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BOOK REVIEWS

EARLY MODERN DIPLOMACY, THEATRE AND SOFT POWER: THE MAKING OF PEACE, edited by Nathalie Rivère de Carles, Early Modern Literature in History (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 239, ills; ISBN: 113743693X, 9781137436931

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This edited volume, *Early Modern Diplomacy, Theatre and Soft Power,* offers a thorough insight into the complex machinery of engineering peace in premodern Europe. It brings together ten essays, written by scholars in the fields of literary studies and history, which mostly focus on European drama, ranging from Shakespeare's history plays of the late sixteenth century to the German tragedies or *Trauerspiele* a century later. These plays were not staged in honour of a specific diplomatic event and could thus comment directly on the diplomatic tactics and strategies used in a variety of peace negotiations, which for reasons of censorship were either historical or fictional. The volume loosely defines the tactics and strategies of peacemaking as examples of 'soft power', a term coined in the 1990s by the American political scientist Joseph Nye to denote the use of appeal and attraction, rather than coercion and aggression, in diplomatic interaction.

The majority of contributions are devoted to carefully-executed close readings of dramatic texts, each of which make good use of the methodology introduced by literary scholar Timothy Hampton in his influential monograph *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (2009). Hampton's method seeks to uncover and compare the diplomatic underpinnings of early modern literature by reading the literary text through the prism of diplomatic documents, such as theoretical manuals, peace treaties, or ambassadorial dispatches. Hampton's own contribution to the volume provides a fine example of this. It compares how two plays – Miguel de Cervantes' *El Cerco de Numancia* (1585) and Pierre Corneille's *Sertorius* (1662) – used the diplomatic truce as a dramatic device to reflect on the authority and morality of those who negotiate the ceasefire. By bringing historical theorists into the discussion, including Hugo Grotius' opinion of the truce as 'a slumber of war',[1] and the late sixteenth century jurist Alberico Gentili, on who has

[1] *De Jure Belli ac Pacis Libri Tres*, trans. Francis W. Kelsey (Oxford, 1925), 1, p. 833.

the right to negotiate, Hampton convincingly identifies the contours of a previously overlooked dramatic subgenre: the 'treaty play' (42).

Early Modern Diplomacy, Theatre and Soft Power is admirably interdisciplinary and transnational in its approach to early modern peacemaking. Not only does the volume examine plays from a range of European countries, which frequently refer to diplomatic practices from overseas, notably the Ottoman Empire, it also reflects on forms of soft power other than drama. Diego Pirillo, for one, studies the cross-confessional diplomacy of a Venetian mercantile family. By drawing on a wealth of historical documents from Italian and English archives, he aptly demonstrates how the less formal status of merchants allowed the Venetian Republic 'to negotiate with more flexibility and without direct diplomatic involvement' (196). Moreover, Roberta Anderson examines, in a well-researched essay, how non-residential spaces at the Jacobean court, such as galleries, gardens, or private houses, could be used to conduct secret diplomacy. The volume's editor, Nathalie Rivère de Carles, expertly outlines all these different approaches to early modern diplomacy in a helpful introduction that provides multiple directions for further research, especially in the field of drama. Topics of interest include representations of the ambassador's fluid identity (such as Montjoy, the diplomat-herald in Shakespeare's *Henry V*), the relationship between diplomatic and dramatic time (the idea that the different stages of the peacemaking process are matched on stage by moments of sudden action and reflection), and the use of literary *exempla* (such as Mercury, god of embassies and eloquence) in historical diplomatic texts.

Given that theatre is mentioned as a main focus in the volume's title, it is rather surprising that neither the introduction nor the individual contributions reflect on the importance of audience reception and theatrical performance for a good understanding of early modern drama. Audiences did not perceive Shakespeare's plays as isolated texts but as 'live' theatrical events that interacted with and were tested against the political agendas of the spectators present during the performance, as well as of those who read about the plays in retrospect – in diplomatic dispatches or other reports. Although Jane Newman, in her chapter on the German *Trauerspiele* written around the time of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), suggests that drama could serve as 'a cultural ambassador' (82), informing domestic audiences about foreign relations, the collection does not offer extensive discussion on how plays about diplomacy were evaluated and appreciated as forms of soft power themselves. Despite this one blind spot, *Early Modern Diplomacy, Theatre and Soft Power* offers a valuable contribution to the field of literary studies and premodern history. It successfully draws back the curtain on the intricate nature of making peace in pre-Westphalian Europe and the dramatic plays that sought to represent that process in fiction.