

‘A memorial and a pledge of faith’: Portraiture and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture

In 1567 Margaret of Parma, regent of the Netherlands, discussed a picture of Elizabeth I with the English diplomat Thomas Radcliffe, earl of Sussex. She claimed to have obtained it with great difficulty, but had persevered because she had heard such great praise of the English queen from Ludwig, count of Stolberg, who had recently returned from a diplomatic mission to the English court. Yet Margaret was concerned that the picture she had procured might not be an adequate likeness as it depicted Elizabeth dressed in a fashion that she was not known to favour. As Margaret ‘honored and loved so moche’ Elizabeth’s person, she implored Sussex to show her his mistress’s picture if he had it with him. Unable to deny that he did, Sussex reluctantly exhibited the royal image, which Margaret ardently perused with several high-ranking members of her court.¹ An imperial ambassador, Monsieur de Maldeghen, who had also recently been on embassy to England, affirmed that it was a true likeness of the English queen, so much so that ‘ther lacked but speche’. This prompted further expressions of affection from the regent, who stressed the close personal and political amity between herself and Elizabeth. The portrait then became a vehicle for Margaret to convey a coded expression of her support for the flailing Anglo-Habsburg marriage negotiations for, as she looked upon it, she professed that ‘ther was onely one fault in you, which was with all these greate giftes of god to live sole without a husbände’. As Sussex was on his way to show Elizabeth’s portrait to her suitor and Margaret’s cousin, Archduke Charles, the unspoken meaning of the comment was hard to miss.²

¹ There are two likely reasons for Sussex’s reluctance: the portrait was intended for someone else and it demonstrated the inadequacy of the painting Margaret owned.

² T[he] N[ational] A[rchives, London, Public Record Office] S[tate] P[apers] 70/92, fos. 18v–19r (*Calendar of S[tate] P[apers] F[oreign] Elizabeth* (23 vols., London, 1863–1950), VIII. 1399. References in calendars are to

Margaret's use of Elizabeth's image as the focus of a diplomatic exchange combining staged reverence, professions of friendship, and the coded delivery of a semi-articulated political message was far from unique. Portraits of rulers, medals, and other images of politicians were widely used within early modern diplomatic practice, as were images of battles and classical allegories. Yet this aspect of the role of art in early modern English diplomacy has gone largely neglected. Admittedly, there are several studies which discuss aspects of the role of portraits in international marriage negotiations.³ On the whole, however, studies of Tudor portraiture have tended to overlook the diplomatic importance of their subject, as historians have been predominantly concerned with the messages encoded in the paintings and their place within the monarchs' wider iconographical schemes.⁴ Iconography and magnificence have dominated studies of other European rulers' images too.⁵ Equally, reactions to Tudor portraits have received little consideration. Roy Strong suggested that paintings of Queen Elizabeth should be seen within the context of expressions of loyalty by her courtiers, while

document number unless otherwise stated). On the Anglo-Habsburg marriage negotiations see S. Doran,

Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I (London, 1995), pp. 26–9, 65–6, 73–98.

³ D. Eichberger, ed., *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York / Margaret of Austria* (Leuven, 2005), pp. 139–42; F. Hepburn, 'The Portraiture of Prince Arthur and Katherine of Aragon', in S.J. Gunn and L. Monckton, eds., *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: Life, Death and Commemoration* (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 37–45.

⁴ J.N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton, 1989); R.C. Strong, *Portraits of Elizabeth I* (Oxford, 1963); K.M. Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, 2009). Although Cliff Davies has recently argued that 'Tudor' is a problematic anachronism (C.S.L. Davies, 'Tudor: What's in a Name?' *History*, xcvi (2012), pp. 24–42), I retain it as a convenient shorthand.

⁵ L. Silver, *Marketing Maximilian: The Visual Ideology of a Holy Roman Emperor* (Princeton, 2008); R. Mulcahy, *Philip II: Patron of the Arts* (Dublin, 2004), ch. 5; C.C. Christensen, *Princes and Propaganda: Electoral Saxon Art of the Reformation* (Kirkville MO, 1992); M. Jenkins, *The State Portrait: its Origin and Evolution* (New York, 1947).

Sydney Anglo questioned whether those few who encountered royal portraiture would have possessed sufficient classical and religious knowledge to decode their meaning.⁶ Kevin Sharpe recently proposed that the Tudor image was, in fact, created through a process of negotiation between rulers and ruled. Sharpe acknowledged the importance of an international context, but did not fully expound how this might also have contributed to the creation of the royal image.⁷ In all these schemas, the international usage of royal portraits has received scant attention. Admittedly art historians considering the uses of Renaissance portraiture have briefly noted instances of diplomatic audiences involving portraits. But they have used these, almost without exception, either to discuss the phenomenon of the image's accuracy or to establish the belief that portraits could serve as the symbolic stand-ins of people they represented.⁸ As these scholars' interest lay in the meaning of the portrait genre, they understandably did not explore the diplomatic significance of the interactions they found.

Meanwhile, there has been a growing appreciation that analyses of diplomacy must consider a wide range of cultural factors.⁹ In 2008 John Watkins called for a new multidisciplinary

⁶ R.C. Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London, 1997); S. Anglo, *Images of Tudor Kingship* (London, 1992).

⁷ Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*.

⁸ L. Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait Painting in the 14th 15th and 16th Centuries* (London, 1990), ch. 8; J.W. Pope-Hennessy, *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (London, 1966), ch. 4; J. Fletcher, 'Substitution and Diplomacy', in L. Campbell, P. Attwood, eds., *Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian* (London, 2008), pp. 46–63; Strong, *Portraits*, pp. 23–7.

⁹ See for example C. Windler, 'Diplomatic History as a Field for Cultural Analysis: Muslim-Cultural Relations in Tunis, 1700–1840', *Historical Journal*, xlv (2001), pp. 79–106; D. Frigo, 'Prudence and Experience: Ambassadors and Political Culture in Early Modern Italy', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, xxxviii (2008), pp. 15–34; J. Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy: Britain in Europe c.1750–1830* (Manchester,

history of pre-modern diplomacy. While stressing the importance of language and literature, Watkins also highlighted that adopting a range of approaches was necessary when assessing the mechanisms and impact of early modern diplomacy.¹⁰ Watkins' concern with literature has been shared by others, most notably Timothy Hampton, whose work has established a profound link between early modern literary and diplomatic cultures.¹¹ Other scholars have also begun to view diplomatic history through a cultural lens. Recent studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century diplomacy have emphasised the importance of ritual, protocol, and ceremonial and the notions of honour, prestige, and status that informed them.¹² Moreover, several of these studies have suggested how, through the exercise of ritual and ceremony, shared concepts of diplomacy could be forged over time. While historians are increasingly appreciating the role of diplomats as cultural mediators, scholars interested in the relationship between diplomacy and art tend to focus on what this can tell us either about the circulation

2010); T. Riotte, M. Mösslang, eds., *The Diplomats' World: A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 2008).

¹⁰ J. Watkins, 'Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, xxxviii (2008), pp. 1–14.

¹¹ T. Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (London, 2009); D. Biow, 'Castiglione and the Art of being Inconspicuously Conspicuous', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, xxxviii (2008), pp. 35–55.

¹² A. Krischer, 'Ein nothwendig Stück der Ambassaden. Zur politischen Rationalität des diplomatischen Zeremoniells bei Kurfürst Clemens August', *Annalen des Historischen Vereins für den Niederrhein*, ccv (2002), pp. 161–200; J. Hennings, 'The Semiotics of Diplomatic Dialogue: Pomp and Circumstance in Tsar Peter I's Visit to Vienna in 1698', *International History Review*, xxx (2008), pp. 515–44; Windler, 'Diplomatic History'. On diplomatic ceremonial more generally see W. Roosen, 'Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach', *Journal of Modern History*, lii (1980), pp. 452–76; L. Bély, 'Souveraineté et souverains: la question du cérémonial dans les relations internationales à l'époque moderne', *Annuaire-bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France* (1993), pp. 27–43.

of works by notable artists or patronage networks and the role of agents, particularly the ambassador as art agent.¹³ The art-historical interest in the international circulation of goods has considered instances of works of art being sent as diplomatic gifts,¹⁴ but as yet there remains no systematic analysis of the role of the art-gift within diplomatic practice, let alone the broader functions which these and other works of art might have had in Renaissance diplomacy.

Anthony Colantuono has, however, suggested that we should try to theorise the relationship between art and diplomacy. He proposed that Guido Reni's *Abduction of Helen* should be read as an allegory of and comment upon the diplomatic negotiations taking place between the Barberini papacy and Philip IV of Spain as the painting was created and sold. Colantuono's suggestive analysis points to the potential of works of art (and their reputations) to act as commentaries on diplomatic situations. Yet his analysis of the *Abduction of Helen* and his assertion that discussions about the patronage of the painting served as a surrogate for diplomatic negotiations pushes the evidence too far. Colantuono's broader framework does successfully demonstrate the inadequacy of placing diplomatic art within the conventions of

¹³ D. Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485-1649* (Berkley, 1997), pp. 234–45; R. Hill, 'The Ambassador as Art Agent: Sir Dudley Carleton and Jacobean Collecting', in E. Chaney, ed., *The Evolution of English Collecting* (London, 2003), pp. 240–255; M. Keblusek, B. Noldus, eds., *Double Agents: Cultural and Political Brokerage in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2011); M.J. Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (New York, 2005), ch. 7; D. Carrió-Invernizzi, 'Gift and Diplomacy in Seventeenth-Century Spanish Italy', *Historical Journal*, li (2008), pp. 881–99; H. Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power: The Material World of the Stuart Diplomat 1660-1714* (Oxford, 2011).

¹⁴ D. Bentley-Cranch, *The Renaissance Portrait in France and England: A Comparative Study* (Paris, 2004); J. Cox-Rearick, *The Collection of Francis I: Royal Treasures* (Antwerp, 1996), ch. 6; Mulcahy, *Philip II*, pp. 71–80, 91–104; C.H. Clough, 'The Relations between the English and Urbino Courts, 1474-1508', *Studies in the Renaissance*, xiv (1967), 202–18; M. Jansson, 'Measured Reciprocity: English Ambassadorial Gift Exchange in the 17th and 18th Centuries', *Journal of Early Modern History*, ix (2005), pp. 348–70.

collecting, but is too dependent upon gift exchange.¹⁵ If we are to comprehend fully the diplomatic functions of early modern art, then we must appreciate that iconography, gifting, display, usage, response, and diplomatic theory all contributed to an art work's diplomatic role, even if they were not equally important for each work at all times.

Royal portraits provide a useful means of exploring the relationship between art and diplomacy. Because monarchs and their councillors were concerned about the international image they projected, many interactions with royal portraits are noted in the diplomatic records. Only rarely can a surviving portrait be linked to a particular diplomatic audience or report, meaning that it is often impossible to explore the iconographical significance of individual diplomatic portraits. Even without such data, however, the surviving accounts can elucidate the diverse ways in which the royal image was made to do diplomatic service. Tudor diplomats had to mediate the expectations of the foreign courts to which they had been sent, while those ambassadors sent to the English court arrived with continental expectations. Successful diplomacy depended on the ability of political actors to operate within existing cultural frameworks or create shared understandings of diplomatic processes. This article will therefore analyse several of the key diplomatic uses of portraiture including demarcating diplomatic hierarchies; facilitating and celebrating marital alliances; familiarising princes with one another; maintaining political relationships between rulers; and enabling nuanced commentary upon international relations. Such an analysis can deepen our understanding of how material and visual culture was symbolically and practically deployed and further illuminate the complexities of early modern diplomatic culture.

¹⁵ A. Colantuono, *Guido Reni's Abduction of Helen: The Politics and Rhetoric of Painting in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 1997); id., 'The Mute Diplomat: Theorizing the Role of Images in Seventeenth-Century Political Negotiations', in E. Cropper, ed., *The Diplomacy of Art: Artistic Creation and Politics in Seicento Italy* (Milan, 2000), pp. 51–76.

Portraits had considerable diplomatic utility in no small part due to Renaissance portrait theory. Leon Battista Alberti believed that ‘painting possesses a truly divine power in that . . . it make[s] the absent present (as they say of friendship)’ and a portrait came to be widely understood as the stand-in of the person it represented.¹⁶ The perceived link between sitters and their pictures even led some to interpret events surrounding portraits as harbingers of the fate of the people in them. One of the earl of Essex’s supporters, for instance, took it as a bad omen that Essex’s portrait fell down and broke, not once but twice on the eve of Essex’s ill-fated rising.¹⁷ At the English court the belief that interactions with portraits indicated the state of personal and political relationships was sufficiently widespread that Thomas White and John Throckmorton were investigated in March 1556, among other things, for spreading rumours that an enraged Mary I had expelled her husband’s portrait from her chamber.¹⁸ The understanding of portraits as the symbolic embodiment of their subjects made them useful to rulers who hoped to create, maintain, or modulate political affinities. As shall be seen, portraits could serve as the surrogates for distant monarchs. Equally significant to portraits’ diplomatic functions was the power many people attached to them.¹⁹ Certainly several Elizabethans credited state portraits with considerable potency. Geoffrey Fenton believed that displaying the Queen’s portrait during an Irish Parliament would be politically beneficial,

¹⁶ J. Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester, 1997), p. 8. See also n.7 above.

¹⁷ Washington DC, Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.b.50, pp. 218–9.

¹⁸ C.S. Knighton, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Mary I 1553–1558* (London, 1998), 339, 367. D.M. Loades, *Two Tudor Conspiracies* (Cambridge, 1965) discusses White and Throckmorton’s involvement in the Dudley conspiracy.

¹⁹ On the power of images see D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (London, 1989). On portraiture see Jenkins, *State Portrait*, pp. 6–7; Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, pp. 220–1.

while Thomas Wilkes echoed Lycurgus's judgement that portraits could sway public opinion.²⁰ Some contemporaries evidently did react strongly to royal portraiture as Karl van Mander claimed that observers felt fearful in the presence of Holbein's mural of Henry VIII at Whitehall.²¹

Tudor ambassadors were visually branded as their sovereign's loyal representatives through their material goods, such as tapestries, wall hangings, and plate which usually displayed their monarch's coat of arms.²² This was in keeping with the theory that the house and its contents represented the values of the owner or resident.²³ Displaying a portrait was widely interpreted as a sign of political allegiance. Hence when the Spanish ambassador Alvarez de Quadra paid a surprise visit to the home of Elizabeth's secretary William Cecil, he was perturbed to discover the count of Egmont's picture in the study, no doubt because the Dutch statesman was a vocal critic of the Spanish king's policies in the Netherlands. Despite Cecil's protestations that it had been a gift, de Quadra believed that it substantiated rumours that Elizabeth would adopt an anti-Spanish policy.²⁴ As Joanna Woodall observed, 'an understanding of portraits as direct substitutes for their sitters meant that the circulation of portraits could mirror and expand the system of personal patronage whereby power, privilege and wealth were distributed'.²⁵ This was no less true internationally. Increasingly in the sixteenth century, English diplomats established their link to their monarch by taking their monarch's pictures with them. This practice became more common in the second half of the

²⁰ TNA SP 63/82, fo. 39v; B[ritish] L[ibrary] Stowe MS 2442, fo. 18r.

²¹ S. Foister, *Holbein in England* (London, 2006), p. 196.

²² See TNA E351/1952.

²³ F. Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 6.

²⁴ C[alendar of Letters, Despatches, and] S[tate] P[apers, Relating to the Negotiations between England and] Sp[ain, Preserved in the Archives at] Simancas (London, 1892-99), I. 200.

²⁵ Woodall, ed., *Portraiture*, p. 3.

sixteenth century as the availability of royal portraits increased.²⁶ But there was probably a further reason for this development. Contemporary diplomatic theory asserted that an ambassador should be a close intimate of the ruler he served, but in practice English monarchs sent a wide variety of men to represent them abroad, many of whom did not enjoy such closeness to their monarch. The advent of female monarchy and the structural changes this caused at the English court further complicated matters. Whereas Henry VIII had been able to use the male intimates who staffed his privy chamber as diplomats, the members of Mary and Elizabeth's privy chambers were predominantly women,²⁷ making it expedient for Elizabeth's ambassadors to adopt additional visual markers of the theoretical political intimacy underpinning their appointment.

As the royal image was believed to embody the sovereignty and dignity of the ruler, prominently displaying a portrait of the king or queen within the ambassadorial household or lodgings demarcated the embassy's physical space and added weight to its contested claims to extraterritoriality. It also augmented the embassy's prestige and effectively signalled its allegiance to those foreign courtiers and ambassadors who enjoyed the ambassador's hospitality.²⁸ By 1538, John Hutton had a portrait of Henry VIII in his household; Philip Hoby returned to the imperial court in 1549 with Edward VI's portrait; and Fulke Greville took Elizabeth's portrait with him when he accompanied Philip Sidney on an embassy to the

²⁶ On the increasing availability of royal portraits in the sixteenth century see Strong, *Gloriana*, pp. 11–12, 15–18; Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, pp. 140–1, 228, 366–7; Anglo, *Tudor Kingship*, pp. 116–7; R. Tittler, *Portraits, Painters and Publics in Provincial England* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 18–20, 68, 76.

²⁷ P. Wright, 'A Change in Direction: The Ramifications of a Female Household, 1558–1603', in D. Starkey, ed., *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987), pp. 147–72; D. Starkey, 'Representation through Intimacy', in J.A. Guy, ed., *The Tudor Monarchy* (London, 1997), pp. 42–78.

²⁸ On ambassadorial hospitality see C. Fletcher, "'Furnished with gentlemen': the Ambassador's House in Sixteenth-century Italy", *Renaissance Studies*, xxiv (2010), pp. 518–35.

Holy Roman Empire in 1577.²⁹ Men further down the diplomatic hierarchy also desired the queen's picture as a symbol of their allegiance. In 1585, Henry van Holtz, who acted as a mercantile agent in the Holy Roman Empire, suggested that he would more promptly serve the English queen if he received the money he was owed and a portrait of the queen in recognition of the 'perpetual memory' of his service to her.³⁰

In 1595, the English ambassador to the Ottoman sultan, Edward Barton, asked the English privy council to furnish him with a likeness of Elizabeth. Barton's request reveals two further reasons why many ambassadors took the queen's portrait on embassy: he believed that Englishmen in Istanbul would be comforted by seeing the Queen's image in his lodgings and he wanted to have a portrait to show the Sultan.³¹ Other diplomats in the 1590s received the queen's picture to take with them on embassy, a practice that had probably already begun by the early 1580s. While some were intended for display in the ambassadorial lodgings, others more directly linked the ambassador's physical presence to his mistress' authority. In 1598 Robert Cecil was given the queen's picture as he departed for France and Edward, Lord Zouche was given a small portrait of Elizabeth, 'the fairest picture in Europe', to take on embassy to Denmark.³² Wearing miniatures of the queen marked ambassadors like Cecil as her representatives on several levels. It was commonly understood as a sign of affection and

²⁹ TNA SP 1/136, fo. 79v (J.S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, R.H. Brodie, eds., *L[etters and] P[apers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII]* (23 vols., London, 1862-1932), XIII.ii 286.2); *C[alendar of Letters, Despatches, and] S[tate] P[apers, Relating to the Negotiations between England and] Sp[ain]* (13 vols., London, 1862-1954), IX. 470; TNA SP 70/145, fo. 119 (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XI. 1470).

³⁰ TNA SP 82/2, fo. 11v (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XIX. 847). See also *C[alendar of] S[tate] P[apers relating to] Scotland [and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603]* (13 vols., Edinburgh, 1898-1969), XII. 46, 76.

³¹ BL Cotton MS Nero B XI, fo. 215r.

³² FSL, MS V.b.10, fo. 17v; Hatfield House, C[ecil] P[apers] 61/78.

fidelity³³ and so distinguished the ambassador as the queen's loyal servant. The portrait miniature's association with intimacy reinforced the political closeness between queen and ambassador, while the fact that many miniatures were known to be presents from Elizabeth further indicated the favour in which she held her ambassador. As it became more common for courtiers to wear Elizabeth's image in the latter decades of her reign, it is likely that more ambassadors did than can now be traced. It is highly suggestive that two sometime diplomats – Francis Walsingham and Christopher Hatton (figure 1) – considered wearing a cameo of the queen sufficiently important to commemorate in portraiture.³⁴

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Figure 1. Sir Christopher Hatton © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Portraits were also widely used during early modern royal marriage negotiations. Perhaps most famously, when Henry VIII decided to remarry after the death of Jane Seymour, he sent Hans Holbein to paint prospective brides including Christina of Milan and Anne of Cleves.³⁵ Although Holbein's tour was at one end of the extreme, portraits were frequently exchanged when making royal marriages. In 1505, as Henry VII contemplated a second marriage to Margaret of Austria, they exchanged portraits, while in 1553 Mary I received two portraits of her future consort, Philip of Spain, including one by Titian (on loan from Philip's aunt Mary

³³ P. Fumerton, "'Secret' Arts: Elizabethan Miniature and Sonnets', *Representations*, xv (1986), pp. 57–97; K.

Coombs, *The Portrait Miniature in England* (London, 1998), pp. 37, 45.

³⁴ N[ational] P[ortrait] G[allery, London] 1807, 2162. The quality of cameos varied considerably, but those used in diplomatic contexts were probably relatively good. Cameos also conveyed intimacy and familiarity.

³⁵ J. Rowlands, *Holbein: The Paintings of Hans Holbein the Younger* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 115–8; Foister, *Holbein*, pp. 200–204.

of Hungary), and she reciprocated.³⁶ Elizabeth I also exchanged pictures with potential bridegrooms; the images she received ranged from traditional panel paintings to a jewel of a frog with the Duke of Anjou's 'phisnamy'.³⁷ Portraits were clearly integral to Tudor marriage negotiations, but their diplomatic meaning and usage remains relatively unexplored. Even Susan Doran's seminal study of Elizabeth's courtships paid relatively little attention to the pictures involved in the process.³⁸ So while the phenomenon of exchange may be relatively familiar, much remains to be said about its subtleties and significance.

Portrait exchanges associated with marriage negotiations had the clear utilitarian purpose of informing potential spouses of their intended's appearance and monarchs understandably wanted to receive reliable images. In 1504-5 Henry VII was so anxious to receive an accurate picture of Joanna, dowager queen of Naples, that he instructed his ambassador to find an artist who would paint it to 'agree in similitude and likeness as near as it may be possible to the very visage, countenance, and semblance of the said queen'; should the first or second attempt prove inadequate, they were to commission a painter to persevere 'till it be made perfect and agreeable in every behalf'.³⁹ Diplomats came to play a pivotal role as authenticators of the royal image. Such verification worked on two levels. Ambassadors were expected to comment upon images of their ruler when at a foreign court; as the monarch's proxy chosen 'to represent their persons and greatnesse during their Ambassage', they were presumed to be close associates of their rulers who would know their monarchs' mind, character, and person.⁴⁰ They were also expected, while in service and afterwards, to judge

³⁶ F. Hepburn, 'The 1505 Portrait of Henry VII', *Antiquaries Journal*, lxxxviii (2008), pp. 222-57. *CSPSp*, XI.

355, 367-8, 384, 396, 402, 407-8. Henry VII's portrait is now NPG 416.

³⁷ BL Royal MS Appendix 68, fo. 33v.

³⁸ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*.

³⁹ J. Gairdner, ed., *Historia Regis Henrici Septimi* (London, 1858), pp. 236-7; *CSPSp*, I. 401, 419.

⁴⁰ J. Hotman, *The Ambassador* (London, 1603), sig. B2r. STC (2nd ed.) 13848.

the veracity of pictures of those foreign potentates with whom they had come into contact as a result of their diplomatic missions.

Whenever monarchs acquired the image of a potential spouse, they relied upon their ambassadors to explain how it compared to the person it represented. Consequently, Henry VIII's ambassadors with the Duke of Cleves were instructed to evaluate the quality of the paintings of his daughters.⁴¹ Similarly, when Henry contemplated marrying Christina of Milan, his ambassadors compared her to her portrait, reporting that she was so beautiful that she 'was yet never so wel paynted, but her lyvely visage dothe much excel her poynture'.⁴² Female rulers also expected their ambassadors to assess the veracity of potential spouses' pictures. Elizabeth I repeatedly professed that she did not entirely trust portraits, citing the disappointment of her former brother-in-law, Philip II, upon meeting her sister.⁴³ Some of Elizabeth's ambassadors apparently shared her reluctance to rely on portraiture; this explained Sussex's eagerness to see the Austrian archduke at the imperial court in September 1567, while Thomas Smith doubted the honesty of pre-marital portraits.⁴⁴ But Elizabeth still tried to ascertain how reliable the portraits she received were. Hence in December 1573 Valentine Dale, the English ambassador in France, and another diplomat, Thomas Randolph, compared Elizabeth's latest suitor Hercule François, duke of Alençon, to a 'well expressed' portrait, criticising only its 'overmuch couler'. Dale also sent a fuller assessment explaining that contrary to rumour, Alençon's pockmarks were 'no greate disfigure' as they were thick

⁴¹ BL Cotton MS Vitellius C XVI, fo. 265v (*LP* XIV.i 1193).

⁴² TNA SP 1/142, fos. 212v–213r (*LP* XIV.i 194).

⁴³ *CSPSp (Simancas)*, I. 34, 35, 335. V. Klarwill, ed., *Queen Elizabeth and Some Foreigners* (London, 1928), 218, 220. Elizabeth was concerned with character as well as looks.

⁴⁴ R. Brown, ed., *C[alendar of] S[tate] P[apers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of] V[enice]* (38 vols., London, 1864–1947), VII. 401; J. Strype, *The Life of the Learned Sir Thomas Smith* (Oxford, 1820), pp. 241–2.

not deep, with the exception of those on the end of his nose, ‘howe much to be disliked maye be as yt pleaseth God to move the hart of the beholder’.⁴⁵ Equally, foreign ambassadors who had served at the English court were expected to proffer their opinion on the faithfulness of English royals’ images. Hence in 1514, the imperial ambassador confirmed that the portrait being sent of Princess Mary was a good likeness.⁴⁶ Another diplomat even went so far as to vouch for the accuracy with which Elizabeth’s dress was depicted as he had witnessed her wearing it.⁴⁷

The practice of marital portrait exchange came to shape international expectations. Such was the widespread association between accurate depiction and marriages that when an English ambassador took a striking likeness of Edward VI on embassy in 1549, it sparked rumours that Edward would marry a daughter of Ferdinand, king of the Romans.⁴⁸ These developing conventions could be utilised to bring diplomatic benefits, as Elizabeth I found. In March 1571, despite several months of tentatively exploring the possibility of Elizabeth marrying Henry, duke of Anjou, the French were reluctant to negotiate formally.⁴⁹ Henry’s mother, Catherine de Medici, expressed concerns about the French initiating official talks as Elizabeth had rejected proposals from so many other royal suitors. Although the English were eager to negotiate, they insisted that, as it would be improper for a woman to propose, any offer of marriage must come from the French. The presentation of Elizabeth’s portrait during the preliminary discussions was a sign of her commitment to pursuing the marriage and

⁴⁵ Randolph was instructed to obtain Alençon’s perfect portraiture (*CSPF Elizabeth*, X, 1206). TNA SP 70/129A, fo. 96r (ibid., 1244). CP 148/11. For the Alençon negotiations see Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, ch. 6.

⁴⁶ *LP*, I.ii 3041.

⁴⁷ TNA SP 70/92, fo. 19r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, VIII. 1399). See also Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, 197–8.

⁴⁸ *CSPSp*, IX. 470.

⁴⁹ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, ch. 5.

helped to break the deadlock.⁵⁰ By invoking a widely understood trope of international marriage negotiations Elizabeth ventured her own reputation, indicating that she was less likely to reject Anjou's suit or damage his honour, but she did so without proposing or entering into any binding written agreement. The expectations surrounding pre-marital portrait exchanges sometimes caused confusion, not least as rulers exploited them in order to try to create the misleading impression of enthusiasm. At the start of Elizabeth's reign, the imperialists pursued an Anglo-Imperial marriage alliance, but the English were less keen.⁵¹ The imperialists found it difficult to assess how interested the queen and her government were; their uncertainty was compounded by the arrival of the queen's portrait in Vienna just as they began to suspect that Elizabeth had no intention of marrying the Austrian archduke.⁵² Reactions to a potential spouse's portrait were read for evidence of how well the suit was received. Displaying the portrait of one's betrothed within one's bedchamber or wearing it at one's bosom was a common trope of the marriage alliance and was often invoked for diplomatic advantage.⁵³ But specific interactions with portraits could more persuasively convince observers of the health of an engagement. Hence in June 1514, as Princess Mary's betrothal to the future Charles V appeared in question, the imperial ambassador Gerard de Pleine was assured that the marriage would not be called off. This political fiction was furthered by reports that Mary frequently asked to see Charles's picture, which de Pleine believed was proof of her dedication to her fiancé. Yet de Pleine received this reassurance as the English secretly planned for Mary to marry the French king Louis XII instead. Within two months Louis had received Mary's picture and the Anglo-Burgundian betrothal was no

⁵⁰ TNA SP 70/118, fos. 35r–38v (*CSP Elizabeth*, IX. 1614). The French reciprocated (BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian F VI, fo. 53r).

⁵¹ Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, pp. 26–9.

⁵² *CSPV*, VII. Appendix 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 74; *CSPF Elizabeth*, XI. 1260.

more.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, interactions with portraits continued to be taken as a barometer of how robust the international marital alliances they heralded were. Hence, in early 1560, the imperial ambassador in Spain's claims that Elizabeth I had placed Archduke Charles's portrait at the head of her bed and professed that she was reluctant to part from it sustained imperial hopes that she would eventually marry Charles.⁵⁵ Even small gestures could be invested with considerable significance to the diplomatic observer. When Charles IX of France cut the wrapping containing the picture of Emperor Maximilian's daughter himself, rather than asking a servant to do so, the Scottish diplomat James Melville interpreted this as a demonstration of the king's enthusiasm for the marriage. But when Elizabeth declined Melville's offer of portraits of Johann Casimir and his family, Melville believed this indicated that she had no interest in receiving Casimir's proposal.⁵⁶ A lack of reciprocity during marriage negotiations could adversely impact reputations, explaining why the Spanish ambassadors were eager to procure a painting of Prince Arthur when the English demanded Catherine of Aragon's portrait in 1488.⁵⁷ Another common concern was that the sitter's honour would be injured if marriage negotiations failed or if his or her likeness met with a negative response.⁵⁸ No wonder, then, that the French ambassador in England in 1574 felt

⁵⁴ *LP I ii 3041*; A.B. Hinds, ed., *C[alendar of] S[tate] P[apers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of] M[ilan: 1385-1618]* (London, 1912), I, 711. Charles' portrait is most likely now R[oyal] C[ollections] IN 403439. In it he holds a sprig of rosemary which was a symbol of friendship, love, and remembrance.

⁵⁵ *CSPV*, VII. 127.

⁵⁶ A.F. Steuart, ed., *Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill, 1535-1617* (London, 1929), pp. 64, 71, 73, 75–8.

⁵⁷ *CSPSp*, I. 21. See also TNA SP 70/118, fo. 38v (*CSP Elizabeth, IX. 1614*).

⁵⁸ *CSPSp*, I. 401, 419.

compelled to contradict rumours that the portrait of Elizabeth's latest suitor, the duke of Alençon, had been badly received.⁵⁹

Even when the planned marriage was far distant and the physical attributes of the potential spouse far from the intended's mind, sending portraits was deemed appropriate. In 1519, the French queen sent Princess Mary, Henry VIII's two year old daughter, a portrait of her betrothed, the one year old Dauphin.⁶⁰ While this may have been intended, in part, to demonstrate the infant's health to Mary's parents, it also indicates that betrothal portraits transcended their informative function. Indeed, the iconography of some explicitly articulated political relationships. The painting of Henry VII obtained by the imperial ambassador Herman Rinck for Margaret of Austria in 1505, for instance, depicted him wearing the collar of the Burgundian chivalric order of the Golden Fleece, a clear indication of Henry's diplomatic ties to Margaret's Habsburg relatives (figure 2).⁶¹ Other marital portrait exchanges conveyed a dynastic message by incorporating other family members. Hence in 1502, as Margaret Tudor's marriage to James IV of Scotland approached, Henry VII sent the Scottish king his prospective bride's portrait accompanied by 'figures of the king, queen and prince of England'.⁶² As well as giving James the conventional opportunity to vet his fiancée's appearance, by sending portraits of himself, his wife, and his heir, Henry emphasised the dynastic alliance that the marriage represented and reminded James of the political expectations accompanying it. Furthermore, as it was anticipated that James would display the portraits, Henry was inviting James to advertise the alliance to visiting dignitaries and domestic politicians.

⁵⁹ J.B.A.T. Teulet, ed., *Correspondance diplomatique: Recueil des dépêches, rapports des ambassadeurs de France en Angleterre et en Écosse pendant le xvie siècle* (7 vols., Paris, 1838-40), VI. 22, 26, 40.

⁶⁰ *CSPV*, II. 1298.

⁶¹ Hepburn, '1505 Portrait'; NPG 416.

⁶² T. Dickson et al, ed., *Accounts of the Treasurers of Scotland* (13 vols., Edinburgh, 1877-1978), II. 341.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Figure 2. King Henry VII © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Marital and pre-marital portrait gifts, then, not only provided visual information about the appearance and character of the prospective bride or groom, they also visually established the association between the two dynasties. Moreover, sending portraits of living parents and sometimes even siblings indicated commitment to the proposed marriage, as did the intensity of portrait exchanges. Negotiations for Edward VI to marry the French king's eldest daughter, Elizabeth, were accompanied by portrait exchanges which lasted from late 1550 until the Treaty of Angers was agreed. First, the French Queen Catherine de Medici was presented with Edward's portrait; she reciprocated with a sketch of Princess Elizabeth reportedly drawn from life by one of her ladies. In early 1551, a second portrait of Edward, probably by the royal painter William Scrots (figure 3), was sent to the French court. In April, Edward received portraits of Henry II, Catherine, and his prospective bride and in the following month he was given a further image of Elizabeth cast in silver.⁶³ This prolonged exchange testified to the strength of English and French commitment to the marriage during the deliberations and established Edward's place as an ally and future member of the French royal family. Such a dynastic approach was probably fairly widespread.⁶⁴

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Figure 3. Edward VI by William Scrots © Louvre Museum. Source: AKG images / Eric Lessing.

⁶³ BL Royal MS 18 cxxiv, fo. 69v; *CSPSp*, X. 171, 217, 265, 298–9.

⁶⁴ See TNA SP 70/4, fo. 55r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, I. 644); Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, pp. 196, 272 n.127; D. Starkey, ed., *The Inventory of Henry VIII: The Transcript* (London, 1998), pp. 234, 396, 414.

In an age when meetings between rulers were increasingly rare and expensive, monarchs relied on royal portraits in order to know what their contemporaries looked like. Consequently accurate depiction mattered even when there was no marriage on the horizon. Hence in February 1532, as Henry VIII arranged an interview with Francis I that he hoped would secure the French king's support for his marital policies, he commanded his ambassador Stephen Gardiner to obtain the 'purtrature' of Francis 'in that forme and favour as it nowe is specially considering that fewe yeres do always change a mans countenance' and 'it is long passed, sith we did see our good brothers person'. Moreover, Henry wanted a stylistically up to date portrait, instructing Gardiner to have it painted 'in most like, best and curious facion'.⁶⁵ Certainly, a person's features were thought to change sufficiently in five years that their portrait might no longer be current.⁶⁶ Anna Riehl has suggested that considerable emphasis was placed upon Elizabeth I's facial characteristics as these were believed both to indicate her true character and to serve as an important diplomatic commodity.⁶⁷ Although physiognomy was still sometimes discussed, the predominant diplomatic concern was accuracy.

Ambassadorial verification of royal likeness was therefore not limited to portrait exchanges during royal courtships. When Mary, Queen of Scots, received Elizabeth's portrait in 1562, she summoned the English ambassador, Thomas Randolph, asking him 'howe lyke thys was unto her lyvelye face'? Randolph assured Mary that it resembled his mistress and suggested that she might soon be able to judge for herself how, in Elizabeth's person, there was 'myche more perfection then coulde be sette forthe with the arte of man', increasing Mary's hopes

⁶⁵ BL Additional MS 25114, fo. 74v (LP V. 791).

⁶⁶ *CSPF Elizabeth*, IX. 1086.

⁶⁷ A. Riehl, *The Face of Queenship: Early Modern Representations of Elizabeth I* (Basingstoke, 2010), chs. 3, 5.

that her long-mooted meeting with Elizabeth would soon take place.⁶⁸ Portraits were sometimes envisaged as a means of discerning how a neighbouring prince fared. So when Elizabeth's agent Guido Cavalcanti was asked about Elizabeth's health by Catherine de Medici, he responded that Catherine would witness 'how faier and well the quene of Ingland dothe shewe her selfe to all thos eies that doe behold her' and proceeded to exhibit an 'excelent counterfet' of the English queen.⁶⁹ Portraits could be used to maintain familiarity with a royal neighbour who had once been met in person; likewise they provided a focus for expressions of hope that two rulers who had not met might do so in the future. In 1560, Mary, Queen of Scots, sent her portrait to Elizabeth 'because the one of us cannot see thother' and requested Elizabeth's in return.⁷⁰ Later Elizabeth reportedly gazed upon Mary's picture 'with great delight', because 'their so much, by her, desired meeting' seemed far distant.⁷¹ Similarly, Catherine de Medici and Henry IV of France both frequently communicated their wish to see Elizabeth in person when contemplating her image. Portraits thus offered a means of expressing the desire for a closer alliance and a partial means of substituting for the personal meeting of princes which could help to establish amicable dialogue outside or alongside official agreements.

Being able to recognise other rulers could bring tangible diplomatic benefits, as politicians used this knowledge to construct their diplomatic oratory. In February 1559, Cavalcanti attended negotiations that would eventually lead to the Treaty of Cateau-Cambr sis; this multi-lateral peace brought an end to the Franco-Spanish war, in which Mary I had allied with Spain. When the French king was shown a painting of Elizabeth by Cavalcanti, he

⁶⁸ TNA SP 52/7, fo. 62v (*CSP Scotland*, I. 1125).

⁶⁹ TNA SP 70/118, fo. 38v (*CSPF Elizabeth*, IX. 1614). For friends and relatives viewing portraits as news see Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, pp. 196–7.

⁷⁰ TNA SP 70/17, fo. 82r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, III. 446).

⁷¹ Steuart, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 94.

exclaimed that his ‘dear sister’ was truly beautiful, as had been reputed and that she bore a striking resemblance to her father, Henry VIII. Henry II’s profuse declarations of brotherly love for Elizabeth and by implication for her father, too, was designed to moderate the strained relationship between the two monarchs as they clashed over the sovereignty of Calais. Certainly, Henry’s claim of knowing what Elizabeth’s father had looked like lent greater credence to his claims of goodwill towards England, as did his implicit recognition of Elizabeth’s legitimacy, which was denied in some quarters. But this instance has wider ramifications as Henry considered possessing an image of the English queen sufficiently important that he asked to borrow the painting to have it copied.⁷²

There was, then, a premium in being able to own and display recognizable images of one’s allies and enemies, further testimony to which lies in the range of media in which foreign rulers’ pictures were found at court.⁷³ Consequently, some rulers went to considerable efforts in order to acquire portraits of their fellow princes. In January 1550, it was reported that the English king’s painter (probably William Scrots) would visit France in order to paint portraits of the French royal family and the Queen of Scots, while Catherine de Medici sent her painter to the English court in 1582.⁷⁴ While some missions aimed at the acquisition of up to date portrayals of distant relatives, others had the objective of obtaining likenesses of allies.⁷⁵ As Sussex’s audience with Margaret of Parma demonstrates, owning and exhibiting erroneous portraits of foreign royals was potentially embarrassing and could cast doubt on a ruler’s

⁷² Cavalcanti willingly obliged. TNA SP 70/2, fo. 142r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, I. 340).

⁷³ G.W. Groos, ed., *The Diary of Baron Waldstein, a Traveller in Elizabethan England* (London, 1981), pp. 139–41; P. Razzell, ed., *The Journals of Two Travelers in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (London, 1995), p. 97; *LP* IV.iii 6789; BL Additional MS 62525.

⁷⁴ *CSPSp*, X. 217; TNA SP 78/7, fo. 27r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XV. 513).

⁷⁵ J. Woodall, *Anthonis Mor: Art and Authority* (Zwolle, 2007), pp. 213–30; *CSPF Elizabeth*, IX, 1086.

political acuity.⁷⁶ But rulers went to considerable pains, even for poor likenesses, because exhibiting pictures of a wide range of dynastic rulers created the impression of extensive diplomatic contacts. Accurate images were useful for discussing international affairs with visiting diplomats as they allowed princes to suggest their familiarity with other rulers, while current likenesses suggested the vitality of such links.

English courtiers also recognised the potential utility of foreign rulers' portraits. Hence Armygall Waad, an administrator with diplomatic experience, gave Elizabeth 'a half picture of mettall of Sigismend king of polo sett in wod' in 1565.⁷⁷ The perceived importance of knowing what foreign princes looked like and possessing recent images of them is clear in Edmund Tilney's manuscript *The descriptions regiments and policie as well general as particularly of Italy, France, Germany, Spain, England and Scotland*. This topographical guide to Europe was compiled at the turn of the seventeenth century; it provided descriptions of the major territories of Europe, each of which contained a printed portrait of the ruler even for short entries such as that on the Ottoman Empire. In cases where a ruler had recently died, the deceased monarch's image accompanied the entries as Philip II, for instance, represented Spain. Tilney clearly believed that a volume that he envisioned as a diplomatic manual for the queen would be incomplete without foreign rulers' images.⁷⁸

Ambassadors, too, realized that their monarchs would prize images of foreign princes. They were often ordered to describe foreign rulers' countenances in their reports. By the early seventeenth century, English ambassadors such as Henry Wotton believed that it was 'the duty of servants to represent unto their masters, the images of those, with whom they treat,

⁷⁶ TNA SP 70/92, fos. 18v–19r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, VIII. 1399).

⁷⁷ FSL MS Z.d.13.

⁷⁸ FSL MS V.b.182, fo. 164v. Elizabeth died before the volume was completed. A later, more complete version is in the University of Illinois Library. See W. R. Streitberger, *Edmond Tylney, Master of the Revels and Censor of Plays: a Descriptive Index to his Diplomatic Manual on Europe* (New York, 1986).

and as well their natural as artificial impressions'.⁷⁹ Increasingly, Tudor ambassadors appear to have considered obtaining visual affirmation of a potentate's or a potential spouse's appearance as one of their duties. This practice appears to have begun in earnest by the middle years of Henry VIII's reign. John Hutton, Henry's representative in the Netherlands had planned to send Henry a portrait of Christina of Milan until he learned that Hans Holbein would paint her.⁸⁰ Edwardian and Elizabethan diplomats similarly acquired foreign royals' portraits for their monarch and privy council. The occasional diplomatic agent John Dymock, for instance, sent the prince of Denmark's picture to the council in 1551.⁸¹ Although the practice may have begun in the first half of the sixteenth century, opportunities to acquire pictures and medals of foreign royals became more common in the second half of the century.⁸² While some ambassadors bought such images on the open market, others like Henry Cobham commissioned them specifically. During a mission to the Emperor in 1570, Cobham engaged 'the best drawer of picturs' in Antwerp to draw the Spanish queen's portrait, which he asked William Cecil to present to Elizabeth.⁸³ Similarly, in 1577 Thomas Wilson requested that the Governor General of the Low Countries, Don John, sit for a portrait.⁸⁴ Some took things too far, undertaking unofficial commissions with embarrassing consequences. During a private mercantile mission in 1561 John Dymock persuaded Erik XIV of Sweden to send a 'well made' portrait and several love tokens to Elizabeth, with the recommendation that she reject them if she had no desire to marry the king. The Swedish

⁷⁹ L.P. Smith, ed., *The Life and Letters of Henry Wotton* (Oxford, 1907), p. 187. Wotton refers here to appearance and character.

⁸⁰ TNA SP 1/130, fo. 47r (*LP XIII.i* 507).

⁸¹ W.B. Turnbull, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Foreign 1547–1553* (London, 1861), 293.

⁸² See for example *CSPF Elizabeth*, V. 138, XI. 227, 809, XV. 693.

⁸³ TNA SP 70/114, fo. 5r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, IX. 1232).

⁸⁴ TNA SP 70/145, fo. 119v (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XI. 1470). Don John assented.

king, however, took encouragement and found it difficult to believe Dymock's claims this was a private initiative and not an official mission for two reasons: Dymock was a sometime ambassador whose passport styled him as the queen's servant and he had the portrait painter Stephen van der Meulen in tow. Foreign ambassadors, meanwhile, endeavoured to acquire images of English royals: the Swedish ambassador Nils Gyllenstierna, for instance, bought three pictures of Elizabeth in 1561.⁸⁵

Royal portraits were used in a variety of ways to maintain amicable relations between rulers. One was the irregular, but not infrequent exchange of royal portraits. Henry VIII owned four paintings and one stained cloth of the Emperor Charles V and at least eight pictures of Francis I. This number cannot be explained simply in terms of marriage negotiations, nor can the wider range of European potentates whose images graced the walls of English palaces.⁸⁶ Neither can the portraits of Tudor kings and queens found in neighbouring princes' palaces.⁸⁷ Rather, the Tudor monarchs regularly sent their portraits to their neighbours and allies and regularly received images of foreign dignitaries. At the very least, Elizabeth gave her picture to the kings and queens of France, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, the Ottoman Emperor, several high ranking German princes, and numerous suitors. On at least one occasion a Russian tsar also received her image, as Boris Godunov was presented with a gold cup bearing an intaglio portrait in 1598.⁸⁸ Moreover, Elizabeth often extended portrait gifts to

⁸⁵ TNA SP 70/40, fos. 70v–73r, *CSPF Elizabeth*, V. 438, 439. K. Hearn, ed., *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England, 1530–1630* (London, 1995), pp. 93–4. See also *LP XVI*. 1253.

⁸⁶ For Henry's paintings see Starkey, *Inventory*, pp. 237–40, 384–5; Hayward, *Inventory*, II. 90–98. Groos, *Baron Waldstein*, 49–61 gives a sense of Elizabeth's collection.

⁸⁷ For example E. Bonnaffé, ed., *Inventaire des meubles de Catherine de Médicis en 1589* (Paris, 1874), pp. 92, 128, 137, 141.

⁸⁸ C. Oman, *The English Silver in the Kremlin* (London, 1961), p. 27.

female relatives and cherished wives, sending at least two miniatures to Henry IV's sister, Catherine, and giving the Sultana Safiye 'a jewel of her majesties picture, set with some rubies and diamants'.⁸⁹ Elizabeth probably also bestowed her image on select foreign sovereigns through her role as head of the order of the garter. In 1582 Frederick II of Denmark was invested as a member, joining a select group of foreign rulers, including Henry III, king of France, Emperor Rudolph II, and Pfalzgraf Johann Casimir. Special silver garter medals were minted that year, most probably intended for such high status members.⁹⁰

Gifting created bonds of memory and obligation; it created the obligation to receive and to retain as well as the obligation to reciprocate. Long after the moment of exchange, the gift remained as a physical reminder of the favour once shown.⁹¹ Portraits' mnemonic functions made them a potentially powerful means of establishing and maintaining ostensible relationships.⁹² By visually evoking the memory of the giver long after the giving of the gift, the royal likenesses that remained within royal collections became a potent reminder of former amities and even debts between princes. As a Venetian ambassador commented of portraits Francis I gave Henry VIII, they would 'testify eternally to the most Christian King's obligation to him'.⁹³ Elizabeth I certainly appreciated portrait gifts' value. When she gave her

⁸⁹ BL Cotton MS Vespasian FIII, fo. 160r; J. Berger de Xivrey, J. Guadet, eds., *Recueil des lettres missives de Henri IV* (9 vols., Paris, 1843–76), IV. 292–4; BL Cotton MS Nero BXI, fo. 124r.

⁹⁰ B[ritish] M[useum] M.6891. R.B. Waddington, 'Elizabeth I and the Order of the Garter', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxiv (1993), pp. 97–113. E.H. Fellowes, *The Knights of the Garter 1348–1939* (2 vols., London, 1939), II. 1, 5, 33, 80, I. 130.

⁹¹ M. Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Early Modern Societies* (London, 1954); N.Z. Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France* (Oxford, 2000); G. Algazi, V. Groebner, B. Jussen, eds., *Negotiating the Gift: Pre-modern Figurations of Exchange* (Göttingen, 2003).

⁹² Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, pp. 193–7; F.A. Yates, *Art of Memory* (London, 1966), p. 33.

⁹³ CSPV, III. 1451.

portrait to her brother, king Edward, she exhorted him whenever looking on it to ‘witsafe to thinke that as you have but the outwarde shadow of the body afore you, so my inwarde minde wischeth that the body it selfe wer oftner in your presence’.⁹⁴ International portrait gifts were intended to evoke similar reactions to that which Elizabeth hoped to inspire in her brother.

As in other areas of diplomacy, concerns over prestige, status, reciprocity, and honour shaped expectations and behaviour surrounding royal portraits. Foreign rulers were sent state portraits that were designed to articulate the prince’s magnificence, with elements such as style, colour, dress, and pose all conveying information about the sitter that asserted their status. When giving their portrait rulers were theoretically giving a part of themselves, which intensified the need to insist that the image be treated with respect and esteem, as well as heightening the distinction of the gift and the obligation it created. Portrait gifts also involved a degree of risk: they exposed the ruler’s physical form to scrutiny by proxy, while rulers hazarded rejection and dishonour if a recipient of equal standing did not respond in kind. Hence Mary, Queen of Scots, made it clear in 1560 that although she was sending Elizabeth her portrait, ‘if I thought she wold not send me hers, she shuld not have myne’.⁹⁵

Diplomatic gifts were frequently chosen not merely with the aim of creating bonds between giver and recipient, but to suggest desirable courses of political action.⁹⁶ Some renaissance princes believed that portrait gifts could be useful tools of political persuasion. In late 1526, Francis I sent pictures of himself and his two sons to Henry VIII that attempted to exploit the emotive quality of portraiture and utilise the pictures’ iconography to persuade Henry of a desired course of action. Francis had been captured by Charles V at the battle of Pavia in the

⁹⁴ BL Cotton MS Vespasian F III, fo. 48r.

⁹⁵ TNA SP 70/17, fo. 82r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, III. 446). See also SP 70/23, fo. 148r (*ibid.*, 565). Elizabeth insisted that Mary’s portrait be sent first (SP 70/18, fo. 43r [*ibid.*, 512]).

⁹⁶ Colantuono, ‘Mute diplomat’, pp. 53–7, 75.

previous year. Under the terms of the Treaty of Madrid (1526) he was released in exchange for his two young sons who were held hostage by the Emperor. Through the miniatures Francis appealed to Henry to mediate with the Emperor and secure the princes' release. The portraits, which visibly delighted Henry, were mounted in two wrought gold cases; both contained inscriptions evoking the friendship between the monarchs. The miniature of Francis, painted *au vif*, was paired with an allegorical picture of two columns representing England and France, separated by the sea. A legend surrounding the uniting of the top of the columns proclaimed 'the lands, which are divided by the waves of the ocean, join together in firm friendship', while a second motto expressed the faith and friendship between the two kings. The second case alluded to the princes' captivity; it was decorated with chains and verses about the princes' confinement and their hopes of freedom. Inside were portraits of the Dauphin Francis and Henri, duke of Orleans, while a verse declared that as Francis I merited the name of true friend, it was fitting that Henry would be willing to rescue his children.⁹⁷

While the intention behind portrait gifts held diplomatic significance, so too did the response with which they were met. At the end of December, the English ambassadors in France, John Clerk and Sir William Fitzwilliam, were instructed to thank the French king for the pictures, in a manner that consciously developed the rhetoric of affection and trust articulated by the French miniatures. Finding Francis absent from court, Clerk and Fitzwilliam instead delivered their message to his mother, Louise. They related Henry's concern for his brother Francis' welfare and his gratitude for 'the lovyng remembrance that was shewid in sendyng [the] pictures,' not omitting 'any other point that might make to the demonstration off the assuryd mynd, love and syncere aff[ection]' that Henry bore Francis and his children. They

⁹⁷ *CSPV*, III. 1421, 1451; *CSP Milan*, I. 749, 750. Shortly afterwards, the princes' grandmother, Louise of Savoy, showed copies of the portraits to the English ambassador. BL Cotton MS Caligula DIX, fo. 273 (*LP* IV.ii 2651).

assured the queen dowager that Henry's 'hart and mynd is fixid [in] love and amyte with the kyng your sonne' and that he had a 'great trust and perfect hoope . . . that the frenche kyng hath the semblabill towards his highnes and his realme'.⁹⁸

The following summer Henry reciprocated in kind, sending miniatures of himself and his daughter to the French king. Francis's reaction to these English portraits was also calculated to strengthen the growing Anglo-French alliance. When presented with Henry's image, Francis showed his respect for the English king by doffing his bonnet to the painting, as he would have done to Henry's person, telling the English ambassador that he 'knew well that face', before praying that God would send Henry a long and happy life, and claiming that no other present could have better expressed Henry's regard.⁹⁹ The exchange of portraits paralleled and complemented broader diplomatic negotiations that secured several Anglo-French treaties.¹⁰⁰ They helped to facilitate the reorientation of English foreign policy from pro-Habsburg to pro-Valois, not merely through acts of giving, but also through the dialogue and performances that accompanied them. A further gift followed in late November or early December of a jewel, 'a beautiful and noble present of a heart of gold, in which is contained the image of the king of England'. Louise of Savoy used the picture to perpetuate the rhetoric now that the alliance was affirmed, effusing that Henry's true heart was surely contained within the gift, which she took as a sign that 'such great friendship has arisen between these

⁹⁸ Ibid., fos. 301v–302r (*LP* IV.ii 2728).

⁹⁹ BL Cotton MS Caligula DX, fo. 121r (*LP* IV.ii 3169). Francis also praised Mary's picture.

¹⁰⁰ On these negotiations and their significance see C. Giry-Deleison, 'Une alliance contre nature? La paix franco-anglaise de 1525-1544', in id., ed., *François I^{er} et Henri VIII: Deux Princes de la Renaissance* (Lille, 1996), pp. 53–62.

two great kings . . . that she is assured that god has sent her the ease and peace that she has desired', but that she could never have hoped to see.¹⁰¹

Elizabeth's contemporary rulers were increasingly rewarding foreign ambassadors and loyal military captains with medals bearing their image, whether explicitly conceived as *gnadenpfennige* or not. Philip II of Spain did so to acknowledge services rendered and to show his gratitude and obligation.¹⁰² Elizabeth's government was well aware of such practices. Henry Cobham reported in 1582 that the king of France had given the Swiss envoys gold medals bearing his picture,¹⁰³ while Christopher Hatton, a mid-ranking member of an English delegation sent to Scotland to celebrate James's baptism, was given a miniature of the Scottish Queen as a leaving present as early as 1566.¹⁰⁴ As the practice became common at the northern European courts, many Elizabethan ambassadors received portrait gifts from their royal hosts: in 1573 Henry Horne returned from Saxony wearing a portrait medal of the duke, Stephen Lesieur received Christian IV's portrait during his mission to Denmark in 1599, while Robert Cecil was given a jewel containing Henry IV's portrait at the conclusion of his 1598 embassy.¹⁰⁵ By bestowing their image on the departing diplomat rulers aimed to utilise the portrait's mnemonic role both to express gratitude and to perpetuate

¹⁰¹ V.-L. Bourrilly and P. de Vaissière, eds., *Ambassades en Angleterre de Jean du Bellay: La première ambassade (septembre 1527-février 1529) correspondance diplomatique* (Paris, 1905), p. 46.

¹⁰² F. Bouza, 'Letters and Portraits: Economy of Time and Chivalrous Service in Courtly Culture', in F. Bethencourt, F. Egmond, eds., *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe vol. 3: Correspondence and Cultural Exchange, 1400-1700* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 151–3; A.R. Flatén, 'Identity and the Display of medaglie in Renaissance and Baroque Europe', *Word and Image*, xix (2003), pp. 59–73.

¹⁰³ *CSPF Elizabeth*, XV. 513. For bronze and silver versions see BM, M.2203, M.2204.

¹⁰⁴ Steuart, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁵ *CSPSp (Simancas)*, II. 380. Keblusek, Noldus, eds., *Double Agents*, p.199. FSL, MS V.b.10, fo. 101v.

the political relationship beyond the ambassador's term of service, perhaps hoping that the diplomat would, once home, reciprocate by advocating their interests.

Elizabeth's advisers certainly believed it would be wise to exploit the power of portraiture for diplomatic advantage. Henry Cobham, possibly inspired by what he had witnessed in France, recommended in April 1583 that Elizabeth's 'portrature in goold' should be given to Ottaviano Cornaro, a Venetian gentleman whom Cobham believed wanted to help re-establish the Venetian embassy in London.¹⁰⁶ The earl of Leicester also thought that Elizabeth's portrait would be a prized reward for her diplomatic and military allies and that a portrait gift's symbolic value transcended its material worth. In April 1586, he wrote that Elizabeth's 'picture in a tablett which might be worth ij^{cl}i' would content Philip of Hohenlohe 'as much as 1000^{li} in money'.¹⁰⁷ Yet Elizabeth does not appear to have bestowed her image on departing diplomats on a regular basis. Jerome Horsey twice received Elizabeth's image at his departure from the English court in the 1580s: a painting and a sapphire cameo, which Elizabeth asked Horsey to wear in remembrance of her.¹⁰⁸ But Horsey undertook diplomatic service for both England and Muscovy, making it unclear in what capacity he received the images.

Early modern royal portrait exchange and the subsequent uses made of royal images helped to sustain international relationships as they were manifestations of the rhetorical *amicitia* between princes. In the sixteenth century diplomatic relations were still personal, revolving around the ambitions, friendships, and animosities of individual rulers. The notion of

¹⁰⁶ TNA SP 78/9, fo. 206r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XVII. 260).

¹⁰⁷ J. Bruce, ed., *Correspondence of Robert, Earl of Leycester, during his Government of the Low Countries, in the Years 1585 and 1586*, Camden Society, old ser., xxvii (1844), p. 245.

¹⁰⁸ L.E. Berry, R.O. Crummey, eds., *Rude and Barbarous Kingdoms: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers* (Madison, WI, 1968), pp. 298, 341.

international relations as amity or enmity between princes was embedded in Renaissance diplomatic theory. The Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus advocated that princes achieve lasting peace in Europe by being ‘attached to each other, not by political intermarriages, artificial and factitious ties, but by pure and sincere friendship’.¹⁰⁹ Exchanging ambassadors was itself a sign of princely amity. Ermolao Barbaro claimed one of the purposes of ambassadors was ‘to win or maintain the friendship of princes’, while another diplomatic writer Bernard Du Rosier believed it to be ‘to confirm friendship’.¹¹⁰ *Amicitia* was becoming increasingly important in diplomatic practice, most notably in negotiations and peace treaties, where friendship came to have legal meaning.¹¹¹ Royal portrait gifts simultaneously expressed princely *amicitia* and provided physical evidence of this abstract bond, not least because the sending of a portrait was widely regarded as an expression of friendship.¹¹² Elizabeth I certainly considered portraits symbols of amity and fidelity. Writing to Claude Antoine, sieur de Clervaut, she noted that his recent letter and actions had demonstrated his devotion to her ‘as if by a portrait’.¹¹³ As Augustino Scarpinello, Milanese ambassador to Henry VIII, explained, the sending of a portrait was ‘a memorial and a pledge of faith’ that rulers hoped would aid their deeper political goals.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Desiderius Erasmus, *The Complaint of Peace* (London, 1917), p. 50.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in G. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston, 1955), pp. 34, 108. See also Hotman, *Ambassador*, sigs. B4v–5r.

¹¹¹ R. Lesaffer, ‘Amicitia in Renaissance Peace and Alliance Treaties (1450–1530)’, *Journal of the History of International Law*, iv (2002), pp. 77–99; E. Roshchin, ‘The Concept of Friendship: From Princes to States’, *European Journal of International Relations*, xii (2006), pp. 599–624.

¹¹² Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, pp. 210–212.

¹¹³ *CSPF Elizabeth*, XXI.i, 441.

¹¹⁴ *CSPM*, 749.

Princes also manifested their theoretical affection for one another by requesting each other's pictures. Sometimes this was in response to seeing a painting, as when Don John asked Thomas Wilson to procure for him a full length picture of Elizabeth.¹¹⁵ On rare occasions, the entreaty followed the receipt of an unsatisfactory portrait. Thus Catherine de Medici asked for a new painting of Elizabeth after being dissatisfied with a full face portrait.¹¹⁶ But often these requests were made without any apparent visual prompt and even far distant princes might receive one. In 1514, Henry VIII's ambassador in Mantua solicited, and received, paintings of Francesco Gonzaga, the marquis, and his wife Isabella d'Este.¹¹⁷ Such exchanges were often designed to nurture stronger political ties between princes outside of the more formal treaties and marriage alliances. As a means of implying even deeper regard and cultivating closer bonds, princes often asked for, or ostentatiously acquired, pictures of rulers' families. In 1532, as Henry VIII cultivated Francis I's support for his efforts to rid himself of Catherine of Aragon, he requested paintings of the French king and of Francis's children, which 'to beholde shalbe alwaies unto us great reioyse and comforte'.¹¹⁸ Similarly, on several occasions in 1540 Francis I's anglophile sister Marguerite, Queen of Navarre appealed to John Wallop, the English ambassador in France, to get her portraits of Henry, his queen and all of his children, which she would regard as a most 'pretyeuse present'. Wallop stressed how much she 'gretely desired' 'your majestis picture and others' and strongly

¹¹⁵ *CSPF Elizabeth*, XI. 1470.

¹¹⁶ She suggested that Elizabeth would look better with her head turned to one side. H. de la Ferrière-Percy, G. Baguenault de Puchesse, eds., *Lettres de Catherine de Médicis* (11 vols., Paris, 1880-1943), IV. 53.

¹¹⁷ Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits*, p. 196.

¹¹⁸ BL Additional MS 25114, fo. 74v (*LP V*. 791).

encouraged Henry to send them as a token of thanks for Marguerite's support.¹¹⁹ Asking to see portraits of foreign rulers became another means of indicating sustained ties of friendship. This convention was also followed by polities outside the centre of European court culture such as the Ottoman court, where the Walide sultan asked to see her friend Elizabeth's picture in 1599.¹²⁰

Diplomatic ties were also maintained through royal performances involving royal portraiture that invoked the rhetoric of friendship and affection. When Henry IV wrote to tell Elizabeth that he had kept a portrait she had sent to his sister, which was probably similar to figure 4, he professed that he was unsure whether to apologise for seizing the 'beautiful picture' or to thank her for intending it for him in her heart. Protesting that Elizabeth's image was so beautiful that the temptation had proved too strong for one so devoted to her, Henry claimed that 'no one could equal the honour and affection with which I serve you in my mind'. Consequently, he had decided to keep the portrait as a token of their continued friendship.¹²¹ Even in non-diplomatic encounters, rulers could use royal portraits to express admiration and affection for foreign princes. When visiting Florence in 1594 Fynes Moryson was surprised to see Elizabeth's portrait displayed in the ducal palace. Yet he was informed that 'the Duke of Florence much esteemed her picture, for the admiration of her vertues, how soeuer the malitious Papists had long endeououred to obscure her fame'.¹²²

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

¹¹⁹ TNA SP 1/159, fo. 87v, 1/163, fos. 139r, 204v (LP XV. 543, XVI. 204, 240). For Marguerite's pro-English sympathies see H.M. Vose, 'Marguerite of Navarre: that "Righte English Woman"', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xvi (1985), pp. 315–44.

¹²⁰ TNA SP 97/4, fo. 50r.

¹²¹ Xivrey, Guadet, eds., *Recueil des lettres*, IV. 292–4.

¹²² F. Moryson, *An itinerary vwritten by Fynes Moryson Gent* (London, 1617), p. 150. STC (2nd ed.) 18205. In 1600 the Grand Duke's gallery also contained Henry VIII and Edward VI's portraits (TNA SP 98/1, fo. 163r).

Figure 4. Jewelled case containing a portrait of Elizabeth I by Nicholas Hilliard © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Some princes went further, openly wearing Elizabeth's portrait to display the strength of their amity with her. In 1585 Peregrine Bertie, Baron Willoughby, reported that Frederick II, king of Denmark, 'taketh much contentment' in wearing Elizabeth's 'picture in a tablet of gold'. This was a strong statement of allegiance at a time when Frederick promised to send two thousand soldiers to aid English military efforts in the Netherlands.¹²³ It could potentially have been interpreted as an indication of submission to Elizabeth as Habsburg women rulers wore their male relatives' portraits to demonstrate the source of their power as regents.¹²⁴ Other rulers also wanted to stress their association with Elizabeth through portraiture, like the young elector Palatine, Frederick IV, who in 1587 reportedly desired Elizabeth's portrait so 'that he may weare it about his necke'.¹²⁵ Frederick was probably encouraged by his regent and uncle, Johann Casimir, and his request was especially poignant as he had been given a painting of Elizabeth by an English agent in the previous year. Wearing Elizabeth's portrait at a time when Casimir was heading a force of Rhenish troops in support of Henry of Navarre would have served to link Elizabeth with the Protestant heir to the French crown, to whom she had recently lent money through Casimir.¹²⁶

The desire to exploit the conventions of memorialisation and the rhetoric of *amicitia* explains why several bi-lateral peace treaties deemed to be of especial significance because they

¹²³ TNA SP 75/1, fo. 169r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XX. 401). The troops Frederick promised did not, however, materialize. Elizabeth also used this trope (*CSPSp (Simancas)*, I. 349).

¹²⁴ Mulcahy, *Philip II*, 278–80.

¹²⁵ TNA SP 82/2, fo. 156r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XXI.i. 252).

¹²⁶ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Tanner MS 78, fo. 106r. For Casimir's role in Elizabeth's armies see P. Hammer, *Elizabeth's Wars: War, Government and Society in Tudor England 1544-1604* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 105, 111–15; C. Wilson, *Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands* (London, 1970), pp. 60–67, 74–8.

indicated a reversal of traditional alignments bore rulers' portraits. In 1527, during what Charles Giry-Deloison has termed a diplomatic revolution, Henry VIII allied himself with Francis I, with whom he had recently been at war.¹²⁷ The Treaty of Amiens included a defensive alliance against the Emperor Charles V and made provisions for the betrothal of Francis's son Henri, duke of Orleans to Henry's daughter Mary. The documents enshrining these agreements were highly decorated. Francis's ratification of the peace contained his portrait (figure 5), derived from the official type produced by his royal painter Jean Clouet; the ratification of the marriage treaty bore stylised images of Henri and Mary; and a fictional meeting of the two kings decorated a further treaty.¹²⁸ By including the royal image on such diplomatic documents, the French king concurrently asserted his friendship for Henry and left a lasting memorial to it. Henry also recognised the value of such an approach. To further strengthen the Anglo-French alliance, Francis was invested as a member of the Order of the Garter and given a copy of the statutes designed to remind him of the amity and the importance of the proposed marriage – Princess Mary was portrayed as Concordia on the frontispiece, holding a cord which tied together the English rose and the French lily.¹²⁹

The illuminated treaties of 1527 had their roots in developing practices of treaty decoration and diplomatic portrait exchange. The English had earlier given and received illuminated treaties, such as the Anglo-Scottish Treaty of Perpetual Peace (1502), the English and Scottish copies of which were both festooned with dynastic badges representing the kings' authority and honour.¹³⁰ Meanwhile, portrait gifts had marked the successful conclusion of some non-marital diplomatic negotiations, such as the Magnus Intercursus (1496), an Anglo-

¹²⁷ Giry-Deloison, 'Une alliance contre nature?'

¹²⁸ TNA E30/1109, E30/1112; E30/1114. Henry's illuminated ratification did not contain his portrait (Paris, A[rchives] N[ationales], AE/I/1/10).

¹²⁹ BL Additional MS 5712.

¹³⁰ TNA E39/58; National Archives of Scotland SP 6/31.

Burgundian trade treaty which Philip the Fair, duke of Burgundy, and his wife Juana of Castile celebrated by sending Henry VII their pictures.¹³¹ Royal images were also sometimes used in printed declarations of alliances.¹³² Moreover, Henry VIII issued several diplomatic agreements bearing his picture in the historiated H opening the text including the 1522 pact to join Charles V in a war against France, the commitment to meet Francis I in 1532, and the conferral of English lands on Anne of Cleves.¹³³ From the 1520s, the artists producing these images increasingly followed official portrait types, producing recognisable images of the king¹³⁴ that signalled his majesty and sincerity.

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]

Figure 5. Francis I's ratification of the Treaty of Amiens. TNA E30 1109. Source: The National Archives.

The king's image on illuminated treaties asserted his magnificence whilst visually affirming his political investment in the agreed peace. As political alliances were often fleeting, elaborate treaty decoration may have been intended, in part, to create the impression of a more permanent alliance. This would account for two English ratifications of Anglo-French treaties which were decorated with high quality likenesses of the English king. Henry VIII's ratification of the Treaty of Camp (1546) and Edward VI's ratification of the Treaty of Boulogne (1550) both incorporated a roundel miniature of the king which followed pre-established official portrait types by the royal painters Hans Holbein and William Scrots

¹³¹ G. Kipling, *The Triumph of Honour: Burgundian Origins of the Elizabethan Renaissance* (The Hague, 1977), p. 52. Possibly now RCIN 403438, 614769.

¹³² *CSPV*, I, 714.

¹³³ See D. Starkey, A. Clarke, S. Doran, eds., *Henry VIII: Man and Monarch* (London, 2009), p. 99; AN, AE/III/31; H. Peters, H. Lahrkamp, 'Zwei Bildnisse Heinrichs VIII. auf Schenkungsurkunden für Anna von Kleve', *Düsseldorfer Jahrbuch*, xlviii (1956), pp. 293–309; BL Egerton MS 2809.

¹³⁴ E. Auerbach, *Tudor Artists* (London, 1954), 59–70.

respectively.¹³⁵ Opening treaty ratifications with the ruler's picture served as a reminder of his or her physical presence and was no doubt intended to evoke the bonds of *amicitia* established in the treaty. Due to the subsequent use made of such treaties, it was potentially an effective reminder of the basic obligations they enshrined. In the event of future disagreements or further negotiations, governments would consult the original treaty ratification. Should the French king consult the Treaty of Camp, for instance, he would be greeted by the image of his friend, Henry VIII, the conditions of whose friendship were articulated by the text of the treaty.

While the portraits that rulers gave one other possessed an immediate diplomatic significance, they also remained in royal collections long after the initial moment of exchange alongside portraits that had been commissioned or procured. As gifts were 'contested constructions of social transactions',¹³⁶ those who received portrait gifts and those who inherited portraits that had once been gifts could try to construct new meanings around them. The display of portrait gifts after their receipt was one factor determining their perceived meaning. Portrait galleries established a magnate's dynastic ambitions, kinship ties, and political affinities and simultaneously provided a collection of pictures of illustrious men whose examples the beholder should strive to emulate.¹³⁷ To a large degree, the paintings of foreign potentates displayed in royal palaces served similar purposes even if they were not

¹³⁵ AN, AE/III/23, AE/III/35.

¹³⁶ G. Algazi, 'Introduction: Doing things with Gifts', in Algazi et al., *Negotiating the Gift*.

¹³⁷ L.K. Aleci, 'Images of Identity: Italian Portrait Collections of the C15th and C16th', in N. Mann, L. Syson, eds., *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance* (London, 1998), pp. 67–79; Jenkins, *State Portrait*, pp. 4–6. On the politics of portrait display see D. Eichberger and L. Beaven, 'Family Members and Political Allies: the Portrait Collection of Margaret of Austria', *Art Bulletin*, lxxvii (1995), pp. 225–48; M. Chiarini, 'Personaggi e ritratti: I medici, l'Italia e l'Europa', in Cropper, ed., *Diplomacy of Art*, pp. 45–50.

displayed in dedicated portrait galleries. By virtue of their inclusion in the royal collection, the most important glorious deed of the monarchs depicted could be understood to be their amity with the ruling house; these images' display would therefore be intended to evoke emulation through a continuance or re-establishing of the alliance. Consequently, these portraits' testimony to former alliances could be harnessed for diplomatic ends and the political messages constructed through them changed as time, and political alignments, passed.

At moments of political tension, the images displayed at court could be exploited to evoke past familial and amicable relationships in an attempt to re-establish friendlier relations. English monarchs were attuned to the uses to which such paintings could be put. All of the Tudor monarchs displayed portraits of the fifteenth century dukes of Burgundy in their palaces, which served to emphasise the long standing Anglo-Burgundian alliance. In 1529, as Henry VIII sought to annul his marriage to Charles V's maternal aunt Catherine of Aragon without alienating Charles, he emphasised his affection for, and the long-standing English amity with, Charles' paternal family by invoking the image and memory of Charles' father, Philip the Handsome. Henry confided to Charles' ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, that his favourite room in his palace was named in Philip's honour, partly because it contained his portrait, and partly because Philip had been Henry's godfather.¹³⁸ Similarly, in the tense opening years of her reign, Elizabeth carefully contrived interactions with portraits to try to maintain amicable Anglo-Scottish relations at moments when the objectives of the Scottish and English queens diverged. In September 1559, as Mary of Guise, the regent of Scotland, faced religious unrest and feared English military intervention, Elizabeth showed Gilles de Noailles, the French ambassador, a portrait of Mary which was prominently displayed in the gallery at Hampton Court. Through the picture, Elizabeth praised the regent's 'goodness,

¹³⁸ *CSPSp*, IV.i. 224.

honesty, and virtue’, before asking Noailles to convey her ‘very affectionate regards’ to Mary. Noailles judged that if Elizabeth’s outward displays of friendship could be trusted, then she had every intention of maintaining the Anglo-Scottish amity.¹³⁹ Despite Elizabeth’s professions she was already corresponding with the Scottish Protestants and Noailles was soon disabused. Five years later, Elizabeth again attempted to smooth Anglo-Scottish relations at a time when she was refusing Mary, Queen of Scots’ requests to be formally acknowledged as her heir designate. During an audience with the Scottish ambassador, she not only revealed that she devotedly kept Mary’s portrait in her cabinet of treasures in the most intimate room in her palace, itself a sign of affection, she also kissed Mary’s picture as a sign of the ‘great love’ she bore her cousin.¹⁴⁰

Rulers also drew upon the broader visual culture of the court when discussing international relationships and the miniatures that adorned the bodies of Elizabeth’s ambassadors provided further occasions for political engagement, offering opportunities to comment on the state of alliances in a less formal and more personal manner. At the end of a diplomatic audience in February 1596 Henry IV led the English ambassador Henry Unton into his bed chamber and, once they were in a private place between the bed and the wall, asked the ambassador how he liked Gabrielle d’Estrées, his mistress, with whom they had just been talking. This provoked Unton to claim that he ‘had the picture of a farr more excellent Mistress, and yet did her picture come farr short of her Perfection of Beauty’. Upon seeing Unton’s miniature of Elizabeth, Henry ‘kissed it twice or thrice’ ‘with great reverence’. The king beseeched Unton to give him the painting claiming that ‘he would not forgoe it for any Treasure; and that, to possesse the Favor of the lively picture, he would forsake all the World, and hould himself

¹³⁹ A. Teulet, ed., *Relations politiques de la France et de l’Espagne avec l’Écosse au XVIe siècle* (5 vols., Paris, 1862), I. 343.

¹⁴⁰ Steuart, ed., *Memoirs*, p. 94.

most happie'.¹⁴¹ For Louis Montrose the queen's miniature allowed Unton and the French king to share 'highly eroticized intelligence regarding the secrets of state'.¹⁴² Yet all talk of specific *arcana imperii* had ceased one hour earlier. The official discussions in which Unton had engaged had been tense. He had presented Elizabeth's letters to the French king and debated the matters they raised, namely how much more financial and military support Elizabeth would be prepared to lend Henry. This was a recurrent theme in Anglo-French diplomacy in the 1590s: Elizabeth criticised Henry's use of her troops and reminded him of the money he owed for the forces she had already sent him, while Henry professed his gratitude, avoided committing to specific military engagements, and threw himself once more on Elizabeth's mercy. Once business was over, Henry strolled through the palace and its garden with Unton on one arm and Gabrielle on the other, during which time they did not discuss high politics. Unton claimed that 'the dombe picture did drawe on more Speache and Affection from him then all my best Argumentes and Eloquence', leading him to conclude that 'if infiniteness of vowes and outward *profession* may be a strong argument of inward affection, then is there good likelihood of the Kinges continewance of Amytie with your Majestie'. Henry had used his engagement with Elizabeth's portrait to manifest his personal loyalty to, friendship for, and desire to adequately serve the 'lively picture' Elizabeth, to whom he still looked for deliverance. Crucially, it allowed him to do so without committing to any specific policy or military strategy.¹⁴³ Monarchs could thus use interactions with portraits during less formalised diplomatic encounters to sustain international relationships

¹⁴¹ CP 171/72, fos. 2v–3r.

¹⁴² L. Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender and Representation* (London, 2006), pp. 236–9.

¹⁴³ CP 171/72, fo. 3r.

without official obligation, even at times when the broader objectives of the monarchs were becoming divergent.¹⁴⁴

Miniatures and other portraits were also used in attempts to elicit information about policy. At the French court in February 1580, Anne Cobham sported a miniature of Elizabeth encased in a jewelled mount. Anne had vowed that the first to set eyes on it would be the queen dowager, Catherine de Medici. Invited to attend Catherine's Shrove Monday celebrations, Anne arrived to find her unwell and the French king Henry III and his young queen, Louise, presiding instead. Henry twice asked to see the portrait and twice Anne refused; eventually she gave in to Louise's entreaties after dinner. The picture then became the focus for the royal couple's praise of Elizabeth, their profession of their longing to meet her, and Anne's assurances that Elizabeth was as keen to see her cousins and friends as they to see her. The French queen further expressed her affection for Elizabeth by asking if Anne might be persuaded to part with the picture. Later that evening, the miniature inspired Henry to show Anne portraits in his own collection. Leading Anne into a gallery, he paused before pictures of James VI and Mary, Queen of Scots, asking if she had ever met either, in what was probably an attempt to prompt discussion of Elizabeth's policies towards the captive Scottish queen and the succession.¹⁴⁵

Politicians could probe the nature and strength of diplomatic relationships by discussing aspects of portraits. In June 1577 Don John was shown a painting of Elizabeth, which he intently perused for 'a good longe tyme'. When Don John asked the English ambassador Thomas Wilson if Elizabeth did not sometimes wear 'spanyshe attire' and stated that this was the 'most cummelie', he was trying to elicit an indication of Elizabeth's policies, as the style of dress politicians wore was widely believed to indicate their political sympathies. In 1582,

¹⁴⁴ See for instance FSL, MS V.b.10, fos. 1r-10r, 18v, 45v; CP 175/1, fo. 14r.

¹⁴⁵ TNA SP 78/4A, 24 (*CSPF Elizabeth XIV*. 189.1).

for instance, Catherine de Medici interpreted Elizabeth being dressed *à la Française* in a portrait as a sign that she was favourably inclined towards France. Don John was presumably disappointed but not surprised by Wilson's non-committal response that Elizabeth 'used dyverse attires, Italian, Spanyshe, and frenshe, as occasion served'.¹⁴⁶

Interactions with portraits were also used to make claims of legitimacy or the lack of it. In 1566 Mary, Queen of Scots, was reported to have visited a merchant's house in Edinburgh, where she was asked to judge if a portrait of Elizabeth looked like the English queen. Taking the opportunity to highlight her claim to the English throne, Mary apparently replied that it did not, as she was the true queen.¹⁴⁷ Accounts of overtly hostile uses of royal portraiture by foreign politicians are relatively rare and often merely reflect court gossip. The claim of the Spanish ambassador Guerau De Spes that Robert Dudley had given Elizabeth a miniature depicting Mary, Queen of Scots, in chains begging the English queen for mercy, certainly seems like a vicious rumour or an overtly hostile interpretation of an allegorical image.¹⁴⁸ At least one diplomat, Mary's advocate, John Leslie, bishop of Ross, believed that a confrontational display of two monarch's portraits in front of a third ruler would be beneficial. In October 1578, as Leslie tried to convince Rudolph II, Holy Roman Emperor, that Elizabeth unfairly held Mary captive on religious grounds, he recommended that Rudolph be shown 'true and natural' portraits of Mary and Elizabeth, so that he could see them face to face when weighing the matter.¹⁴⁹ Leslie evidently thought that being able to

¹⁴⁶ TNA SP 70/145, fo. 119, 78/7, fo. 27r (*CSPF Elizabeth*, XI. 1470, XV. 513). On the politics and meaning of dress see U. Rublack, *Dressing Up: Cultural Identity in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 2010), ch. 4; A.R. Jones and P. Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge, 2000), ch. 2.

¹⁴⁷ E.K. Purnell, *Report on the Pepys MS at Magdalene College, Cambridge* (London, 1911), p. 77.

¹⁴⁸ *CSPSp (Simancas)*, II. 231.

¹⁴⁹ BL Cotton MS, Caligula C IX, fo. 134v (*CSP Scotland*, V. 389).

judge likenesses of the two monarchs would help Rudolph discern the truth, probably based on the belief that a person's facial characteristics indicated their inward character.

Given the strategic uses to which portraits could be put, early modern rulers unsurprisingly recognised the advantages of trying to control the dissemination of their image. English monarchs certainly showed some circumspection when bestowing portraits of themselves and their family. During speculative negotiations for Princess Mary to marry the duke of Cleves, the English representative was instructed to say that it was not proper for the princess' picture to be sent abroad if he was asked to produce it.¹⁵⁰ Three years later, the English ambassador at the French court claimed that he did not know how to obtain Mary's picture for the duke of Orleans and recommended that the matter be pursued through the English court.¹⁵¹ Whether this would have yielded better results is questionable as the French ambassador in England reported that painters would not undertake Princess Mary's portrait without Henry VIII's permission. Instead, the ambassador provided a detailed written assessment of Mary's appearance and felt it worthwhile to compare the princess to paintings of her mother.¹⁵² Elizabeth I's government twice drafted proclamations that attempted to limit the production and distribution of her likeness and on at least one occasion the Queen apologised to another ruler for not sending a picture because her artist of choice had been temporarily unavailable.¹⁵³ Elizabeth herself showed caution regarding the international distribution of her image. In May 1595 the Scottish queen Anne of Denmark asked for a fresh portrait of

¹⁵⁰ BL Cotton MS, Vitellius BXXI, fos. 175v–176r (*LP* XIV.i. 103). Instead, he was to suggest that Francis Burgartus, who had recently returned from England, testify to Mary's beauty and virtues.

¹⁵¹ *LP* XVII. 418.

¹⁵² *LP* XVI 1253. The French king may have had a portrait of Catherine of Aragon.

¹⁵³ Hearne, *Dynasties*, 77; *CSPF Elizabeth*, IV, 798. The French had similar concerns: see D. Digges, *The Compleat Ambassador* (London, 1655), p. 30. Elizabeth's government also tried to suppress prints depicting Elizabeth with any suitor (CP 153/83).

Elizabeth from life whilst professing her ‘afeccionitt good will’. One month later, the intermittent English ambassador, Robert Bowes, urged that the request be met as Anne remained ‘vere desyreres of it’. Yet it seems unlikely that any image was sent for several months, as Anne twice repeated her suit. Finally, in early February 1596 Elizabeth condescended ‘to graunt her picture to be given to y^e Q: agreable to her ernest desire herein’.¹⁵⁴ Anne’s requests coincided with her husband James VI’s realisation that his succession to the English throne was far from secure and his subsequent more subservient attitude to Elizabeth,¹⁵⁵ no doubt explaining why Elizabeth was only sufficiently convinced of Anne’s goodwill and friendship after several entreaties.

As a prince’s ambassador ‘representeth his greatnesse amongst strangers’, he had a responsibility to protect the reputation of his prince and by extension, the royal image.¹⁵⁶ English diplomats were concerned that their monarch’s portrait should be exhibited respectfully.¹⁵⁷ Equally, they paid attention to the accuracy of portraits circulating on the continent and tried to use their role as authenticators of the royal image to preserve the monarch’s honour. Sussex’s apprehension that the foreign ‘pictures commonly made to be solde did nothing resemble your ma^{te}’ was shared by lower ranking diplomatic agents. In 1576, Robert Colshill reported to secretary Walsingham that Adolph von Niewanaar was well affected to Elizabeth and wished to serve in her armies as a pensioner. His wife apparently wore a ‘counterfet’ of the queen and ‘never goethe without yt in her bosome’. But as the image was ‘so ill drawne as yt grevethe me to beholde the same’, Colshill recommended that Walsingham send von Niewanaar’s wife a true likeness of the queen ‘with as much spede as

¹⁵⁴ TNA SP 52/55, fo. 105v, 52/56, 15, 52/58, 18 (*CSP Scotland*, XI. 540, 569, XII. 118).

¹⁵⁵ See S. Doran, ‘James VI and the English Succession,’ in R. Houlbrooke, ed., *King James VI and I: Ideas, Authority and Government* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 25–52.

¹⁵⁶ Hotman, *Ambassador*, sig. Cviir.

¹⁵⁷ See for example TNA SP 70/118, fo. 38v.

maye be'.¹⁵⁸ In such cases, it was felt necessary to reclaim Elizabeth's image and restore her dignity by ensuring that only good images of her were displayed and worn. More frequently, ambassadors struggled to deal with unflattering, sometimes downright insulting images of their king or queen that had appeared in print.¹⁵⁹ Mass-production made the need to protect the royal image more acute whilst simultaneously increasing the difficulty of suppressing such pictures.

Portraits were integral to early modern diplomatic practice. As the availability of portraits increased in the sixteenth century, so too did the range of diplomatic uses to which they could be put. Royal portraiture was principally exploited to establish, express, and modify relationships between rulers at the turn of the sixteenth century, even those which were in reality fragile or fragmented; by the end of the century the royal portraits in ambassadorial households and the miniatures worn by diplomats legitimised and augmented their credentials by visually affirming the trust and confidence monarchs placed in their proxies. Portraits' diplomatic significance predominantly lay in the strategic uses made of them by kings, queens, and princes and the reception they received from members of other ruling dynasties. While there were variations within practice from ruler to ruler, a common rhetoric developed which allowed princes and diplomats to utilise portraits to modulate, refine, and develop diplomatic relations and when necessary, to dissimulate. They provided a nuanced political vocabulary and evoked a range of responses that did not demand formal ratification or legal commitment, but which none the less created the impression of being personally binding. A portrait was a useful and malleable diplomatic tool that facilitated commentary on international relations or the subtle probing of attitudes to international events. Moreover, the

¹⁵⁸ TNA SP 70/92, fo. 19r, 70/139, fo. 161 (*CSPF Elizabeth*, VIII. 1399, XI. 912).

¹⁵⁹ *LP* VI. 518, XVI. 121; *CSPF Elizabeth*, XVIII. 246, 412, 486, XXI.i, 532; CP 167/118.

portrait gifts that remained in royal collections provided reminders of former alliances as well as opportunities to make political points in the future. Their meaning changed over time, presenting new opportunities to reconfigure their diplomatic utility. Yet the substantial diplomatic currency royal portraiture enjoyed in the sixteenth century must, of necessity, have been modified significantly as collecting culture and connoisseurship developed in the seventeenth.

Examining the diplomatic role of works of art and other material artefacts with due sensitivity to the wide range of cultural preconceptions with which they were approached by all participants, whether giver, sender, or observer, in a particular political context provides a more nuanced picture of early modern diplomatic practice. As this study demonstrates, art works at court provided a valuable resource, upon which politicians regularly drew when framing their political discourse. Interactions with the range of visual and material culture of the court were as politically meaningful as the carefully monitored gestures and rituals of formal diplomatic audiences and domestic ceremonies. Indeed art at court operated within a ceremonial and symbolic system where even small distinctions were embedded with considerable significance and where reciprocity, honour, prestige, magnificence, friendship, and concepts of gift-giving could all be crucial components in constructing its meaning. The court's decoration was integral to the political discussions that occurred there. While this study has focussed on the prevalence of portraiture in early modern discourse, there is no reason to think that the tapestries and paintings depicting biblical, historical, and military scenes that adorned early modern courts were any less important visual props to political

commentary, not least as politicians widely drew upon historical and biblical parallels to offer counsel and to comment upon political events.¹⁶⁰

This has broader relevance for the ways in which we conceive of the role of visual and material culture in early modern politics. Studies of art at court tend to focus on iconography but rarely integrate tangible examples of how that iconography was received and interpreted by observers. The few explicit attempts to address the reception of royal portraits, for instance, have largely been rooted in the subsequent adoption of similar iconographies, rather than individuals' reactions to specific images.¹⁶¹ Responses are also an understudied aspect of political gift exchange. Here too, scholars tend to focus on gifts' decoration or the givers' intentions, but often overlook how gifts were received. But the significance of an object only partially lay in its opulence or the skill it demonstrated or the ideas its iconography articulated; how the various political actors used and responded to such items was equally important and these reactions need to be located within the contexts of honour politics and theories governing political behaviour. There is, then, a need to integrate more firmly the surviving evidence of reception and reaction to our current understanding of royal iconography and the visual universe of early modern courts. If we do not put responses back into the picture, then we will fail to understand the true role of visual and material culture, including gifts, in early modern political culture.

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¹⁶⁰ See D.R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000); P. Kewes, ed., *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, CA, 2006). Diplomatic manuals emphasized the utility of historical exempla, for instance Hotman, *Ambassador*, sigs. Biir, Ciir.

¹⁶¹ For example Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*; Silver, *Marketing Maximilian*.