materials, means their likelihood of survival is unusual; those that survive do so for reasons connected to their collection either as exemplars of design or fashion or through identification with particular individuals. The nature of surviving gloves and related documentary sources therefore focusses the article on the upper classes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, although we acknowledge wider social groups and practices involved in glove processes where possible.

Theoretically the article offers a methodological approach to things that complements traditional ‘object biographies’, and is critical of such conceptualisations for several reasons. It eschews the term ‘afterlife’ or ‘lifecycle’ since it argues that gloves and their meanings or power do not evolve, develop, or have an ‘after’ life, all of which imply a linear sense of progression, a beginning and end to an object’s existence; rather it understands these artefacts as highly changeable in different interpretive contexts and constellations of gender and power. While ‘biography’ implies a birth, death and potential afterlife, it argues that things (gloves) and their components (leather, embroidery, perfume) always exist and have meaning generated in different

---

<sup>26</sup> On thick description see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

relational contexts. In the sections that follow we trace various material components on their itineraries towards becoming and being gloves. We do so adopting the terminology of the itinerary of materials and things, which views them in continual transition through different states, identified as different things in particular moments in time.<sup>27</sup> For example, a thing that warms your hand, to one that is gifted, to an acquisition to be displayed in a museum. We recognise that the glove continues to exist beyond the early modern period, which is treated in our full scale study of glove culture in early modern England.<sup>28</sup>

## II Production

The becoming of gloves, muffs and ruffs, indeed handwear of all kinds, required a range of component materials including leather-work, embroidery, silk-work and cuffs in processes informed by gendered power dynamics. An exquisitely embroidered leather glove thought to have been worn by Mary Queen of Scots [Fig. 1] at the time of her execution demonstrates the complexity of the production process. The leather gauntlet, shaped to fit the wearer's hand, is embellished with careful needlework, the pattern of which features a bird in flight, and finished with edges trimmed with silver pendant beads.<sup>29</sup> Each part entailed practices that were shaped by material constraints and contemporary gender ideologies. Many of these limitations and assumptions were not specific to glove-making but were reflective of wider access to raw goods and of labour practices in the period. Gloves' raw components, how they were fashioned into clothing, and the designs with which they were decorated, were entangled in complex power operations by these factors, as we shall explore in this section.

---

<sup>27</sup> Hans Peter Hahn and Hadas Weiss, 'Introduction: Biographies, Travels and Itineraries of Things', in Hahn and Weiss (eds), *Mobility, Meaning and the Transformations of Things* (Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2013), pp. 1-14.

<sup>28</sup> Daybell and Broomhall, *Glove Culture* (forthcoming).

<sup>29</sup> The glove survives at Saffron Walden Museum.



*Figure 1. Glove thought to have been worn by Mary Queen Scots at her execution, 8 February 1587, Saffron Walden Museum. Exquisitely embroidered leather gauntlet, featuring a bird in flight and edges trimmed with silver pendant beads.*

As a commonplace commodity, the base materials of gloves, including particular kinds of leather and fabrics, were often sourced and prepared in bulk, with white skins such as deer and kid prized for softness and quality. Just as Ulinka Rublack has shown the significance of leather from the Spanish colonies for male luxury footwear and masculinity in early modern Europe, these raw materials connected peoples across the known world in relationships of power and exploitation.<sup>30</sup> John F. Richards observes that, by the eighteenth century, deerskins for glove-making amongst other items were commonly sourced from the Americas, where local populations understood their relationships with deer in distinctive social and spiritual terms, which required restraint in their killing by the communities' men.<sup>31</sup> Traditionally, within the Creek nation, for example, women were responsible for preparing deerskins for sale and use, and although the enormity of the scale of demand by European traders irreparably altered native

<sup>30</sup> Ulinka Rublack, 'Matter in the Material Renaissance', *Past & Present* (2013), 41-84 (pp. 66, 79).

<sup>31</sup> John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006), pp. 496, 498.

hunting technologies, women's continued involvement in manufacture practices were important to the stability of communities.<sup>32</sup> For other groups, however, the pressure to hunt skins damaged the social dynamics of groups, as it separated men from their communities for longer periods as they hunted and demanded more rapid preparation of furs and skins by women.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the trade of skins and furs to Europe functioned as a product of social and sexual relationships of male traders with both native men and women. Marriage to the latter potentially gave European men the strategic advantage of a conduit to local populations, a native speaker and negotiator.<sup>34</sup> Some groups instead insisted that traders married a woman from the community in order to enter into a trade relation.<sup>35</sup> The interplay here between gender and race or ethnicity, colonization and exploitation is significant. Much of the fur used in Europe (also for decorating gloves) came from Siberia, and similar processes to those in the Americas also occurred in Siberia. There, Russian traders and officials forcibly changed traditional ways of living, sometimes taking women or children hostage to ensure male hunters met their demands in sable and fox.<sup>36</sup> In such ways, increased European demand for materials, in this case, skins, entailed new power and gender relations for native populations in the lands from which they were sourced. These did not produce a clear-cut shift in gender and power in native communities broadly speaking, but reflected local and individual opportunities for empowerment and exploitation of both women and men, American and European alike.

European gender ideologies likewise informed locally-produced materials regularly used in glove-making, such as silk. Although they are little discussed in sericultural histories that highlight the role of royal edicts and statute regulation of the silk industry, account books and contemporary reports indicate that in

---

<sup>32</sup> Richards, *The Unending Frontier*, p. 499. See also Kathryn E. Holland Braund, *Deerkins and Duffels: The Creek Indian Trade with Anglo-America, 1685–1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

<sup>33</sup> Richards, *The Unending Frontier*, p. 507.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce M. White, 'The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade', *Ethnohistory*, 46/1 (1999), 112. See also, Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), and Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-trade Society, 1670–1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

<sup>35</sup> White, 'The Woman who married a Beaver', p. 129.

<sup>36</sup> W. Bruce Lincoln, *The Conquest of a Continent. Siberia and the Russians* (New York: Random House, 1994), pp. 52-5, 84-7. On purchase of sable in early Tudor England see, Maria Hayward, 'Luxury or Magnificence? Dress at the Court of Henry VIII', *Costume*, 30/1 (1996), 37-46 (p. 40).

sixteenth-century France and seventeenth-century England, high-profile women of power at court such as Catherine de' Medici and Anna of Denmark feature among the primary investors in the silk industry, planting extensive mulberry plantations and establishing industrial silk manufacturing at dower lands, and in England at Greenwich and at Oatlands Palace, Surrey, which had been granted to the queen in 1611.<sup>37</sup> The substantial silkworm house at the latter palace was elaborately decorated and included a window with the Queen's arms painted on glass.<sup>38</sup> Lower down the social scale, Katharine Hyde was responsible for the loan to a Frenchman from St Omer who came to Abingdon around 1630 to establish silk working in the town as a potential source of work for the poor.<sup>39</sup> In such ways, women engaged with both new technologies and supported charitable endeavours. However, contemporaries clearly visualised gendered divisions of the labour involved in silk working, where investment was to be controlled by a 'governour' while the physical labour of harvesting cocoons and their unwinding could be undertaken by women and children. Indeed, several authors celebrated the cost-effectiveness of silk as a new industry to be established precisely because the labour force was cheap. The work of Frenchman Olivier de Serres translated into English in 1607, argued of the workforce that 'three quarters are women, or boyes, ... sufficient to gather all the leaues necessarie ... the payment of which worke for the qualities of the persons, ariseth not to much mony. ... But if the feeding of the leafe-gatherers trouble you, for money only you may be supplied with their seruice by the day, or by the gathering'.<sup>40</sup> Serres argued that a single man who 'will governe so many Wormes as you wil, prouided hee bee assisted: the which will be done with folke of little price, seeing all sorts of persons, men and women are capable of it.'<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Derek Keene has observed how the simple silk ribbon manufacture by women of London in the fifteenth century was undermined by attempts to develop

---

<sup>37</sup> The arguments of this paragraph are developed more fully in Susan Broomhall, 'Gendering Global Encounters: Women and Luxury Technologies in Sixteenth-Century France,' unpublished paper presented at *Gender Worlds: New Perspectives, 500-1800*: conference, Perth, Australia, October 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Joan Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture: A History: From the Black Death to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 125, who emphasises the strong French influence of James I's ambitions for the silk industry.

<sup>39</sup> Thirsk, *Alternative Agriculture*, p. 127.

<sup>40</sup> Olivier de Serres, *The perfect use of silk-wormes, and their benefit*, trans. Nicholas Geffe (London: Felix Kyngston, 1607), pp. 33-4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

a larger scale silk industry employing foreign models and refugee labour in the capital.<sup>42</sup> The establishment of industries that supported manufacture of luxury goods, such as silk for gloves, was founded upon contemporary gender ideologies that formed industry practices and financial models.

The glove-making industry in the City of London was controlled by the male-only Guild of the Worshipful Company of Glovers dating to before 1349 when its first formal Ordinances were made, although there are records of the Perth Guild dating back to the tenth and eleventh centuries, as well as local regional guilds throughout England from the medieval period.<sup>43</sup> From 1483 onwards restrictions were imposed on the importing of Spanish gloves to England, although foreign visitors often brought them as gifts.<sup>44</sup> However, the control of leather sourcing, as with other commodities, could be aided by powerful women as well as men. Cecilia Crofts, Lady Killigrew, Maid of Honour to Henrietta Maria, petitioned Charles I in June 1636, on behalf of the glovers of London who wished to be incorporated because of

the great decay of their trade by reason of the frauds in dressing tawed leather, and the great oppression of certain leather-sellers, by engrossing all sorts of leather and selling the same at extraordinary rates...<sup>45</sup>

In 1638, the glovers were incorporated. Killigrew's was self-interested support, for she had secured the patent to search and seal leather.<sup>46</sup> Courtly status of women and men thus produced power that guilds were keen to see exerted in their favour

---

<sup>42</sup> For women's work at earlier periods in this area see Marion K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth century', *Economic History Review*, 1<sup>st</sup> series, 4 (1933), 324-55; Kay Lacey, 'The Production of 'Narrow Ware' by Silkwomen in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century England,' *Textile History*, 18 (1987), 187-204; Derek Keene, 'Material London in Time and Space,' in *Material London, ca. 1600* (ed.) Lena Orlin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 55-74 (p. 66).

<sup>43</sup> Mike Redwood, *Gloves and Glove-Making* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2016), pp. 13-17; <https://www.thegloverscompany.org/index.php/history-of-the-company> [accessed 29 February 2016].

<sup>44</sup> Annemarieke Willemsen, 'The Geoff Egan Memorial Lecture 2013: Taking Up the Glove: Finds, Uses and Meanings of Gloves, Mittens and Gauntlets in Western Europe, c. AD 1300-1700', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 49/1 (2015), 1-36 (p. 4).

<sup>45</sup> The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), State Papers, 16/323, fol. 15: Petition of Lady Killigrew to the King, 12 June 1636.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Ashton, *The City and the Court, 1603-1643* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 74.

— Killigrew's access to the king enabled the glovers' proposals to succeed — but in so doing, she achieved a significant financial gain that established her as an even more powerful interlocutor into the future.

Beyond the component materials, the production of gloves, as with many other manufactures, divided labour in gendered ways. Annemarieke Willemsen has stressed the layered process of glove-making: 'leather dressers worked the skin, textile ateliers provided cuff and lining, while the decoration placed on the top of the cuff was made by professional embroiderers (usually male) who might use stitched pattern pieces often prefabricated by female art-workers'.<sup>47</sup> This segmentation of glove manufacture in practice often functioned to exclude women. The cutting of leather into the shape of gloves was generally men's work, although Henry VIII had a female skinner.<sup>48</sup> Shakespeare, whose father was a glove-maker and whittawer, linked particular leather-working tools of the profession to male characters, as in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: 'Does he not wear a great round beard, like a / glover's paring-knife?'.<sup>49</sup> A sharp circular cutting tool with a wooden handle (an example of which survives at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), the pairing knife was used in the strenuous process of preparing skins, whereby the blood, hair and fat would be scraped off prior to the tanning process.<sup>50</sup> Such a large and heavy tool had to be wielded expertly by those with strength and training, physical expertise that men were able to develop in the workshop. The inside of an English glove-making workshop depicted in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1764) represents a largely male occupation, the master glove (male) closely inspecting the quality of the leather.<sup>51</sup>

Women were generally shut out of formal glove-making guilds across Europe but demand for gloves could create female labour opportunities. Guild and municipal records show widows appearing as glove-makers in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, and women clearly produced knitted gloves

---

<sup>47</sup> Willemsen, 'Taking Up the Glove', p. 15.

<sup>48</sup> Katherine Addington was the King's Skinner: Maria Hayward, 'Luxury or Magnificence? Dress at the Court of Henry VIII', *Costume*, 30/1 (1996), 37-46 (p. 40); TNA, E315/160, fol. 2r.

<sup>49</sup> *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), I.iv.18-19.

<sup>50</sup> Cuming, *Gloves*, pp. 9-14; John Cherry, 'Leather', in John Blair and Nigel Ramsay (eds), *English Medieval Industries: Craftsmen, Techniques, Products* (London: Hambledon, 1991), pp. 295-318; L.A. Clarkson, 'The Leather Crafts in Tudor and Stuart England', *Agricultural History Review*, 14 (1966) 25-39.

<sup>51</sup> Cuming, *Gloves*, p.13.



domestically.<sup>52</sup> The preamble to the 1638 charter granted to the London glovers spoke of the damaging effects of an influx of unregistered glove workers who took on apprentices both male and female.<sup>53</sup> As demand for labour grew women were, as Mike Redwood has shown, noted in Guild records as journeywomen, apprentices and mistresses; in 1676, Mistress Katherine Cloves' glove shop had four guild-approved staff, two of whom were women.<sup>54</sup> These gendered divisions of labour saw, by the early nineteenth century, male 'skilled' labour in organised workplaces and women's 'unskilled' outwork at home combined in the production of leather gloves.<sup>55</sup> In this way, the professionalisation of the glove industry transformed the power relations between men and women involved in glove manufacture.

In addition to leather-working gloves acquired gendered meanings through the process of perfuming. Women were vital in transmitting recipes for perfumes in household books, and were the intended audience of domestic manuals by men detailing instructions for perfumes, waters and distillations. Some specified recipes for perfuming gloves of varied leathers.<sup>56</sup> Gervase Markham's heady glove perfume recipe in his *English Housewife* (1615) was coupled with a notably sexualised recommendation that women should let their scented gloves 'dry in your bosom, and so after use them at your pleasure'.<sup>57</sup> However, perfuming on a large scale was costly in resources. In 1563, Elizabeth I gave her glove-maker John Wyngard not only a steel perfuming pan in order to perfume her gloves but also a lock and key to keep the pan secure, presumably because of the fear of being

---

<sup>52</sup> Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 43. Devon Record Office, QS/4/Baptist 1630, Examinations, no.32 records that Margaret Stitson of Cockington, Devon, owed Eliz Warren '6d for a pair of knit gloves which she made for her' in 1630.

<sup>53</sup> Ellis, *Gloves and the Glove Trade*, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> Redwood, *Gloves and Glove-making*, p. 46.

<sup>55</sup> Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (London, Routledge, 1998), p. 154.

<sup>56</sup> Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), pp. 150, 151. See also, Evelyn Welch, 'Scented Gloves and Perfumed Buttons: Smelling Things in Renaissance Italy', in *Ornamentation: Accessories in Renaissance Europe*, ed. by Bella Mirabella (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), pp. 13-39; Leticia de Frutos, 'Maria Mancini (1639-1715): Paintings, Fans and Scented Gloves: A Witness to Cultural Exchanges at the Courts of Paris, Rome and, Madrid', in *Early Modern Dynastic Marriages and Cultural Transfer*, ed. by Joan-Lluís Palos and Magdalena Sánchez (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2016), ch.8.

<sup>57</sup> Amanda E Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 64-5.

poisoned.<sup>58</sup> Perfuming enabled wearers to personalise their gloves. Fragrances could be highly individual — Elizabeth I was known not to have enjoyed strong scents— and could also convey status and power by the inclusion of costly exotic scents and foreign ingredients like ambergris and orange. Some scents were linked to national identities and humoural dispositions that entailed potential gendered distinctions, as Holly Duggan has shown.<sup>59</sup> An early modern individual might immediately be able to identify a glove as male or female simply by its smell therefore. The perfumer John Shacrosse promised Sir Robert Cecil gloves smelling of as ‘pleasing scents as Spain or Portingall do afford’.<sup>60</sup> A seventeenth-century bridegroom distinguished between the gloves bought for male and female guests, bemoaning that he could ‘not get so many woman’s Jessamy [Jasmine] gloves as [I] wrote for; and at the last was fained to pick upon cordinent [i.e. cordovan or Spanish leather] for men and perfumed kid for women’.<sup>61</sup> This example suggests a gendered olfactory and sensory division between women’s gloves, which were perfumed and of soft kid, and men’s gloves that smelled of Spanish leather.

---

<sup>58</sup> Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlock’d* (London: David Brown Book Company, 1988), p. 217, fn 520.

<sup>59</sup> Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume*, p. 151.

<sup>60</sup> Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, Cecil Papers, CP 90/59: Walter Cope to Sir Robert Cecil, 1601.

<sup>61</sup> P. Cunnington and C. Lucas, *Costume for Births, Marriages and Deaths* (London: A & C Black Publishers, 1972), p. 67. C.W. Cunnington and P.W. Cunnington (eds) *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010).

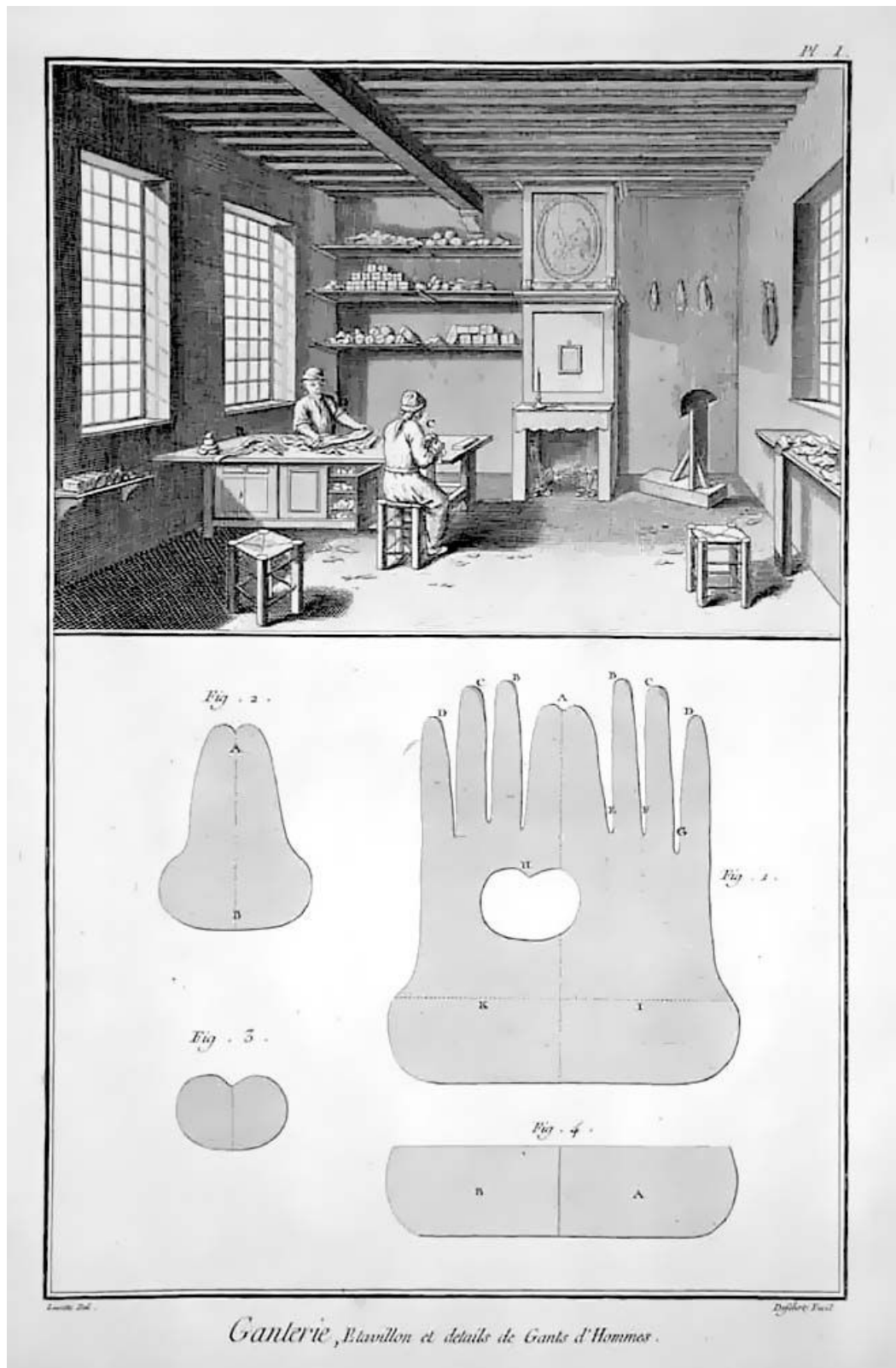


Figure 2: Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert, 'Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers' (Paris, 1760).

Personalising the fit, perfuming or decoration of gloves in such ways provided men and women of high status with opportunities to stake their identity, in ways that demonstrated their power. The application of costly foreign scents such as ambergris to domestic leather turned them into luxury items. Here, the possibilities of these material forms were already shaped by gender ideologies. Women's gloves tended to be smaller than men's, and templates for cutting gloves printed in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* [Fig. 2] show gendered differences in sizing and style for men and women.<sup>62</sup> Guillaume Le Gras, supplier to the Lisle family in Calais, wrote to Lord Lisle in May 1538, asking the latter's opinion on the style of cut that he had produced:

I send by the bearer, Guillaume Portier, a pair of gloves which I have made of the skins you sent. There are a dozen more pairs, and there also remain a dozen more skins which I did not wish to use till I knew that the gloves gave satisfaction.<sup>63</sup>

Higher quality decorative elements such as silk, gilt thread, velvet and pearls reproduces power. Much fine needlework was the domain of female embroiderers, but the pervasiveness of needlework as a female accomplishment also made the personalising of gloves an area where women could add a personal touch derived from their own skillset.<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth Isham recalled in her autobiographical diaries her enjoyment at needlework, both in creating new designs and producing gloves among other items from her spinning and knitting. The proceeds of her labour enabled her to give to the poor, maintaining herself, supporting her community and satisfying her deep, spiritual sense of responsibility.<sup>65</sup> Much rarer are extant examples of early modern domestic handwear, which likely underwent continuously processes of modification and adaption until they were unusable. A

---

<sup>62</sup> Willemsen, 'Taking up the Glove', pp. 13-14; Cuming, *Gloves*, pp. 13-15, 38-42. It is often hard to discern children's glove, with the exception of a sixteenth-century pair woollen baby's mitten on display in the museum of London: Museum of London, A 1989, <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/90608.html>.

<sup>63</sup> TNA, SP, 3/16, fol. 104: Guillaume Le Gras to Lord Lisle, 27 May 1538.

<sup>64</sup> Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery in Women's Lives, 1300-1900* (Manchester, Whitworth Art Gallery and Cornerhouse, 1988); Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

<sup>65</sup> Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p. 125.

sixteenth-century hand-stitched leather workman's mitten from the Victoria and Albert Museum collections, includes stitch holes that suggest it was made from re-used leather from another earlier item. Additionally, it is probable that the hole in the thumb had been repaired with a small cut-out piece, extending the life of these hard-working pieces of leather.<sup>66</sup> [Figs 3 and 4] Another extremely rare late seventeenth-century pair of mittens held by the Worshipful Company of Glovers' of London provides some insights into the material realities of cruder stitching, wear and tear, and comfortable sheep-fleece interiors that proved serviceable for a wider proportion of the population than were most of the material artefacts that remain.<sup>67</sup> [Figs 5 and 6]



*Figures 3 and 4. Mitten, hand-stitched leather, English made, 1500-1599 (made). Maker unknown. T.621-1913 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

---

<sup>66</sup> <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O361039/mitten-unknown/>

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.glovecollectioncatalogue.org/23395+A.html>



*Figures 5 and 6 (upper motif detail). Ladies mittens, late 17<sup>th</sup> century, dark brown/aubergine dyed sheepskin leather, flesh side out, lined with sheep fleece, pointed finger guards, finger slits below edged in white leather, the uppers applied with raised silver thread scrolling motifs, worked over parchment mounts. 23395+A. © Worshipful Company of Glovers' of London.*

Thus, the creation, supply, and decoration of gloves all reflected and enacted operations of power that were shaped by both gender ideologies and the nature of the materials, treatment processes and work flows by which these parts were brought together. Generally speaking, these did not exclude women outright. Indeed, at all social levels, female traders, negotiators, sewers, embroiderers, and suppliers of gloves, their components, and their decorative elements, could be empowered to various degrees (as well as merely used) if they held skills,

resources or access valuable to the varied processes embedded in the manufacture of gloves. Yet another gendered aspect of women's involvement in decorating gloves is that while sewing and embroidering were important as practical skills, their practices were seen as schooling girls and young women to control their conduct, feelings, and emotions, and to become obedient, virtuous, and industrious.<sup>68</sup> Thus, gender and materiality did shape the nature of men and women's participation and labour in handwear production and thus, their power within these production systems.

### III Consumption and Display

Recent studies of consumption across early modern European have demonstrated the importance of gender in influencing shopping habits, the power of female consumers and the role of gender in influencing taste and fashion. Broadly, patterns of consumption reinforced social as well as gender distinctions.<sup>69</sup> Women have often been viewed as the drivers of conspicuous consumption.<sup>70</sup> However, this has recently been challenged by Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths in their forensic study of gender and consumption through the household accounts of the early seventeenth-century Norfolk gentlewoman Alice Le Strange, which argues that male elites spent more than their female counterparts as a function of social status.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors: At Home at Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 234-35; Johanna Ilmakunnas, 'Embroidering Women & Turning Men: Handiwork, Gender and Emotions in Sweden and Finland, c. 1720–1820', *Scandinavian Journal of History*. 41/3 (2016), 306-31.

<sup>69</sup> Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture, 1660-1760* (London: Routledge 1988), and Weatherill, 'A Possession of One's Own: Women and Consumer Behaviour in England, 1660-1740', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), 131-56; Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); V. de Grazia and E. Furlough (eds), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Robert Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600-1750* (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1902), pp. 68-101; Andrew B. Trigg, 'Veblen, Bourdieu, and Conspicuous Consumption', *Journal of Economic Issues*, 35/1 (2001), 99-115.

<sup>71</sup> Jane Whittle and Elizabeth Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Gloves of many sorts were ubiquitous items of consumption throughout all sections of society, as is clear from household accounts, clothing bills, wills and inventories, and archaeological evidence of found gloves.<sup>72</sup> The volume of handwear in circulation in early modern Europe made the buying and selling of gloves the domain of no one sex. Whereas today gloves are either worn when it is cold, for purposes of protection or specialist use, throughout early modern Europe they were routinely donned year round, and were bought in multiples rather than singly.<sup>73</sup> As the Lisle family evidence presented in the last section suggests, men and women were keenly involved in the consumption of gloves – although wearers of higher status often used servants to purchase gloves, but nonetheless presented detailed instructions – and the types of gloves available ranged from simple woollen gloves (that might be knitted *by women* at home) to highly decorated and jewelled leather and silk gloves emanating from Italy and Spain and bought from master glove-makers. In Europe, those who could travel (most commonly, men) were able to establish themselves as powerful agents by fulfilling commissions, including for gloves.<sup>74</sup> In April 1631, Prestwick Eaton wrote to George Wellingham, asking for a dozen pair of ‘Cordovall’ gloves, white with short fingers, after the Spanish fashion, which he would arrange to perfume when he received them.<sup>75</sup> In his 1578 Italian phrasebook, John Florio included several conversations to assist his English (presumed male) readers to converse about glove perfuming with Italian merchants.<sup>76</sup> As with other items of clothing, as Margaret Spufford has shown, a complex set of trade networks developed to bring household goods from London and other major urban centres to rural towns and villages.<sup>77</sup> Several bills in early modern English women’s hands survive for items

---

<sup>72</sup> Willemsen, ‘Taking Up the Glove’.

<sup>73</sup> In Northern Europe the period c.1550-c.1750 was known as a ‘little ice age’: Willemsen, ‘Taking Up the Glove’, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> John Gallagher, ‘The Italian London of John North: Cultural Contact and Linguistic Encounter in Early Modern England’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 70/1 (2017), 88-131.

<sup>75</sup> TNA, SP, 16/233, fol. 194: Prestwick Eaton to George Wellingham, 15/25 March 1633.

<sup>76</sup> Duggan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume*, pp. 128–9. The volume was dedicated to Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, who gifted gloves to Queen Elizabeth.

<sup>77</sup> Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclotting of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 77; Christine North, ‘Merchants and Retailers in Seventeenth-Century Cornwall’, in Tom Arkell, Nesta Evans and Nigel Goose (eds), *When Death Do Us Part: Understanding and Interpreting the Probate Records of Early Modern England* (Oxford: Leopard’s Head Press, 2004), pp. 285-305 (p. 294); Tarnya Cooper, *Elizabethan I and Her People* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2014), p. 164; Greig Parker, *Probate Inventories of French Immigrants in Early Modern London* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 46-47.



including gloves, indicating the role of female shopkeepers. One Mary Black wrote a receipt for Sir Robert and Lady Shirley in London between 1672 and 1675 which included ‘a border for gloves’, a bill she noted was paid by Mrs Atkinson, presumably a housekeeper.<sup>78</sup> Gloves were thus widely available outside of fancy glover-makers shops in Europe’s capitals, bought and sold by men and women able to access them in the provinces. At lower social levels at least women were not excluded from the glove trade; in manufacturing terms they tended to knit rather than stitch leather, and act as shopkeepers and consumers.

Clothing as many historians working on dress across Europe – including Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones and Ulinka Rublack – have argued were important markers of social standing as well as gender.<sup>79</sup> Stallybrass and Jones point out that ‘detachable parts’, such as jewellery but gloves in particular, yoke ‘person’ and ‘thing’. For certain material artefacts, these detachable items could convey immense power. On 8 February 1587, Marmaduke Dayrell wrote a letter from Fotheringhay, to Mr William Dayrell, his kinsman, informing him that the Queen of Scots had been executed and enclosing a gauntlet was an exquisitely embroidered leather glove.<sup>80</sup> The glove’s lining, of a crimson satin, corresponded in both colour and material with the undergarments that the queen was understood to have worn on the day of her death, and unlike her clothes which were burned after the execution to prevent them from becoming relics associated with a martyred queen, the glove was preserved, passed to a close male attendant and thereafter passed down the family line with this letter of provenance.<sup>81</sup> Using a phrase coined by William Pietz, Stallybrass and Jones argue that gloves can be

---

<sup>78</sup> Caroline Bowden, ‘Women in Educational Spaces’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. by Laura Lunger Knoppers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 85-96 (p. 87).

<sup>79</sup> Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ulinka Rublack, *Dressing Up. Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes, and Fine Clothing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Eugenia Paulicelli, *Writing Fashion in Early Modern Italy: From Sprezzatura to Satire* (Ashgate, 2014).

<sup>80</sup> Redfern, *Royal and Historic Gloves*, pp. 25-28, plate XVII. Saffron Walden Museum.

<sup>81</sup> After having had her black robe and jacket removed, Mary reportedly wore a body of crimson satin and matching velvet petticoat. James Anthony Froude, *History of England From the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (London: Longman, Green & Co, 1870): vol. 12, p.332.

seen as ‘external organs of the body’.<sup>82</sup> Following their argument, an empty glove suggestively connected to Mary, Queen of Scots, might be considered to continue her bodily presence, and, functioning as a quasi-relic, connect to broader religious and political movements of the period.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, the gestural politics of gloves were innately gendered and often sexualised. For a woman to drop a glove in front of a man signalled sexual availability (with glove as vagina).<sup>84</sup> It was also common for portraits to suggest female sexual availability by the way in which gloves might be held by the sitter; dangling a single glove carried a visually erotic charge, as in the case of Anthony van Dyke’s portrait of the countess of Bedford, an image that was widely copied by engravers.<sup>85</sup> On the other hand, for a man to drop a glove in front of man (or indeed to strike him in the face with it) was to issue an insult or challenge to combat.<sup>86</sup> Paired and unpaired gloves, the wearing or holding of draped gloves, the tucking of gloves into belts or hatbands, the removal of gloves to shake hands (and the intimacy of the bare hand) were thus all charged with symbolic meanings that can be explored through the ways in which gloves are represented as being held by men and women in plays, masques, engravings and paintings of the period, connected with constructions of female sexuality and codes of masculinity.

More broadly gloves displayed in particular ways and worn at particular times carried symbolic meaning. The politics connected with the royal hand was bound up with gloves: the newsletter-writer John Chamberlain reported to Sir Dudley Carleton that Lord Coke had with his gloves on ‘kissed the King’s hand’.<sup>87</sup> These protocols of glove-wearing were informed by social status and gender ideologies. For men to perform a kiss of another man’s bare hand was an act of

---

<sup>82</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Ann Jones, ‘Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe’, *Critical Inquiry*, 28/1 (2001), 114-32 (p. 116), referring to William Pietz, ‘The Problem of the Fetish, I’, *Review of English Studies*, 9 (1985), 5-17 (p. 10).

<sup>83</sup> On gloves as relics see, Peter Marshall, ‘Forgery and Miracles in the Reign of Henry VIII’, *Past and Present*, 178 (2003), 39-73 (p. 53).

<sup>84</sup> Stallybrass and Jones, ‘Fetishizing the Glove’.

<sup>85</sup> Trumble, *The Finger*, p. 124.

<sup>86</sup> Stallybrass and Jones, ‘Fetishizing the Glove’.

<sup>87</sup> TNA, SP, 16/1, fol. 57: John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, 9 April 1625. Within seventeenth-century Polish society a subordinate would kiss the hand of a superior, and protocols of politeness dictated that the person being kissed should remove their glove; failure to do so was to express displeasure, as in the case of King Wladislaus IV Vasa who in 1644 held out a gloved hand to one of the burghers of Cracow to kiss, a gesture of royal displeasure. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, second edition 2005), p. 133. On the history of gesture see John Walter, ‘Gesturing at Authority: Deciphering the Gestural Code of Early Modern England’, *Past and Present*, 203 (2009), 96-127.

deference on the part of the kisser (traditionally signifying fealty and loyalty), and an intimate acceptance on the part of the party proffering his hand, symbolizing homo-social male ritualised power relationships, as when Henry Cobham offered to kiss the hands of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, English Ambassador in France.<sup>88</sup> Failing to extend one's hand to be kissed was to issue an insult or snub. Amidst the petitioning activities by the women surrounding the Earl of Essex after his fall from favour late in Elizabeth's reign, his mother the Dowager countess of Leicester was denied access to come again to 'kiss the queen's hand'.<sup>89</sup> For a man to kiss a woman's un-gloved hand symbolised courtesy and respect, but could acquire sexualised overtones that threatened female chastity. To kiss the Queen's bare hand was a sign of particular favour, as when the sixteenth-century German traveller Paul Hentzner described how the queen pulled off her glove on receiving letters from a Bohemian Baron, and 'gave him her right hand to kiss, sparkling with rings and jewels, a mark of particular favour'.<sup>90</sup> Gloves were routinely removed in the presence of royalty, in church, or at court; it was polite to remove gloves when eating or shaking hands to greet people (the bare hand being more intimate). As a general rule subordinates removed gloves in the presence of superiors, and women in such situations were more likely to be allowed to wear gloves than men.<sup>91</sup> Thus, protocols of glove-wearing could be gendered in significant ways.

The wearing of gloves for a woman at court enabled her to touch another courtier or to dance with a man, and the removal of a glove was a gesture that could be erotically charged, as in the famous glove-scene in Middleton's *The Changeling* where Beatrice-Joanna dropped a glove hoping that the handsome Alsemero might find it, but instead it is picked up by the detested retainer De Flores; finding this out she casts the other down, now wishing to disown both, the

---

<sup>88</sup> CP 153/99: Sir Thomas Chaloner to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, 1 May, 1562.

<sup>89</sup> Lucy Atkin, *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth: In Two Volumes* (1818), 2, p. 402.

<sup>90</sup> *A Journey Into England by Paul Hentzer, in the Year 1568* (London, 1757), p. 50.

<sup>91</sup> On shaking hands see, Herman Roodenburg, 'The "Hand of Friendship": Shaking Hands and Other Gestures in the Dutch Republic', in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. by Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 152-89; Willemsen, 'Taking Up the Glove', pp. 29-30. See also Farah Karim-Cooper, *Hand on the Shakespearean Stage* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

first having been touched.<sup>92</sup> Castiglione in the *Courtier* talks about women's hands:

It is the same with the hands; which, if they are delicate and beautiful, and occasionally left bare when there is need to use them, and not in order to display their beauty, they leave a very great desire to see more of them, and especially if covered with gloves again; for whoever covers them seems to have little care or thought whether they be seen or not, and to have them thus beautiful more by nature than by any effort or pains.<sup>93</sup>

In marriage ceremonies of the period, gloves were gifted to guests, but significantly it was customary for the bride to go bare-handed, a symbol of sexual availability and intimacy with her new husband.<sup>94</sup> This contrasts well in gender terms with a description of an Elizabethan peasant wedding in which a bridegroom was described wearing 'a payr of harvest glovez, as a sign of good husbandry'. In these examples, the male gloves demonstrates that the bridegroom's power comes through physical labour, which he brings to the church, whereas the bride brings the purity of her body.<sup>95</sup>

Gloves might also be devices or receptacles to be secretly or clandestinely delivered. In the aftermath of the Ruthven raid, after the Scottish king was placed under house arrest, Lady Fernihurst delivered a series of letters from the ill-fated Scottish duke of Lennox to James VI. On one occasion as the king entered his chamber she passed him a letter secreted in her gloves, which meant that it went unobserved by the attending lords.<sup>96</sup> In these instances the act of giving was an

---

<sup>92</sup> Barbara Ravelhofer, 'Middleton and Dance', in Gary Taylor and Trish Thomas Henley, *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 130-47 (pp. 134-35), Stallybrass and Jones, 'Fetish', pp. 114-32.

<sup>93</sup> Paulicelli, *Writing Fashion in Early Modern Italy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2014), p. 66.

<sup>94</sup> Beck, *Gloves, Their Annals*, pp. 228, 231-2, 236-7, 245-7, 249; Steven C. Bullock and Sheila McIntyre, 'The Handsome Tokens of a Funeral: Glove-Giving and the Large Funeral in Eighteenth-Century New England', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 69/2 (2012), 305-46. Heal, *Power of Gifts*, pp. 66-7; David Cressy, *Birth, Death and Marriage: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 362.

<sup>95</sup> Cunnington and Lucas, *Costumes for Births, Marriages and Deaths*, p. 78.

<sup>96</sup> TNA, SP, 78/9, fol. 7: Cobham to Walsingham, 5 January 1583. Rosalind K. Marshall, 'Stuart, Esmé, first duke of Lennox (c.1542-1583)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

occasion of power in that it provided access; gloves as with other gifts, letters or oral reports functioned as the excuse for proximity.

For elite men and women, gloves during the early-seventeenth century were highly fashionable accessories donned as a form of ‘power dressing’ which together with other dress and accessories working as an assemblage established and re-established hierarchical order.<sup>97</sup> European sumptuary laws specified the rules that governed dress along socially hierarchical lines, which extended to the wearing of gloves in terms of colour, decoration and materials.<sup>98</sup> Jacobean male apprentices were forbidden to wear gloves costing more than one shilling, or ‘with fringes, or any garnishing of gold or silver lace, velvet lace, or silk lace or ribbon’ — a reminder that the attraction of decorative matter was by no means restricted to the elite or women alone.<sup>99</sup> For the gentry and aristocracy gloves were markers of social standing and taste rather than functional: they could be magnificent items, connected closely to ostentatious display. An inventory of the ‘rich wearing Apparrell of the right honorable Richard Earle of Dorset’ compiled in 1619 listed no fewer than eight highly decorative pairs of gloves, including ‘Item one doublett of greene cloth of gold embroadered with golde’.<sup>100</sup> A remarkable pair of early seventeenth-century highly decorative gauntlet gloves, held by the Worshipful Company of Glovers’ of London, suggest the possibilities of gloves to offer a site for male sexual bravado displaying colourful scenes of a range of activities, including a courting couple, nude women bathing and another naked couple locked in an embrace.<sup>101</sup> [Figs 7, 8 and 9] Such images were of course only the purview of the sharp-eyed, intimate acquaintance, however, giving these gloves the capacity to include or exclude others from one’s sociability. However, gloves formed part of an assemblage of power in different ways for women and men, for

---

<sup>97</sup> Ulinka Rublack, ‘Renaissance Fashion: The Birth of Power Dressing’, *History Today*, 61/1 (2011).

<sup>98</sup> ‘An Act against wearing of costly Apparel’, 1510, as well as laws in 1514, 1515, 1553, 1554, and Enforcing Statutes of Apparel, 1562, 1574. Anna Reynolds, *In Fine Style: The Art of Tudor and Stuart Fashion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press for the Royal Collection Trust, 2013); Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of Henry VIII* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2007); F. Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1926).

<sup>99</sup> Therle Hughes, *English Domestic Needlework, 1660-1860* (London: Abbey Fine Arts, 1961), p. 206.

<sup>100</sup> Peter and Ann Mactaggart, ‘The Rich Wearing Apparel of Richard, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Dorset’, *Costume*, 14/1 (1980), 41-55.

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.glovecollectioncatalogue.org/23344+A.html>

the latter had many other opportunities to advertise their status. Women's bodies, in this case their hands, adorned with particular jewellery and fabrics, were a primary site for life stage and class demarcations. Wedding rings were commonplace throughout this period for all sections of society for men and for women. In order not to hide their marital status married women might carry gloves rather than wear them; and leather gloves (owned by either sex) made from soft kid skin might be slit at the fingers to reveal rings beneath, as can be seen in a pair of late seventeenth-century kid skin gloves in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection, which contain a slit on the little finger of the left-hand glove.<sup>102</sup>



---

<sup>102</sup> Broomhall, 'Materializing women'; Cunnington and Lucas, *Costumes for Births, Marriages and Deaths*, pp. 117-21; Ninya Mikhaila and Jane Malcolm-Davies, *The Tudor Tailor: Reconstructing Sixteenth-century Dress* (London: Batsford, 2006), p. 33. V&A, T.14&A-1983.



*Figures 7, 8 (gauntlet tab detail) and 9 (gauntlet tab detail). Men's embroidered gauntlet gloves, with long extended fingers, c. 1600-1635, cream leather, separately worked ivory satin gauntlets lined with moss green silk, worked figures in six tabs of flossed silks within couched gold thread medallions, gold purl wire leaves and floss silk flowerheads, edged with gold bobbin lace threaded with sequins, 33cm. 23344+A. © Worshipful Company of Glovers' of London.*

Gender likewise informed discernible shifts in the material form of gloves over the early modern period seemingly in alignment with formal changes in

power structures of the country. The heavily decorated gloves of Elizabeth's reign were replaced for men at least by much simpler styles by the 1620s, 1630s and 1640s by which period the fashion for women too was to wear plainer gloves with long slender sleeves, changing styles that may reflect the more conservative fashions of times of war. The Restoration saw men's gloves becoming more flamboyant with use of elaborate ribbon, reflecting a reassertion of courtly gender and power values; women's gloves, however, were always longer and more narrowly fitted up the arm (which accentuated the female forearm), and men who wore such fashions might risk accusations of foppery.<sup>103</sup> Such tight-fitting glove styles were governed by gendered assumptions and expectations about restrictions in movement, and actively produced and reinforced more restricted arm movement for women as worn items both by tight-fitting enclosure and also potentially by the tightness of finishes and trimmings. The physical glove thus has a degree of agency that structured corporeal experience; and such impediments to movement were embedded in expectations of when men and women might take gloves off and have free movement.

Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth-century there were clear gendered implications relating to the representation of gloves worn, held or otherwise displayed by male and female portrait sitters. In some instances gloves were clear markers of wealth and social status, as in Paul van Somer's portrait of the Countess of Kellie, which depicts her resting her left hand on a sumptuously extravagant pair of gloves.<sup>104</sup> Conversely, the redoubtable Bess of Hardwick is pictured holding a pair of plain brown leather gloves.<sup>105</sup> Below the level of the court and aristocracy, women of the 'middling sort' were pictured with gloves: the calligrapher Ether Inglis (1570/1-1624) was painted hold a prayer book and glove, while Joan Alleyn, wife of the Elizabethan actor Edward Alleyn, was portrayed wearing and holding a red decoratively patterned glove in her left hand and a prayer book in her right.<sup>106</sup> Such portraits bear witness to the ubiquity of gloves, but also perhaps an aspirational attempt to emulate elite practices. In civic portraits, as Robert Titler has shown, the depiction of gloves functioned as markers of gentility,

---

<sup>103</sup> Cumming, *Gloves*, pp. 28-9, 31-7.

<sup>104</sup> Trumble, *The Finger*, p. 123.

<sup>105</sup> Tarnya Cooper, *Elizabethan I and Her People* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2014), p. 102.

<sup>106</sup> Cooper, *Elizabethan I and Her People*, pp. 10-11, 178-79.



conspicuous display connected to the symbolic status of being a freeman and power. A richly produced portrait of ‘Captain Smart’, possibly Rowland Smart, Swordbearer to the Lord Mayor of London in the 1640s depicts his expensively fashionable costume – emphasising his wealth and social standing – which included a glove tucked into his belt, lavishly decorated with silver gilt thread.<sup>107</sup> Interestingly, far fewer women are depicted in civic portraits holding gloves. One notable example, however, is a double portrait of John (d. 1528) and Joan Cooke the Mayor and Mayoress of Gloucester, in which she is painted holding the ceremonial gloves, which represent her taking over the mantle of her husband, and empowering her to execute his will, since the portrait was produced posthumously after both their deaths. (Fig. 10) Through the depiction of the gloves, this painting suggested Joan’s power and responsibility as executor of her husband’s will and as co-founder with him of a grammar school.<sup>108</sup> The ceremonial glove depicted here offered an opportunity to foreground female as well as male civic roles, not only was it acting in this instance as a memory object of his civic power, but also the status accrued to her after his death.

---

<sup>107</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, 534-1892.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Tittler, ‘Freemen’s gloves and civic authority: the evidence from post-Reformation portraiture’, *Costume*, 40 (2006), 13-20 (p. 15).



*Figure 10: Portrait of John Cooke (d.1528), and Joan Cooke (d.1545), unknown artist, Gloucester Life Museum. Oil on Oak Panel. © Gloucester Museums Service Art Collection*

Gloves thus reflected and reproduced early modern gender identities and practices in significant ways. As such, the purchase and wearing of gloves as items of display differentiated handwear in most instances in reflection of contemporary ideologies of gender and social status. The physical glove even shaped men and women's behaviour because decorative elements restrained or allowed for different capacity of hand and arm action and movement between the sexes.

#### **IV Exchange**

Gloves were ubiquitous gifts throughout early modern Europe. Single or multiple pairs routinely accompanied letters, functioning as gifts that circulated as a form of social currency. They were passed between family and friends, were sent to women at court as tokens of remembrance; they were enclosed to be passed on to wives; proffered by merchants; and exchanged by diplomats and government officials. In approaching gloves as things imbued with power, as they connect to social relationships, we are indebted to a significant body of theoretical work on gifts, gift-giving and their significance, which has long been discussed by anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, Marcel Mauss, Marshall Sahlins, and Claude Lévi-Strauss.<sup>109</sup> Central here is the meaning embedded in early modern gift-giving practices linked to gloves as gifts, as inflected by issues of gender, the range of social and political occasions where they appear, the reciprocal obligations and expectations attendant on givers and receivers, and the significance of return gifts and in some instances refusals.<sup>110</sup> From a wider

---

<sup>109</sup> For example, Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea* (London, 1922); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, English trans. W.D. Halls (repr. London: Routledge, 1990) from the French *Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*; Marschall D. Sahlins, 'On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange' in *The Relevance of Models in Social Anthropology*, ed. by Michael Banton (London 1965); Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* (London 1969). See also Yunxiang Yan, *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 1996); Alan D. Shrift, *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (New York: Routledge, 1997). For recent studies on early modern gift-giving see, Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Oxford: OUP, 2000); Ilana Ben-Amos, 'Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England', *Journal of Modern History*, 72/2 (2000), 295-338; Karen Newman, 'Sundry Letters, Worldly Goods: The Lisle letters and Renaissance Studies,' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 26/1 (1996), 139-52; Lorna G. Barrow, "'The Kyng Sent to the Qwene, by a Gentyلمان, a Grett Tame Hart': Marriage, Gift Exchange and Politics: Margaret Tudor and James IV 1502-13', *Parergon*, 21/1 (2004), 65-84; Lisa M. Klein, "'Your Humble Handmaid": Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 50 (1997), 459-93; Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Giving and Receiving: *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Politics of Exchange', *English Literary Renaissance*, 23/2 (1993), 287-313; Ronald A. Sharp, 'Gift Exchange and the Economics of Spirit in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Modern Philology*, 83/3 (1986), 250-65.

<sup>110</sup> Mauss 1972, 17-8, 81, 95-6. The debate on the nature of gifts as inalienable objects and their relations to commodities (alienable objects) continues in anthropology and sociology, but increasingly the original assumed opposition between these concepts is blurred and the coexistence between gift-giving systems and commodities in all societies is acknowledged: Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (France, 1923-4; New York: W.W. Norton, 1954, Routledge 1990); For later anthropological critiques of Mauss' argument see Levi-Strauss (1969) and Sahlins (1972), for a very good discussion of different anthropological theories about gift-giving and their historiographical backgrounds see Karen Margaret Sykes, *Arguing with Anthropology: An Introduction to Critical Theories of the Gift* (London: Routledge, 2005). And for a recent concise summary of the anthropological theory development in response to Mauss see Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies* (2010), Chapter: Hirokazu Miyazaki, 'Gifts and Exchange', pp. 246-64, as an excellent discussion of anthropological debates

perspective of the social nature of the circulation of material artefacts, Arjun Appadurai observes that gifts are ‘socialized things’, similar to commodities, and that as such ‘gifts link things to people and embed the flow of things in the flow of social relations’.<sup>111</sup>

The gendered nature of the gift and gift-giving processes remains largely underexplored, and the few studies (anthropological, sociological and early modern) that address gender explicitly focus on women.<sup>112</sup> Felicity Heal and Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos highlight female social and familial obligations in their study on gifts and women’s informal networks and services in early modern England.<sup>113</sup> There is, however, a distinct gap in the literature regarding the gendered positions of women and men in gift-giving and their ability to exercise power through gift-giving and receiving.<sup>114</sup> Overlapping with these modes or channels of gift-giving is a body of work that has excavated the significance of gift-giving in patronage, diplomacy, and within the household where gifts functioned as important markers in creating and maintaining social relations.<sup>115</sup> In

---

since Mauss and critique of Mauss. Helmuth Berking, *Sociology of Giving*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London, 1999). See also, Mark Osteen (ed.), *The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines* (London, 2002), introduction.

<sup>111</sup> Appadurai, *Social Life of Things*, p.11.

<sup>112</sup> Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While Giving* (Oakland, Ca: University of California Press, 1992); Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Aafke E. Komter (ed.), *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Amsterdam, 1996), Chapter 10 ‘Women, Gifts and Power’. Jyotsna G. Singh, ‘Gendered “Gifts” in Shakespeare’s Belmont: The Economies of Exchange in Early Modern England’, in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000).

<sup>113</sup> Felicity Heal, *The Power of Gifts: Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Oxford: OUP, 2014); Felicity Heal, ‘Food Gifts, The Household and The Politics of Exchange in Early Modern England’, *Past & Present*, 199 (2008), 41-70; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *The Culture of Giving: Informal Support and Gift-Exchange in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Ben-Amos, ‘Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Modern History*, 72/2 (2000), 295-338. Valentin Groebner and Bernhard Jussen (eds), *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-Modern Figurations of Exchange* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Jane Fair Bestor, ‘Marriage Transactions in Renaissance Italy and Mauss’s Essay on the Gift’, *Past and Present*, no. 164 (Aug. 1999), pp. ??.

<sup>115</sup> Luuc Kooijmans, *Vriendschap: en de kunst van het overladen in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1997); Irma Thoen, *Strategic Affection? Gift Exchange in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007); Catharina Andersson, *Kloster och aristokrati: nunnor, munkar och gåvor i det svenska samhället till 1300-talets mitt* (Diss. Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet 2006); Kim Esmark, Lars Hermansson and Hans Jacob Orning (eds), *Gaver, ritualer, konflikter: et rettsantropologisk perspektiv på nordisk middelalderhistorie* (Oslo: Unipub 2010). See also, Felicity Heal, ‘Giving and Receiving on Royal Progress’ in Jayne Elisabeth Archer and Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah (eds), *The Progresses, Pageants, and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 46-64; Ania Loomba, ‘Of Gifts, Ambassadors, and Copy-cats: Diplomacy, Exchange, and Difference in Early Modern India’, in Brinda Charry and Gitali Shahani (eds), *Emissaries in*

England, gloves were given as tokens of remembrance and affection (strategic and otherwise) between family and friends. Key here in considering the relationship between power and things is the public nature of gift-giving rituals, the importance of display, to be seen giving, receiving or rejected a gift.<sup>116</sup> Early modern gloves operating as gifts functioned in many of these social contexts and ritualised cultural practices, given by diplomats and on special occasions, such as New Year and being given as ritualised gifts at events connected to family and lifecycle.

The glove as gift appears across several of the power constellations, and issues of gender and power connect in interesting ways; gloves as gifts to a female monarch, or to ambassadors' wives; women at court as conveyors of gifts of gloves to the monarch; the gendered dimension to wedding gloves, where the groom pays for gloves, gives to men at the ceremony, while the bride (bare-handed) presents gloves to the women. At court, practices of gifting gloves acquired layers of gendered political meaning. At a basic level, gloves were deemed appropriate gifts to be given to women of the court for favours, as the countess of Rutland advised Lady Lisle.<sup>117</sup> Women of the bedchamber were also key in promoting suits: delivering letters and gifts, including gloves, formed a part of this complex political exchange, as recorded by Frances Lady Cobham in a letter to Lord Burghley which reports that 'her majesty hathe resevyd your gloues and lykethe well of them and wylled me to thanke yow for them,' adding that the buttons and silk that garnished them 'plesethe her much'.<sup>118</sup> As the beginning of this article highlighted, gloves featured among items presented to the monarch in courtly gift-giving ceremonies.<sup>119</sup> Much of the gift-giving at court was highly conventional, but the work of Jane Lawson on new year gift-exchanges has identified networks of women who grouped together to present Queen Elizabeth coordinated outfits of clothing. In this sense the giving of gifts can be used to track political networks; the gifts in themselves have a rich symbolism; are given in a particular arena; when

---

*Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550-1700* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 41-76. Michael Auwers, 'The Gift of Rubens: Rethinking the Concept of Gift-Giving in Early Modern Diplomacy', *European History Quarterly*, 43/3 (2013), 421-41.

<sup>116</sup> Maija Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 9/3-4 (2005), 348-70.

<sup>117</sup> TNA, SP, 3/12, fol. 43: John Husee to Lady Lisle, 29 January 1538; *Lisle Letters*, IV, 858.

<sup>118</sup> TNA, SP, 12/171, fol. 43: Lady Cobham to Lord Burghley, 15 June 1584.

<sup>119</sup> Jane A. Lawson, *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges, 1559-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 42; see also, pp. 63, 96.

worn signify royal favour; and are displayed publicly.<sup>120</sup> Thus material history uncovers political networks that are distinctly female. However, gloves were also commonly given as New Year's gifts for those outside the elite, and in exchanges between men that signalled their status in power hierarchies. Henry Algernon Percy, fifth earl of Northumberland (1478-1527), for example, received gloves as New Year's gifts from his footmen, for which they were rewarded 3 shillings 4 pence, an amount that equated to their worth and reinforced the social hierarchy between the earl and his servants.<sup>121</sup>

Gift-giving at court might thus be an occasion of intimacy and favour, allowing access to a monarch's body, with clearly gendered implications relating to the living arrangements of male and female monarchs.<sup>122</sup> The more restricted gendered access to Elizabeth I compared with Henry VIII made the poisoned glove a perceived powerful weapon, since it was feared that perfumed gloves could easily be poisoned. The smell itself was a poison that acted through being breathed in. As early as 1563, draft precautions in the hand of William Cecil regarding the 'apparel and dyett' of the newly installed Elizabeth I, warned her not to accept 'Apparell or Sleves' or 'Gloves' from any stranger, lest they 'be corrected by some other fume,' in other words, the perfume was poisoned.<sup>123</sup> Gifts of poisoned gloves appear to have been not uncommon, so much so that they were dramatized in Marlowe's *Massacre of Paris*, in which play the character of the Old Queene fatally accepts poisoned gloves, remarking 'Me thinks the gloves have a very strong perfume, / The sent wherof both make my head to ake... / the fatall poison / Workes within my head, my brain pan breakes, / My heart doth faint, I dye (3.3-6, 19-21). Rather than being absorbed through the skin by wearing the glove, the poison was administered through the fumes of its smell. Restricted access to the

---

<sup>120</sup> Society of Antiquaries, London, MS 537; Folger Shakespeare Library, MS Z.d.15. See also British Library, Lansdowne Roll 17 (1589); British Library RP 294 vol.1 (1600); Jane A. Lawson, *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges, 1559-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); eadem, 'Rainbow for a Reign: The Colours of a Queen's Wardrobe', *Costume*, 41 (2007) 26-44 (pp. 29-34). Susan Corbett, "'When gloves are giving': A Royal History", *Country Life*, 170 (1981), 391-2.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Percy, (ed.), *The Regulations and Establishment of the Household of Henry Algernon Percy, The Fifth Earl of Northumberland* (London: William Pickering, 1827), p. 345.

<sup>122</sup> On the transformation of the privy chamber under Mary I and Elizabeth I see, Pam Wright, 'A Change in Direction: The Ramifications of a Female Household, 1558-1603', in David Starkey (ed.), *The English Court From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (Harlow: Longman, 1987), pp.147-72.

<sup>123</sup> CP 153/53: [1563?].

female royal body deriving from the restricting of the living quarters at court likely made poison a gendered weapon for the would-be assassin, and gloves were an ideal and ubiquitous tool with which to deliver it to the victim.

Fears of poisoned gloves reflected the significance of gloves as items that directly touched the skin. As well as potentially dangerous gifts for a monarch, this sensory element also made them intimate gifts. In order for gloves to fit perfectly, the giver needed to know the size of the wearer's hands, a personal connection that was amplified where recipient or giver was a monarch. Ill-fitting gloves were quite common, as when Secretary of State, Edward Nicholas, wrote to Lady Mary Carr, asking her 'to leave with your Ladyship the size of my hand that you may do me the favour in payment of your last wager to fit the gloves the better'.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, where gloves were given out en masse at occasions such as weddings and funerals, it is unsurprising that they often did not fit, as it satirised by Thomas Dekker in his *Satiromastix* (1602): 'Five or six pair of white innocent wedding gloves did in my sight choose rather to be torne in pieces that drawne on'.<sup>125</sup> To receive a gift of gloves from the monarch was a sign of particular royal favour: court rituals of gift-giving were intrinsically public rituals of power and display, in which both women and men were intimately involved, as conveyors of gifts or messengers of royal pleasure or displeasure. Sir Thomas Chamberlain Resident English Ambassador in Spain received a gift of perfumed gloves from Elizabeth I, which Sir Nicholas Throckmorton conveyed to him, writing 'so as I perceive that yow be taken to be very skilfull in delicacyes', a tone that appears to undercut notions of his masculinity.<sup>126</sup> The gifting of gloves between men and women was a common feature of popular courtship rituals and practices, and this clearly extended to the diplomatic and royal level in significant and telling ways.<sup>127</sup> As part of the 1562 courtship negotiations between Elizabeth I and Eric XIV, the London-based jewel merchant John Dymock presented the Swedish king with gifts from the English queen, including a pair of black velvet gloves and a 'fair English mastiff'. The choice not to present Eric with a ring, was presumably, given Elizabeth's reticence

---

<sup>124</sup> TNA, SP, 16/482, fol. 19: [3 July] 1641.

<sup>125</sup> Act I; Cunnington and Lucas, *Costumes for Births, Marriages and Deaths*, p. 67.

<sup>126</sup> TNA, SP, 70/19, fol. 132: [Throckmorton] to Chamberlain, 29 October 1560.

<sup>127</sup> Eric Carlson, 'Courtship in Tudor England', *History Today*, 43/8 (August 1993), 23-29 (p. 24).

for a diplomatic marriage, because such a gift symbolised marital intent.<sup>128</sup> Thus, the glove when gifted between men and women while intimate was not as emotionally symbolic as other kinds of gifts.

The giving of gloves as gifts was often ad hoc, but there are a series formal occasions where the formal bestowal of gloves was an important symbolic part of the kinds of ceremonial rituals outlined by Natalie Zemon Davis. A key part of the pageantry that greeted important visitors to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge involved the ceremonial presentation of highly decorated gloves.<sup>129</sup> A pair of elegant embroidered white gloves purportedly presented to Queen Elizabeth, on her visit to Oxford in 1566 are now displayed at the Ashmolean Museum.<sup>130</sup> Detailed decrees survive regulating the reception of Charles I at Oxford in August 1636, which involved presenting him with an embroidered bible and pair of gloves, and stipulated that the queen was also to receive gloves, as were the Elector Palatine and his brother.<sup>131</sup> Throughout these elaborate rituals involving male and female monarchs, queen consorts and other dignitaries, gloves were a symbolic high status gift of welcome irrespective of gender.

More broadly, the gifting of gloves was a central part of various rituals and ceremonies: funereal black gloves were given to mourners at funerals, as marks of honour and to extend community. Wedding guests were given gloves normally by the groom, but the seventeenth-century English gentleman farmer, Henry Best suggested that sometimes the groom gave to men while the bride to women, in which gloves became the conduit to enacting, or reinforcing, distinct male and female sociabilities upon which the couple might draw as an emotional and social resource through their married life. Gloves were also given in pre-contracts and legal betrothals, and they were given as Valentine's presents.<sup>132</sup> In 1721 the

---

<sup>128</sup> TNA, SP, 70/40, fol. 124: J. Dymock to Cecil, 12 August 1562; SP, 70/40, fol. 64: Dymock's statement, 6 August 1562; SP, 70/40, fol. 70, Dymock's Examination, 6 August 1562; Anna Whitelock, *Elizabeth's Bedfellows: An Intimate History of the Queen's Court* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp.

<sup>129</sup> *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, J. S. Brewer, et al. (eds), 21 vols and *Addenda* (London: HMSO, 1862-1932), IV, part 3, 6788 (1530)

<sup>130</sup> <http://www.ashmolean.org/ash/objectofmonth/2002-11/relobjects.htm> [accessed 11 September 2018].

<sup>131</sup> TNA, SP, 16/330, fol. 53: [12] August 1636.

<sup>132</sup> Beck, *Gloves, Their Annals*, pp. 228, 231-2, 236-7, 245-7, 249; Steven C. Bullock and Sheila McIntyre, 'The Handsome Tokens of a Funeral: Glove-Giving and the Large Funeral in Eighteenth-Century New England', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 69/2 (2012), 305-346. Heal, *Power of Gifts*, p. 362



Hampshire gentlewoman Lady Betty Heathcote recorded that she ‘gave the Men four pair of Gloves when I was Churched’, intimately linked to the female lifecycle.<sup>133</sup>

Gifts of gloves could also reflect and create male networks. In the concluding paragraph of a letter to his kinsman about the execution of Mary Stewart, Marmaduke Dayrell requested his kinsman ‘accepte in good p[ar]te this small shewe of my duetifull remembraunce to you’.<sup>134</sup> As a gift, was this a sign of political favour; as a remembrance, a saintly relic; or a memory of the event? A glove of the late queen could hardly be termed a trifling, but letters were carefully constructed rhetorically; in this instance, as letter-writer Marmaduke might have employed modesty *topoi* in terming the glove ‘a small shewe of [his] duetifull remembraunce’ thus transforming the richest imaginable gift at that precise moment into a minimal gesture of friendship, thereby suggesting that his loyalty for his kinsman had no boundaries.

As with many types of social exchange, textual and material, the gifting of gloves was fraught with social anxieties evidenced by a rhetorical apologetics relating to sending and receipt, anxieties that could be complicated by issues of gender. Writers were concerned about the poor quality of gloves, their safe arrival, the refusal of the gift, whether the recipient liked the gloves or not. The Earl of Hertford out of favour with the Queen in March 1563 desired reconciliation and approached Robert Dudley to present her with ‘a poor token of gloves’.<sup>135</sup> Here social anxieties connected to material goods worked with epistolary forms of deference enacting subordination and humility in order to honour the recipient.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, there was concern that the giving of gloves might be an empty gesture. In a series of considerations delivered before the 1559 Elizabethan parliament, an entry concerning foreign merchants warned of

the Italians aboue all other to be taken heede of, for they in all tymes passe to go to and fro everye wheare, and for them selves serve all princes at

---

<sup>133</sup> Dawn Chappel, ‘Sir William Heathcote’s Livery’, *Costume*, 42 (2008), 66-87 (p. 81).

<sup>134</sup> Redfern, *Royal and Historic Gloves*, pp. 25-28

<sup>135</sup> TNA, SP, 12/28, fol. 57: 29 March 1563.

<sup>136</sup> James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), ch. 4; Daybell, *Women Letter Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006; paperback edition 2018), ch. 4.

ones, and w[i]t[h] their perfumed gloves and wanton presentes, and gold enough to boote if nede be, worke what they lyst and like the fatt even from our berdes.<sup>137</sup>

In some ways then, the gift of diplomatic gloves was seen as mere courtesy.

Complex gender politics governed the acceptance and wearing of a pair of gloves that was intimately connected to the politics of display, and in some ways obliged the recipient. For a woman to receive gloves from a man might carry romantic implications, while acceptance by a man bound in other ways. The influential Italian merchant based at Antwerp, Carlo Lanfranchi sent Robert Cecil four pairs of Spanish gloves – a gesture of male sociability – hoping that he would take them as a present for his ‘attentions to my friend’ the bearer, but knowing that Cecil would not wish to he suggested he pay 8 crowns a pair for them.<sup>138</sup> The acceptance of gifts of gloves might also associate the recipient with the giver, which was heightened where the gift carried symbolic meaning. The French nun Anthoinette de Saveuses was concerned that a gift of gloves to her former charge, Anne Basset, the daughter of Lady Lisle, and Maid of Honour to Jane Seymour would cause her to fall into disfavour, since they were embroidered with the name of her patron saint, St Anne.<sup>139</sup> These gloves associated with a nun, and carrying overtly Catholic symbolism might have been interpreted in a particular way in the Reformist climate of the Henrician court in the 1530s. Saveuses’ gift entailed not only a finished wearable item but included a degree of careful work that reflected contemporary ideologies about women’s labour. Elite women frequently created or crafted gifts that symbolised their feminine propriety and gloves were a suitable site for such demonstrations. Moreover, as Amanda E. Herbert has argued, these were investments of female time and expertise that heightened the emotional value of the gift and the network of sociability that it produced.<sup>140</sup>

The gifting of gloves was therefore ubiquitous and ritualised throughout early modern society in ways that both reflected and created the gendered operations of power, connected to a series of social, diplomatic and political

---

<sup>137</sup> CP 152/96: Considerations delivered to the Parliament, 1559.

<sup>138</sup> CP 60/30: Carlo Lanfranchi to Sir Robert Cecil, 8 March 1598 (Italian).

<sup>139</sup> TNA, SP, 3/18, fol.131: Anthoinette de Saveuses to Lady Lisle, n.d. *Lisle Letters*, V.1588 [November to December 1539]. *Lisle Letters*, V, p. 106.

<sup>140</sup> Herbert, *Female Alliances*, p. 55.

occasions: weddings, funerals, visits from ambassadors and to the universities, as well as New Year's gift ceremonies. Gloves could be intimate gifts connected to the body (and specifically the hand and sense of touch); the giving of well-fitting gloves meant an intimate knowledge of the size of hands of the recipient, and knowledge of taste, fashion and preference. The presentation of gloves itself might be an occasion of intimacy or access (which could itself be undermined or an occasion of anxiety), while the acceptance of a glove, the wearing of it next to the skin enacted favour or intimacy, which connected the sender and giver through the exchange of the gift and signified political associations that carried different meanings for men and women.

## **V Conclusion**

Power relations informed by gender and materiality shape gloves and glove components through every stage of their becoming in the early modern period, from assemblage in production, consumption, gifting and display and performance of gloves. Gloves and their material parts in turn participate in creating power relations in these distinct interpretive contexts. No material artefact can be analysed without considering the interplay of power relations that involve gender, and materiality and the material. These are components that are admittedly not easily disentangled. We have taken gloves from the early modern period as a useful example to outline the dynamic interactions between gender and materiality in creating forms of power. These operations of power through gloves are not stable, but shift over time and within particular contexts. With further study of these and similar artefacts from other periods, we will be able to examine how the early modern processes of becoming gloves that we have elucidated here are themselves bound in a particular historical moment and geo-cultural site, and to investigate broader continuities and changes. Gloves from this period represent complex material entities that generate significant meaning across their early modern existence from commission and construction to display and exchange. They lived complex existences and itineraries as they communicated — as materials, texts and social and gender performances — in the early modern world.