EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES

'Nil penna sed usus': Negotiating Female Authoriality in Esther Inglis's *Solomon's Proverbs* (Pforzeimer MS40)

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> 'A wicked messenger falleth into evill: but a faithfull ambassadour is preservation'
> (Proverb [Geneva Bible, 13:17], MS40, fol. 18).

The rise of women's publications in early modern English culture is linked to several social factors: women wrote more as members of a gift-exchange system,[1] as educated daughters,[2] as mothers or as learned princesses. And as more and more women were acknowledged as authors in their own right, their correspondences between each other began to extend beyond personal exchanges, as their letters would sometimes have an impact on diplomatic and transnational relations.[3] When one includes the number of letters, as well as manuscripts penned by women to their edited productions within the

[1] Jane Donawerth, 'Women's poetry and the Tudor-Stuart System of gift exchange' in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*, ed. by Mary Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove and Karen Nelson (Syracuse: Twayne Publishers, 1996), pp. 3-18.

[2] Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and* England (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010); Kathi Vosevich, 'The Education of a Prince(ss). Tutoring the Tudors' in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture*, ed. by Mary Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove and Karen Nelson, pp. 61-76. About female knowledge of Greek, see Tania Demetriou and Tanya Pollard, 'Homer and Greek Tragedy in Early Modern England's Theatres: An Introduction' in *Classical Receptions Journal* 9.1 (2017), 1-35. Ascham's pupil, Elizabeth I, was reported to have translated a play by Euripides. In the mid-1550s Jane, Lady Lumley, translated in manuscript Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* in English (London, British Library MS Royal 15. A. IX Lumley).

[3] See *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. by Caroline James and Glenda Sluga (London: Routledge, 2016); *The Politics of Female Households. Ladies-in-Waiting across Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Nadine Akkerman and Birgit Houben (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

early modern period, a whole new continent of literature opens up.[4] This rather steady rise in female publications is taking place within a long-standing feud between the sexes, known as the *Querelle des femmes* since the medieval period. Women had to find their own way of becoming authors, finding their own space for the publication of their works within this chronic conflict.

The case of Esther Inglis has attracted much attention: historians of feminism such as Susan Frye and Sarah Gwynneth Ross, as well as book historians like Georgianna Ziegler and Anneke Tjan-Bakker, have contributed to the study of her numerous gift manuscripts and, building on the thorough catalogue elaborated by her bibliographers, A.H. Scott-Elliot and Elspeth Yeo, as well as on their personal observation of the corpus, they have outlined that Inglis is one of a kind within the wider community of female intellectuals in her time. Ross contends that, within the rather 'elite circles' that define the Tudor and Elizabethan ages, Esther is from 'the middling sort' and rather belongs to what she terms 'the household salon'; she defines her marriage as a form of early modern business partnership, enhancing what she calls 'collaborative' practices between the spouses. Yet Frye takes on a rather less rosy view of Inglis's relations to her male counterparts in the family, analysing her father's use of her skills in his school and her husband's use of her as a female go-between for political reasons; moreover, as Ziegler points out, Kello may well have used his wife's books as a means to approach people of rank both in Scotland and in England, including the Essex and Sidney circles, and those associated with the courts of Anne of Denmark and Prince Henry for his own benefit. Both Ziegler and Frye thus conclude that copying words by others becomes a 'strategy for self-authorization' and that 'Inglis successfully negotiated issues of production and patronage' on her own.[5]

Though tempting because it contradicts the notion of 'chronic war' between the sexes and offers an ideal model of allied husband-wife – following an equally perfect father-daughter relationships Inglis would have had with her French father and tutor, Nicholas Langlois – Ross's unrelentingly positive reading of Esther Inglis's collaborative work relations may indeed be questioned: what if Inglis's works were read as constant

[4] See for instance Wendy Hall, *The Imprint of Gender* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994); and Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), and for texts: *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550–1700*, ed. by Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer (New York: Routledge, 2004). On manuscript culture in England, see Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[5] Susan Frye, 'Materializing Authorship in Esther Inglis's Books', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32.3 (2001), 469-91 (p. 481).

negotiations to create an artistic space for herself within the tight social structure provided by her father's workshop, and then by her husband's school?

This article centres on the specific case of Pforzeimer MS40 and probes Inglis's position within her family 'cottage industry' by exploring the technique of 'ambiguation' in her beautiful presentation manuscript.[6] Borrowed from the rhetorical analysis of diplomatic discourse, ambiguation belongs to the field of irony and it is not meant as 'a means of deception' but rather as a way to give 'a second meaning as well, one that acts to undermine the negative effects of the first'.[7] Esther Inglis is generally considered as a conciliatory figure, what I will define as a textual diplomat, within the international Protestant community, as her volumes cross the Channel, as well as within her own family circle; indeed her diplomatic strategy in *Solomon's Proverbs* needs also to be considered within her own production, as the tiny volume occupies a special place within her other sixteen so called 'flower manuscripts'. What is more, the book is also part of a series of three copies which share material elements but yet widely differ in terms of patronage research. This double comparison allows to analyse how, even as Inglis creates a new style of manuscript presentation, she negotiates a space for her personal career within her family by a strategic use of several elements, some of them paratextual. This will lead to contextualize the meaning of a unique – to the best of my knowledge – dedicatory Latin poem, signed by her husband, appended to Pforzeimer MS40, which teases out Inglis's diplomatic technique of ambiguation in her scribal creation.

Esther Inglis as a textual diplomat within the multinational Protestant community

Esther Inglis is in several manners a 'woman of the Book'. Esther Langlois (her *nom de plume* is the anglicized version of her maiden's name: Inglis) was born in 1571 in London from a French Huguenot family and she died in Edinburgh in 1624. She is famous for her numerous technical skills: as a miniaturist, embroiderer, calligrapher, translator, she produced an incredible number of 59 known calligraphic manuscripts.[8]

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[6] Esther Inglis, *A New Yeers Guift for the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lord my Lord Sidnay of the hand writing and limming of mee Esther Inglis the first of Ianuar*, 1606 [Harry Ransom Center, Pforzeimer MS40]. My heartfelt thanks to Harry Ransom Center Research Assistant, Elizabeth Garver, for her help and advice.

[7] See Nathalie Rivère de Carles, 'The Poetics of Appeasement in the Early Modern era', in *Early Modern Diplomacy, Theatre and Soft Power. The Making of Peace*, ed. by Nathalie Rivère de Carles (London: Palgrave, 2016), pp. 1-23 (p. 7 and n. 25).

[8] I am drawing information for this biographical survey from the crucial research tool that constitutes A.H. Scott-Elliot and Elspeth Yeo, 'Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis (1571-1624): A Catalogue', *The*

Her family history immediately posits her as a multinational woman: she is of French descent, lived in Scotland and England. Able to write in English, French, Greek and Latin, she thus belongs to what Ross calls a European network of 'women intellectuals among the middling sort'.[9] As Ross goes on, 'charting the broad distribution of intellectual families in 17th century Britain',[10] she focuses on Esther's French Huguenot household as a typical example of home schooling in the classics by a learned father, Nicholas Langlois (a former schoolteacher in France), while insisting on her mother's role: Marie Presot was a calligrapher herself.[11] Her family moved from London to Edinburgh when she was 3 (in 1574) as her father became the Master of the French school (c.1580) appointed by King James, who paid him an annual pension of 80-100 pounds (Scots). Her mother was also involved in her husband's school as writing mistress. It seems that her father's position helped him secure an aristocratic patronage network which then benefited to his daughter.[12] In or around 1596, she marries Bartholomew Kello and Ross suggests this is a 'collaborative marriage', in which he 'served her as her publicist and business manager'[13] and thus gives visibility to her works by adding her husband's

Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America, 84 (1990), 10-86, pp. 12-14 (hereafter referred to as CAT.). I have also used accounts on Esther Inglis's work provided by Georgianna Ziegler, 'Hand-ma(i)d Books: the manuscripts of Esther Inglis, Early Modern Precursor of the Artist's Book', *English Manuscript Studies 1500-1700*. Vol. 9, ed. by Peter Beal and Margaret Ezell (London: British Library, 2000): pp. 73-87; and her '"More than feminine boldness": the gift books of Esther Inglis' in *Women Writing and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart England*, ed. by Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove and Karen Nelson, pp 19-37; as well as Anneke Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms: Esther Inglis's flower-illustrated manuscripts', *English Manuscript Studies 1500-1700*. Vol. 9 (London: British Library, 2000), pp. 49-72. Sarah Gwyneth Ross's research on Esther Inglis sets her as an intellectual within a broader European context in *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2010); part of her chapter derives from her former article on 'Esther Inglis: linguist, calligrapher, miniaturist and Christian humanist' in *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. by Julie D. Campbell and Anne R. Larsen (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 159-82, which focuses on her manuscripts copying Pibrac's *Quatrains* as a means to broker truce between Catholics and Protestants on both sides of the Channel.

[9] See Ross, *Birth of Feminism*, p. 327. For a definition of 'the middling sort', see William Harrison, *The Description of England: The Classic Contemporary Account of Tudor Social Life*, p. 94 quoted in Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 223 n. 3.

[10] Ross, *Birth of Feminism*, p. 327.

[11] See also Frye, 'Materializing Authorship', 469-91.

[12] Ross explains that Inglis owed her technical skills and initial patronage networks to her father: 'Her father's position on James VI's payroll facilitated her connection to the elite patronage network that she would enjoy throughout her career'; see Ross, *Birth of Feminism*, p. 251.

[13] Ross, *Birth of Feminism*, p. 251.

network of influence to her father's Jacobean connections. At the time, Kello is a clerk for foreign correspondence at James VI's court. Both then work for the Scottish court but they have strong ties with the Elizabethan court as Esther's dedicatees suggest. After James became the king of England, the family followed him to London, establishing residences there and then in Essex, where Kello finally obtained a post as rector (from 1606 to 1615). Esther moved back to Scotland at the end of her life.

Her important production – which definitely stands out at a time when manuscripts continued to be circulated even as print became more and more available – constitutes very special gifts for patrons. Her valuable miniature gift manuscripts were used as political presents and exemplify how a successful female artisan of her time worked towards a peaceful resolution of the Christian conflict thanks to her family's (husband's?) important Protestant connections. By reconstructing the network of her thirty-four dedicatees between 1591 and 1624 (all associated with the Scottish, English, and French courts) as well as the scenario of some of her book presentations, Ziegler demonstrates that her books must be seen as a means to actively support the Protestant cause by strategically-placed gifts to members of the circles around Elizabeth and James,[14] such as Queen Elizabeth herself, Prince Maurice of Nassau, the Earl of Essex, and Sir Anthony Bacon (1599), Henri, Duke of Rohan (1579-1638), a major military captain for the Protestant faction in France (1600 and 1601), Catherine de Parthenay, Vicomtesse of Rohan and mother of the Duke of Rohan, who was an ardent Calvinist and gave her fortune to the Protestant cause, Catherine de Bourbon, or Navarre, the sister of Henri IV (1601). Ziegler also analyses several letters from Kello to Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's secretary of state, which suggest that he was involved in the spy network whereby Cecil maintained communication with King James VI. Inglis's calligrapher skills could therefore even be seen as 'an asset for *his* career',[15] just like Peter Bales, another master calligrapher, worked for Walsingham.[16] Tricia Bracher also explores this correspondence to suggest that Inglis was involved in the same type of textual diplomacy with her husband 'to promote a secret or not-so-secret alliance between James VI of Scotland and his Essexian allies in England' during the Succession Crisis of 1599.[17]

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[14] See Ziegler, '"More than feminine boldness"', pp. 23-27 and Frye, 'Materializing Authorship', 472-3. Both use three letters signed by Bartholomew Kello mentioning a manuscript dedicated to Elizabeth I in 1599 to reconstruct the scenario of the book presentation.

[15] Ziegler, '"More than feminine boldness"', p. 23, note 6, my emphasis.

[16] Henry Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 33.

[17] See Tricia Brachter, 'Esther Inglis and the English Succession Crisis of 1599', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England* 1450-1700, ed. by James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 132-46 (p. 135).

The content of Inglis's presentation books is also meant to enlist patronage support to transmit Protestant texts, as the choice of her copied translations reveals. Ross studies her thirteen known manuscripts which copy *Les Cantiques du Sieur de Maisonfleur* by Guy du Faur, Sieur de Pibrac (1529-1584).[18] To her, Inglis thus makes a substantial contribution to 'the transmission of Christian humanist texts from her native France' aimed at cultural leaders in Britain in order 'to bridge the French and British communities of knowledge'.[19] Because Pibrac's poems are also read 'as platforms for urging the reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants',[20] Ross deduces that the circulation of Inglis's books, as well as her choice of translations, may even propose a solution of peace between the communities.

While an array of strategies of political appeasement may appear to emerge on the international front, residing both in her choice of literary content for her manuscripts and in their mode of diffusion to selected circles of patronage, Inglis also negotiates her own voice while copying the Bible. Even as she offers a beautiful prototype for feminine calligraphy, her professional skills lead to rethink the notion of 'auctoriality', what it means to be an author when one is not the creator of one's written word. Her agency in book production which presents several self-portraits, aligns her with Christine de Pizan's self-produced calligraphic manuscripts[21] – she can also be compared to Georgette de Montenay whose Protestant emblem books were a model for Inglis.

Esther Inglis's textual diplomacy within Pforzeimer MS40

Pforzeimer MS40 is a gift book for the New Year 1606 and offers an English translation of the Protestant version of the 'Proverbs of Solomon' in the latest fashion of illuminated

On the role of material culture as textual diplomacy, see Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009) and on diplomatic gifts see *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c.1410-1800*, ed. by Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[18] Guy du Faur, Sieur de Pibrac (1529-1584), *Les Cantiques du Sieur de Maisonfleur* (Paris: 1586 [1576]).

[19] See Ross, *Birth of Feminism*, pp. 254-261.

[20] Ibid, p. 259.

[21] See Frye, *Pens and Needles*, p. 76.

miniatures. It exists in three copies, presenting paratextual variations. More specifically, this manuscript belongs to an important group of sixteen flower-illustrated manuscripts in colours which marks a decisive break in her former sober, black and white, copying-style, as shown by Tjan-Bakker.[22] This important change in style leads critics to ponder: either in 1606 Inglis's career was driven by her necessities as a family bread winner or – and no matter the dire family circumstances – Inglis never lost her political agenda and had to adapt her formula to approach new people.

If Ziegler insists that her hand-wrought beautiful presentation manuscripts can never be separated from her political aims of reconciling Protestants and Catholics, and suggests that 'as in the case of several others of her recipients… Esther Inglis did not necessarily choose them by their popularity as patrons' but rather for political reasons,[23] Tjan-Bakker favours a group approach of these manuscripts which leads her to reconsider Inglis's politically-driven production. Tjan-Bakker sees them as a new trend in Inglis's lifelong production which grew out of a remunerative practice. She addresses the reasons why this particular pattern dominated her prolific production in 1606-7, following what she describes as the Dame Flora metaphor. She notably contends that this was a moment in her life when it 'was hard to make end meets':[24] because the family had moved back to London, following the new King, and because James had now acceded to the throne and so her husband's diplomatic errands on the continent and to other courts were no longer required. Tjan-Bakker thus speculates she was using her quill as a means to sustain the family of four children and her schoolmaster of a husband, B. Kello.[25]

Considered as a series, and even as part of a larger group then, her reproductive formula for the three volumes certainly accounts for an efficient practice. First, the three tiny books were made for the same occasion: New Year 1606. Then they start a new format in her production: smaller and oblong in size,[26] they share the unique quality of being written on vellum and only on the recto.[27] Finally, then, the inside layout is identical to what she produces at the time: title pages with flower borders and each page is illustrated

[22] See Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms', 49-72. For a list of the Flower manuscripts, see 67-68.

[23] Ziegler, '"More than feminine boldness"', p. 25 n. 14.

[24] Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossom', 61.

[25] Tjan-Bakker's argument paves the way for Susan Frye's claim in 'Materializing Authorship', 469-91: 'Inglis successfully negotiated issues of production and patronage to make herself arguably the first woman in the British Isles to earn her living as a proclaimed "writer"' (p. 481). Yet Frye qualifies the production of the flowers manuscripts in terms of the rest of Inglis's lavish manuscript production (p. 489 n. 14).

[26] See Tjan-Bakker, Anneke. "Dame Flora's Blossoms", pp. 52 and 69 n.13.

[27] CAT. p. 51.

with a colourful bird or a flower on top of a calligraphed proverb, and all of them claim to present a new limning technique, using colours.

> Une Estreine pour tres illustre et vertueuse Dame la Contesse de Bedford, **escrit et illumine** par moy Esther Inglis ce 1 de Janvier, 1606.
> A New Yeers Guift for the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lord my Lord Sidnay of the hand **writing and limming of mee** Esther Inglis the first of Ianuar, 1606.
> A New Yeeres Guift for the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lady the Lady Arskene of Dirltoun. Of the hand **writting and limming of mee** Esther Inglish, the 1. of Iannuar 1606. (emphasis mine)

Inglis's precarious social status – and reproductive pattern – does not prevent her from reminding her patrons-readers of her agency in the production of these books and asserting her identity as illustrator and 'handwriter', in a form of scribal self-publication.

Textual diplomacy is deployed through her selection of *Proverbs*, as the manuscript also conveys a Protestant message, and in the method she uses to present them. Inside the book – and this is true in all three copies – there is an obvious pattern in her choice of adaptations. Rather faithfully copied from the Geneva Bible, her selection from the *Book of Proverbs* does not follow the biblical order – although she does start by the first one[28] – and only retains four or five lines on each page. As in other of her books, she breaks in mid-sentence to fit the Proverb to the page[29] – but she cuts the beginning of a Proverb only once.[30] She also occasionally plays with correspondence between text and illustration, as in fol. 11 where there is a bird above text and a carnation under it.[31] So not only does she display her ability at writing in various hands from page to page as a skilled calligrapher but she also creates a book meant to prompt her reader's memory. It is notable when she uses compression with a word: for instance, the repetition of 'righteousness' in the Biblical text leads to Inglis's suppression of clauses within her own

[28] Proverbs 1, 3, 7, 12, 15:1-3, 11, 14, 15:13-16, 26, 13, 2, 17, 1–22, 26, 30.

[29] See Tian-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossom', p. 53. See fos 7, 9–19.

[30] The beginning is missing only once to make the sentence more efficient: "Better is a dry morsell, [if peace be with it], then a house full of sacrifices with strife". [Proverb 17:1] on fol. 14 (decorated with a red flower, with gold lines, with a white butterfly).

[31] This folio is identical in CAT. no. 23, p. 52 [Newberry Library, Wing MS.-ZW645.K29], with several differences in spelling for 'sommer', 'causeles[se]': 'As the snowe in summer, and as the raine in the haruest, are not meete, so is honour unseemely for a foole' (Geneva Bible, 26:1); 'As the sparowe by flying, and the swallow by flying escape, so the curse that is causeles, shall not come' (Geneva Bible, 26:2), 'Unto the horse belongeth a whip, to the' [the end is lacking: 'asse a bridle, and a rod to the fooles backe'] (Geneva Bible, 26:3).

text: ‘The wicked worketh a deceitful[l] worke: but hee that soweth righteousness leadeth to life: so he that followeth evill seketh death’ (fol. 8).[32] The memory of the reader is called upon to supplement this compression. Linking professional skills and Christian practices of devotion, Inglis is thus making a treasurable gift as well as a book that her dedicatee can easily carry around for private devotion; in accordance with mnemonic practices used by a community of Christian readers, her gift belongs to a textual diplomacy shared by pious readers.

Just like the abridgement of the biblical text serves to enhance the calligrapher’s abilities, it could then be argued that the choice of Proverbs offers a clever self-promotion. Such a miniature present, with its selection of proverbs about modesty, is aptly – and self-consciously – reminiscent of its small size. While some proverbs mention the precious aspect of the biblical wisdom, others insist on the modesty one has to display in life. The tropes about jewellery and precious metal compare God’s words to ‘a comely ornament unto thy[i]ne head, and as chaines for thy necke’ (fol. 3), or a ‘great treasure’ (fol. 10), ‘as is the fining pot for silver, and the fornace for golde’ (fol. 14), ‘As siluer drossed’ (fol. 19), thereby also mimicking the preciousness of the gilded gift. Miniature and humility, paramount female qualities, are praised euphemistically:

> ‘Better is a little with the fear of the Lord then great treasure and trouble therewith.’ (Geneva Bible, 15:15) (fol. 10)
> ‘A good name is to bee chosen aboue great richesse, and louing fauour is aboue siluer and aboue gold’ (Proverb 22:1) (fol. 18)

Inglis’s obvious mastery of calligraphy in such three tiny objects (what she coyly calls the ‘smal work of my pen and pensil’[33]), thus materialises a complex interplay between a specially hand-made gift meant to be officially presented and a discreet object, rather meant for private devotion than for public display; it also reveals her witty command of the humility trope, so commonly shared by artists.

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[32] This folio presents two adaptations of the Geneva Bible proverbs: first a change as Inglis writes ‘he that troubleth his owne *soul* [my emphasis] is cruele’. She intriguingly replaces ‘flesh’ (Geneva Bible 11 :16) by ‘soul’, twisting the proverb into a more metaphysical interpretation; second, she compresses the biblical text: the Geneva Bible reads two proverbs and not one: ‘The wicked worketh a deceitful worke: but he that soweth righteousness, shall receive a sure rewarde’ (Geneva Bible, 11:18) and ‘As righteousnes leadeth to life: so hee that followeth evill seketh his owne death’ (Geneva Bible, 11:19).

[33] *A New Yeeres Guift for the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lady the Lady Arskene of Dirltoun. Of the hand writting and limming of mee Esther Inglish*, the 1. of Iannuar, 1606. [Newberry Library, Chicago, Wing MS.—ZW 6], Dedication.

Inglis's textual diplomacy: between endorsement and self-presentation

> *Aut quis tot formas potuit componere vestis?*
> *Texuit has calamo Galla puella suo.*
> 'Who could devise so many forms of clothing?
> A French girl wove them with her pen.'[34]

As we have seen, what makes Pforzeimer MS40 stand out is not its content strictly speaking, as it is common to all three manuscripts, but rather its presentational strategy.[35] It should be noted that it is one of her first New Year's gift books, as she had only given one – to Queen Elizabeth – previously, and that in 1606 Jacobean patronage was marked by a great uncertainty.[36] Contrary to what she used to do when she relied on her father's network of patronage,[37] the three persons to which she gave the 1606 books were strangers to her: Lucy Harington, the Countess of Bedford (1581-1627),[38] Lady Erskine of Dirleton (?-1621)[39] and Robert Sidney (1563-1626). Among the three copies, then, Pforzeimer MS40 is the only one designed for a man, and seems to present a different approach, suggesting a strategy which varies according to the gender of the patrons.

Arrestingly, indeed, the dedicatory material is rather similar for the two manuscripts dedicated to the Ladies. Both manuscripts dedicated to the Countess of Bedford and to

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[34] Quoted from *Livret contenant diverses sortes de lettres, Escrit a Lislebourg par Esther Langlois*, Françoise, 1586 [British Library Sloane MS. 987], verses signed by Esther's father, "Nicholas Langlois, Father of the Aforementioned Girl" (CAT. p. 25).

[35] On the distribution of multiple copies to different patrons, see Harold Love, *The Culture and the Commerce of Texts. Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), pp. 59-61.

[36] See Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms', p. 52.

[37] See Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms', p. 51 and Ross, *Rise of the Feminism*, p. 253.

[38] The network relations of these three dedicatees are carefully analysed in Georgiana Ziegler, 'Hand-ma(i)d Books', pp. 24-5. She points out the close connections with Queen Anna's entourage: Lucy, the countess of Bedford, Queen Anne's bosom friend was also part of the Sidney/Harington protestant circle. The other Englishwoman in this group of dedicatees was Elizabeth Norris, Lady Erskine. See also Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms', p. 69 n. 16.

[39] 'In presenting this smal work of my pen and pensil to a Lady with whom I have had no familiarity, for altho yea have perchance neither seen nor hard of me, yit your noble and wordy Lord hes both, and can best report of me, therefor have I send this litle offrand of myn to his Lordship to be delivered unto you'; To Lady Arskene of Dirltoun, CAT. no. 23, p. 52.

Lady Erskine of Dirleton are introduced by a foreword composed by Esther herself.[40] There is a French verse dedication to Lucy, Countess of Bedford, who was Queen Anne's bosom friend.

> Vous suppliant de recevoir en gre
> L'oeuvre petit qui vous est consacre
> Avec ces mien versets[41]
> [Begging you to receive well
> This little work dedicated to you
> With my own verse]

And a longer prose dedication in English to Lady Erskine of Dirleton, Elizabeth Norris. Lady Erskine was third wife to Thomas Erskine, first Earl of Kellie, a man who had been educated with James and served as Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Captain of the Guard, and member of the Privy Council. One feels, however, that Inglis does not know her well as she apologizes for writing in English, as apparently she did not know she could speak French.

> Madame, that one unknowne to your Ladyship hes emboldened hir selfve to salut you with a **fewe grapes of hir collection**, I hope your Ladyship shall not altogether mislyk thereof: nather trust I yea shal esteme me impudent or that I have transcendit the limites of shame fastnes (wherewith our sexe is commonly adornd) in presenting **this smal work of my pen and pensil to a Lady with whom I have had no familiarity**, for altho yea have perchance neither seen nor hard of me, yit your noble and wordy Lord hes both, and can best report of me, therefor have I send this litle offrand of myn to his Lordship to be delivered unto you... If I knowen your Ladyship had bene a student **in french** I should have made this in the samin language.[42]

Conversely Pforzeimer MS40 deploys an altogether different dedicatory strategy. Both for patronage and political reasons, Robert Sidney (1563-1626) was an excellent choice. Robert, Philip Sidney's brother, was affluent and influential and he survived Philip by nearly four decades, dying at the age of 63. He shared his interests for literature and statecraft, he also commanded in the Low Countries (1589-1603). He is described as

[40] See CAT., p. 15.

[41] Quoted from CAT. no. 22, pp. 51-2.

[42] Quoted from CAT. no. 23, p. 52 (emphases mine). [Newberry Library, Chicago, Wing MS. – ZW 645.K29]

following dutifully his brother's path: Robert travelling on the continent even wrote his father in November 1580 that Philip had recommended 'that if there were any good wars, I should go to them'.[43] More specifically, in October 1603, he became Lord High Chamberlain and Surveyor General to James I's Queen, Queen Anne of Denmark – he had similar responsibilities as the King's Master of the Revels at Anne's court,[44] playing an important role in the court's dramatic and musical activities. He himself was a poet, he wrote songs, and was an exquisitely well-dressed courtier. Thanks to the established number of extant books kept in his personal library, he has been described as 'amiable, dutiful, amorous, musical, well-connected, extravagant, and… well-read'[45] and he was part of the 'Essex group' (named after courtiers associated with the late earl) in the Queen's court, a court famous for promoting the worth of women.

There are two main differences. First, and this the most telling I believe, Inglis copied in the manuscript a Latin epigraph by her husband, a poem that she never reused in any other manuscript to the best of my knowledge.[46]

[43] Quoted in Germaine Warkentin, *The Library of the Sidneys of Penshurst Place circa 1665*, p. 18 n. 63.

[44] See Leeds Barroll on Sidney's appointment in 1603 showing the importance of the Essex group in the Queen's court, 'The Court of the First Stuart Queen' in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. by Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 191-208, particularly on pp. 200-20.

[45] His library counted at least 16 books; a few more were associated to him: 'This is a substantial number for the period, and the intellectual record the volumes represent is supported by the many titles he referred to in his commonplace books'; see *The Library of the Sidneys of Penshurst Place*, pp. 18-19. An inventory of his elaborate wardrobe possessions still exists in the 1623 inventory of Penshurst Place. His extensive correspondence is preserved. He was also father to eleven children (one of whom is the poet Lady Mary Wroth).

[46] Sarah Gwyneth Ross does not mention Kello's Latin dedication from Pforzeimer 40 (Ross, *The Birth of Feminism*, p. 251). She only mentions the signature of the added verses, quoted in CAT. no. 21, p. 51. She probably she did not see this copy. Susan Frye confirmed at RSA 2018 that she had not yet seen this copy.

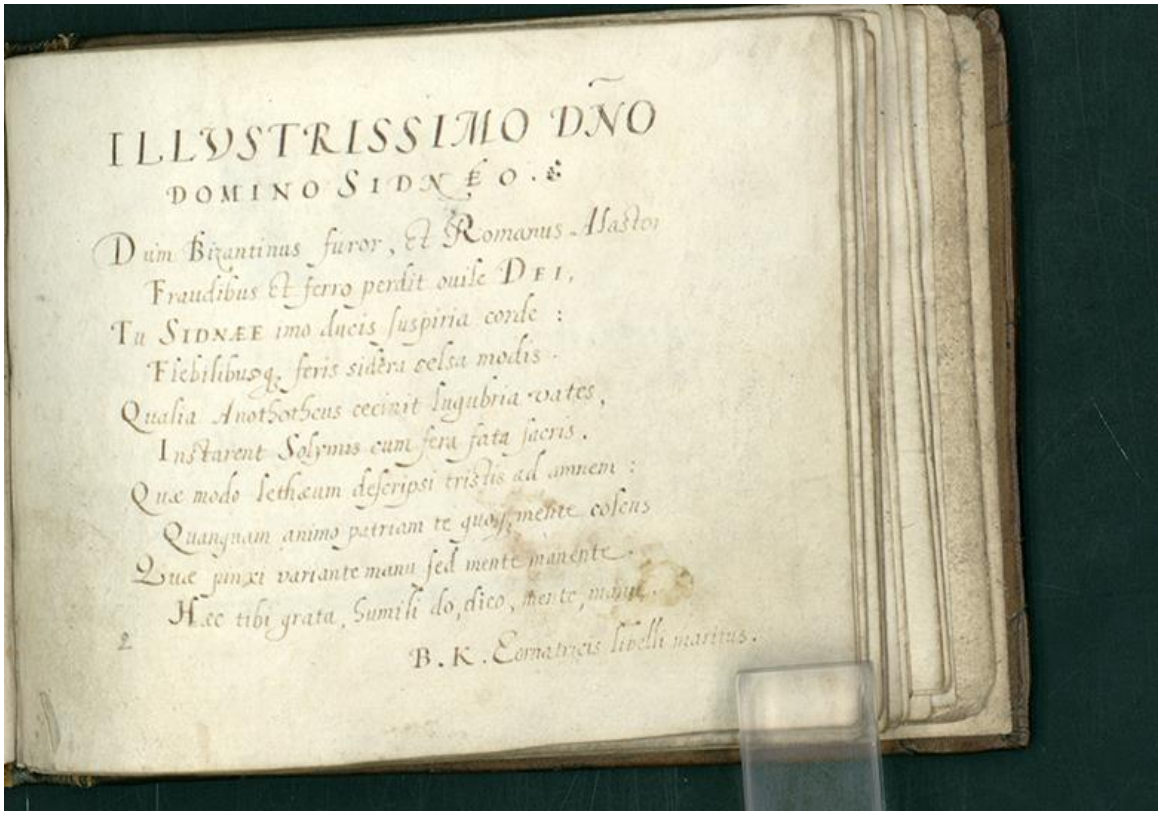

Figure 1. Facsimile from Pforzeimer MS40. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

ILLVSTRISSIMO DNO [DOMINO]
DOMINO SIDNEO
Dum Bizantinus furor, Et Romanus Alastor
Fraudibus et ferro perdit ovise [suise?] [sic] DEI
Tu SIDNÆE imo ducis suspiria corde:
Flebilibusq feris sidera celsa modis.
Qualia Anothotheus [sic] cecinit lugubria vates,
Instarent Solymis cum fera fata sacris.
Quæ modo Lethœum descripsi tristis ad amnem:
Quanquam animo patriam te quoque mente colens
Quæ pinxi variante manu sed mente manente
Hæc tibi grata, humili do, dico, mente, manu.
'B[artholomew]. K[ello of Leith]. 'Eornatricis libelli maritus.' ('husband of the book's adorner')

To our very illustrious Master Sidney

While the Byzantine anger and the Roman Alastor[47]
Die by deceit or by sword [?]
You Sidney, you heave deep sighs
And move the stars by your weeping.
As the lugubrious songs sung by the Prophet from Anathot[48],
When a cruel destiny threatened him at the time of Jerusalem feasts,
All this I have now gloomily copied for the Lethe river
Even if I quicken the life of our homeland by honouring you
What I painted in various hand but with a sound mind
I'm giving it to you, I'm telling you, with a humble mind and hand.

Its signature, included in A.H. Scott-Elliot and Elspeth Yeo's catalogue, and much quoted by critics to illustrate the husband's pride in his wife's achievements, reads: the 'husband of the book's adorner'. Ross mentions this signature as a good illustration of their 'marital collaboration', but she does not study Pforzeimer MS40 Latin dedication by Kello as a whole poem[49] and neither does Susan Frye. Yet when considered in relation to the whole first-person narrative poem, this signature is rather intriguing: if the poem's beginning is rather obscure and sounds more of an apologetic apostrophe and sets Sidney as a lamenting poet (in exile?) rather than a glorious warrior – awkwardly making a connection with the Sidney family – the last two lines with their alliterative repetition and chiasmic pattern are clearer. Calligraphic art and the hand as writing instrument are associated through the antanaclasis on 'manu' and it is further elaborated with the chiasmus between 'mind' and 'hands'.

Quæ pinxi variante manu sed mente manente
Hæc tibi grata, humili do, dico, mente, manu.

[47] Thomas Cooper in his *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (1578) [STC (2nd ed.) 5688] gives the following definitions for Alastor: 1. 'One of the horses of Pluto'. 2. 'Also the name of a companion of Sarpedon, king of Lycia, whome Vlisses slue at the siege of Troye'.

[48] All my thanks to Pr. Pierre Pontier (Paris Sorbonne - University) for the reading of this thorny Latin poem. The reference to 'Anathoth(eus)' is definitely obscure. In connection with the word 'lugubria' it could refer to the lamentations of Jeremiah and the line could mean: 'Laments such as the poet from Anothotheus [Anatoth] sang'. If I apply a 1587 commentary from Thomas Stocker's 'Epistle to his translation of Daniel Toussain's *The lamentations of Ieremiah*' to this line, I understand it as an allusion to the home town of the prophet Jeremiah (Anathoth is the name of one of the Levitical cities given to the children of Aaron in the tribe of Benjamin; see Joshua 21:13-18 and 1 Chronicles 6:54-60) and there could also be a possible genealogic allusion to Jeremiah's family (who descended from the high priest banished by Salomon).

[49] Ross, *The Birth of Feminism*, p. 251.

An eloquent passage which suggests nonetheless a troubling parallelism between these words by Kello and the 'handwriter' of the book herself. The poem by the husband, in the first person, seems to speak in replacement of Esther's voice: 'pinxi' (l.9) means 'I adorned, I decorated with colored designs' (a reference in the first-person to the limning of the manuscript) and 'descripsi' (l.7) also uses the first-person, 'I described'. Here one cannot fail to notice the definite oscillation in agency as Inglis is copying in the words that Kello invented (and signed) for her own illuminated manuscript which bears on the title page 'of the hand writing and limming of mee Esther Inglis'. The negotiation here between Esther's and Kello's quill is left interestingly unsettled. Although Ross may see it as a further proof of 'marital collaboration' – and this may be reminiscent of the tradition of shaking hands to seal contracts[50] – I believe the use of the first-person here is not so clear and unsettles the symbolism at stake. All the more so as her penname, stated here, is clearly derived from her maiden's name.

Second, the comparison of the tailpieces used in all three books is also quite revealing.

Figure 2. Facsimile from Pforzeimer MS40. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

[50] See Farah Karim-Cooper, *The Hand on the Shakespearean Stage: Gesture, Touch and the Spectacle of Dismemberment* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2016).

The device used is identified as a template borrowed from a well-known calligrapher's manual by Jacobus Houthusius, entitled *Exemplaria sive formulae scripturae ornatioris* xxxvi (Aachen, 1591). Nor is this device rare in Esther's production either as it is used eight times according to the catalogue.[51] Yet, contrary to what Scott-Elliot and Yeo's catalogue choses to dismiss as 'as a standard description of a talented scribe',[52] the praise 'Mistresse of the golden pen',[53] seems meaningful to Tjan-Bakker; she makes an interesting connection between the choice of this device and its recurring use in the so-called 'Flowers manuscript' group: it may well be that after winning the prestigious writing contest of 'The golden pen of twenty pounds' or the 'Prix de la plume couronnée', she used this device to self-advertise her own calligraphic achievements at the moment she was approaching new patrons.[54] This kind of erudite endorsement by her Continental peers would only reinforce her discreet insistence on her personal skills with the quill, but also suggest that her talents are more widely acknowledged than by her husband and his Scottish *coterie*.

But there could be even more to the tailpiece of the volume. I wish to elaborate further on Tjan-Bakker's intriguing suggestion about the 'Prix de la plume couronnée' as a modest self-promoting device: what if, once again, Esther was copying in another man's words to make them her own in her volume, once again playing on ambiguation and double enunciation?

'*Nil penna sed usus*' ('the feathers are of no force, but useful' or 'the quill is worthless, what matters is its use') may first seem inconspicuous for two reasons: it is a straight copy from the template provided by Jacobus Houthusius's *Exemplaria*, a calligrapher who wrote writing manuals.[55] Second, Inglis copied it as such in three other contemporary manuscripts (1606-7), as Scott-Elliot and Yeo note: *Une Estreine pour tresillustre et vertueuse Dame la Contesse de Bedford, escrit et illumine par moy Esther Inglis ce 1 de Janvier, 1606.*, the final leaf (fol. 23) presents two crossed gold pens through a wreath

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[51] See A. H. Scott-Elliot and Elspeth Yeo's catalogue, nos. 22-7.

[52] CAT., p. 20.

[53] CAT., no.13.

[54] Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms', p. 53.

[55] See Jacobus Houthusius, *Exemplaria Sive Formvlæ Scriptvræ Ornatoris XXV In quis, præter diuersa Litterarum genera, varij earumdem ductus, structuræ, & connexiones. In eorum gratiam, qui manum calamumque nitidius excolere student* (Antwerp: 1591). https://archive.thulb.uni-jena.de/hisbest/receive/HisBest_cbu_00030848?derivate=HisBest_derivate_00016691 (consulted July 2022). I thank Elizabeth Garver, Research Associate at the Harry Ransom Center, for this reference.

beneath a jewelled crown, and the motto '*nil penna sed usus*'; *A New Yeeres Guift for the Right Honorable and Vertuous Lady the Lady Arskene of Dirltoun. Of the hand writting and limming of mee Esther Inglish*, the 1. of Iannuar, 1606. The last leaf has the same device (crossed gold pens within a wreath surmounted by a jewelled crown, with the motto '*nil penna sed usus*'); finally, *Les Quatrains du Sr. de Pybrac dediez a tres noble et tres honorable Seigneur, Monseigneur de Hayes, pour ses estrennes* 1607 *Escrit et illumine, par moy Esther Inglis*, offers the same device as a tailpiece.[56]

Yet, some other manuscripts from the same period do not use the Latin inscription at all[57] or, even in three other manuscripts in Latin and French, she substituted a French motto for the Latin one: 'Vive la Plume!'[58] As usual there is no unique reading of such a common Latin motto. Read emblematically and morally, when Claude Paradin first publishes his basic set of 118 devices called *Devises heroïques* (Lyons: Jean de Tournes and Guillaume Gazeau, 1551), '*Nil penna sed usus*' is associated to the woodcut figure of the Ostrich.[59] In the expanded 1557 edition, an added – and moralistic – French commentary glossed the *Devise* as denouncing hypocrisy.[60] The figure of the Ostrich shows how this beautifully feathered bird – which cannot fly – truly exemplifies how people may betray by their outward appearances:

> L'Autruche estendant ses esles & belles plumes, fait une grande montre de voler: ce neanmoins ne s'enleve point de terre. Et en ce, fait comme les Ypocrites, lesquelz par externe aparence, representent grande sainteté & religion: puis c'est tout, & n'y ha que la montre: car en dedens, tout est au contraire.

[56] These remarks are compiled from the information given in the Catalogue: [CAT22], [CAT23], [CAT31].

[57] See [CAT. 24] *Tetrasticha selecta historiae Geneseos, Estherae Inglis manu exaratae*. Londini. 1606. On fol. 45, a wreath with crossed pens beneath a crown, but no inscription.

[58] See *Argumenta in Librum Psalmorum Davidis Estherae Inglis Manu Exarata* (Londini, 1606). On the last page (fol. 101) is a jewelled crown with a small green and gold wreath and crossed gold pens, with "vive la plume", [CAT. 25]. *Argumenta in Librum Geneseos Esthere Inglis manu exarata Londini* 1606. On fol. 37, the inscription "vive la plume" within a wreath crossed by two gold pens, surmounted by a crown, [CAT.26]. *Cinquante Octonaires sur la va vanite [sic] et inconstance du monde. Dediez a monseigneur le Prince, pour ses estrennes, de l'an 1607*. Escrit et illumine par moy Esther Inglis presents the French motto "Vive la plume" with two crossed pens through a crowned wreath (fol. 54), [CA.T27].

[59] https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/facsimile.php?id=sm815_d1v (consulted July 2022).

[60] https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/facsimile.php?emb=FPAb025 (consulted July 2022).

In the English 1591 prose translation, and slightly longer edition, the Latin motto appears at the head of the page, translated as 'The fethers are of no force, but use' followed by the woodcut device, showing an ostrich with wings outstretched, followed by the following commentary on hypocrisy:

> If you marke well the monstrous bird called an Ostrich, you see how with great preparation and ostentation of her feathers, she endevours to take a great flight, and yet for althat is not an inch higher from the ground when shee hath done all that shee can: the very like propertie the hypocrites have, which outwardly make a gay glistering shew of a zealous holiness of religion, but let them once lay away their dissembling, and then search them thorowly, and you shall finde them even stone cold within, & all the ostentation that they made outwardly to be lies.

This moral reading cannot be ruled out but it hardly fits the purpose: putting on a show of virtue is not by far a Protestant quality. Yet each specific use of emblematic mottos must repay close attention to its context and the quill is the calligrapher's tool: I suggest Inglis intentionally picked her full template from Jacobus Houthusius and kept the Latin phrase to conclude her first presentation book outside her traditional network of dedicatees. Ironically, and arguably, she is showing off her skills outside her circle while she is also being dutifully obedient to her social role as copyist. Indeed, as a calligrapher born out of a calligrapher family, this phrase had a definite family ring to it.

Nicholas Langlois [Anglus], her father, concluded a Latin poem he wrote for her by this very motto, a poem she copied on the last leaf of her first known manuscript entitled *Livret contenant diverses sortes de Lettres* (Lislebourg, 1586), (fol. 32), turning it into a form of tailpiece.

> *Huius ipsius Libelli Prosopopoeia.*
> *Filia me scripsit mandante utroque parente.*
> *Exilii calamo taedia discutiens.*
> *In scribendi artificium.*
> *Pictores hominum pinxerunt membra colore*
> *Penna hominum at varie pingere verba potest.*
> *Nil penna sed usus.*
> N[ico laus] A[nglus] D[ictae] P[uellae] Pater
>
> [Prosopopoeia of this book itself
> A daughter wrote me because both her parents asked her to
> Lulling away the pains of her exile by her pen

Thanks to her art of writing.
Painters have painted my limbs in colours
Men's quill however can paint words in a changing fashion
The quill is worthless, what matters is its use
'Nicholas Anglus the father of the said girl' (my translation)]

Inglis already partly reused this paternal poem which gives voice to her book in the form of a prosopopoeia twice to conclude her manuscripts. She copied its first two lines at the end of her 1591 *Discours de la Foy* (Lislebourg)[61] and in 1592, it is also on the final leaf (fol. 83) of her *Livret traittant de la Grandeur de Dieu, et de la Cognoissance qu'on peut avoir de luy par ses oeuvres. Escrit par Esther Langlois, fille Françoise, de Dieppe*.[62] So this Latin motto – all in all reused four times in her own device – is both borrowed from a well-known 1591 calligraphy manual template and from her father's 1586 concluding line. Knowing Inglis's intellectual creativity, this connection cannot be fortuitous: such a duplication of her father's words rather sounds like a witty family pun. Through Cut and Paste, a technique we have seen in her adaptation of the biblical text itself, she creates another meaning, a new textuality in books that she has literally made up by herself and that she even bound herself.[63] She may well have picked this particular device as tailpiece because of her father's 1586 poem, making hers his words [N[ico laus] A[nglus] D[ictae] P[uellae] Pater (cat, p. 29), 'Nicholas Anglus the father of the said girl' in the same way as she is making hers her husband's words at the opening of the manuscript. Inglis performs a ventriloquizing exercise, during which she finds her own voice.

Duplication has necessarily to do with making the most of one's time as a skilled artisan, eager to make profits out of one's trade at a time when it is hard to get by. Yet each one of these three identical manuscripts personalizes its reception in different ways, and also organises the endorsement process of the author differently within her family. Thus this study of paratextual material confirms how Inglis negotiates her own originality within the confined space of scribal copy. To her two female dedicatees, she uses the common

[61] (CAT.3) in French and Latin (fol. 50 out of 51).

[62] (CAT.4).

[63] Esther was as skilled in calligraphy as in needlework since she was the one who embroidered many rich book covers for her jewel-like little books. Yet Pforzeimer 40 is not embroidered but part of the twenty-five manuscripts she bound in leather, tooled and gilt (1599-1617). The catalogue notes that the pattern of leafy ovals enclosing alternating flower forms occurs on a group of manuscripts from the London period and more specifically that 'the individual tools used on these bindings were also used in the border pattern on the three manuscripts of the Proverbs of 1606'. (CAT, p. 22 group 2). It has been convincingly suggested that she bound her own books due to the specificity of the binding, and to the different locations in which she lived (CAT., p. 22).

topos of the author's humility both as a copyist and a calligrapher, demonstrating her familiarity with the literary code of prefatory material and adding to it the idea of female impropriety in writing: she feared that Lady Erskine 'shal esteme [her] impudent or that [she has] transcendit the limites of shame fastnes (wherewith our sexe is commonly adornd)' in the way she has crafted her little volumes ('L'oeuvre petit qui vous est consacre', as she writes to the Countess of Bedford). Ironically, by diminishing her achievement as a female English author in French, she asserts her proficiency in both languages and cleverly suggests that she does not mean what she writes. Similarly her diminutive reference to the volume's length ('petit') can ambiguously praise her mastery of the miniature techniques. To Robert Sidney, however, her self-assertive strategy is different: by using her husband's poem and fusing her voice into his (by the switch of the pronouns), and by privately nodding to her father's words at the end the volumes, we can see how her female textuality displays itself, self-authorizing her production by negotiating her own voice. Inglis's voice, seemingly safe-guarded by male 'domestic' figures, 'impudently' offers her gifts outside her established network of patrons.

Conclusion

This manuscript clearly belongs to a group with identical layouts: there is no real specific choice within the Salomon proverbs according to the dedicatees, we find no 'inside' textual diplomacy with her husband's political allies. What this volume actually negotiates is that Esther Inglis acts as a cultural and Christian agent of concord between members of the Essex group, heir to the Elizabethan culture, and the Queen Consort's court, uncovering interests and a shared culture. In so doing, as 'a faithfull ambassadour is preservation', she finds her own distinctive voice and is not merely a family envoy. First, she copies the Geneva Bible, both in French and in English, and this is congruent with an encompassing religious vision that she advocates and her polyglossia (English, French, Latin) in some of the volumes underscores her proficiency with languages that the Court also had. Second, her new stylistic interest for adding colourful flowers, birds and butterflies is in line with the medievalism that was prevalent in the 1590s at Elizabeth's court. Although they are reminiscent of the Ghent-Bruges style (1475-1550) for Books of Hours, there is nothing really specific in the flower borders and choice of flowers she makes in this group of manuscripts.[64] It is rather reminiscent of sewing samplers that were popular at the time. So her new limning style, departing from her stricter black and white manuscripts, shows her commercial interest in the court's latest trends. Her interest for colourful miniatures may also relate to her intimate and

[64] See Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms', p. 52.

documented work relation with Isaac Oliver (c.1560-1617) as a Protestant artist who was a miniaturist at Queen Anne's court as early as 1603.[65]

What establishes her in a unique, and relatively safe, position as a scribe then is the way she weaves various modes of discourse within her manuscript's pages. Simultaneously preserving the words of the Book (like a 'faithful ambassador'), she is also making her own voice heard through her choice of different hands, repeated texts, limning choices as well as work for the cover. Finally, her crafty strategy of adaptation of various dedicatory verse and tailpieces according to her three dedicatees for this group of manuscripts reveals how she constantly negotiates the space for her own voice to emerge among the male voices of her father and husband. She acts as a humble textual ambassador for Protestant faith while she knowledgeably presents her authorial self, enfranchising her words from a male domestic space.

[65] See Tjan-Bakker, 'Dame Flora's Blossoms', p. 53 and p. 69 n. 15 and n. 16.