

## **Textual Ambassadors Workshop One: Mapping the Field**

The network's first workshop was held at TORCH in Oxford on 9-10 August 2013. The workshop was sponsored by a research networking grant from the AHRC and received further sponsorship from the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH). Below is a summary of the workshop, detailing important themes that emerged from our papers and discussions, as well as short summaries of key themes from individuals' papers. Tracey's introduction to the workshop, which surveyed trends in scholarship that make this a timely and much needed project will be posted separately.

### **1. Themes**

#### **Disciplinarity**

The workshop was distinguished by open and engaged discussion between historians and literary scholars working across English and Continental European literatures. Papers and discussion reflected the desire to draw on valuable techniques from different disciplinary traditions. Tim asked how a literary scholar could retain allegiance to studying literary form in working on the historical contexts for literary production, and reflected on the disciplinary divisions that constrain transnational literary studies. Jan and Susan invited literary approaches to the symbolic and literary exchanges their respective historical work had uncovered. Jason reminded us all, but especially his fellow literary scholars, to be rigorous in our archival research and to bear in mind the material nature of our texts. André and Tim diverged in their views on culture as an all-pervasive aspect of politics versus the need for some language that can distinguish literary culture and describe what literary writings do that other things do not. Jo asked whether more detailed understanding of early modern literary engagements with diplomacy could help us roll back our disciplinary assumptions to a 'pre-disciplinary' position, whilst John advocated a post-disciplinary position based on the compatible possession of literary and historical approaches.

#### **Geographies and communities**

The nature and geography of literary communities emerged as a theme in several papers and in the general discussion. André asked what we should do with odd, composite territories with non-monarchical international actors like the princes of the Holy Roman Empire. Jo suggested that there were benefits to analysing these international phenomena through the lens of a national literary tradition. Tracey suggested that we should think about what role diplomats played in shaping the public spheres in their native countries, Edward W-L argued that diplomats could be conduits between national public spheres, while Diego pointed to an international public sphere. Joad, however, suggested that we should think about literary communities that crossed and transcended political boundaries. In discussion we wondered whether 'trans-local' might be a more useful term than transnational for describing some of the phenomena we were discussing, given that they transcended individual localities, and yet local constraints and variations were also relevant, whilst neither medieval principalities nor modern political nation groupings adequately described the range of political actors involved.

#### **Terminology**

As well as debating the terminology we use to describe geographies and communities, we also discussed some quite fundamental terms. Chris pointed out the need to remember that 'diplomacy' and 'international relations' are outcomes that need explaining and that our modern usage is suffused with assumptions that can be anachronistic when we are discussing the early modern period. Warren further added that one of the assumptions embedded in discussion of 'diplomacy' is that it is something designed to avoid war. Instead, he cautioned, we should remember that diplomacy was

not necessarily peaceful in intent and that we should bring war and conflict more firmly back into the picture.

### **Periodization and models of diplomacy**

Much of our discussion concerned issues of periodization. One key issue was whether the literate diplomat was a humanist phenomenon or one that continued and to what extent different types of diplomats (eg aristocratic, non-aristocratic) could participate in court culture at different times. Another common theme in our conversations was the extent to which we should think not just of Renaissance diplomacy, but also of 'Reformation diplomacy' and how that might be different. Meanwhile John's paper raised the question of whether some diplomatic activities (eg inter-dynastic marriage) raised issues that cut across different periods. We also discussed whether we should be talking about multiple moments of transformation in different geographies.

### **Gender**

Various papers and our general discussion suggested that this project could make an important contribution to our understanding of the role of gender in diplomacy. Gender was an important dynamic in the diplomatic tropes of the play discussed by Tim and the princely diplomatic exchanges at the Field of the Cloth of Gold described by Glenn, and it was fundamental to John's analysis. Moreover, Jo's work suggested that there was a gendering to the language of diplomacy that would repay further investigation.

## **2. Individual Papers**

**Timothy Hampton** asked how a literary scholar might retain an allegiance to literary form in studying the historical and paratextual diplomatic contexts for literature; and, relatedly, what we should do with texts within texts (eg peace treaties in plays), how features of diplomacy were translated into literary forms and tropes eg deferral, and why Calderon was so nervous about diplomacy. Tim discussed Pedro Calderon's *Constant Prince* (1628/9) as a detailed case study, highlighting the multiple modes of princely representation Calderon deploys in his plot and demonstrating that Calderon's dramatic form negotiates both diplomatic changes and wider political, social and cultural changes expressed within the social space of diplomacy.

**Jo Craigwood** outlined her project on English literature and diplomacy and used this to ask how looking at the 'diplomatic moment' through the various genres within a national literary tradition might tell us something more by giving us a sense of how pervasive it was. She used a case study from within the Sidney circle to show that this can give us a more detailed appreciation of the various forms it might take. Jo also suggested that comedy and sermons are underused sources.

**Diego Pirillo** focussed on how Giacomo di Castelvetro's (a professional intelligencer) reading of diplomatic reports was influenced by the confessional context and his exile. Diego demonstrated that Castelvetro read these texts in conjunction with others (eg Machiavelli) and that his shaping of the texts he passed on raises important questions about how we should interpret *relazioni*, what sort of texts the published *relazioni* really are and how they were read and repurposed by contemporaries. He suggested that the history of reading and reception theory can help us tackle such issues.

**Edward Holberton** focussed on the relationship between poetry and diplomacy. He discussed Marvell's epigram to Queen Christina of Sweden, written on a portrait of Oliver Cromwell presented to Christina during the English Protectorate's 1653 embassy to Sweden, with the verses designed to forge further links between the two rulers. This served a prelude to raising a series of questions about

Marvell's diplomatic work and poetry, including whether some of Marvell's other poetry should be seen as a diplomatic 'job application'.

**Chris Warren** was interested in the need to explain the international context of texts and to avoid the anachronisms that can creep in through terminology like diplomacy and international relations. He used the international context of Milton's *Second Defense* (1654) to show that legal discourse is one possible way through these problems. Like Edward Holberton, Chris was interested in how far international law was part of a broader discourse.

**André Krischer** examined texts about diplomatic protocol produced by non-monarchical actors in the Holy Roman Empire. He noted that these both recorded and articulated power claims, and that books of ceremonies became preserved as quasi-material evidence of power relationships. André also flagged the importance of epistolary etiquette in diplomatic relations and raised questions about the way in which we think about geographies.

**Warren Boucher** reminded us that diplomacy can be an unhelpful term if we invest it with an assumption of working towards peace (as many scholars do). Reminded us that we need to think about diplomacy as continuous with actual and cultural wars. Suggested that paratexts were often sites for the literary negotiation of cultural conflict, and that even literature written to promote peace, became a tool for controversy and war.

**Edward Wilson-Lee** argued that translators relied on available works, which comprised a narrow section of the book trade; they often sourced books through diplomatic connections. He asked whether we should view translating as a 'para-diplomatic activity', as it lay on the periphery of diplomatic business, and suggested that diplomats were conduits between different countries' public spheres. A case study of Mary Sidney and translation showed how the diplomatic context could provide a background to the public self-fashioning of family grief.

**Joad Raymond** demonstrated that diplomatic networks were important to many of the transnational news networks, but showed via Milton's *Defences* that this was just one of several means of transmission. He warned us not to think just about the spread of whole texts, but of units of texts too: news often travelled in paragraph units. Joad further suggested that texts can easily move across borders and questioned to what extent we should be thinking in terms of national public spheres, as geographical features could be as (or even more) important to the shaping of news communities than political borders. Furthermore, such news and satire could be disruptive to normal diplomatic processes.

**Susan Brigden** discussed the literary opportunities of Charles V's court. She emphasised the contacts diplomats such as Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542) made with other literati while serving abroad. This not only prompted the spread of literary texts, but also the dissemination of, and experimentation with, new literary genres and styles, including prosodic experimentation.

**Jason Powell** reminded us that the interests of earlier cataloguers can obscure important information: just as they left out documents that they deemed uninteresting, so they often omitted data about the material nature of the text, or ignored literary qualities of documents if they did not fit with their notion of literature. He asked how we should go about overcoming these issues if we are to understand the literary qualities of diplomatic documents or the diplomatic importance of letters and other texts.

**Will Rossiter** talked about Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400) and Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542): both wrote poetry on the side of bureaucratic day jobs and were influenced by diplomatic contexts, raising questions about how we differentiate medieval from Renaissance or early modern diplomats and poets. He suggested that ideas of translation helps to explain the relationship between their situations: the poet as translator; diplomacy as *translatio imperii*; and the translation of the practices of embassy across geographical areas and across time periods.

**Jan Hennings** discussed types of writings by diplomats posted to Russia and their different ends. He brought out the contrast between the views of foreigners (and foreignness) found in diplomats' official reports and their personal travel accounts. He showed how an examination of ceremony could expose the false dichotomy between these texts and suggested that more focussed literary analysis of these texts could tease out their meanings further.

**Jose Maria Perez Fernandez** talked about the diplomatic contexts for writing by Andrés Laguna (1499–1559) and James Mabbe (1572–1642). He reminded us of the vibrant literary coterie at Charles V's court, that included diplomats, and of its cross-confessional nature, which provided two important contexts for the literary production of its members, such as Laguna. He examined how Mabbe's experience in embassies in the early seventeenth century helped to shape his later translations and political thought. Diplomatic contexts are also relevant to his work on translation and the book trade and on the Biblioteca Columbina.

**Tracey Sowerby** discussed the central role that Elizabethan diplomats played in the translation and publication of foreign material in England; the impact that overseas service had on diplomats' thinking about their own state; and briefly showed how the first English treatise on the role of the diplomat was compiled from histories, classical texts and Renaissance encyclopaedias. She asked how typical these English activities were and what might be learned from comparative studies.

**John Watkins** discussed the views of interdynastic marriage in Paul the Deacon's *Historia gentis langobardum*. He showed how foreign queens were subject to questions about their loyalties and anxieties over how far they could be trusted by their husband's subjects (and even their husbands) both within and without the polity. These concerns in turn might shape 'historical' narratives. They were not exclusively medieval or early modern concerns, but cut across our periodization.

**Glenn Richardson** discussed the meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Whereas the French king was keen to claim the event as a French triumph, even taking writers with him, the English seemed more reticent to do so. He showed that the subsequent French pamphlets played an important role in presenting an international image of Francis as peace-loving and imperial. And he asked why the English did not try to capitalise on the event in quite the same way.



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

