
24 June 2024 | [https://hdiplo.org/to/RT25-16](https://hdiplo.org/to/RT25-16)

Editor: Diane Labrosse
Commissioning Editor: Lori Maguire

Production Editor: Christopher Ball
Copy Editor: Bethany S. Keenan

Contents

Introduction by Lori Maguire, University of Reims ................................................................. 2

Review by Rachel Chin, University of Glasgow ................................................................. 5

Review by Pauline Georgelin, Independent Researcher ......................................................... 9

Review by Philip Nash, Penn State Shenango ................................................................. 17

Response by Charlotte Faucher, University of Bristol ......................................................... 21
I’m delighted to be able to introduce Charlotte Faucher’s book on French cultural diplomacy in Britain from 1880 to the end of World War II. Situated within the new diplomatic history, the book considers the question through the roles of both state and non-state actors, and, in particular, of women who took initiatives and sometimes even acted on their own. Divided into six chronologically based chapters, Faucher’s book traces the development and evolution of cultural diplomacy by French authorities, as well as its eventual takeover by male diplomats and academics. The chronological approach allows her to show both the evolution in the concept of what constitutes diplomacy, and who practised it. Faucher explains her goals in the introduction:

This book presents a corrective to this approach [studying cultural exchanges separately from diplomatic relations], offering the first systematic analysis of French cultural diplomacy in Britain and focusing in particular on its gendered workings. It argues that questions of cultural diplomacy shaped Franco-British and European politics to the extent that writing a history of French diplomacy in Britain requires analysing cultural processes

One of the most impressive aspects of this book is the large range of source material on which it is based. These include British, French, and Belgian archives at both national and local levels; personal papers; and the archives of organizations like the French Institute in the UK, the French Chamber of Commerce, and the British Council. Added to this are personal interviews, newspapers, parliamentary debates, etc. This provides Faucher’s work with great depth of insight into the workings and the impact of cultural diplomacy at all its echelons. The comprehensiveness of her sources allows her to assert the importance of cultural diplomacy.

The reviewers have all worked either in the area of French foreign relations or gender history. Rachel Chin specializes in Franco-British relations, notably with regard to conflict and empire. Her recent work focuses

---

1 In this short space, it would be impossible to do justice to the numerous first-rate work done in the field of the new diplomatic history. One cannot overstate the impact of Edward Said’s book Orientalism (New York: Random House, 1978) which made many historians rethink their assumptions with regard to race and the developing world and question the prejudices and, thus, the interpretations of Western actors in foreign policy. It also convinced many of the need to pay more attention to non-American sources. Akira Iriye insisted on the importance of culture, notably in Akira Iriye, Cultural Internationalism and World Order, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) and the role of non-state actors in Iriye, Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). The centrality of Odd Arne Westad, in particular, his book, The Global Cold War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) with its focus on ideology, Third World agency, and its decentering of the history of foreign relations from the United States, cannot be denied. Thomas W. Zeiler, “The Diplomatic History Bandwagon: A State of the Field,” The Journal of American History, 95.4 (March 2009):1053-1073, gives an overview of the trends the new diplomatic history as well as the historians who explore them.
on the role of rhetoric. Pauline Georgelin concentrates on Franco-Australian relations, especially doing the First World War. Philip Nash has done a great deal of work on women and US foreign relations.

In her review, Chin praises the contribution Faucher’s book makes on multiple levels, asserting that “it enhances our understanding of Franco-British relations and delivers a more nuanced view of diplomacy—what it is and who practices it.” Chin stresses the complexity of the scene that Faucher paints, not only with regard to the conception of diplomacy and its actors, but even with regard to what constitutes French culture. The latter led to competing concepts between Vichy and the Free French during the Second World War. Chin points out that “through this analysis, Faucher shows that French culture was used deliberately to justify France’s position during the war and to envisage France’s postwar future.”

While Georgelin also discusses the cultural and diplomatic aspects of the book, she places more emphasis on the gender dimension and its contributions to women’s history. As she notes, Faucher’s “focus on the achievements of women in the field of French cultural diplomacy is one of the book’s key strengths and is particularly interesting given the patriarchal nature of French politics and society during this time.” Faucher’s book allows previously overlooked actors to take their role on the stage.

Philip Nash also praises the breadth of subject matter, the depth of the research, and the importance of the subject matter. Given his research interests, it is not surprising that he focuses more on the gender question. He finds that the book offers important insights into women’s progress in general through the information that Faucher provides about the particular case of diplomacy. The book, Nash argues, “demonstrates importantly that women’s progress has not only often plateaued for long periods, but it sometimes has actually been reversed.”

In her response, Faucher deals with the observations of the reviewers and responds to their questions. She also provides a personal statement on her methodology: “My approach to international relations proposes that studies should integrate soft and hard power together, rather than distinguish them, and that non-state actors were significant in shaping diplomatic practices and policies.”

A major contribution to both diplomatic history and gender studies, Faucher’s book is a must-read for anyone who is working in these fields.

---

1 See Charlotte Faucher, War of Words: Britain, France and Discourses of Empire during the Second World War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)


**Contributors:**

**Charlotte Faucher** is a Lecturer in Modern French History at the University of Bristol. She was previously a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow (University Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle) and a British Academy postdoctoral fellow (The University of Manchester). As well as her monograph *Propaganda, Gender, and Cultural Power: Projections and Perceptions of France in Britain c. 1880–1944* (Oxford University Press 2022), she has published several articles on women in diplomacy including an article on gender and French soft power during the Liberation of France in *Historical Journal* 64:5 (2021): 1428-1448, and “Women, Gender and the Professionalisation of French Cultural Diplomacy in Britain, 1900–1940” in *English Historical Review* 136:583 (2021): 1513-41. Her piece on anti-Gaullism in war-time London appeared in *Journal of Contemporary History* 51:1 (2019): 60—81. Her next book offers a transnational history of European cultural diplomacy (1870–1940).

**Rachel Chin** is a Lecturer in War Studies at the University of Glasgow. Her research focuses on twentieth-century Franco-British relations, in particular through the lenses of conflict and empire. Her book, *War of Words: Britain, France and Discourses of Empire during the Second World War* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), explores the role of rhetoric as a strategic policy tool in the context of clashes over French imperial territory during the Second World War. Her research on historic and contemporary Franco-British relations has appeared in *The Conversation, Britain and the World, The European Review of History* and the *Journal of Contemporary History*. Rachel is currently embarking on new research examining the rhetoric around empire and imperial migration during and after the two world wars. This includes an RSE-funded project exploring the Chinese community in British Jamaica.

**Pauline Georgelin** is an independent researcher from Melbourne, Australia. She is interested in French history, Australian History, First World War history, and cultural and diplomatic history, and her research focuses on the spaces where these intersect. She is particularly interested in French-Australian relations during the First World War. Her PhD thesis completed in 2020 was entitled “For Noble and Valiant France: French-Australian connections and French-Australian identities during the First World War.”

**Philip Nash** is Associate Professor of History at Penn State Shenango, where he has won three teaching awards since arriving in 1999. His specialties are women in US foreign relations and the Cuban missile crisis. After earning his PhD from Ohio University, he held a post-doctoral fellowship at Harvard University and was Fulbright Visiting Professor at the National University of Singapore in 2010. He is a frequent guest on the “Professor Buzzkill” history podcast (professorbuzzkill.com), and he is author of three books, including *Breaking Protocol: America’s First Female Ambassadors, 1933–1964* (University Press of Kentucky, 2020) and, most recently, *Clare Boothe Luce: American Renaissance Woman* (Routledge, 2022).
Review by Rachel Chin, University of Glasgow

Histories of Franco-British relations and histories of diplomacy more broadly have been rooted, for many years, in long-held perspectives and definitions. In the case of the former, the idea of a persistent and inherent Franco-British rivalry still imbues much of the thinking about this relationship. Reynaud Morieux writes “the stereotype lives on: France and England are still described, in an echo of contemporary propaganda, as ‘natural and necessary enemies’.” In regard to the latter, diplomacy has long been defined as a high-level political practice undertaken by career diplomats and elected officials. More recently, this view of diplomacy has expanded to acknowledge the messier reality of international relations.

Public diplomacy, which is defined by G.R. Berridge as a way to exert indirect influence on foreign governments by appealing “over the heads of those governments” to relevant members of the public, is one way in which scholars have sought to widen definitions of diplomacy. However, although this concept introduces new actors to the diplomatic stage, it still situates elite government officials as the main drivers of diplomatic initiatives. Cultural diplomacy, on the other hand, has presented an alternative way to acknowledge both the state and non-state actors that help to shape the way a state is viewed beyond its shores.

Charlotte Faucher’s book is thus a welcome and much-needed contribution on multiple levels. It enhances our understanding of Franco-British relations and delivers a more nuanced view of diplomacy: what it is and who practices it. Faucher successfully constructs a complex and multi-faceted argument, making the case that cultural initiatives and actions were important diplomatic tools that were deliberately deployed at multiple levels to maintain good Franco-British relations.

More than this, one of the book’s most notable strengths is that it deals, seemingly effortlessly, with a huge range of topics over a period of more than six decades. In order to capture the variety of actors and institutions that were involved in cultural diplomacy Faucher delves into the world of high politics, civil

---

1 Reynaud Morieux, *The Channel: England, France and the Construction of a Maritime Border in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2. This is a point that the Arts and Humanities Research Council project “The Weight of the Past in Franco-British Relations Since 1815” is exploring and challenging in its research. See: https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/research/historyresearch/researchprojects/weightofthepast/.


society and public opinion. She assesses these interconnected spheres through multiple lenses including
gender, war, peace, and power.

The book develops chronologically through six main chapters, showcasing how cultural diplomacy as an
idea and a practice shifted over time. At the same time, it does not present a one-directional narrative of the
gradual legitimisation of cultural diplomacy as a professional diplomatic tool. It rightly presents a more
complex picture of the work of a range of civil society and governmental actors and the institutions they
were connected to. As Faucher herself writes, this book tracks “the ‘masculinisation’ and
professionalisation of cultural diplomacy” (190). It highlights the important roles that women (and
children) played in the practice and development of cultural diplomacy while also showing that many, but
not all, female actors were increasingly sidelined after 1910.

One of the undeniable strengths of this text is the range of archival materials it engages with. Faucher has
consulted French, British, and Belgian archives. She also conducted a number of personal interviews.
Together, these primary materials showcase national, regional, and local voices. This is particularly
important because it allows Faucher to make the case that cultural diplomacy was not being practiced only
in and from the French and British capitals. It had a wider reach, outside of these urban centres. Likewise,
Faucher’s knowledge of the secondary literature on and around this topic is impressively displayed
throughout the text.

Faucher’s work interrogates two themes particularly successfully. First, she asks what constituted cultural
diplomacy, and relatedly, what was “true” French culture. Second, she asks why cultural diplomacy
matters. The book demonstrates that multiple actors presented various and sometimes competing views of
the role that cultural initiatives should play in international relations. This becomes particularly evident in
chapters 2–4, which trace the shift from the high society diplomacy of the founder of the University of
French Arts, Marie d’Orliac, through the more institutionalised approach of academic diplomacy to a
greater recognition in diplomatic circles of the value of cultural diplomacy.

Alongside this increasing political recognition of the role that culture could play in international
relationships is the recognition that there was no absolute agreement on what constituted “true” French
culture. In chapter 3, we see this argument as it developed between scholars and the individuals who
practiced high society cultural diplomacy. Chapter 6, on the other hand situates these arguments in the
midst of the Second World War. In this context, competing ideas of French culture and who could speak
for France were created by the Free French external resistance and Vichy French collaboration narratives.
Regardless of where each actor situated France in the war, each mobilised French culture as a strategic

---

5 Faucher’s work on the war years enriches existing research on Franco-British wartime relations and

© 2024 The Authors | CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 US
diplomatic and political tool. Through this analysis, Faucher shows that French culture was used deliberately to justify France’s position during the war and to envisage France’s postwar future.

Simply by showcasing the substantial amount of attention that the actors across this book paid to cultural initiatives Faucher makes a strong case for the importance of cultural diplomacy as an area of study. More than that, she demonstrates that definitions of diplomacy that limit their scope to state-level actions tend to ignore the fact that cultural diplomacy frequently involved a range of state and civil society actors (13, 35). This shifting panoply of individuals and institutions mobilised their ideas of French culture in a huge variety of ways and in a range of different contexts.

The use of education as a tool to enhance Franco-British understanding was one of the most robust and multi-level tools of cultural diplomacy. Faucher’s discussions of wartime initiatives and postwar planning, such as the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME), show that officials considered education to be an important method to strengthen Franco-British relations by appealing to younger generations (184). Likewise, chapters 4 and 6, which cover the two world wars, convincingly argue that narratives of Frenchness played a critical role in framing the French war effort and attempting to build sympathy for France within Britain. French state, civil society and resistance actors placed a great deal of importance on these wartime narratives as a power-building tool. Thus, as Faucher argues, cultural diplomacy becomes a significant component of soft power strategies (167, 182).

Faucher raises several challenges in studying cultural diplomacy, most notably the difficulty in measuring the impact of these policies or initiatives. As she points out early in the text, policy makers did not spend time in assessing whether their cultural ventures actually worked (10). This point leads to several additional questions. First, can cultural diplomacy build sympathy where it did not already exist or was actively hostile? Second, was/is cultural diplomacy an inherently elitist practice? Faucher makes the point, for instance, that d’Orliac’s high society cultural diplomacy exploited British appetites that already viewed French culture as aspirational (79). The failure of the Toynbee Hall lecture series in 1925, which aimed to combat anti-French sentiment amongst British working-class men, raises similar questions both in terms of the measurable influence of cultural diplomacy and its actors/audience (151).

In chapters 1 and 2, I was also keen to hear more about the practical process of migration from France to Britain. Namely, how stringent were British immigration laws during this period and how did they impact who was migrating and how cultural diplomacy was practiced? Is there more to be said about cultural diplomacy in relation to class hierarchies? These are not criticisms of this book, but rather natural questions that will lead to a rich discussion.

*From my own research, see also ED 22/215 and ED 23/780 in The National Archives, Kew.*

© 2024 The Authors | CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 US
not exist in separate, unrelated spheres. On the contrary, the way in which a nation is perceived (its brand so to speak) has a critical role to play in building a state’s power and influence. Cultural initiatives thus become an important diplomatic tool in their own right.
In October 1943 in Algiers, General Charles de Gaulle, head of the Free French Forces and later President of the French Republic, delivered a speech to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Alliance Française, the organisation whose mission was to spread French language and culture throughout the world. De Gaulle acknowledged two pillars on which the hopes of the Resistance lay: “a sword […] and French thought” (167). De Gaulle was recognising not only the Alliance’s role as a bastion of soft power support for Free France, but also the work of Yvonne Salmon, the General Secretary of the Alliance Française in Britain.

Salmon is one of many remarkable characters whose stories illustrate the role of women in the development of French cultural diplomacy in Britain from the 1880s to 1944. Charlotte Faucher’s book is a scholarly and fascinating historical investigation into the role of culture in French diplomacy, tracing its evolution as a key element of soft power. It covers a period which was at times turbulent and transformative for Franco-British relations, with moments of crisis and rapprochement. Faucher argues that cultural diplomacy ought not to be considered as a separate element of French diplomacy, but as a key element of international relations alongside the more commonly considered political and economic aspects.

While the cultural turn and the transnational turn are by now well-known historiographical approaches, Faucher argues that the role of culture is yet to be sufficiently incorporated into diplomatic histories of European international relations (3). She notes that according to the historiography, French diplomatic policy in Britain mainly “focused on military, colonial, security, and commercial issues and that diplomats mainly paid attention to negotiations of high politics” (3). Faucher’s book makes an important contribution in addressing this gap in the research. Her analysis shows that culture played an intrinsic part in enhancing perceptions of France in Britain, and supporting French diplomatic aims. The process involved a wide variety of actors, ranging from private individuals in civil society to state sponsored groups. Franco-British diplomacy would always have to wrestle with the underlying mutual suspicion of “the sweet enemies,” but as Faucher demonstrates, the prestige of French culture and the cultural capital it brought developed into a powerful tool to promote positive images of France in Britain.

As the title announces, gender is one of the central lenses through which Faucher frames the book, shining a spotlight on the role of women in the development and evolution of French cultural diplomacy. The book provides detailed profiles of the fascinating women who carried out cultural diplomacy in the cause of France. Analysing their individual histories, Faucher demonstrates how their life trajectories, talents, and personalities, combined with the social and political context in which they lived, allowing them to make important contributions to French cultural diplomacy. However, in both official and non-official
capacities, but particularly in roles officially approved by the French state, they operated within confines prescribed by men. Moreover, Faucher concludes, in most cases, these women were able to make a difference because they were privileged and white. The gendered approach presents a little-known aspect of diplomatic history, and thus Faucher’s book adds to our knowledge of not only diplomatic, transnational, and cultural history, but also of women’s history.

Faucher links the stories of these women to her wider analysis of the political and social world in they operated, which allows her to consider broader questions regarding the nature of cultural diplomacy. In this way the book responds to established and ongoing scholarship by cultural historians, such as John Horne, as well as the work of scholars of diplomacy such as Patricia M. Goff.3

Throughout the book, as Faucher traces the evolution of French cultural diplomacy in Britain, she explores questions that were intrinsic to this process: understandings of what constituted culture, and what kinds of culture were considered worthy to be used in the cause of diplomacy. In the effort to project French prestige, high culture, presented in elite or academic settings, won out over popular working-class culture. Another ongoing question related to the why of cultural diplomacy: to whom was French cultural diplomacy aimed, what was its purpose? Faucher shows that in the early part of this period, French cultural diplomacy in Britain particularly targeted elites, whose social position meant they were able to shape public opinion. It seldom targeted the general public—only at specific times of crisis. Hence, as Faucher shows, during wartime we see the entanglement of cultural diplomacy with propaganda.

A further ongoing question asked who was best qualified to implement cultural diplomacy. Was the ideal cultural diplomat a high-society elite woman, a professional male, or an academic; an individual member of civil society or a member of the diplomatic corps? Did expertise emanate from Paris, or from those on the ground in the target country, with local knowledge? To what extent and in what way were individual actors permitted to play a role, and at what stage did the state fully assume responsibility for the implementation of cultural policy (9)? Faucher shows how debates such as these provided the context and informed the formation of policies, exploring the interplay between practice and theory.

In response to all these questions, Faucher weaves together her analysis of the wide variety of actors who were involved: state and non-state actors, individuals and organisations. Groups were either private and independent, or controlled by the French state to varying degrees. They were sometimes fully or partly subsidised agencies, or were subtly guided to carry out the State’s work. They range from the Maison de la Presse or the Alliance Française, as well as the stories of individuals. A significant and engaging element of the book is the story of the University of the French Arts, its founder Marie d’Orliac, and its subsequent evolution and importance as the French Institute, or Institut Français du Royaume Uni.

---

Faucher has drawn on a comprehensive and varied range of French and British, as well as international, sources. Notable is her use of French diplomatic archives, which complements the records of private institutions and government agencies ranging from small, locally-based entities to national organisations, as well as newspaper and private correspondence. The wide variety of primary sources allows her narrative to move between the local, the national, and the transnational scales. It thus provides for a dynamic view of the history she analyses from above and below and across the Channel. An interesting limitation which Faucher herself notes is that the correspondence in the archives generally focused on positive stories, and on the shaping of and setting up of policies, rather than analysing their outcomes. Hence the book also focuses on implementation rather than outcomes, but Faucher has also mined the sources deeply whenever possible in order to locate and analyse reactions and attitudes toward the programmes of French cultural diplomacy (10).

The book is structured chronologically, over six chapters, each treating a different time period and a key theme in the development of French cultural diplomacy. The first chapter provides a historical context of the French presence in Britain up until the nineteenth century. It then traces the varied and increasingly important role of French culture in Franco-British relations. During the nineteenth century, the numbers of French religious and political exiles and refugees fluctuated according to changes in the political situation in France, but by the late 1800s the French population in Britain was a settled and industrious group. Those who ventured across the channel for economic reasons formed a stable population, establishing social and cultural organisations for mutual support. Sporting or trade-based groups, such as the French Chamber of Commerce, operated for the benefit of men. Organisations which aimed to promote the French language and French culture included university clubs. Meanwhile, individual impresarios took it upon themselves to introduce Impressionism, or the music of Claude Debussy, to the British public. The importance of French culture as a tool to improve perceptions of France and of French people had already been acknowledged. Women were active as teachers and governesses, and in religious and charitable groups. As in France, they were not expected to engage in public life. However, these organisations did not exist to serve the French state. As Faucher points out, during the late nineteenth century, state-based efforts to promote French language and culture were confined to colonial and imperial settings. Through religious, educational, and cultural means, their aim was to subjugate local populations and instill loyalty to France (22).

Faucher sets out for us the context in which French cultural diplomacy in Britain developed. British perceptions of France and French people were complex and contradictory, and incorporated both negative and positive stereotypes. For example, the French were viewed as being politically radical, but also artistic and cultured. French literature was immoral but also wonderful. The cross-channel relationship played out against a backdrop of perceived social and political differences, imperial rivalry, and polarising events such as the Dreyfus Affair and the 1898 Fashoda Incident. Moreover, the British often articulated their own national identity in opposition to the French. Cultural organisations set up by French (mostly men) aimed to harness Francophilia and improve British perceptions of the French language and French culture, and in doing so, to counter the popularity of German culture in Britain. In academic settings, the teaching of

---

French competed with the high regard for German educational methods. German immigrants far outnumbered those from France, and their values were considered more closely aligned with British values (29-30).

In 1881, a group of male French teachers took steps to improve the reputation of their profession. They created a governing body, the National Society of French Teachers in England, which imposed stricter professional codes and regulations. It received government subsidies to support its mission—an early example of French state support for French cultural groups. As Faucher notes, men—the professionally trained French teachers—were valued over French female governesses. In 1900, Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador to Britain who was also a co-founder of the Alliance Française, praised the role of French teachers in Britain in engendering a love of France, and thus enhancing the relationship. The Alliance Française opened its first branch in Britain in 1884, with more to follow in the decades after. It was established as a non-government, independent entity, yet was helpful in doing the state’s cultural diplomacy work. As Faucher points out, a debate continued as to the alliance’s primary mission: should it be more focused on French language or culture? (36-37) In 1908, French university lecturer Amadée Salmon founded and became the first director of the British Federation of the Alliance Française. Under his directorship the linguistic focus was the more favoured.

Faucher notes the contribution of a group of British and French wine merchants to improving Franco-British relations. Their leader, British wine merchant John Roper Parkington, launched the Entente Cordiale Society in 1896. Its focus was on creating a trade relationship that was more cooperative and less competitive. The Fashoda Crisis of 1898 presented a temporary derailment of the warming relationship, when British and French colonial territorial interests clashed in the Sudan. Faucher argues that in the aftermath of the Fashoda Crisis, French cultural groups in Britain were careful to separate cultural connections from the diplomatic and political relationship (39). The Entente Cordiale was not a mutual military defence pact, but rather a cordial agreement by which each nation agreed not to dispute the other’s claims to colonial territory (93). The Entente provided the context of positive dialogue for the period to follow.

Chapter 2 spans the years 1900-1913, and investigates the rise of essentialist ideas of French culture and society, and which appealed to elites and bourgeois members of British society. Faucher coins the phrase “High Society Cultural Diplomacy” to describe the methods and the social environment in which it was carried out. It capitalised on prevailing essentialist ideas of Frenchness which portrayed France as “the pinnacle of polite society” (45).

The central character of chapter 2 is Marie d’Orliac (who was known as Marie Bohn after her marriage). D’Orliac, a successful French teacher, arrived in Britain in 1907. In 1910, she founded the University of the French Arts, which eventually became the French Institute. The chapter recounts the origins of this venerable institution, which played a key role in promoting French language and culture in Britain. The chapter also addresses issues such as the rise in education for women during this period, and the push to reinforce positive images of France as a country of refinement with bourgeois conservative values. D’Orliac’s origins are obscure, and she herself added the particle ‘de’ to her name. Faucher notes the significance of d’Orliac’s reinvention of herself: it reflected the social expectations in which she lived. She
contextualises d’Orliac’s professional aspirations in a world where feminism was viewed as being subversive. D’Orliac could never have had an influential position in society without her assumed aristocratic persona.

In addition to providing language classes, the University of the French Arts offered the opportunity for members of British high society to engage with feminine, bourgeois French cultural practices such as literary salons and lectures. The success of d’Orliac’s ventures sprang from the perceived cultural capital to be gained for British elites: an interest in French language and culture enabled them to signal their status. While D’Orliac found a strong ally and supporter in Cambon, his support also meant increased intervention. Thus, the private institution run by a woman and employing many women came increasingly under the male-directed official influence of the French state. Faucher explains that this exemplified an evolution in the French state’s awareness of and desire to implement French cultural diplomacy.

Academic diplomacy is the focus of chapter 3. It focuses on the watershed year of 1913, which saw the opening of the French Institute in London, and traces the increasing role of higher education institutions in shaping French cultural policy. During this period, French universities were increasingly internationalist in their outlook, endeavouring to compete globally with British and German predominance. Lille University was in an expansionist phase and wanted to exploit existing ties with Britain. Concurrently, d’Orliac—now Bohn—was experiencing financial difficulty with the management of the University of the French Arts which resulted in its takeover by the University of Lille, and its re-branding as a French Cultural Institute.

While Bohn continued to work at the French Institute, Faucher argues that this period witnessed the weakening of feminine-led cultural diplomacy as the academic institutions were increasingly active and influential. State-led, academic diplomacy was done by men, and unless women operated in their own private sphere, women were marginalised. The focus was increasingly on the valorisation of French academic thought rather than bourgeois cultural practices.

This period also witnessed the spread of French cultural diplomacy to British regional cities, such as Liverpool, a city that was important for trade and commerce, and the gateway to North America. Faucher argues that French culture may have been even more important to wealthy members of middle-class in regional cities, as they sought to demonstrate a level of cultural capital on par with that in London. Politicians displayed a growing awareness of the importance of cultural diplomacy.

As chapter 4 demonstrates, with the coming of the First World War, French cultural diplomacy became a crucial part of cultural mobilisation in Britain. Pro-French propaganda operated as a spontaneous response from members of civil society, alongside officially organised, state-directed means. Organisations such as the Maison de La Presse and the French Information office conveyed the message with the help of carefully selected operatives, including journalists. Pro-French propaganda aimed to increase support for the war, framing French war aims (such as the post-war status of Alsace-Lorraine) in a positive light, and to counter German cultural diplomacy which, in the early years of the conflict, was more advanced than the French. The French in Britain also adopted an increasingly transnational focus, highlighting not just the intrinsic value of France and its culture, but also incorporating joint Franco-British and Allied partnership narratives. The presence of the Alliance Française was diminished by the war: funds were diverted elsewhere.
and male employees were called up for military service. Nonetheless, French cultural life continued. Cultural societies put on plays, and Marie Bohn presented lectures, all with the aim of evoking sympathy and admiration for France and inspiring patriotism.

Education and language instruction assumed a new importance during this period. The French Institute provided free French classes to soldiers departing for the Western Front. Moreover, the influx of refugees who needed schooling led to the establishment of London’s French lycées, one for girls and one for boys. The lycées were Bohn’s initiative and were set up under the umbrella of the French Institute. Faucher provides a fascinating analysis of the role of children in war culture, as both recipients of propaganda, and the subjects of it.

The war highlighted the value of culture as a tool for propaganda and diplomacy. But it also brought about further questions about the nature of French cultural diplomacy, which Faucher addresses here and throughout the book. Should cultural diplomacy be carried out by male academics? By highly placed individuals close to the French government? Or by locally based representatives with a good knowledge of the target country? Gender-based decisions also persisted, as French cultural diplomacy was increasingly directed from the Quai d’Orsay, which took over for, although it did not replace, feminine-focused high-society cultural practices.

Chapter 5 traces the evolution of French cultural diplomacy during the turbulent interwar period. Previously, cultural diplomacy had been largely the domain of upper-class women, journalists, and academics. However, the Quai d’Orsay’s creation of the Service des Œuvres Françaises à l’Étranger (SOFE) in 1920 was a crucial turning point. French cultural diplomacy was increasingly professionalised, yet hybrid, run by both state and non-state efforts. Faucher argues that although the role of women in the sphere of cultural diplomacy was diminished, they were not entirely absent from the field. Nevertheless, the fields in which women were permitted to have agency were circumscribed.

Faucher illustrates two contexts in which women assumed roles of influence. The first involves professionally trained women who operated in a role designated for them by the French government. Marie-Reine Garnier, a literary critic and journalist who had worked as London correspondent, was appointed by the government as a propaganda agent. In the second category were women who acted in independent transnational organisations, such as the dynamic Yvonne Salmon, who achieved prominence as General Secretary of the Alliance Française. Professor Denis Saurat, appointed in 1924 to head the French Institute, was one of many characters representing French interests in a time of shifting political sympathies and rapprochements between Britain and France. When the danger posed by the rise of Germany’s Adolf Hitler became apparent, the two nations once again formed an alliance.

The final chapter analyses the role of women who carried out cultural diplomacy in the service of Free France during the Second World War. As Faucher argues, the role of women in the resistance inside France has already been the subject of scholarly attention, yet the contribution of women as résistantes outside of
France is not well known. Through the stories of such women in chapter 6, Faucher provides a new angle on the operation of the Free French movement. The German occupation of France after 1940 necessarily meant that French cultural diplomacy (in this case differentiated as cultural diplomacy on behalf of Free France as opposed to occupied Vichy France) was obliged to operate outside of metropolitan France. Therefore this chapter takes us not only to Britain, but also to North America and French North Africa. Chapter 6 also reveals the rivalries between supporters of de Gaulle and those who opposed him. Denis Saurat, head of the French Institute, was not a supporter of de Gaulle and in fact hindered him. However, the Free French capitalised on other methods and people to disseminate their message. By the late 1930’s, Faucher argues, there was some evidence that women had begun to be more accepted into roles that were traditionally the preserve of men. French cultural diplomacy remained a largely male domain. Yet, with the outbreak of war and the departure of so many men for combat, some opportunities for female contribution and involvement opened up.

Faucher presents a select group of pro-Gaullist women who were active in a range of roles and locations. They included Yvonne Salmon, secretary general of the Alliance Française, as well as Ève Curie, the youngest daughter of scientists Pierre and Marie Curie, and Elisabeth de Miribel, descended from a wealthy, conservative military family, who was an important agent for Free France. Faucher argues that these women were permitted entry into this male-dominated world via their involvement in cultural propaganda. They were among “a sizable number of women” sent by De Gaulle to North America to promote the cause of Free France (168). In 1943, Ève Curie joined the Fighting French Women’s Corps (176). Her story illustrates the increased opportunities for women’s participation during World War II. Faucher concludes that despite the abilities and contributions of women such as these, their experiences were exceptional, and it would be a long and gradual process before women were appointed to executive positions in the field of French cultural diplomacy. The final chapter also widens the lens to consider other settings of French cultural diplomacy, notably the role of French and refugee children in Britain. Once more children are shown to have been both the subjects and the objects of cultural diplomacy, and the experiences of the students at French lycées who were evacuated from London to rural England serve to demonstrate the wide reach of the Free France and pro-de Gaulle message.

Faucher’s book will be of value to scholars working in several fields. It incorporates reflections on culture, diplomacy, politics and the role of women. It considers these issues during times of war and peace, and at pivotal moments from the late nineteenth century until the end of the Second World War. The book thus engages with multiple ongoing historiographical and scholarly inquiries, including: the definition of culture and its role in soft power diplomacy; the issue of how France was to impose its influence though the use of soft power and cultural diplomacy; and the role of cultural diplomacy in times of conflict. Despite its academic tone, the book will also appeal to a wider readership. For the general reader who interested in history, each chapter provides new information and a new angle from which to understand the period in question.

---

While the gendered lens is a constant unifying theme throughout the book, it is not restrictive, but adds a richer and more complex layer to our understanding of not only cultural diplomacy but many aspects of history. Its focus on the achievements of women in the field of French cultural diplomacy is one of the book’s key strengths and is particularly interesting given the patriarchal nature of French politics and society during this time. Reading the stories of their determination to succeed, and their successes and failures in what was a male-led world, provides a fascinating new insight into the history of international cultural diplomacy.
Charlotte Faucher’s *Propaganda, Gender, and Cultural Power* provides a highly nuanced history of French cultural diplomacy in Great Britain from the late nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. In tracing the development of cultural diplomacy “and examining elements of continuity and rupture during periods of peace and war,” Faucher writes, “this study reveals how and why French citizens, British Francophiles, and eventually the French state promoted French culture in Britain” (1-2). Her indisputable premise is that French diplomacy in Britain cannot be fully understood without analyzing its cultural dimensions (4).

After rightly establishing a broad definition of cultural diplomacy—one which embraces civil society, various transnational actors, and informal diplomats as well as French officials—Faucher begins in her first chapter by exploring British Francophilia in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. During this period, French officialdom mostly left cultural diplomacy to prominent members of civil society. Chapter 2 then narrows the focus to gender and the rise of “high-society cultural diplomacy,” facilitated by slowly-growing interest in cultural diplomacy in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and by the efforts of Marie Orliac (later d’Orliac, an aristocratic affectation; then Bohn, after her marriage), who was head of the University of French Arts (UFA) from 1910 to 1913. Chapter 3 examines the “academic diplomacy” (13) which came to the fore on the eve of the First World War, as the University of Lille helped transform the UFA into the French Institute in the United Kingdom. At this point, the previously dominant upper-middle-class women were increasingly marginalized by male academic and political elites. Chapter 4 covers the First World War, which served as a catalyst for the official embrace of cultural diplomacy by the Quai d’Orsay, especially in the form of the Quai’s new Maison de la Presse (1916). Faucher’s fifth chapter analyses the interwar period, which was marked by the “masculinization and professionalization of cultural diplomacy” (157). The last chapter traces the struggle over cultural propaganda in General Charles de Gaulle’s Free France during the Second World War, in particular the roles played by women such as Yvonne Salmon, General Secretary of the British Federation of the Alliance Française, and Elisabeth de Miribel, one of de Gaulle’s key propagandists, as well as, intriguingly, French children. “The making of French cultural diplomacy in Britain,” Faucher aptly concludes, “was complex and multifaceted” (188).

The above summation is woefully inadequate for a book that covers more material, addresses more themes, and has implications for more subfields, than either the title or the subject itself would suggest. Indeed, this is a remarkable book for the things it manages to achieve all at once. It is concise, coming in at less than 200 pages of text, including photos and footnotes, and yet it analyzes in-depth a fairly long period of Anglo-French relations, from the early years of the French Third Republic to the end of the Second World War. In fact, one of the only topics that deserves fuller treatment is the Free French military service (1943-44) of the amazing globetrotting journalist Ève Curie (176).

Especially valuable in a study of cultural diplomacy, both formal and informal, is the work’s analysis from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives, of both institutions and individuals, the result of which is a truly comprehensive portrait. Its examinations of both the cultural and gender aspects of the subject are equally trenchant. Moreover, Faucher is always careful to provide the broader context for the particular period or subtopic at hand, whether it is the character of the French community in the UK, the history of...
the French Institutes generally, French cultural diplomacy in North America during World War II, or, as a fascinating, recurring subplot all its own, the threat posed by German cultural policies and propaganda. And on a side note, more books should wrap up their chapters with summaries that are as good as Faucher’s; they make her arguments easy to retain.

Faucher also grounds the book in some impressive research, including a range of public and private archival sources from three countries, a vast array of the very latest secondary sources in three languages, and oral history interviews. Faucher also makes full use of her own formidable body of journal scholarship (although in at least one case, regarding the role of the British government in Free French cultural propaganda, it would have been preferable to have incorporated, rather than merely cited, one of her articles [158 fn 1]).

Especially helpful in such a book are the nearly three dozen images it features, which are excellent and well used.

Faucher’s narrative and analyses are particularly useful for students of women, gender, and foreign relations. She usefully reminds us, on the one hand, that the history of women in foreign relations in the twentieth century is often not one of linear ascent. The undeniable progress women have made, such as the service of three female US Secretaries of State between 1997 and 2013, as well as far higher numbers of female diplomats around the world generally, might lend itself to a Whig history of female diplomacy. But as Faucher writes, her work “differs substantially from the scholarship that emphasizes the gradual integration of women into diplomacy and international organizations from the interwar period onwards” (12). She convincingly argues that, for instance, as French cultural diplomacy was professionalized and formally acquired as an official policy by the Quai d’Orsay in the 1920s, informal cultural diplomats—women prominent among them—were increasingly shut out. Consider, for example, the case of Brazil, where the 1938 Foreign Service “reform” turned back the clock and prohibited the admission of women to the service despite the fact that it had been allowed since 1918. Similarly, it is striking to learn from Faucher that for once the Second World War was not a catalyst for change, in this case when it came to women’s access to the French diplomatic corps (191-2). Her book demonstrates importantly that women’s progress has not only often plateaued for long periods, but it sometimes has actually been reversed.

On the other hand, just as the limits of progress constantly reappear, so too do resilient women. Despite the professionalization of cultural diplomacy in the interwar period, women managed to stay involved, because informal cultural diplomacy retained its importance. The Service des Œuvres Françaises à l’Etranger (Department of French Works Abroad, SOFE), which was created by MFA in 1920 to oversee French cultural projects around the world, launched a campaign against Marie Orliac, who, as noted, was by then known as Marie Bohn. This, along with Bohn’s inability or unwillingness to keep up with changes in cultural diplomacy, provoked her exit from the French Institute in 1932-1934. But despite the worsened

---


© 2024 The Authors | CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 US
gender climate, Bohn continued to make her contribution through the Anglo-French Art and Travel Society, a high-society group that was engaged in informal cultural diplomacy. Other women persisted unofficially as well, such as Yvonne Salmon, who worked for the transnational network Alliance Française, and Ella Saurat, wife of the head of the French Institute and one of history’s countless, crucial-but-unseen diplomatic spouses. Surprisingly, considering the near-total exclusion of women from official service, women who enjoyed government sponsorship complemented these unofficial actors: Thérèse Oakeshott, headmistress of the Lycée français in London, and Marie-Reine Garnier, who partnered with journalist and veteran cultural propagandist Henry Davray in an official French propaganda/lobbying effort in the mid-1930s. Although constituting a very small number of individuals, these determined women carved out places for themselves in a hostile cultural-diplomatic landscape and thus wholly deserve the act of historical recovery Faucher has performed (chapter 5).

One is struck by other parallels between the women who are prominent in Faucher’s account and other pioneer women of diplomacy. For example, the informal diplomacy conducted by most of the women was the norm for the equally forgotten unofficial women in the centuries before the professionalization of diplomacy. In addition, the leading women of French cultural diplomacy during World War II—de Miribel, Salmon, and Curie—were free to serve because they were unmarried and without children (159). Similarly, it is no coincidence that four of the first six female US ambassadors, Ruth Bryan Owen, Florence Harriman, Perle Mesta, and Frances Willis, were either widows or single, as was true of most British female diplomats. The limits imposed on female diplomats’ overseas service make for a notable comparison as well. For example, the first French female foreign service officer, Suzanne Borel, makes an appearance in Faucher’s book; she was formally barred from a posting abroad (146–147). Her earlier American counterpart, Lucille Atcherson, was likewise confined to Washington, DC, for years and only grudgingly sent to Switzerland, where she faced further discrimination: after being sent to a hardship post and getting married, she left the Foreign Service in 1927 in compliance with the de facto marriage ban which remained in place until 1971.

And finally, for all the discrimination, condescension, and obstacles the French women faced, at times they and their counterparts found their gender to be an advantage. While Elisabeth de Miribel’s political expertise was often ignored (an experience also shared by US political-appointee ambassadors such as

---


Eugenie Anderson and Clare Boothe Luce7), she found that her “gender proved to be an asset” as a Free French propagandist in Canada (171-172). This has often been the case, even in recent years. Vicki Huddleston, for one, was appointed to run the US Interests Section in Havana in 1999 in part because she was a woman. “I knew,” she later wrote, “that Castro preferred to deal with women.”8 As such comparisons make clear, Faucher’s work meshes nicely with the growing list of national and bilateral histories which, one hopes, will provide the building blocks for a grand, synthetic history of women and foreign relations across the globe.

Propaganda, Gender, and Cultural Power more than achieves its goal of contributing to “histories of cultural internationalism and European migration in Britain” (20). Sophisticated and yet accessible, scholarly yet engaging, critical yet evenhanded, it is a successful and important book. One hopes that Oxford University Press will quickly release a far less expensive paperback edition, so it can reach the wider audience it richly deserves.

8 Vicki Huddleston, Our Woman in Havana: A Diplomat’s Chronicle of America’s Long Struggle with Castro’s Cuba (New York: Overlook, 2018), 56.
Response by Charlotte Faucher, University of Bristol

I am thankful for the time and care that Rachel Chin, Pauline Georgelin, and Philip Nash took to read my book, *Propaganda, Gender, and Cultural Power: Projections and Perceptions of France in Britain, c1880–1944* (OUP 2022). Many thanks too to Lori Maguire for introducing the discussion. I was pleased to see that the central arguments I make in the book were well-received by the reviewers, who note that the book offers important contributions to the history of international relations, soft power, gender, and Franco-British relations. In my response to the reviewers, I would like to briefly reflect on some of the themes that run across the three reviews before coming back to the importance of biographical approaches for the history of international relations as highlighted by Georgelin, the comparative approach that Nash employed at the end of his review, and the questions of audience and migration raised by Rachel Chin.

The reviews all mention the significance of employing a broad understanding of diplomacy for the framing of *Propaganda, Gender, and Cultural Power*. My approach to international relations proposes that studies should integrate soft and hard power together, rather than distinguish them, and that non-state actors were significant in shaping diplomatic practices and policies. This allows for a rich analysis of Franco-British relations during the period 1870–1945 and for a contribution to the historiography of cultural diplomacy.¹ Building upon the ongoing discussions among scholars of “new diplomatic history,”² my book seeks to open up historical inquiries beyond the analysis of strictly political and state-centered diplomacy by making space for actors who have often been sidelined in international relations studies: members of civil society, including “those individuals, such as academics, who officially cooperated with the diplomatic spheres without necessarily being part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs” (7). The focus on members of civil society has been significant to broaden our understanding of the workings of interwar public diplomacy, and exciting new work has recently been published in particular in the German and Mexican contexts.³

It is precisely because my definition of who could act as a diplomat is broad that I am able to integrate a cast of women who supported French diplomacy in Britain, even if not all of them were officially affiliated to the French State. What Georgelin describes as a “unifying theme throughout the book” allows me to offer a fresh perspective on the making of cultural diplomacy. In the Franco-British context, a gender-history


approach acknowledges the significant efforts of individuals such as school teacher Marie d’Orliac in the creation of the French Institute in Britain, an institution that is still thriving today. Gender history is also a fruitful approach for appreciating the exclusion of women from diplomatic spheres, which occurred as a consequence of the professionalisation of the field. As Nash notes, the story that Propaganda, Gender, and Cultural Power tells adds careful nuance to this narrative because determined (and often socially privileged) women found new ways to leave their marks on cultural diplomacy.

I combine a women’s history approach with a gendered reading of French cultural diplomacy, which is particularly productive when I examine the debates about how different groups imagined and defined the ideal French cultural diplomat. To roughly summarize that debate, champions of cultural diplomacy opposed on the one hand a high-society woman with excellent connections among the British and European elite, and on the other a male academic lecturing at a prestigious university in the UK who would have the necessary social and cultural baggage to deal with diplomats—all of whom were also male in the Franco-British interwar context. But the gender lens is also constructive as I examine the content of cultural diplomacy and highlight how a vision of French white upper-class femininity became a precious tool deployed by some unofficial diplomats in order to improve the reputation of France in the UK. Thanks to such a strategy, which relied on belongings of race and class, these individuals tapped into British and Anglophone audiences’ imaginaries of France. This practice, which I discuss in the context of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, certainly has had a long trajectory that continues to the present day, as attested by stereotypes circulated in cultural productions from Netflix shows to “how-to books” revealing the secrets of Parisienne effortless chic or how French women supposedly don’t get fat.

I am thankful for Nash’s brief remark on the “intriguing” presence of children in the book. Throughout the chapters, I take into account children of French and Belgian refugees (during world wars), children of the permanently-settled French community in Britain, and children of Free French in London during the Second World War. Among the latter group, I was able to interview half a dozen individuals, including one of philosopher Raymond Aron’s daughters, and the son of the French consul in Iceland, who, upon rallying around the leader of the French Resistance Charles de Gaulle in 1940, had sent his children to the UK for safety reasons. When I set out to research the book as a PhD student, I had not expected this category of historical actors to feature in my work. Yet children and students were important receivers of policies of cultural diplomacy—and as Chin notes, education and instruction were central elements of French soft power. But children also contributed, often unknowingly, to the production and dissemination of propaganda policies; Gaullists in particular were very skillful in employing them for photo operations and in radio programs too.

On a less conceptual level, but nonetheless important for the making of the book, I am appreciative that Nash notes the significance of pictures. As some fellow authors might have experienced, these were sourced not without some challenges and copyright negotiations. To me, they are significant in illustrating one of

---

the central themes of the book. The varied and varying meanings of “true France” appear through the selection of illustrations—from public lectures chiefly attended by well-heeled women in the early twentieth century, a poster released by Transport for London (managing the London Underground and bus networks) on the occasion of the French President’s visit in 1913,5 to portraits of the writer Ève Curie, a precious propagandist for Charles de Gaulle during the Second World War, in the American edition of Vogue. France had different meanings to Anglophone audiences, and French diplomats (official and non-official) sought to project different understandings of their home nation across the channel.

Finally, all the reviewers remarked on the significance of competition (in particular with Germany) in the making of French cultural diplomacy in Britain. Germany was sometimes understood as a role model by French diplomats, but more frequently, they used it as a foe to emphasize the need to invest in soft power. In the well-oiled rhetoric of French diplomats, resorting to the example of Germany was useful to try and convince the Quai d’Orsay of the necessity of their funding request and to explain why the government ought to support a specific cultural policy. I am currently exploring this question of transnational competition beyond the Franco-British context for my second book, which will examine the influence of entangled national competitions and cooperation for the soft power of France, Germany and Britain.

This is not the only topic which deserves further investigation. I wish I had had more space to dedicate to the war trajectory of Ève Curie (1904–2007) which Nash highlights in his review. Curie was thirty-six years old when she joined Free France in the summer 1940. By then, the youngest daughter of scientists Pierre and Marie Curie had already acquired a strong reputation in France and in the world, in part because she had accompanied her mother on many formal and informal lecturing trips and ceremonies. While I examine her key accomplishments in support of Gaullist propaganda, anyone wishing to know more about her extraordinary war years should turn to her latest biography (in French)6 and her war memoirs (in two volumes).7 The latter in fact consists of a collection of articles she wrote for The New York Herald Tribune Syndicate and Allied Newspapers Limited about her travels through Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, during which she met with allied armies as well as important individuals such as the Shah of Iran and Gandhi.

Certainly, Ève Curie is not a woman that researchers can easily forget. Neither are the other women I study in the book, including the secretary of the Alliance Française, Yvonne Salmon, who supported Gaullist propaganda in London and North African during the Second World War. As Georgelin’s review shows, in echo to one of the key methodological approaches of my book, biographical considerations are a useful way to examine and acknowledge the activities of unofficial women diplomats who are otherwise often excluded from official reports. I am grateful that Nash demonstrates so skillfully that the comparative approach further strengthens the arguments I make in the book about the uneven trajectory of women in the diplomatic world. Comparison also helps consolidate patterns in the biographies of women who were

---


7 Ève Curie, Journey among Warriors (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1943).
able to engage in diplomacy; Nash reminds us that “it is no coincidence that four of the first six female US ambassadors, Ruth Bryan Owen, Florence Harriman, Perle Mesta, and Frances Willis, were either widows or single, as was true of most British female diplomats.”

I am grateful to Chin for her questions. She first wonders about the extent to which cultural diplomats attempted to engage with hostile audiences. There were certainly varying degrees of hostility towards France on the international stage in the first half of the century, and her question made me think about the different conscious and unconscious allegiances and belonging of individuals. For example, while Britain was an ally of France throughout the period I study, this friendship at the level of the states did not necessarily shape the way France was viewed by Britons across the country. For example, political opinions, and adhesion to pacifism, also influenced the view of France in some pockets of society. Because there existed a “terrain” of sympathy in post-World War I Britain, however, French diplomats thought that it was worth attempting to “seduce” leftist, pacifist groups (who were often very critical of France’s policy towards Germany). Similarly, efforts were made among neutral countries during the First World War, but no serious attempts were ever carried out among enemy countries. This came down to two main reasons. The first is logistics: a visit by a French drama company, or sending cultural productions in First World War Germany via official channels was impossible. Second, French diplomats acknowledged that as long as a state was an enemy of France, its society as a whole could not be shifted. This, of course, did not prevent some existing sympathy for France or French culture to subsist.

During the period 1870–1945, cultural diplomacy was broadly an elite practice, both from the perspective of its upper-middle or upper-class agents (diplomats, high-society women, academics) and its target audience. This drew on the belief shared by diplomats and academics that it was most productive to reach out to the elite of a country that would in turn influence its state. As Chin recalls, my book does highlight some (often failed) attempts on the part of French diplomats to engage with working-class and lower middle-class audiences. But overall, French cultural diplomacy remained socially exclusive. This was the case until after the Second World War, when a slow democratization took place, not without causing tensions between diplomats and practitioners of cultural diplomacy.

Finally, Chin asks about the practical process of migration from France to Britain and how this might have affected the practice of cultural diplomacy. This is not something which I address in the book, beyond a few mentions of how long the journey from France to Britain took (around seven hours at the onset of the First World War, and up to eighteen hours in 1917). During the two world conflicts migration between the two countries, even for temporary guests, was extremely limited and, at times, suspended (see chapters 4 and 6). Consequently, cultural institutions resorted to artistic and intellectual refugees rather than guest lecturers who came specifically from France. None of the individuals I study seem to have had administrative issues with crossing the Channel (outside the periods of the world wars). Of course, the costly journey often proved a hindrance for institutions that were keen to invite guests from France. This is not to put aside the important question of migration rights and the multiple laws that French individuals

---


9 I am currently writing an article on this post-war story.
who desired to migrate to Britain had to contend with, including the 1905 Aliens Act and subsequent legislation. In an article about French female migrants in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, Constance Bantman and I show that the 1905 Aliens Act was loosely implemented (for French citizens) but that French working and lower-middle class labour migrants often did their best to show that they had already secured a job before attempting to settle in Britain. For an earlier period but still on the Anglo-French context, the work of Fabrice Bensimon will provide further answers.

My thanks again to Lori Maguire for her introduction to the roundtable, to Rachel Chin, Pauline Georgelin, and Philip Nash for their thoughtful and generous reviews of Propaganda, Gender, and Cultural Power, and to H-Diplo, Diane Labrosse, and Lori Maguire for giving me the opportunity to both reflect on the research and writing processes for the book and think about future research projects, where I hope the comparative and transnational approaches will be even more central.

---
