Andrew Marvell in Russia: Secretaries, Rhetoric, and Public Diplomacy

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Abstract

This article examines interactions between diplomatic representation, state bureaucracy, and rhetoric in early modern diplomacy. It analyzes manuscripts in the hand of the poet Andrew Marvell, which he wrote as secretary to the Earl of Carlisle’s 1663-4 embassy to Moscow. The manuscripts show how a battle over diplomatic ceremony and honour unfolded into disputes over the forms and decorum used in a lively exchange of diplomatic letters and written complaints. These texts were edited, translated and published for English and international audiences by another embassy secretary, Guy Miège. The article traces the afterlife of the embassy letters in print, arguing that Marvell and Miège became central agents in shaping how the embassy was perceived at home and further afield. The wider context of public diplomacy drew from the secretaries considerable skill in framing diplomatic letters for consumption by different audiences. Early Modern ambassadors performed rituals of sovereignty, symbolizing status and rank, but the complex art of diplomatic image-making was also directed by
lower-ranking embassy personnel. Examining the relationship between the practices of bureaucratic institutions and the performative nature of diplomacy, this article shows how the art and bureaucratic practices of secretaries exerted significant influence on the early modern reception of diplomatic relations.
Early Modern diplomats knew that they were observed by multiple audiences, from onlookers and agents at the courts and in the cities which they visited, to readers further away who followed their progress in news and printed sources. During his 1663-64 embassy from King Charles II to the court of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich in Moscow, Charles Howard, first Earl of Carlisle, worried about the way that he was perceived from afar, and feared that reports of delays and ceremonial indignities would make him “every where a matter of laughter and contempt.”

Helmer Helmers has recently stressed the importance of a wider public which observed and interpreted diplomatic events. He suggests the study of “public diplomacy”: how diplomats communicated with distant audiences to control information and news, cultivate diplomatic prestige, or damage the standing of political rivals. The Carlisle embassy, which also visited Sweden and Denmark after leaving Muscovy, offers an opportunity to examine in detail the construction of early modern public diplomacy because substantial manuscript evidence survives along with a printed embassy narrative. Carlisle’s secretary was the poet and polemicist Andrew Marvell, whom the authors have identified as the writer of a series of manuscript memoranda which passed between the English ambassador and the Russian court.
Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA), these papers illuminate the key role which Marvell played in developing Carlisle’s ambassadorial voice in speeches and letters. The documents were later adapted for print by another secretary, Guy Miège, who in 1669 published *A Relation of Three Embassies from His Sacred Majestie Charles II, to the Great Duke of Muscovie, the King of Sweden, and the King of Denmark*. Comparative analysis of these manuscript and print sources reveals valuable insights into the development by Marvell and Miège of different representations of the embassy for different audiences. The manuscript sources show that the fractious negotiations between Carlisle and the tsar’s court were a more symmetrical contest of wits than Miège’s *Relation* allows, and throw into relief how Miège’s narrative was geared towards a later diplomatic occasion and readership. Taken together, these texts highlight the importance of diplomatic secretaries in shaping perceptions of an ambassador at the court which he visited, and also further afield, in England and across Europe.⁵

The RGADA papers relating to the Carlisle embassy include a large file of memoranda in English and Latin in Marvell’s handwriting. Marvell’s secretaryship was the climax of a diplomatic career which began in 1657 when he
became a Secretary for Foreign Tongues in Oliver Cromwell’s Protectorate. The mission proved a pivotal episode in his life, even though he subsequently focused on being a Member of Parliament. Marvell’s papers in Russia feature very few corrections and must be fair copies of drafts that were developed in close collaboration with Carlisle. They have been bound together into one manuscript volume of 37 folios, and include letters, financial documents, and transcriptions of speeches. These circulated between the court and the embassy, or were delivered at audiences with the tsar and meetings with a commission of boyars (Russian top-rank aristocrats) appointed to negotiate with Carlisle. The Muscovite ambassadorial chancellery collected all records pertaining to the embassy, including detailed records of the conversations that took place between Carlisle and the boyars, as well as the responses to Marvell’s written communication, and copied them into an ambassadorial book (Posol’skaia kniga), which is separate from the file of Marvell’s papers.

Miège used Marvell’s papers as a source for his Relation: he edited them and interspersed them with commentary to create a dramatic narrative of Anglo-Russian cultural conflict. The Relation served as an apology for Carlisle’s diplomatic actions. Miège, a young
Swiss-born scholar, was employed as an embassy under-secretary, perhaps on the recommendation of Miège’s previous patron, Thomas Bruce, first earl of Elgin. Miège’s Relation evokes the diplomatic relazioni of Venetian ambassadors whose end-of-mission reports often included geographical and ethnographic observations, as well as an account of political institutions and a court’s attitudes towards other states. Even though Miège includes in his Relation richly-detailed descriptions of Russian, Swedish and Danish towns, landscapes and customs, these are not always drawn from first-hand experience: he incorporates into his descriptions, often without acknowledgement, many details taken from an earlier Muscovy embassy narrative by Adam Olearius. Miège published his Relation in both English and French versions several years after the embassy’s return. The occasion of publication was Carlisle’s departure for a second embassy to Denmark and Sweden, in the significantly changed diplomatic circumstances which followed the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-67). These circumstances, this essay will argue, influenced the ways in which he edited the materials which passed between the English diplomats and the tsar’s court. Marvell’s papers in Moscow include substantial material which does not feature in Miège’s account. Miège’s text, then, is not a
transparent account of what happened in Russia, and is in fact a rhetorical intervention in its own right, shaped for a later diplomatic moment.

Carlisle’s negotiations quickly became fraught and ended in failure: these difficulties are the rhetorical contexts which shaped the public diplomacy of Marvell and Miège. The embassy was one of a series of embassies exchanged between the English and Russian courts between 1662 and 1665 as they sought to renew Anglo-Russian diplomatic relations after Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich expelled the English merchants from Moscow following the execution of Charles I in 1649. Its main task was to restore the trade privileges that the English Muscovy Company had previously enjoyed since the reign of Ivan IV. But England was also preparing for a naval confrontation with the United Provinces, wanted access to Russian and Swedish naval supplies, and aimed to build diplomatic support in northern Europe. For Carlisle and his secretaries, Moscow was the first stop in a mission that later brought them to Stockholm and Copenhagen, where they joined English diplomats who had been attempting to build anti-Dutch alliances. The embassy’s three destinations still fell in the remit of the recently established secretary of state for the northern department, hence “northern” specialists were appointed
to lead the embassy to Moscow.\textsuperscript{14} Carlisle was selected for aristocratic rank and perhaps also for his connections to the Scottish diaspora, which played a significant role in Russian and Swedish military and political life; Marvell was chosen for his Baltic expertise and secretarial experience, and for his linguistic abilities in French and Latin; Miège was also skilled in these languages, and also had Scottish connections, through the Earl of Elgin.\textsuperscript{15} Despite the regional expertise mustered by the embassy, Carlisle’s mission ended in a diplomatic brawl over unresolved issues of ceremony and protocol. The English diplomats faced an uphill battle in arguing for the restoration of the privileges because the tsar was in a weak financial position. Contemporaries and later observers attributed the unsuccessful ending of the embassy to incompatibilities in diplomatic protocol resulting from cultural difference.\textsuperscript{16} But this verdict does not reflect what happened on the ground. Rather, this episode demonstrates Marvell’s and Miège’s skill in spinning the failure of Carlisle’s mission into a success of public diplomacy.

Marvell’s Papers in Russia

Marvell’s papers in Russia illuminate the tension-filled interplay between protocol, bureaucracy, writing
practice, and literary learning in early modern foreign relations. The Russian court complained after the embassy that the ambassador “pursued empty controversies, and caused much vexation to the boyars with his notes.” The papers in Moscow reveal that this was a more symmetrical contest of wits than Miège’s Relation makes it seem, and that there was a two-way relationship between scribal practice and diplomatic ceremony. Much of the written negotiation between the embassy and the Russian court revolved around a number of ceremonial incidents which had delayed Carlisle’s entry into the Russian capital at the beginning of his stay. What initially seemed to be nothing more than a diplomatic spat evolved into a major confrontation which was carried out on paper.

On 13 January 1664 Marvell handed to the Russian court two complaints. These set in motion an exchange of counter-protests and follow-up disputes which referred back to those first complaints many times. For those first two complaints, Marvell used the round hand which he also used for his personal correspondence, but in most subsequent memoranda, he employed his italic hand. Marvell did not usually use an italic hand for writing in English, but its application here is suited to the diplomatic context: italic had long been used in diplomatic correspondence. Why then did Marvell first
write the complaints in round hand, which was fashionable, but associated with speed and business? Marvell and Carlisle were in no hurry when they delivered the complaints, so the briskness implied by round hand was rather a way of setting the tone: they had been delayed enough already. This initial strategy was rethought when they received a counter-complaint that they had got the tsar’s titles wrong. “Every word” of their Latin transcript of the speech has been “examined strictly.” If the decorum of each document that they produced would be scrutinized so minutely, then the “formal, distancing effect” of fair italic was more appropriate.

Most of the memoranda are in English, but Marvell also produced Latin versions of the speeches which Carlisle delivered to the tsar, including three complaints against the official Ivan A. Pronchishchev, who had asserted the honour of the tsar by challenging Carlisle’s claim to precedence during an earlier entry, causing Carlisle ceremonial embarrassment. The “vexations” resulting from these Latin texts, and particularly by the Latin versions of titles of address used in the first of them, cast a long shadow over the negotiations, and warrant close examination here. Whereas Miège frames the disagreement as an illustration of
Russian ignorance and incompetence, the fuller picture afforded by the archival record suggests a more evenly-balanced contest over bureaucratic protocol, and also that the Latin documents in question were written with a wider readership in mind and presented as a means of pressuring the negotiations. Latin was not used as the language of negotiations, which were conducted with the help of English translators and Russian interpreters. The problems began with the Latin titles that Marvell uses in a letter which was sent to the tsar before Carlisle’s entry into Moscow, and again in Marvell’s Latin translation of the speech given at Carlisle’s first audience. He uses the epithet *illustrissimus* in the tsar’s title and *serenissimus* in that of Charles. The tsar’s officers complained that in the Russian translation, *serenissimus* appears as the more honourable attribute, and by using an inferior title for the tsar, Marvell had dishonoured him.

Their complaint was not unreasonable. *Serenissimus* was more commonly used in sovereigns’ titles: between 1648 and 1748, *serenissimus* featured 403 times in peace treaties; *illustrissimus* only six. The dispute took place against a backdrop of epithetic inflation. European princes of all ranks competed in styling themselves as *potentissimus, carissimus, altissimus, excellentissimus,*
celsissimus, invictissimus, or christianissimus. One observer notes that disagreement over titles mostly focused not on what a word meant, but on how it was used. The value of words was measured like that of money: no one asks where it comes from or what its substance is as long as it is acknowledged to be valid currency: “verba valent sicut nummi.” In other words, Marvell and the tsar’s conflict was a struggle for status according to the usual conventions of the early modern politics of prestige and honour. The Russian court’s perspective was only to be expected. Miège was just as aware as Marvell of the wider ceremonial context, but his Relation gives the impression that disagreement over the connotations of the tsar’s and king’s titles was essentially a contest over which party had a better command of classical Latin (which in the Relation the Englishmen of course win). Comparing this account with the Russian and English language archival sources shows that the disagreement between the diplomat and the Russian court was in fact rather more prosaic. Latin was becoming more important in the Tsar’s court at this time, but training was pragmatic and focused on the demands of an expanding chancellery system. There was sufficient expertise to deal with diplomatic correspondence, with four translators of Latin in the ambassadorial chancellery (Posol’skii prikaz), and
the duma secretary Lukian Golosov, who was involved in Carlisle’s negotiations, was an accomplished Latinist. While a small circle of scholars, trained in Latin mainly in Kiev, had relocated to Moscow upon the invitation of the tsar, the Russian court did not regard humanist learning and the sophistication of Latin rhetoric a source of prestige over which it competed with foreign ambassadors.

The dispute over Latin titles, then, was one of precedent-based chancellery ceremonial and sovereign rank, not a battle over classical knowledge and philology. The exchange between the embassy and the tsar’s councillors over the use of titles in the ambassador’s speech is a case in point. Three versions of the speech exist: in English, Latin and Russian. The English text distinguishes between “most excellent” and “most serene,” the Latin text between _illustrissimus_ and _serenissimus_, and the Russian version between “svetleishii” and “presvetleishii.” No account is given as to why the translators chose these terms. While the Latin and English texts use entirely different honorifics, the Russian text adopts a form of address which was accepted in its chancellery ceremonial, but which translates the difference between the two words as one of degree: the tsar is a _svetleishii_ (most
illustrious) monarch, while King Charles II is a presvetleishii (literally, most most illustrious) ruler. By translating the Latin into Russian in this way, the boyars recorded a suspicion that a distinction of honour might be perceived between the different words in the Latin. This would upset the mutual recognition of sovereignty which such ceremonies affirmed as a prerequisite to diplomatic negotiation. So in fairness to the boyars, their request for a corrected text for the record, as it were, was not unreasonably finicky, as Miège’s ironic account of the disagreement implies, where he says it was “as if the whole business were only to pick quarrels.”

The Russian boyars further noted that Carlisle (through his interpreter), had actually used the correct “presvetleishii” in his oral address to the tsar during the audience, but the written version of the text had then reduced the tsar’s honour to “svetleishii.” Asked why he had done this, Carlisle blamed his secretary, who had been responsible for producing the speech in documentary written form. The boyars challenged Carlisle again: the ambassador had attempted to raise the king’s honour over that of the tsar in the written version of the speech, creating an unacceptable precedent. Other Christian monarchs did no such thing, and they cited the
example of the ambassadors of the Holy Roman Emperor, who addressed the tsar as presvetleishii: “and such a humiliation that you, ambassador, wrote [in your letter], they do not write in theirs.” The boyars kept silent, of course, about the endless disputes over titles in exchanges with embassies from other European powers, including those of the Holy Roman Emperor. Despite these forceful objections, the Russian court remained accommodating and requested that Carlisle simply treat the tsar according to his “state dignity” on the widely accepted principle of reciprocal status relations, as purportedly did the emperor, and replace the words in his speech so that both tsar and king were addressed on equal footing.

The Russian commissioners thus understood the issue of titles to be a practical matter of chancellery ceremonial. What may seem like a minor hitch in written protocol presented a serious challenge to the tsar’s sovereign status if it remained uncorrected. The tsar’s sovereignty hinged, as did the king’s, on the recognition of his place in a princely hierarchy both at personal and international levels, which not for the first time resulted in anxieties over status in all spheres of diplomatic interaction, creating disputes over the use of titulature. Indeed, for Charles II, who had only
recently been crowned when he dispatched the embassy to Russia, the ceremonial display of majesty in diplomatic relations was a constitutive moment in restoring the monarchy. But Marvell and Carlisle, who themselves complained about the incorrect use of the king’s title, insisted that the issue was a question of who could better interpret and translate from Latin, which only served to increase the tension and became one of the major obstacles to future negotiations. In a long response to this complaint, Carlisle claims that the Latin translation of his speech to the tsar was not an official “paper of state […] but only [produced] as a piece of curiosity.”

This reply belongs to several contradictory explanations given about the purpose and official status of the Latin texts. The Russian translation notes that the Latin version of the speech was returned to Carlisle. Carlisle later had a second audience with the tsar, for which Marvell also wrote Latin documents containing passages that were translated unfavourably by the tsar’s commissioners. On this occasion Carlisle explains that the translation was “only prepared […] to save time, and as an help to their Russian translation, because one of the Commissioners Golozof understood Latin.” Carlisle sought to prevent this document
circulating as an official state paper by resisting to sign it. When again pressed to sign it by the commissioners, he attempted to retain some control over its interpretation by subscribing it, in his own hand, "by mee provided thear bee noe difference with the English." Why, given the difficulties caused by the earlier Latin translations, did Marvell and Carlisle circulate the Latin texts, and try to give them a status that was distinct from the "official" documents?

While the English texts are on the whole phrased rather woodenly, the Latin versions are more elegant and ornate. For example, where Carlisle reports of a recent Russian peace treaty with Sweden, "some points remained yet undecided," the Latin version reads "discordiae semina adhuc pullulare" (literally, "the seeds of discord are yet shooting forth"). Marvell and Carlisle persisted in circulating these more literary Latin documents, in spite of the trouble they caused, as a means of pressuring the insecurities of the boyars, few of whom knew Latin, and enhancing the prestige of an embassy which was being played out "in the eye and discourse of the whole World"; foreign merchants and the agents of other powers were observing the reception of the embassy closely. This would also explain why those of the tsar's commissioners who knew Latin compared the translations
with the originals carefully, and wanted Carlisle to sign the Latin version of his speech to the tsar: his signature made it more official, and so more accountable to their scrutiny. Miège later privileges the Latin documents in his Relation by printing them before the English originals, which in Russia were more central to the business of negotiation. Importantly, he picked up on what had originally been intended by Marvell by highlighting their literary interest and praising their "elegance" and "eloquence."  

Carlisle told Golosov that he "know Latin well enough," when the latter challenged the diplomat on ancient philosophers' use of Latin. However, a letter written at this time by the English resident at the Hague, George Downing, reports that Carlisle had no Latin, and relied upon Marvell. Marvell’s literary influence has previously been detected in a passage which deploys classical learning in response to the boyars’ complaint about the tsar’s Latin titles. In the 29 February memo, Carlisle presented a set of arguments on the etymology and contemporary usage of illustriissimus and serenissimus, which draws on Cicero, Lucretius, Ovid and Pliny for proof. However, the original document also addresses Russian etymology:
any one that hath no use of the Russe tongue can only by the eare understand that swettleishis & preswettleishis are words of the same originall derivation & significancy only differing in gradation. Whereas any one that hath no use of the Latine tongue may only by the eare comprehend that Illustrissimus & Serenissimus having nothing of the sound of one another do spring from a severa[l] fountain at least & so are likely to differ in signification [...] The word serenus signifiye[s] nothing but still & calme & therefore though of late times adopted into the Titles of great princes by reason of that benigne tranquillity which properly dwelles in the Majestick Countenance of Great Princes [...] is more properly used concerning the calmnesse of the weather.51

This argument treats the issue entirely as one of correct translation between Latin and Russian, and is extraneous to the more salient point, which Marvell addresses elsewhere, that illustrissimus and serenissimus might be understood to imply some distinction in degrees of sovereign status. It compares Latin with the Russian language, and strays into Russian etymology. Miège omits
it. This illustrates how Miège’s editing tends to enhance the rhetorical clarity of Marvell and Carlisle’s arguments, in order to tailor them to a public audience. Miège grounds Carlisle’s diplomatic authority more strictly in Latin literary culture. In Miège’s Relation, to which this essay now turns more fully, Latinity becomes an important sign of the cultural difference between English and Russian diplomats and the greater skill and decorum of the English, even though this misrepresents the bureaucratic reciprocity that underpinned their negotiations as is evident in the original papers collected at the Russian court.

Miège’s Relation and Marvell’s Papers

The archival materials in Moscow throw into relief the way in which Miège developed a story of bureaucratic disagreements between the English party and the Russian boyars into a narrative of asymmetrical conflict. Miège misrepresents Carlisle’s Russian interlocutors as incompetent readers and writers, rehashing a well-rehearsed early modern commonplace that juxtaposed “Muscovite contempt for Latin, and European pride in […] Classical learning.” After Carlisle presented to the boyars his first complaint about delays and inhospitable lodging while awaiting his formal entry into Moscow, the
boyars replied with a close rebuttal of Carlisle’s arguments, which Carlisle in turn rehearses and contests in the next memo. Miège edits this exchange to represent the Russians as incompetent rhetoricians and so, by implication, unskilled diplomats. He summarizes their argument very briefly but supplies his own negative commentary on its style and decorum: it is “ill compacted” and “rude.” Their claims are “unreasonable,” lack plausible proofs, and are indecorous in tone: “they make bold to tell him, that he ought not to have demanded satisfaction in that place, where then he was.”

Elsewhere he reports that the Russian memoranda ramble and offer “nothing to the purpose.” Miège is taking his lead from the defensive representation of Russian diplomacy established by Carlisle in his letters back to England. Carlisle reports that the Muscovites “neither know to manage affairs nor practise courtesy.” But at other times, Carlisle represents his opponents as sophisticated negotiators, which is an aspect of the embassy which Miège’s account tends to efface: “they held me above four hours upon that discourse using all the arguments, turnes and scrues of the Russian suttlety,” reports Carlisle, “but I held firm.”

Nigel Smith remarks that some of Carlisle’s point-by-point replies to the boyars anticipate the style of
animadversion in Marvell’s later satires. The Moscow papers strengthen this connection by showing that Marvell’s rhetorical sparring with the boyars was even more detailed than it appears in Miège’s Relation. The witty persona which Marvell develops for Carlisle includes a lively sense of intertextuality, which responds closely to the nuances, timing and form of the documents and arguments that the boyars presented to the English diplomats. For example, the original 22 March memorandum referred ironically to the boyars’ treatment of a preceding memorandum from Carlisle:

Then as to the first part into which His Tzarskoy Majestys neare Boyars & Counsellors have bin pleased to dismember my second paper I have nothing more then to desire that His Tzarskoy Majesty's neare Boyars & Counsellors as they have divided it would be pleas'd to set it together again. Only as to their affirmation that [...] their most wise Lord furnished His Royall Majesty with bread I agree with them forasmuch as the wisest of Princes saith, Cast thy bread upon the waters & after many days Thou shall find it again, as also it hath happened. But again I say that only our blessed Lord & Saviour could multiply the five loaves. His
Royall Majesty hath & will own perpetually that

Courtesy [...].

Miège reproduces from this passage the ironic development of the boyars' bread metaphor (referring to a loan from the tsar to the exiled Charles), but omits the quibbling about what the boyars have done to Carlisle's previous arguments in another paper. To similar effect, Miège combines and summarizes the detailed Russian responses to the two papers, which were handed to Carlisle on 26 February. To encounter this dialogue in its original form is to see that Marvell and Carlisle address the Russians' response, which is hardly "ill compacted," very closely: they break it down into sections, quote these at length, and reply to each in turn. Miège's editing makes Carlisle's arguments more flowing and internally coherent, but what is lost is the texture of close rhetorical contest, in which both sides show sophistication and wit in the way that they respond to one another. Marvell was well-suited to the competitive and precise nature of seventeenth-century diplomacy because he could draw on recent traditions of adversarial polemic which often took the form of close quotation and retort. Nicholas von Maltzahn argues that there are
strong continuities between this polemical tradition, the elaborate intertextuality of Marvell’s lyrics, and the witty animadversion of Samuel Parker in *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* and *The Rehearsall Transpros’d: The Second Part* or Francis Turner in *Mr Smirke*.\(^{62}\) The speeches and memoranda which Marvell wrote for Carlisle in Moscow fit into this continuity too. The diplomatic context demanded an ability to write adversarial rhetoric with acute attention to the changing details and decorum of the negotiations. It shows why a secretary with the literary skill of Marvell was not only useful to have at hand but formed a crucial part of diplomatic process.

The material omitted by Miège includes a lot of quibbling, on Carlisle’s part, about the form and timeliness of the documents that he has been given. His long 29 February memorandum complains that an “answer [which] was read in my presence” at an earlier meeting was not subsequently presented to him in writing despite “daily importunityes,” and that the version lately given to him is “Not attested, dated, nor subscribed.”\(^{63}\) He expects to receive documents which in these respects mirror those which he sent to the boyars, each of which are dated, signed by Carlisle, and countersigned “By his Excellencyes Command, Andrew Marvell, Secretary.” Several of Carlisle’s memoranda to the boyars begin with similar
complaints, which pressure the boyars to negotiate on paper, with appropriate formality. In letters written to his government, he confides that his quibbling approach to the minutiae of bureaucracy and ceremony is a tactic aimed at securing political and ceremonial concessions, which is reminiscent of the boyars’ demands regarding the title issue discussed earlier: “And though I am perfectly satisfy’d that it happened much against their intentions that I was so diferred, yet I hold still fast [...] both in respect to his Majestyes honor and by this advantage to hold them closer to it upon other occasions either of ceremony or buinesse.” The Moscow documents show what this meant in practice: Carlisle and Marvell contest the punctilios of bureaucratic form just as energetically as they disputed ceremonies such as Carlisle’s entry to Moscow: each is taken as an index of the social reciprocity between the English and Russian courts.

Another front in the paper war lay in the exploitation of archival memory, and here again the Moscow archives include telling material that is omitted from Miège’s Relation. Carlisle repeatedly challenged the boyars to produce documentary evidence in support of their claim that the privileges had been withdrawn at the request of Charles I: the boyars mentioned that the tsar had received a letter from Charles carried by one Luke
Nightingale, whose official credentials Carlisle disputed, and whose letter the boyars seemingly could not or would not find. Conversely, the speeches that Marvell wrote for Carlisle’s second audience with the tsar refer closely and in detail to past correspondence between the tsar and the English crown. Miège omits to mention in his Relation an affidavit, signed by seven privy councillors, which had been brought from England and is incorporated within the 29 February memorandum in the archive. In such details, which were often omitted or condensed by Miège, Carlisle and Marvell show considerable acuity in the reproduction and exchange of written evidence. They exploit the increasingly bureaucratized nature of European diplomacy at this time, as the “information state” began to emerge: diplomatic power was increasingly shaped and enhanced by the state’s archival memory, and its ability to store, retrieve, and deploy information.

Correspondingly, the Moscow archives witness contests of sovereignty that merge, or move back and forth between the ceremonial and the bureaucratic spheres, as Carlisle repeatedly quibbles over the decorum of petitions unanswered, of documents lost or delayed, or inadequately authorized.

Miège’s editing makes Carlisle’s arguments more fluid, internally coherent, and readable, but it also
distorts their rhetorical context significantly. This served a deeper purpose: Miège had to obscure the reciprocity of Anglo-Russian diplomatic dialogue in order to sustain his wider theme of cultural difference and Russian diplomatic incompetence. The precise quotation and rebuttal of Russian arguments implied recognition that the two sides are legitimate adversaries in a battle of wits, yet the tenor of Miège’s wider narrative emphasizes the barbarity and otherness of Muscovite diplomatic culture. This was a representational strategy pursued by Carlisle and Miège by way of damage limitation: if the tsar’s court could be represented to a European audience as culturally “other,” and outside the European family of princes, then the tsar could not be seen to have won diplomatic honour from Charles II when the embassy ended in failure and unredressed grievances over protocol.66 No matter how each side “won” or “lost,” such contests presuppose that the diplomatic adversaries competed according to a system of symbolic meanings through which the hierarchical early modern political order was organized between rulers.67 The details of close rhetorical and formal combat revealed in Marvell’s memoranda and the Russian documentation, imply a recognition that the Russian “other” is a sovereign to be reckoned with – to the detriment of the ambassador whose
ceremonial setbacks caused all his quibbling. It is no wonder that Miège edits them away.

One of the most striking omissions of archival material in Miège’s *Relation* reinforces this point, in that it conceals a final episode in the negotiations, which came dangerously close to exposing the fact that behind the rhetoric of an ancient friendship between the Muscovite and English crowns, the Muscovy company privileges was financially valuable to the English state. Acknowledging this value would also imply a mutual recognition of diplomatic legitimacy, of precisely the kind denied by Miège’s fiction that diplomacy was made impossible by deep cultural differences. In the *Relation*, the negotiations come to an impasse after Carlisle offers to perform the role of mediator between Russia and Poland, but then gently retracts this offer when it becomes clear that the tsar will not restore the privileges, which remains Carlisle’s precondition for any further treating.

The embassy in fact ended in brinkmanship and haggling according to memoranda exchanged between 9 and 14 June. Carlisle arranged to take his leave of the tsar on 14 June, and on 9 June left a list of outstanding business, which underlined his determination to conclude negotiations: demands for the liberty of a number of
Charles II’s subjects who had been detained in Muscovy; financial accounts to be settled; further complaints concerning ceremonial slights, and requests for documents not yet delivered in correct form. The commissioners notified him that day that the tsar would restore the privileges if Carlisle first carried out his proposed mediation with Poland, and returned to Moscow.

Carlisle’s reply receives the offer warmly, but states that he cannot return to Moscow later. This 9 June paper also seems to have expressed further interest in a previous offer of military assistance to the tsar. Carlisle responds on 10 June with a mild rebuke, which invites further negotiation: the tsar’s occasions are “better to be matured [...] in presence then by late & nowunseasonable writings.” Carlisle then received a paper asking who would pay for the military assistance offered. Miège edits some of the wording from Carlisle’s 12 June reply to this paper into an earlier section of his narrative. He implies thereby that the commissioners’ request for further details about possible military assistance to the tsar followed immediately after Carlisle’s first mention of this idea in his second audience with the tsar. The edited version implies that when the possibility of financial aid aroused the boyars’ interest, Carlisle’s response was consistent and non-
negotiable: the privileges had to be restored first. On 12 June, Marvell writes that the tsar would have to pay for any assistance and the privileges would have to be restored before further details could be discussed. This memorandum was sent after a day’s delay, and Carlisle may have hoped that the near deadline would force the boyars to yield; an earlier letter from Carlisle to the Earl of Clarendon suggests that the boyars’ refusal to discuss the privileges might turn out to be a negotiating ploy: “I am told that it is an usual effort which they make to see if they can win anything, but often that they yield.”

By omitting any mention of these final exchanges, Miège conceals an episode which, as Carlisle’s departure approached, implied that the privileges had a financial value after all, notwithstanding all that Carlisle had said earlier in his embassy about the privileges being valued not for the revenue that they brought, but as a “token & memorial of a friend.” Or as Marvell and Carlisle put it more grandly: “not that [the privileges would bring] any advantage of gain to His Royall Majesty who could willingly shoot away yearly as much powder as the value of them comes to at the health of his Tzarskoy Majesty.” Both sides hinted that they might make tempting last-minute concessions as the deadline neared,
and tried to work out how far the other might go. In the end, however, neither could offer sufficient incentive for the other to compromise. Tsar Aleksei was in the grip of a fiscal crisis caused by his war with Poland, which a restoration of the privileges would only exacerbate. Charles II’s finances were also constrained, and could not extend to subsidizing Muscovy when a war with the Dutch was on the horizon.\textsuperscript{78} Miège’s \textit{Relation} supplies an ending in which the ambassador does not haggle. Carlisle instead makes a welcome offer to mediate between Russia and Poland, which reflects much more positively on his role as an ambassador (he offers not war but peace) and on his prestige as a diplomat. He then declines the farewell gifts presented by the tsar, on the grounds that his mission was not successful, and receives again the gifts that he had previously given the tsar, who rejects these in retaliation. Carlisle’s response at this point ends the embassy with a graceful compliment: “I give his Tzarskoy Majesty thanks for this, and I receive it with as great kindness as if it had been a greater Present. I shall keep it alwaies by me, because it hath had the honour to be in the Possession of his Tzarskoy Majesty.”\textsuperscript{79} In Miège’s account, Carlisle has the last word, and his magnanimity underlines the great tension between
mercantile haggling and the symbolic economy of diplomacy.

Public Diplomacy
Marvell’s state papers had a political life which stretched beyond the immediate diplomatic occasion of the 1663-4 embassy. The Second Anglo-Dutch war was pivotal to the changing diplomatic context in which the papers were edited and published by Miège in 1669. In 1663–64, the restoration of the Muscovy trade was desired partly because England was preparing for war and needed naval materials. Marvell’s The Second Advice to a Painter includes an ironic account of this war economy:

Muscovy sells us hemp and pitch and tar,
Iron and copper Sweden, Munster war,
Ashley prize, Warwick, customs; Car’ret pay;
But Coventry sells the whole fleet away.80

Charles II also needed to build diplomatic support in northern Europe, and Carlisle’s visits to Sweden and Denmark, following the mission to Russia, were part of
this strategy. Carlisle was a high-ranking diplomat, and he cultivated warm relationships with the Swedish and Danish royal families while he was there. These exchanges of courtesies also provided diplomatic cover for more secretive negotiations towards an anti-Dutch alliance which aimed, rather ambitiously, to recruit Sweden and Denmark together.\textsuperscript{81} These attempts to broker a military alliance proved unsuccessful in the short term, but from the peace treaties at the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch war emerged a fragile Triple Alliance between England, Sweden and the United Provinces. Unaccompanied by Marvell, Carlisle made a second embassy to Sweden in 1669 in order to present the order of the garter to Charles XI: a gesture aimed at shoring up Swedish support for the Triple Alliance. Carlisle also visited Copenhagen along the way, hoping to rekindle friendly relations with Denmark too, and to expand the Triple Alliance further.\textsuperscript{82}

Miège’s \textit{Relation} of the 1663–65 embassies was published to tie in with that diplomatic effort. The narrative supports Carlisle’s aims in 1669: the unflattering stereotype of Russia’s backwardness and lack of diplomatic sophistication provides a foil to praise the refined courts of Denmark and Sweden to the reading public.\textsuperscript{83} Miège – writing about “the unexpected humour wherein his Excellency [Carlisle] found the Court of
Moscovy” – notes the danger of exposing oneself to the “Censure of the World” while speaking to the interest of both the ambassador and the “Publicks”:

Why that Court should have opposed itself so obstinately against his Lordship, I know no other reason, but because his Lordship acted with much Zeal and Vigour for the Interest of the King and his subjects, and because he would not prostitute the dignity of his Office to the ridiculous pride of a Stolnick or a Boyar.

The “Courts of Sweden and Denmark” left a much more favourable impression:

For there his Excellence received all manner of satisfaction, being laden with praise and honour, and in short used with as much kindness and respect as could be expected from two Nations, whose Politeness and Urbanity are clear different from the Humour of the Muscovite.”

The Swedish court in particular might have been especially encouraged to read about Carlisle’s conflict with the tsar. Sweden was a long-term strategic rival of Russia, and cherished hopes of English support for a naval raid on Russia’s port at Archangel, which would
benefit Swedish trade. Miège’s Relation was printed with Carlisle’s endorsement, which is dated to the eve of his intended departure for Denmark and Sweden: 30 November 1668.

Miège’s book was an international publication: it was translated into French immediately and published in Amsterdam in 1669, and in Rouen the following year. As noted above, French was spoken at court in Sweden and Denmark (Miège elsewhere wrote that French was an ‘almost universal’ language in the states of Europe), so this translation might be expected to circulate widely. Reception evidence suggests that the Relation succeeded in broadcasting Carlisle’s version of events across Europe. In 1671 Fabian Philipps praised his “stout and prudent management of his Embassies into Muscovy.”

Miège’s Relation subsequently influenced authors of diplomatic handbooks, treatises about precedence, and state descriptions, including Abraham de Wicquefort, Jean Rousset de Missy, and Johann C. Lünig, as well as Voltaire.

The major difference between England’s diplomatic policy in 1663–64 and in 1669 was in its relationship with the United Provinces, which for a brief period after the war became England’s ally. The middle of the seventeenth century saw the English and Dutch public
spheres bleeding into one another, and English diplomats became concerned about, and keen to influence, representations of English politics and diplomacy in the United Provinces. Miège’s editing of Marvell’s papers suggests a tactful sense of how comments made by Carlisle in Moscow might play with Dutch readers too: in his reproduction of the 29 February memorandum, for example, Miège omits a section in which Carlisle argues that Russian mistrust of the English Muscovy Company is misdirected. The Dutch can undercut the English company’s supply of “velvets Sattins Taffities & Damaskes” only because the Dutch “have got the manufactures of those sorts of goods into their own Country where they corrupt & falsifie them.”

Marvell’s Moscow papers show how he drew on his rhetorical and literary skill to create diplomatic documents and an ambassadorial voice for Carlisle, and how these representations were prompted and shaped by the specific ceremonial and bureaucratic pressures of the embassy. They also show that Anglo-Russian ceremonial and bureaucratic exchanges were significantly more symmetrical than later accounts of the embassy suggest. The Russian officials who were delegated to treat with Carlisle were scrupulous and acute in their management of the bureaucratic back-and-forth, and hardly the
diplomatic novices that they appear in Miège’s Relation. This realization throws Marvell’s and Miège’s writing into new light. It suggests that Marvell and Carlisle’s more witty and elegant documents (especially some Latin translations of Carlisle’s speeches which were presented to the Russian court in parallel with the official “state papers”) were written to place extra pressure on the Russian court through the implied threat that they would circulate more widely in the international sphere, where the Russian court had less control over its representation. It also throws into relief the point that Miège’s Relation is an independent work of public diplomacy, which develops and adapts materials written by Marvell and Carlisle for a distinct, later diplomatic moment and an international audience.

When read in conjunction with Miège’s Relation, then, Marvell’s Moscow papers offer rich insights into the multi-layered, multilateral, and many-handed production of early modern public diplomacy. An early modern embassy’s life in letters could involve multiple tellings and retellings, and the relationship explored here between Marvell’s memoranda and Miège’s Relation demonstrates the need to read embassy narratives in the context of their scribal production. The complex representational strategies pursued by Carlisle’s
secretaries demonstrate that secretaries were central figures in shaping the way that the embassy was perceived both domestically and internationally, and that the wider context of public diplomacy drew from them considerable skill in framing diplomatic materials for consumption by different audiences. Joad Raymond has recently drawn attention to the ways in which the crises of the seventeenth-century blurred boundaries between the spheres of literary writing, practical diplomacy, and transnational debate in newspapers and polemic. Marvell and Miège are thoroughly representative figures in this process because they operated across all of these spheres. The agency of secretaries such as these is key to the study of public diplomacy, and warrants being examined as carefully as that of the ambassadors whom they accompanied.

1 We thank Jo Craigwood and Tracey Sowerby for their support and for inviting us to join the Textual Ambassadors AHRC research network, as well as Martin Dzelzainis, Nicholas von Maltzahn, and Steph Coster for their help in developing this essay.

2 Guy Miège, A Relation of Three Embassies from His Sacred Majestie Charles II, to the Great Duke of Muscovie, the King of Sweden, and the King of Denmark performed by the
Right Noble, the Earle of Carlisle in the years 1663 & 1664 (London, 1669), 116.


2 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205.


7 Vivienne Larminie, “Miege, Guy (bap. 1644, d. in or after 1718),” *Oxford Dictionary of National


17 Quoted in Konovalov, “Three Embassies,” 76.

18 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 14-16ob. The complaints were labelled “A” and “B” on the outside of the folded letter (see l. 15ob, the unnumbered sheet before l. 17, and ll. 1-8).


21 Miège, Relation, 195.


23 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 29-29ob (English); RGADA, ll, 18-18ob (Latin); Hennings, Russia and Courtly Europe, 145.

24 Miège, Relation, 118, 153-64,


26 Dauser, Herrschertitulaturen, 121.


31 Miège, Relation, 164-79, (English); RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 215-27ob (Russian).

32 Svetleishii is the superlative of svetlyi (illustrious, bright). The prefix ‘pre-’ in presvetleishii added a degree of augmentation similar in grammatical form to the notion of “most highest.”

33 Miège, Relation, 195.

34 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 266ob-67.

35 RGADA, ll. 302ob-3.


37 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 304-4ob.


39 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 11.

40 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 9-9ob.

41 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 11, l. 215. This explains why the document is not in the RGADA archive, but is reproduced in Miège’s Relation, 153-63.

42 Miège, Relation, 451-2.
Miège, Relation, 451

RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 27ob.

Miège, Relation, 246, 75.


Miège, Relation, 153, 227.

RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 11, l. 523.

Bodl. MS Clarendon 107, 153v.

Miège, Relation, 191-225; Smith, Chameleon, 178-81; von Maltzahn, Marvell Chronology, 75. Marvell’s important role in the embassy was noted by the non-conformist divine Thomas Jacombe. In Bibliotheca Jacombiana (1687), Miège’s Relation is attributed to “A. Marvel” (we are grateful to Steph Coster for this information), suggesting that Jacombe found Marvell’s authorship of text in the Relation more noteworthy than that of Miège.

RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 9ob.

See Okenfuss, Latin Humanism, 4, for a discussion.

RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 1-8, 14-15ob.

Miège, Relation, 190.

Miège, Relation, 192-93.

Miège, Relation, 281.

Quoted in Konovalov, “Three Embassies,” 90.

Smith, Chameleon, 177.

RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 12-12ob.

RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 1-8; Miège, Relation, 190.


RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 1.


Hennings, Russia and Courtly Europe, 154-56.


RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 30-30ob.

RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 32ob.
70 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 32-32ob.

71 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 32ob.

72 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 36.

73 Miège, Relation, 283.

74 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 36.

75 Konovalov, “Three Embassies,” 90.

76 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 6.

77 RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, l. 6.


79 Miège, Relation, 306.

80 Poems, ed. Smith, 334 (ll. 37-40).


83 For early modern stereotypes about Russia, see Marshall T. Poe, A People Born to Slavery: Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

84 Miège, Relation, fol. 6.


RGADA, f. 35, op. 1, d. 205, ll. 5-5ob.