

BOOK REVIEWS

SECURING THE PAST: CONSERVATION IN ART, ARCHITECTURE, AND LITERATURE. By Paul Eggert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xii, 290 p.

“Presenting the Past” is probably the more accurate, though less provocative, title for this cogent and engaging book. The past is impossible to secure, though humans, afflicted and graced as we are by memory, cannot avoid re-presenting the past and, in doing so, making ourselves into versions of it. Physical remnants of the past exist in tantalizing artifacts: our buildings, paintings, and writing, including literary works and something called “history” (a genre of writing about the past that is invariably confused with the past itself). These material versions of the past are notoriously mutable not simply because objects and texts are both revised and naturally altered over time but also because they live through our interpretations of them, interpretations that are often the generative force behind the revisions. Thus, written works, even paintings and buildings, exist in multiple versions due to revisions over time; they are what I call “fluid texts.” (And for centuries textual scholars have proposed theories and engaged in practices that either expose or conceal textual fluidity.) Such revisions are often the result of a desire to make the text look like ourselves. While buildings and works of art may be restored to their “authentic,” original forms, their restorations may not always reflect the earliest original, and the conception of an authentic past on which the restoration depends invariably dismisses other intervening moments. Much culture is demolished for the sake of “securing” a past version of an artwork or written work at the expense of all other versions. As often as not, restoration, retrieval, and reconstruction—a triumvirate of frighteningly impossible “re-” words—are critical illusions, verging on delusion. For instance, no restoration can bring Da Vinci’s *Last Supper* back to its original life, that is, its intended moment as a mural in a monastic dining hall in which monks supped with their lord. Thus, it is with equal measures of irony and sincerity that Paul Eggert—who brings to these problems his expertise as an admired textual scholar and general editor of the Academy Editions of Australian Literature—gestures in his title toward our real but never quite fulfillable desire to secure the past.

Eggert’s book is an informative and stimulating contribution to how postmodern, or rather post-postmodern, scholars and critics might rethink our relation to the past and its texts. It seeks to undo but also build upon earlier differentiations of Work, Document, and Text, which are the critical elements of scholarly editing. One senses an urgency in Eggert’s agenda: three decades of poststructuralist theorizing has redefined Text as discourse, dismissed the relevance of Document, and in effect delegitimized the scholar’s view that writing (hence discourse) can be the object of empirical analysis. Eggert addresses this syndrome intelligently as a theorist himself and without any of the scholarly chip-on-shoulder resentment that still lingers in some sectors of academe. In his view, conservators and editors—indeed any reader or critic—need to take fresh stock of something as deceptively simple as “Work,” both as noun and verb, in how we “secure the past”-ness of works that seem to transcend time (but never do). In proposing a new and healthier regard for historical empiricism among critics, Eggert argues that “the *work* . . . has to be detached from its traditionally idealist moorings” (18; his emphasis). In his last chapter, Eggert extends editorial theory to include American pragmatist C.S. Peirce and Frankfurt dialectician Theodor Adorno, a step that is both inviting and (as Eggert freely admits) debatable. This agenda is a tall order, but before he can fully address the problem of The Work, Eggert takes us through a remarkable range of topics, texts, and controversies that effectively

elaborates the critical, editorial, and aesthetic problems occasioning a need for the change he proposes.

The first half of *Securing the Past* reviews controversies related to the conservation and preservation of buildings and paintings. John Ruskin, who abhorred all attempts at restoration and preferred his medieval ruins unmolested by the aesthetic impositions of those seeking to reconstruct their notion of the “original,” serves as a stimulus for Eggert’s lucid critique of the problems incumbent in the curation of any structure. In this regard, Eggert is equally at home in discussing buildings in England, France, the U.S., and his native Australia. One might argue against Ruskin that a deeper understanding of the aesthetics of a period would more intelligently inform conservation practices, and this view is generally what conservators now assume, but for Eggert (and Ruskin) this aesthetic approach does not address the problem that a period’s aesthetics is derived through our interpretation of it. Moreover, this problem is compounded by the failure to confront a fundamental dilemma, about which the difference between the conservation of a building and the editing of a book is instructive.

The fabric of a building is like the document of a written work, and our experience of that building is like the reading of a text. However, because the conservator changes the building’s fabric during restoration, the restorer’s interpretation (text) is essentially indistinguishable from the building itself (document). What visitors to a restored building think they are seeing is the past; what they are getting is an interpretation inseparable from the object itself, and they are more or less vulnerable to misconceptions depending upon the degree of self-exposure included in the conservator’s practices. With written works, on the contrary, document and text are distinguishable from one another. An editor seeking to establish a writer’s intentions can manage the arrangement of words (text) without altering the thing that bears it (document). For instance, an edition of Shakespeare can expose its interpretive emendations and list its selection of variants used and rejected, thus making readers aware of the difference between original documents and edited text. Similarly, in restored buildings, docents, placards, and various kinds of displays can provide a critical presence like that of a textual editor, which, it is hoped, reminds visitors of the difference between past and present, building and interpretation. Comparativists may be particularly sensitive to the dilemma Eggert raises because a translation can be more like a restored building than a critical edition; it is an interpretive textual act so totalizing that general readers might confuse the translated text with the original documentary work, a “scandal” recently discussed by Lawrence Venuti.

Given the inevitability of restoration (*pace* Ruskin), translation, and editing (for whatever artistic, historical, social, or commercial reasons), visitors, viewers, and readers are always vulnerable. Consider, then, the amplification of vulnerability with fakes and forgeries, which Eggert also addresses. Readers might already be familiar with the larcenies of Thomas J. Wise, the late nineteenth-century bibliographer who included nonexistent works in his published checklists of Romantic poets and then “discovered” those items after concocting them in his library. Or, more recently, we have Mark Hofmann, who attempted to get the Library of Congress to purchase what he purported was the earliest known print copy of “The Oath of a Freeman,” which he had forged on his own letter press (72–73). The mid-century Vermeer forgeries and fake Australian aboriginal writings raise the stakes by putting the spotlight on the aesthetic and ethnic dimensions of “authenticity.” But whether we are duped or not, the nature of our vulnerability is located in a blindness to the distinction between document and text—or, in this case, the arena of production, wherein the creators create, and the arena of consumption, wherein we read and interpret. If we deny ourselves access to production and thereby the empirically confirmed organs of creativity (whether managed by fakers or original producers), we risk not just being conned but also not knowing the reality of art and by extension who we as a community of readers are. Critical approaches wherein production is “occluded by discursivity” (85), the

autonomy of the art object is rated over the creative process, and text is prioritized over document lead to blindness not insight.

Eggert does not discuss plagiarism and textual appropriation, although this juncture in his argument would have been a good place to include them, as one incident that emerged during my reading of his book attests. In a February 28, 2010 *New York Times* article, we find the prize-winning German writer Helene Hegemann, who had appropriated large chunks of text from a fellow novelist's work, stating that she had intended the unacknowledged appropriation all along as part of her *mise en text*. By way of justifying what we might call plagiarism, she argues that "there is no such thing as originality anyway, just authenticity" ("The Free-Appropriation Writer," *Week In Review*, p. 3). Hegemann, it should be noted, did not make this admission until her appropriation was made public in the blogosphere by the not-so-compliant source of her appropriation. Hegemann seems conveniently to confuse her *authentic* (that is, self-aware) borrowing as a means of fulfilling her creative needs with our general understanding of *authentic* as meaning authored only by her. To borrow from Melville, who also borrowed from sources: "Wonder ye now [Eggert's] fiery hunt?" Certain contemporary writers—Hegemann is not alone—seem willing to surrender their authorial autonomy, but readers, critics, and scholars (Eggert among them) like to be informed of the story behind the written work, and that story is invariably located in documents—Hegemann's and her source—not our reading of her composite text. (My view is not that "sampling" or textual appropriation is ethically impermissible, only that readers have the right to know the boundaries between borrowed and borrower.)

The Hegemann controversy aside, Eggert's examples show that past artistic acts are deeply embedded in the question of agency. All writers use sources, lift lines, and borrow texts; editors assist through their copy-editing, bowlderizations, and expurgations; writers revise in subsequent editions. Agency is not just a matter of who, but also when, how, and why. It is a matter of process. The same might be said of the conservation of paintings such as the aforementioned *Last Supper*, which contains the work of several originating hands as well as other restorers. Or, the equally controversial restoration of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel, which may have revealed a newly discovered vibrancy in the artist's original application of color or in fact wiped away the artist's intended veil of tonal restraint along with the surely dismissible soot of centuries. What is being restored reflects the conceptualizations and interpretive justifications of the restorer, who, as a reader of the imagery or "text" that filters through dusty light down to us, revises the painted surface or "document" to fit his or her conception of the text. Moreover, the fact that restorers elected to preserve fig leaves placed over the genitals of certain saints painted by artists other than Michelangelo (95), maintaining the prudery of viewers at the expense of the artist's intentions, vividly illustrates how a restorer can become an unacknowledged legislator of the so-called aesthetic object, not to mention a culture's discourse.

The burden of Eggert's argument is that "critical" visiting, viewing, and reading on the basis of aesthetics alone does not enable us truly to experience a building, painting, or written work. Rather, we need to relegitimize the empirical and historicist study of documents. Eggert argues as much in the second half of his book by providing a readable and cogent assessment of the development, here and abroad, of textual scholarship since the 1960s. He details the era's conflicting editorial theories, stressing the emergence of social text editing in the 1980s (in works by Jerome J. McGann), the repositioning of intentionalist theory and the critical edition (by G. Thomas Tanselle), the rhetorical and interpretive focus (of Peter Shillingsburg), and the efflorescence of German geneticism (exemplified in the writings of Gunter Martens and Siegfried Scheibe, and in Hans Walter Gabler's magnificent genetic edition of Joyce's *Ulysses*).

Eggert's theoretical contribution comes swiftly at the end of this useful and engaging survey. Here, Peirce's notion of semiotics and Adorno's "negative dialectics" are entwined to draw our attention away from Work as an ideal concept and toward the more concrete

dynamics of material Document and interpretive Text. For Eggert, document and text have an “ongoing antithetical, but interdependent identity-relationship that unfolds over time” (234). A document is just a piece of paper until it has a text inscribed or printed on it; a text has no materiality until it appears on a document. But there is little room in this dialectic for the notion of Work, which in Eggert’s view becomes merely a “regulative idea, the name or container, as it were, of the continuing dialectic” (235). *Securing the Past* ends with deft gestures back to the earlier problems that Eggert’s proposed dialectic will help resolve, but his notion is so provocative that one wishes for further discussion or perhaps a restructuring of chapters to first showcase his solution and then expose the problems it resolves.

That said, while Eggert’s focus on Document throughout is instructive and useful, I think his de-emphasis of Work—an admittedly fuzzy notion—requires further elucidation. As an example, the working draft manuscript of *Typee* is full of revisions, which if enacted would boil the inscription down to a final reading text. That final reading, however, varies considerably from Melville’s first edition print text. Coming between the manuscript and edition stages were fair-copy and proof stages, each of which existed in document form, and each text of which would have varied one from the other. But these fair-copy and proof documents no longer exist; they can only be inferred from evidence on the existing documents and in letters. This textual condition is common enough, but there are further complexities. Each revision site on the manuscript is a set of revision codes, which when decoded constitute revision texts that are not actually on the document page but must have been semiotically imagined in the writer’s mind; and I say “writer” not “Melville” because someone other than Melville—his brother or publisher—might have had a hand in certain revisions. Later on, after publication, Melville was complicit in putting out an American “revised edition” of *Typee* with numerous expurgations. The traditional notion of Work—fuzzy as it may be—is useful in imagining what constitutes the suite of real and inferred documents, collaborative hands, and the inscribed texts and decoded revision texts. But where is the Work called *Typee* in all of these variables?

Eggert would acknowledge the full revision scenario sketched here and might argue (as I understand it) that in confronting the various constituent parts we use the notion of Work as a means of “regulating” what to include or not to include in our editing, depending on whether the object is to edit Melville’s private revisions, his final intentions at the moment of publication, or his later published expurgations, or somehow all of these conceptions of the work at once. The discussion of what constitutes the work called *Typee* is unavoidable and problematically linked to our conceptions of document and text. In “regulating” the fluid text called *Typee*, I would include all “imagined” documents and texts, as they are readily inferable from existing material documents and inscriptions. However, inference requires argument, which implies dissent, which means discourse: which means that the notion of Work is just as dynamic a dialectic as document and text. Eggert’s dialectical approach is important and useful, but in my sense of it—and Eggert invites debate—the “regulative” nature of Work is an equal dimension in the dialectics of document and text.

Securing the Past is well written: it is full of crisply related and memorable anecdotes from the three disciplines mentioned in the subtitle, which cogently exemplify the documentary and textual problems they share. Eggert is particularly good at conveying his experience-based analysis of buildings, paintings, and written works. As good theorists should do, Eggert also balances formal and informal styles in his critical and editorial theorizing, thereby making theory not just accessible but alluring. One small stylistic matter: the author’s always measured informalities include a fondness for using “this” and “it” at the beginning of sentences, which forces one to reconnoiter for antecedents. This cavil aside, *Securing the Past* is an important book for humanists, comparatists, historicists, conservators, editors, and

anyone who recognizes that in understanding the interoperations of culture, time, creation, and reading we are obliged to see that the work of art is a mutable material thing shaped both by the ungraspable phantom of process and by our desire to grasp it.

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RIDDLES OF BELONGING: INDIA IN TRANSLATION AND OTHER TALES OF POSSESSION. By Christi Merrill. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. xiv, 380 p.

In *Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and Other Tales of Possession*, Christi Merrill has written an ambitious and capacious book in which the words/terms of her title and subtitle resonate with various interests and debates important to contemporary postcolonial theory and criticism and cultural studies. Thus, while centrally concerned with translation both as “practice and as trope” (173), the book engages a host of cognate postcolonial concerns such as the demand for (but also deconstruction of) authenticity and origins; belonging to or within a (national) community; and, following from these, the fraught issues of representation and fidelity to a given linguistic and cultural formation. In doing so, Merrill also engages the related projects of studying world literatures, doing area studies, and pursuing comparative analysis across cultures. Indeed, as Merrill presents it, the former and the latter concerns exist in a symbiotic relationship: her engagement with questions of authenticity or origins, belonging and fidelity is fueled by her interest in mapping the study of world literature and carrying out comparative analysis, much as her pursuit of world literature and comparative study inflects her take on authenticity, etc. As a result, words like “plural,” “multidirectional,” “dynamic,” “generative,” “flexible,” “fluid,” and “dialogical” acquire considerable conceptual and affective force, becoming integral to the reader’s understanding of words/concepts like authenticity or belonging as these are linked to the task of cultural representation.

The meaning of translation that Merrill foregrounds derives from the Hindi word *anuvad*, which she defines as “a telling in turn” (5). The meaning more conventionally associated with translation—“The Latin-based English understanding of translated as ‘a carrying across’” (5)—is made to recede until she makes it speak to her theoretical and critical investments: averring that “the Latin root for the most common term for translation, *translatus* (‘carrying across’) suggests a transaction in the most material sense, as goods transported across distances through networks that exist by and for such exchanges,” Merrill draws attention to how “people involved in those networks have negotiated the (constantly shifting) value of these translated[/transported] objects.” Emphasizing *negotiation*, Merrill would therefore have us “articulate a (meta)critical idiom more dynamic, incisive, and relational” that focuses not on the object of exchange, but on the “relationship that is formed as the text is passed along from one language speaker to the next,” making of translation “a performance in the sense of a ‘telling’” (42–43). The performative dimensions of the various meanings and activities she musters under translation are an important part of the theoretical frameworks she invokes and a valuable contribution to her readers’ understanding of translation.

Predictably, Merrill's understanding of translation emphasizes the translated text as a reading or interpretation, a re-creation of the "original" or source text deriving from what she, drawing on Linda Hutcheon's work on irony, calls "the agential contributions of the interpreter" (72). With each successive (re)reading or (re)creation functioning as a means to revitalize the prior version or versions, translation comes to be seen, in Merrill's analysis, as a dynamic process through which a text undergoes constant change and re-interpretation. Merrill's understanding of translation emphasizes the gains, not losses, it yields. In this respect, her view is at odds with those of some of translation's foremost theorists and practitioners such as Talal Asad, Lydia Liu, Vincent Raphael, and Tejaswini Niranjana, who underscore the losses entailed in translation, especially those that flow from, indeed are a structural condition of, "inherent incommensurabilities that can never be overcome" in a world where power is so unequally distributed (35–36).

In pursuing what she considers a "more subtle inquiry" that enables her to question "the very division between true and false, original and derivative, . . . faithful . . . and transgressive," Merrill consistently characterizes her approach as "dynamically performative rather than statically informative" (20); conversely, she finds that the demand (and search) for origins and authenticity yields commentary that is "flat, humorless, static" (21) and likely to "play into the very rhetoric of colonial possession" that we should interrogate, if not altogether decry (26). Therefore, Merrill does not recommend a view of translation that assumes possession of the "original." Writing about Gandhi's and Premchand's translations of Tolstoy (to which she dedicates an insightful chapter that examines Premchand as a translator not only of Tolstoy, but also of *dalits*, which implicates him in representing subaltern consciousness and speech, an activity for which at least some *dalits* have castigated him), she notes that "It is important that we look carefully at these exchanges [entailed in translation] to see that simplistic notions of translation—as static original to mindless copy—do not apply, for Premchand and Gandhi were each attentive mediators and saw to it that the ideas in the source text would be adapted to the needs of the target culture as much as they wanted to see that the target culture might adapt to the source text" (225).

It is no accident, as Merrill herself admits, that her argument finds its most significant support in translations that are an inevitable part of oral storytelling cycles, particularly those deriving from the work of award-winning Vijay Dan Detha, who "throughout his career" has rendered in writing "stories he [has] heard from politicians, prostitutes, farmers, potters, housewives, and wandering mendicants, and claimed them, in part, as his own" (24). Having made these stories his own, not least by "combin[ing] fragments of various versions of stories he [has] heard" or "by drawing out [a few lines] to more than thirty pages," Detha's (re)written narratives have themselves re-entered the circuit of oral tales by being performed "out loud in storytelling sessions" (24) that in turn (re) create them, much as, as translator of Detha's tales, Merrill has (re)created Detha's work through translation into English. In such a context, claims regarding origins and authenticity are rendered suspect, while meaning-making as an ongoing, interactive, and negotiated activity among spatially and temporally distinct communities of readers and listeners is foregrounded.

Through her many renditions or, more precisely, "telling[s] in turn" of Detha's (re)creations of oral narratives, Merrill opens up a whole new and delightful world of stories and storytelling for her readers. In doing so, she de-parochializes not only the non-Indian reader, but also the English- but non-Rajasthani-speaking Indian reader, given that Detha has rendered his translations of oral narratives into "the local *boli* or spoken idiom of his native Rajasthan" (47), of which the latter is unlikely to have a sufficient grasp. Indeed, Merrill asserts translation as an integral modality for interaction among Indians: "In multilingual India," she notes, invoking Ganesh Devy, "all language speakers are translators, traversing categorical divisions between languages and cultures even when staying in one geographical place" (89). Urging her readers to "recognize that translation has become a

site where we might learn to better negotiate the terms of the world wide community that we are already taking a part in” (231), Merrill locates an ethics of translation in the means it provides for “debates” across and between different cultures and languages “about what the world might become” (241).

As I have already noted, Merrill’s is a capacious endeavor that in any given chapter puts several ideas in motion, making it virtually impossible to summarize her argument without doing violence to the dynamic interaction of these ideas. While this capaciousness is the book’s strength, it is also a source of potential weakness because of the frustration the reader sometimes experiences along with the satisfactions of unpacking all the interweaving strands of her multiple ideas and arguments. In addition, her explicit interventions aimed at guiding the reader are not particularly helpful, not least because they tend to be less resonant than her readings of particular examples. That said, this is a book I learned much from. It told stories that I most likely would never have heard, and it afforded cultural knowledge that would otherwise have remained closed to me.

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FICTIONS OF EMBASSY: LITERATURE AND DIPLOMACY IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE. By Timothy Hampton. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009. 235 p.

At the end of the Renaissance, diplomacy assumed a central role in political theory just as in our own time political theory has assumed a central role in literary criticism. These two trends converge in Timothy Hampton’s new book *Fictions of Embassy*, which displays a rich store of erudition and an unwavering attention to anything that can be even remotely connected to diplomacy. Diplomacy, we are reminded in the introduction, is a natural ally of comparative literature, since it draws our attention beyond national boundaries to the dialogue between nations, and the author takes an impeccably comparative approach to the representation of diplomacy in Western European literature from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. He thereby avoids the stigma attaching to the “médiocres esprits” decried by Cardinal Richelieu, cited on page 2, in whom we are invited to recognize our colleagues in the national language departments. Those of us with joint appointments may feel conflicting loyalties. The first of seven chapters initiates the method of the work. The author begins by recounting an anecdote from diplomatic history or theory—in this case, Lorenzo de’ Medici’s embassy to King Ferdinand of Naples in 1479—and then reviews a series of literary texts that enlist scenes of diplomacy not merely as topical motifs but somehow as constitutive elements of their fiction. Drawing his examples from French, Latin, and Italian texts of the sixteenth century, including Ulrich Gallet’s embassy to Picrochole in Rabelais’s *Gargantua*, Hampton shows how the failure of diplomacy generates new forms of imaginative fiction so that fiction becomes a substitute for diplomacy. This pattern is repeated in the final chapter with the role of Orestes in Racine’s tragedy *Andromaque*, so that the entire book is framed as a structural inquiry into the compensatory relationship of fiction and diplomacy. Of particular note in the opening chapter is the section on Montaigne’s essay “Des menteurs,” in which Montaigne evokes a notorious episode of Renaissance diplomacy, from which Hampton ingeniously derives Montaigne’s project

of self-revision in the Essays. This is a good, new reading of I.9 with broadly plausible implications for Montaigne studies. Hampton could have bolstered his case, or perhaps complicated it, by acknowledging Philippe Desan's biographical argument that many of the early essays were written to promote their author's ambition to be named France's ambassador to Rome.

The second chapter examines the ethics of diplomacy as an archaic topic and traces the movement from ethics to politics in Renaissance culture. Again, there are some good pages on Montaigne, this time on "De l'utile et de l'honneste" (III.1), as well as some keen analysis of Torquato Tasso's dialogue *Il Messaggiere*. Hampton's relentless privileging of politics as a context for literature raises a question: since politics are demonstrably unethical, are we then to understand that Montaigne and Tasso write in order to imagine an ethical politics or, more precisely, an ethical diplomacy? If so, this compensatory role of literature places something of a burden on literary analysis. Chapter 3 takes up Tasso's epic poem *Gerusalemme liberata*, examining yet another failed embassy and its fictional implications. Remaining true to Tasso's own poetics, Hampton reads the episode of Alete and Argante from canto 2 as "a reflection on the ideology of genre" (86). This chapter also initiates what will become a preoccupation of the book with the role of diplomacy in the eclipse of heroism. The character Vafirino from canto 19 is the first of a host of literary figures to earn from Hampton the epithet of "post-epic" or "post-heroic." Chapter 4 deals with Luís de Camões' Portuguese epic *Os Lusíadas*, whose protagonist Vasco da Gama appears even more post-epic than anyone we saw in Tasso. Chapter 5 turns from narrative to dramatic poetry and proposes to understand Corneille's tragedy *Nicomède* in relation to contemporary European discussions of international politics, thus displacing the traditional critical emphasis on internal power struggles such as La Guerre de la Fronde. This welcome shift of attention from national to international politics reminds us that absolutism is not absolute, since it is in negotiation with other states. Chapter 6 on *Hamlet* is quite good, since there really is diplomacy in the text as well as the context. Here, Hamlet enacts yet another version of the supersession of heroism, suggesting that Hampton's true ambition is to write a history of the decline of heroism in literature. It may be no accident, as the author is fond of saying, that this approach to literary history fosters a surreptitious determinism that has been largely discredited in other branches of history. In the seventh and final chapter, which focuses on the role of Orestes as ambassador of the Greeks to the court of King Pyrrhus, Hampton sets the fictional embassy of Racine's *Andromaque* against the background of the increasing professionalization of diplomacy in seventeenth-century Europe and the challenge it posed to the autonomy of the aristocracy. These social tensions are traced throughout the work to the very undiplomatic conclusion of the drama. The novelty that emerges from this concluding failure of diplomacy is the new form of tragic action based on erotic obsession, which we associate particularly with Racine.

Fictions of Embassy manages to say something new about canonical texts by situating them in a context that is at once natural and unexpected. The method is simple, scrupulous, and successful. The author is a very resourceful reader, and his interpretations of Renaissance texts, however far they stretch the elastic boundaries of diplomacy, are unfailingly interesting. The variety of his material assures that his readings are never routine or repetitive. Hampton combines a judicious use of sources and a sure knowledge of criticism in order to extend his analysis through a number of scholarly fields without appearing an intruder in any of them. Indeed, he travels through the humanities with the sort of diplomatic immunity that only a formation in comparative literature can provide.

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