

Negotiating a Courtship between Courts: Hilliard's Prayer Book Portraits of Queen Elizabeth and the Duc d'Anjou

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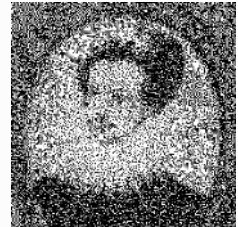
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Negotiating a Courtship between Courts: Hilliard's Prayer Book Portraits of Queen Elizabeth and the Duc d'Anjou

Article by **William Aslet**

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Abstract

Since its last appearance in 1889, the whereabouts of the small book of prayers belonging to Queen Elizabeth I has been unknown. It survives only in the form of a black-and-white facsimile commissioned by its last known owner. Inside are two miniatures by Nicholas Hilliard. With one showing François Hercule, duc d'Anjou and the other Queen Elizabeth, the prayer book undoubtedly relates to Anjou's unsuccessful courtship of Elizabeth. This article presents the first full-length study of the prayer book in relation to the miniatures that it contains. It builds on Jane Lawson's identification of the book with a gift given to Elizabeth by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, in the New Year of 1582, this article examines the reasons why Leicester might have commissioned a prayer book of this kind at this late moment in Anjou's courtship and the iconographical significance in including these two miniature portraits in a book of prayers.

Introduction

At around the start of the twentieth century, a celebrated book of prayers that had once been the property of Queen Elizabeth I went missing. Its disappearance is as mysterious as it is exasperating. It was, due to its association with Elizabeth, rightly valued as an object of extreme importance; and the portraits within—one showing Elizabeth's one-time suitor François Hercule duc d'Anjou (formerly duc d'Alençon) (fig. 1) and the other the queen herself (fig. 2)—were invariably attributed to Nicholas Hilliard.



Figure 1

Nicholas Hilliard (presumed), *François Hercule, Duc d'Anjou*, circa 1582, facsimile, 7.6 × 5 cm (approx.). Collection of The British Library (MS Facsimile 218). Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

Figure 2

Nicholas Hilliard, *Queen Elizabeth I of England*, circa 1582, facsimile, 7.6 × 5 cm (approx.). Collection of The British Library (MS Facsimile 218). Digital image courtesy of The British Library Board (all rights reserved).

Such was its significance that when the prayer book was displayed for sale at a Bond Street gallery in 1885, it was reported in the *New York Times*.¹ In the following year, the collector Edward Joseph—presumably its new owner—took it to show Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, who if not amused, was certainly “highly delighted” to have seen it.² The evident quality of these works shines through even in the black-and-white facsimile by which they are today known, with Roy Strong writing that the portrait of Elizabeth was “judging from reproductions, one of the finest portraits of her”.³

The last documented public appearance of the prayer book was at an exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1889, where it was described as having been lent by the prominent collector, Jeffrey Whitehead, and was again singled out for comment in the press as an “extraordinary relic of Queen Elizabeth”.⁴ In 1893, Whitehead commissioned an autotype facsimile printed on vellum, of which forty copies were made, and which today provides the only known record of its appearance.⁵ One copy is now kept at the British Library, having been acquired by the British Museum in 1916.⁶ The preface, written by one “J.W.”, presumably Whitehead, states that the manuscript was at this date bound in black shagreen with gold enamelled clasps, each adorned with a ruby. A note states that “in the original the ruled margins, capital letters, etc., are gilded: the miniatures being on a gold background, with fleur-de-lis, the effect of which is lost in this autotype copy”.⁷ Clearly, therefore, it was an extraordinary object.

At some point in the years following the creation of the autotype, the manuscript book itself disappeared. A handwritten note inside the cover of the British Library facsimile states that it was exhibited at the Fine Art Society in 1902, but no other record of this exhibition is known. It cannot be found in any of the known sales of Whitehead’s collection that took place following

his death in 1915. There seems to be no evidence to corroborate George Williamson's statement of 1921 that "it is now the property of the Crown".⁸ More plausible is Frederick Chamberlin's report of 1922 that the original manuscript "had disappeared since 1892" (he presumably means 1893, when the autotype was made), with the information having come directly from Whitehead's daughter.⁹ Puzzlingly, the whereabouts of even the additional copies of the facsimile is difficult to ascertain. In 1923, Chamberlin wrote that of the supposed forty copies only four could be traced.¹⁰

Despite this saddening loss, which we must hope is only temporary, the facsimile gives us a good idea of the appearance of this now-missing work. Yet, it has been under-discussed in the literature on Hilliard. Often associated with the courtship of Anjou for Elizabeth—he was, as we shall see, both her last and her most serious suitor—the question of why and at what time in the decade-long courtship this work might have been commissioned has only cursorily been addressed. The paper that follows will seek to suggest an answer to this by locating the prayer book within the historical context of the match with Anjou.

Of course, there is a major caveat with such an exercise, namely, that without the original to hand, certain questions must remain unanswered. We ought, for instance, to note the possibility—however slim—that the portraits are not autograph works by Hilliard. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the works with which we are dealing were painted directly onto the vellum leaves of the book, as in an illuminated manuscript, or, as seems more probable, were mounted portrait miniatures.¹¹

Thus, the ideas presented in this paper will be by necessity exploratory; I hope, however, that they will at least cause us to look at this remarkable work afresh.

The Portraits

The prayer book measured two by three inches; inside were six prayers written in five languages: the first and the last in English, and the middle prayers in French, Italian, Latin, and Greek respectively.¹² It opened to a bust-length portrait of the duc d'Anjou and closed with a nearly three-quarter-length portrait of Queen Elizabeth. With the portraits presented to be viewed in relation to each other, but the sitters facing in the same direction—not each other—they can be considered a quasi-pair.¹³

Each of the two portraits was enclosed in a painted wreath decorated with roses, a Tudor emblem. The space surrounding the wreaths was adorned with fleur-de-lis of gold. Some impression of this, albeit crude, is given by Chamberlin's coloured illustrations (figs. 3 and 4). The fleur-de-lis was, of course, a symbol of the French monarchy, but it was also one that Elizabeth continued to claim for the English crown.¹⁴



Figure 3

After Nicholas Hilliard, *François Hercule Duc d'Anjou*, in Frederick Chamberlin, *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, 1923), coloured autotype. Digital image courtesy of William Aslet (all rights reserved).



Figure 4

After Nicholas Hilliard, *Queen Elizabeth I of England*, in Frederick Chamberlin, *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, 1923), coloured autotype. Digital image courtesy of William Aslet (all rights reserved).

The portrait of the Queen seems to have been a one-off or *unicum* in Hilliard's work. The face-type conforms to neither of the so-called "masks"—of queenship and of youth—with which Hilliard painted Elizabeth in the 1580s and 1590s respectively.¹⁵ It seems to relate most closely to the portraits in oils on panel of the 1570s (figs. 5 and 6) associated with Hilliard and his workshop, but the features are softer and the overall effect less forbidding.¹⁶ Freeman O'Donoghue, who presumably saw the prayer book before its disappearance, describing it as being "of unsurpassed beauty", provides a couple of additional details that are impossible to make out in the autotype. Elizabeth's dress, he writes, is black, "a rose is in the curly yellow-brown hair" and "the jewels are gilded" (in keeping, therefore, with Hilliard's usual techniques for depicting jewels).¹⁷



Figure 5
Associated with Nicholas Hilliard and workshop, *Queen Elizabeth I 'The Phoenix Portrait'*, circa 1575, oil on panel, 78.7 × 61 cm. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London (NPG 190). Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London (all rights reserved).



Figure 6
Nicholas Hilliard, *Queen Elizabeth I 'The Rothschild Portrait'*, 1576–1578, oil on panel, 81.5 × 61.2 cm. Collection of Waddesdon (Acc no: 27.2017). Digital image courtesy of Waddesdon Image Library. Photo courtesy of Mike Fear (all rights reserved).

Elizabeth's attire is unusual for the V-necked gown that she wears, which knows no parallel in her iconography. The V-neck was most commonly seen in Italy of this date (fig. 7), particularly in Florence, and it may be that Elizabeth here wears a garment of Italian origin, modified by her tailor to accommodate the standing ruff. It is also possible that the standing ruff is an early kind of the "Medici collar", popularised by Marie de' Medici, after whom it is known, which had begun to appear at the Parisian court around this date.¹⁸ Elizabeth's attire was watched carefully at court. In the context of marriage negotiations, she could make use of the foreign fashions to indicate her interest in a prospective suitor. For instance, when in January 1581 she had a portrait of herself sent to Catherine de' Medici, Anjou's mother, in connection with marriage negotiations, the fact that she was dressed "alla francoyse" was noted with approval by the portrait's recipient.¹⁹ Elizabeth's choice of dress here, with its possible French inflexions, may have held a similar significance that would have been readily apparent in the eyes of a contemporary observer, although, given the unusual nature of her attire, it is hard here to be precise. Some elements worn by Elizabeth seem to recur in other portraits of the Queen, such as the necklace made of clusters of pearls, which can also be seen in the so-called "Rothschild" portrait (fig. 6). Of all Hilliard's miniatures of Elizabeth, the effect is closest to a portrait in the Royal Collection of circa 1580–1585, with similarities in the abundance of jewels and pearls in the costume, and in the slightly windswept styling of the hair (fig. 8).



Figure 7

Alessandro Allori, *Eleanora di Don Garzia di Toledo di Pietro de' Medici*, circa 1555, oil on poplar wood, 114.5 × 89.5 cm. Collection of Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (GG_2583). Digital image courtesy of Wikimedia (Public domain).



Figure 8

Nicholas Hilliard, *Queen Elizabeth I*, circa 1580–1585, watercolour on vellum laid down on paper, 3.8 × 3.3 cm. Royal Collection (RCIN 422026). Digital image courtesy of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020 (all rights reserved).

The duc d'Anjou is dressed more soberly but no less finely. He wears a black doublet with, perhaps, a cloak slung over the shoulders, as was the French habit. At this date in France, black was definitely “in”, being almost the only colour worn the French monarch, Henry III, in his iconography of the 1580s.²⁰ The ruff is of the kind that came into fashion in the French court at the end of the 1570s, and was sardonically referred to by a contemporary observer as the *plateau de saint jean* for making the head of the sitter look as though it had been served up on a platter.²¹ Notably, Anjou does not wear an earring—a French custom at the time—and the presence of jewellery is limited to his hat, properly called a *toque à la polonaise*, which is jewel-edged and adorned with an aigrette, itself likely jewelled.

Hilliard and the Duc d'Anjou

Nicholas Hilliard was at different times under the direct employment of both sitters. He first painted Elizabeth in 1571 and later became her personal limner, a position he maintained following the accession of James I. Hilliard also worked for Anjou. During a visit to France, which lasted from 1576–1578, Hilliard was employed by the duke as his *valet de la garde robe*, an honorific position that was often given to painters as a means of incorporating them into the princely accounts.²² As the younger brother of the king, the duke was entitled to his own court, and patronised a circle of writers and musicians.²³

A marriage between Anjou and Elizabeth had first been proposed in 1572. It has been assumed that Hilliard was sent to France by Elizabeth, who did not trust French artists, to record an accurate likeness of the duke, who had been left severely scarred following an outbreak of smallpox as a youth.²⁴ However, the precise moment of Hilliard's arrival—around October 1576

—makes this unlikely. In May 1576, Anjou had signed the Edict of Beaulieu, better known as the Peace of Monsieur (Anjou's courtesy title) after the concessions he had forced from his brother the king. The result was, as Elizabeth rightly predicted, a sell-out of the Protestant cause that Anjou had supported in the months leading up to the peace. Incensed, she broke off contact with Anjou and marriage was not discussed again until mid-1578.²⁵

Instead, I would suggest that Hilliard's intention in travelling to France was broadly, as the English ambassador Amias Paulet put it, "to increase his knowledge by this voyage, and upon hope to get a piece of money of the lords and ladies here for his better maintenance in England at his return" (although his success in the latter aspiration was not unalloyed).²⁶ Hilliard's activities in France suggest that he was by no means working exclusively for the English crown, and even indicate a serious attempt on his part to establish his own workshop in Paris, an endeavour that was ultimately frustrated by the fractious relationship between his patron Anjou and Henry III. It may have been the resumption of marriage negotiations that brought Hilliard back to England. Hilliard was still in France in November 1578.²⁷ His return to England—which must have taken place in early 1579—coincides neatly with the arrival on 3 January 1579 of Jean de Simier in England, *maître de la garde-robe* for the duc d'Anjou, as well as his envoy and proxy wooer, who had travelled from France formally to re-open marriage negotiations between Anjou and Elizabeth.²⁸ Simier had spent the month before his departure collecting jewels and other gifts to give to the Queen in security for a loan.²⁹ It seems not unwarranted then to speculate that Hilliard, a trained goldsmith with a knowledge of Elizabeth's taste, might here have assisted Simier and that he might also have returned to England in his train. Were this indeed the case, it would provide a good illustration of how Hilliard's status as a servant—independently—of both Anjou and Elizabeth would have enhanced his utility as a tool of marriage diplomacy. The prayer book portrait is one of only two currently known likenesses of the duc d'Anjou by Hilliard. Usually, a third portrait, in the Musée Condé Domaine de Chantilly, is included in this category, but I would here like to cast doubt on this identification (fig. 9).³⁰ Anjou's physiognomy was highly distinctive and quite unlike the features seen in this miniature. His "thin, slightly asymmetrical lips, almond-shaped eyes and bulbous nose" appear on even his earliest portraits, and can be seen in this work by Pierre Dumonstier (fig. 10).³¹ Both remaining portraits of the duke by Hilliard also exhibit these features and bear a strong resemblance to other portraits of the duke such as Dumonstier. The second is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (fig. 11).³² These confirmed likenesses of Anjou by Hilliard are closely similar, and notably dissimilar to the Chantilly portrait. Small differences between the two show that they should not be considered as versions of the same portrait, taken from one initial sitting from the life, but rather as being akin to Hilliard's two portraits of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, of the 1570s, which, despite being painted over a number of years, differ only slightly in terms of physiognomy.³³



Figure 9

Attributed to Nicholas Hilliard, *A Gentleman (François-Hercule, Duc d'Anjou?)*, circa 1576, watercolour on vellum laid down on paper, 5.8 × 4.6 cm. Collection of Musée Condé, Chantilly. Digital image courtesy of RMN-Grand Palais (domaine de Chantilly). Photo courtesy of René-Gabriel Ojéda (all rights reserved).

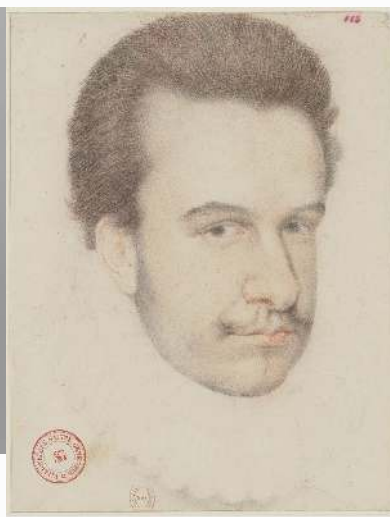


Figure 10

Pierre Dumonstier, *François-Hercule, Duc d'Anjou*, circa 1582, chalks on paper, 19.8 × 15.1 cm. Collection of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris Digital image courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (Public domain).



Figure 11

Nicholas Hilliard, *François-Hercule, Duc d'Anjou*, circa 1577–1582, watercolour on vellum laid down on card, 5.8 × 4.9 cm. Collection of Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Digital image courtesy of Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (all rights reserved).

The Prayer Book

New evidence has come to light to suggest that the prayers contained in this book were not, as is frequently asserted, written by Queen Elizabeth herself.³⁴ Henry Woudhuysen has suggested on palaeographical grounds that they are instead the work of a Cambridge scholar, John Palmer, who later became a chaplain to the queen and then archdeacon of Ely. Thus, the “I” of the prayers becomes, as Woudhuysen puts it, a “sonnet ‘I’”, and not literally the voice of the queen herself.³⁵ This view has now gained widespread critical acceptance to the point that Steven W. May can now simply describe the prayer book as being “manifestly not [Elizabeth’s] work”.³⁶ Just why Palmer, then only a recent graduate, might have been involved in the creation of this volume, however, remains unexplained.³⁷

Nevertheless, the prayers ought not to be neglected, for whether they are by the queen or not—and the possibility that she may have dictated them remains—they *claim* to have been written by her. The tone and content of the prayers is “devoutly and orthodoxly Protestant” and, dealing as they do with the burdens of God-given queenship from a first person perspective, they provide at least a view of how Elizabeth was supposed to have understood her role.³⁸

Two further recent suggestions, by Diana Scarisbrick and Jane Lawson, serve greatly to enhance our understanding of the prayer book. In her transcript of the 1606–1607 inventory of the jewellery collection of Queen Anne of Denmark, Scarisbrick links the prayer book to one “booke of gold with claspes all garnished ouer with small Diamonds & Rubies, hauing the Picture of Queene Elizabeth & of Mounsieur in it, with a booke of Praiers written in parchment”.³⁹ There is a very high probability that this is the same book under discussion here.

If this is correct, then the book must have been rebound before its next documented appearance in the eighteenth century. The finding seems to confirm a suspicion long held by scholars that this “Lilliputian” prayer book (as Erna Auerbach and Elizabeth Goldring have put it) was in fact a kind of devotional aid, known as a girdle book.⁴⁰ These books were, as the name suggests, worn by ladies on a chain at the waist called a girdle, as can be seen in this portrait of Lady Philippa Speke (fig. 12).⁴¹ Remarkably, the covers of the girdle book shown in the Speke portrait appear to be the same as a pair now kept in the British Museum (fig. 13). Girdle books were almost exclusively related to female devotional practice. In *Euphues and His England* of 1580, John Lyly implores Greek and Italian women to “imitat the Englysh Damoselles, who haue theyre bookes tyed to theyr gyrdles, not fethers, who are as cunning in ye scriptures, as you are in Ariosto or Petrarck”.⁴² One example, on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, was according to family tradition given by Queen Elizabeth to her first cousin, Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon (fig. 14). Whilst lacking the jewels described in the inventory, it provides a good impression of the binding in which the prayer book might once have been kept.



Figure 12

Unknown artist, *Lady Philippa Speke née Rosewell*, 1592, oil on panel, 91.5 × 73.6 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of Wikimedia (Public domain).



Figure 13

Speke, girdle-book, cover showing a scene from the judgement of Solomon, circa 1530, gold and enamel, 6.6 × 4.4 cm. Collection of The British Museum, London (AF.2853). Digital image courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Figure 14

Prayer book said to have been given by Elizabeth I to Henry Carey, 1st Baron Hunsdon, circa 1553–1560, gold and enamel, 6.4 × 5.1 × 1.9 cm. Berkley Castle, on loan to the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (LOAN:MET ANON.2:4-1998). Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum, London (all rights reserved).

Hilliard is known to have executed books of this kind. Indeed, his first recorded commission as a freeman of the goldsmiths’ company is for a “boke of gold” made in collaboration with his fellow goldsmith John (Jan) Ruttlinger. Goldring has convincingly shown that this book is the same as the book of portraits on which Hilliard was working later in the year; thus, there is clearly a parallel to be drawn between this and the prayer book.⁴³

The second suggestion—Lawson’s—is, perhaps, the most intriguing. She has posited that this book in Anne of Denmark’s inventory is the same “booke of golde enameliid furnisshid with small Diamondes and Rubies bothe claspes and all” that was given, along with a girdle chain, to the queen in the New Year of 1582, by no less a figure than Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester.⁴⁴ The New Year’s list does not mention the contents of this book—presumably, it remained closed—but the description of the exterior—with the enamelling, and clasps decorated with diamonds and rubies—compares closely to the book in Anne of Denmark’s inventory. As the patron of the 1571 book, moreover, Leicester had already commissioned one work from Hilliard of this kind. Indeed, if Goldring is correct in her hypothesis that the 1571 book contained the portrait of Leicester that he is recorded as having sent to Catherine de’ Medici, then both, intriguingly, were conceived in relation to the Valois court.⁴⁵

The Visit of 1581–1582

Heretofore, no scholar has noted how surprising it is that Anjou’s portrait should have prefaced a book of Protestant prayers. But this should give us pause for thought. In the marriage negotiations between the duc d’Anjou and Elizabeth, Anjou’s Roman Catholic religion had always been a sticking point. Indeed, it was the eruption of public anger following the duke’s first visit to England in 1579, much of it driven by anti-Catholic sentiment, that was in large part responsible for the ultimate failure of the negotiations.⁴⁶ So it is remarkable that Elizabeth should have owned a Protestant prayer book containing a portrait of her Catholic suitor. Still more remarkable is the fact that it seems to have been given to her by Leicester, who had been a known opponent to the match at the time of Anjou’s first visit.⁴⁷

Some explanation for this may lie in the specific circumstances of the winter 1581–1582. Anjou had arrived in England on 31 October 1581 and was to stay until February of 1582.⁴⁸ The ostensible reason for this visit was to finalise the marriage negotiations, but by this point it was clear even to foreign observers that marriage was highly unlikely.⁴⁹ Anjou’s previous visit had proved that Elizabeth’s subjects would never tolerate a Catholic prince. And, in any case, with Elizabeth now in her late forties, there was little chance that she could conceive. Instead, Anjou had an ulterior motive in travelling to England. He sought funds to continue his campaign in support of Protestant rebels in the Netherlands against Hapsburg rule. Elizabeth had already given Anjou £30,000 with which he had successfully laid siege to the town of Cambrai, but he needed more to continue the campaign and came to England, *toque à la polonoise* in hand, so to speak, to see if Elizabeth could provide it. For her part, Elizabeth stood to benefit from keeping the prospect of marriage alive, as the French King Henry III had pledged also to lend financial support to the Dutch, but only on the precondition that Elizabeth married his brother Anjou.⁵⁰ Anjou’s previous visit, when Elizabeth seemed most minded to marry, had been conducted largely in private. By contrast, the negotiations of 1581–1582, when the marriage was in reality at its most improbable, became a vehicle for extravagant courtly display. The romantic side of the marriage discussions was played up by Elizabeth to give French observers something to report back to their king. On 22 November 1581, for instance, she publically kissed Anjou on the mouth before exchanging rings and exclaiming that she was to marry and that the French king should be informed. She reneged on this the very next day, hoping that news was already on its way to Henry.⁵¹ The apogee of this courtly spectacle of romance came in the New Year of 1582. Songs were commissioned from William Byrd and John Dowland to celebrate the match; and Anjou inaugurated the New Year with a lavish tilt.⁵² When he left, Elizabeth herself marked the moment in a sonnet “On Monsieur’s Departure”.⁵³ At around this time, gifts to Elizabeth of frog-

shaped jewels, referencing her pet name for the duke, became fashionable. Sometimes, these contained portraits of Anjou, some probably executed by Hilliard.⁵⁴

With marriage now highly unlikely, Leicester had no reason not to play his part in this rhetorical display. Indeed, he had from the start believed that it was better to influence Anjou from the point of view of alliance rather than marriage.⁵⁵ So Leicester, a one-time opponent of the match, became a close associate of the duke during his sojourn. So close, indeed, did the two become that it sparked the jealousy of Thomas Radclyffe, the 3rd Earl of Sussex. Shortly following the New Year, it was said that the two were only prevented from landing blows on each other by the personal intervention of the queen herself.⁵⁶ When Anjou eventually left England to go to the Netherlands in February 1582, where he was appointed Duke of Brabant and welcomed with much ceremony into the city of Antwerp, the Earl of Leicester was the most senior courtier chosen to accompany him.⁵⁷ Perhaps significantly, later that year, Anjou was depicted in another prayer book—this time a Catholic Book of Hours—by Hans Bol, who shows the duke at prayer dressed in much the same way as he appears in Hilliard’s portrait (fig. 15).



Figure 15

Ioannes (Hans) Bol, *François, Duke of Brabant and of Anjou at Prayer*, in *The Hours of François of France*, 1582, bodycolour on vellum, 8.5 × 6 cm. Collection of Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Digital image courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France (all rights reserved).

Conclusion

It is likely that the book given by Leicester to Elizabeth on New Year’s Day of 1582 was the missing prayer book. So let us, in conclusion, imagine for a moment what Elizabeth would have seen on first opening this book. With the prayer book attached to her girdle by a golden chain, she would have held the book in one hand—where, given its tiny dimensions, it would have fitted neatly—and opened the ornate front cover with the other. Inside, she would have been

presented with a portrait of her suitor, Anjou, dressed in black, surrounded by a wreath studded with roses—perhaps Tudor roses—and enclosed in a frame decorated in fleurs-de-lis of gold leaf. Turning the pages, she would have encountered a series of six prayers in a neat scribal hand, the first in English, the subsequent four in foreign languages in which she was literate—French, Latin, Greek, and Italian—with the final prayer returning to English. After these prayers, written in words that—although they might not have been those of the queen herself—claim to represent her thoughts, Elizabeth would have turned to see a portrait of herself, dressed like her suitor in black, but in fashions taken from the Continent. She would then have closed the book with its jewel-studded rear cover and perhaps secured it with a clasp.

What was Elizabeth to make of this? On one level, the golden and bejewelled prayer book, which was designed to be displayed at the girdle, would have made a prominent exhibition both of the her piety and of its giver the Earl of Leicester's loyalty.

At the same time, it would have communicated private messages known only to a select few. By including portraits of Elizabeth and of Anjou, Leicester, who had once himself hoped to marry Elizabeth, was able to demonstrate his new-found support for the match with Anjou. Yet, as we have seen, the marriage at this date was unlikely and the discussion surrounding it had become almost purely rhetorical. The prayers within could, by consequence, be understood rhetorically. By commissioning prayers in five languages, which pay a compliment to Elizabeth's humanist learning, Leicester may have intended them to serve as a reminder that when being courted by a Catholic—Anjou—Elizabeth should never forget her duty both to her subjects and to her Protestant God. At the same time, the prayer book can be interpreted as conveying a message to Anjou himself, who, having sat to his former court artist, would have been aware of the book's contents. He might have been expected to infer that the success of his courtship—by now only a cypher—was dependant on his support for the Protestant cause, a cause with which he had trifled in the past but which had in the winter of 1581–1582 acquired a renewed importance for the English crown and for the Earl of Leicester more personally.

Hilliard's portraits, then, link Anjou and Elizabeth both as potential spouses and as prayerful rulers, united—despite their differing personal theologies—in a shared political commitment to the rights of Protestants. It is perhaps in part for their ability to convey multiple meanings such as these simultaneously that portrait miniatures were so admired in this period, and that they remain for us a source of fascination today.

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About the author

William Aslet read History at Somerville College, University of Oxford. He wrote his Master's dissertation on the life and works of the eighteenth-century architect James Gibbs at Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, where is currently researching a PhD on the same topic. He has published both on eighteenth-century British architectural history and on the sixteenth-century portrait miniature, including a 2019 publication on the newly discovered portrait of King Henry III of France by Nicholas Hilliard.

Footnotes

1. [Anonymous], "A Prayer Book of Queen Elizabeth. From the London Times", *New York Times*, 1 June 1885, 3; [Anonymous], "Antiquarian News", *The Antiquary: A Magazine Dedicated to the Study of the Past* 12 (1885), 38.
2. [Anonymous], "Miscellaneous", *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, 7, no. 76 (1886), 111; Edward Joseph is described as being its owner in J.L. Propert, *A History of Miniature Art* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1887), 60.
3. Roy Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 102.
4. Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Exhibition of Portrait Miniatures* (London: Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1889), published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised by and presented at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, 1889, 136; and [Anonymous], "Exhibition of Miniatures", *The Times*, 29 May 1889, 15.
5. Western Manuscripts, British Library, London, MS Facsimile 218.
6. British Museum, *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts 1916–1920* (London: Printed for the trustees of the British Museum, 1933), 376.
7. "J.W.", "Introduction", Western Manuscripts, British Library, London, MS Facsimile 218, iv.
8. George C. Williamson, *The Miniature Collector: A Guide for the Amateur Collector of Portrait Miniatures* (London: Herbert Jenkins Limited, 1921), 30, plate V.
9. Frederick Chamberlin, *The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth* (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1922), caption to Portrait No. 6.
10. Frederick Chamberlin, *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd, 1923), 101.
11. Erna Auerbach and Roy Strong have treated them in the category of manuscript illuminations, although Strong describes the portrait of Elizabeth as having been "conceived and executed in the manner of a miniature". Erna Auerbach, *Tudor Artists: A Study of Painters in the Royal Service and of Portraiture on Illuminated Documents from the Accession of Henry VIII to the Death of Elizabeth I* (London: The Athlone Press, 1954), 121; and Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, 102.
12. For translations of the prayers, see Adam Fox (ed.), *A Book of Devotions Composed by Her Majesty Elizabeth R* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1970); and Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 311–321. For transcriptions of the prayers as written, see Janel Mueller and Leah S. Marcus (eds), *Elizabeth I: Autograph Compositions and Foreign Language Originals* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press), 44–53.

13. For a discussion of the term “quasi-pair”, see Elizabeth Goldring, *Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and the World of Elizabethan Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 98–113; and Elizabeth Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard: Life of an Artist* (New Haven, CT: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2019), 171–172.
14. It appears, for instance, in the upper-right quadrant of the “Pelican” portrait by Hilliard, opposite a Tudor Rose: Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool WAG 2994 and also in the “Rothschild” portrait, Rothschild Family acc. no. 27.2017, where it is integral to the pelican jewel that Elizabeth wears.
15. Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*, 172–178.
16. For Strong, it was “an important link between the miniatures of the last decade and, for example, the Hilliardesque ‘Rothschild’ portrait” (which has since been convincingly attributed to Hilliard): Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, 102. For the attribution of the “Rothschild” portrait to Hilliard, see Sarah Bayliss, Juliet Carey, and Edward Town, “Nicholas Hilliard’s portraits of Elizabeth I and Sir Amias Paulet”, *The Burlington Magazine* 160, no. 1386 (2018): 716–726; and Catharine Macleod, Rab MacGibbon, Victoria Button, Katherine Coombs, and Alan Derbyshire, *Elizabethan Treasures: Miniatures by Hilliard and Oliver* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2019), 52–55, published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised by and presented at the National Portrait Gallery, London, 21 February–19 May 2019. For Hilliard’s portraits “in great” of the 1570s, see Karen Hearn (ed.), *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530–1630* (London: Tate Publishing, 1995), 80–81, published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised by and presented at the Tate Gallery, London, 12 October 1995–7 January 1996; Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*, 109–13, 142–148; and “The Phoenix and the Pelican: Two Portraits of Elizabeth I, c.1575”, National Portrait Gallery, online, <https://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/making-art-in-tudor-britain/the-phoenix-and-the-pelican-two-portraits-of-elizabeth-i-c.1575.php>, accessed 1 March 2020.
17. Freeman M. O’Donoghue, *A Descriptive and Classified Catalogue of Portraits of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1894), xii, 31–32.
18. For the development of European courtly fashions in this period, see François Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West*, translated and edited by Yvonne Deslandres, expanded edn (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 219–244; for the Medici collar, see Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West*, 231. Collars of this kind can be seen in *Bal à la Cour de Henri III*, c. 1582, Musée de Louvre, Paris, INV 8730.
19. Letter written by Henry Cobham 22 January 1581, quoted in Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlock’d: The Inventories of the Wardrobe of Robes Prepared in July 1600* (Leeds: W.S. Maney, 1988), 122. Dana Bentley-Cranch, *The Renaissance Portrait in France and England: A Comparative Study* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), 187–188.
20. For the iconography of Henry III, see Alexandra Zverevra, “La Genèse du Portrait de Henri III”, in Isabelle de Conihout, Jean-François Maillard, and Guy Poirier (eds), *Henri III Mécène: des arts, des sciences et des lettres* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006), 56–65; Pierre-Gilles Girault, Mathieu Mercier, and Denis Crouzet (eds), *Fêtes & Crimes à la Renaissance: la cour d’Henri III* (Paris: Somogy), 82–91, published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised by and presented at the Château Royal de Blois, Blois, 8 May–24 April, 2010; Isabelle Haquet, *L’Énigme Henri III: Ce que nous révèlent les images* (Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris Nanterre, 2011), 21–89;

- and William Aslet, Lucia Burgio, Céline Cachaud, Alan Derbyshire, and Emma Rutherford, “An English Artist at the Valois Court: A Portrait of Henri III by Nicholas Hilliard”, *The Burlington Magazine* 161, no. 1391 (2019): 103–111.
21. “*Ce fût le chef de Saint-Jean sur un plat*”, Pierre de l’Estoile, *Journaux-Mémoires, tome I. 1515–1582* (Paris: Éditions Paleo), 122; and Boucher, *A History of Costume in the West*, 240–241.
 22. The title of *valet de la garde-robe* was also bestowed, for instance, on Jean Clouet. It was attendant with some privileges, including proximity to the Prince and his affairs, see Antoine de Furetière, ‘Valet’, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts* [...], Vol. 3 (La Haye: Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690); and Sophie de Laverny, *Les domestiques commensaux du roi de France au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2002), 33. Graham Reynolds was to establish that Hilliard had travelled to France, a fact long suspected by scholars, in Graham Reynolds, *Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver: An Exhibition to Commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Birth of Nicholas Hilliard* (London: Ministry of Education, 1947), 7–8, published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same title, organised by and presented at Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1947. Hilliard’s time in France has recently been discussed in Bayliss, Carey, and Town, “Nicholas Hilliard’s Portraits of Elizabeth I and Sir Amias Paulet”, with overviews in Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*; and Aslet, Burgio, Cachaud, Derbyshire, and Rutherford, “An English Artist at the Valois Court”.
 23. Jean-François Maillard, “Monsieur, frère du roi, mécène”, in Isabelle de Conihout, Jean-François Maillard, and Guy Poirier (eds), *Henri III: Mécène: des arts, des sciences et des lettres* (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006), 263–272.
 24. Mary Edmond, “Nicholas Hilliard (?1547–1619) miniature painter”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (2008), DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/13320, accessed 1 March 2020; and Mary Edmond, *Hilliard and Oliver: The Lives and Works of Two Great Miniaturists* (London: Robert Hale, 1983), 59.
 25. Susan Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (London: Routledge, 1996), 144–146; Mack P. Holt, *The Duke of Anjou and the Politique Struggle During the Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 88–91; and Mack P. Holt, *The French Wars of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 105–110.
 26. Sir Amias Paulet to Sir Francis Walsingham, 19 February 1578, The National Archives, State Papers 78/2, fol. 16, published in Arthur John Butler (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, Of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1577–1578* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1901), Vol. 12, 507.
 27. Aslet, Burgio, Cachaud, Derbyshire, and Rutherford, “An English Artist at the Valois Court”, 111.
 28. The arrival of Simiers and his retinue in London is documented in letters by Paulet and by the duc d’Anjou’s sister, Marguerite de Valois, see Edmond, *Hilliard and Oliver*, 62; Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 154; and Éliane Viennot (ed.), *Marguerite de Valois: Correspondance 1569–1614* (Paris: H. Champion, 1998), 98.
 29. Hieronimo Lippomano, Venetian Ambassador to France, writing to the Venetian Signory, “Venice: November 1578”, in Rawdon Brown and George Cavendish Bentinck (eds), *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 7, 1558–1580* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1890), *British History Online*,

- <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol7/pp586-589>, 586-589, nos 735 and 736, accessed March 1, 2020.
30. Musée Condé, Chantilly, inv. no. OA 1630; Nicole Garnier-Pelle, Nathalie Lemoine-Bouchard, and Bernd Pappe (eds), *Portraits des maisons royales et imperiales de France et d'Europe: Les miniatures du musée Condé à Chantilly* (Chantilly: Somogy Éditions d'Art, 2007), 50–51.
 31. “FRANÇOIS CLOUET (C. 1520–1572): Hercule-François, Duke of Alençon and of Anjou (1555–84) 1561 Oil on panel, 31.3 x 23.5 cm (support, canvas/panel/str external), RCIN 403434”, The Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/403434/hercule-francois-duke-of-alencon-and-of-anjou-1555-84>, accessed 1 March 2020.
 32. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. Kunstkammer 1601.
 33. National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 4197; Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.1174-1988. Elizabeth Goldring dates these to 1576 and 1571–1574 respectively; see Goldring, *Robert Dudley*, 86 and 89–100; Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*, 100–109 and 133–135.
 34. For example, Chamberlin, *The Sayings of Queen Elizabeth*, 101–102; Joseph P. Hodges, *The Nature of the Lion: Elizabeth I and our Anglican Heritage* (London: Faith Press, 1962), 131; Fox, *A Book of Devotions Composed by Her Majesty Elizabeth R*; William P. Haugaard, “Elizabeth Tudor’s Book of Devotions: A Neglected Clue to the Queen’s Life and Character”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 12, no. 2 (summer, 1981): 79–106; Patrick Collinson, “Windows in a Woman’s Soul: Questions about the Religion of Queen Elizabeth I”, in Patrick Collinson *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 90–93; and Christopher Haigh, *Elizabeth I*, illustrated edn (London: Routledge, 2001), 38. Along with Collinson, Susan Doran entertains the possibility that the prayers were not written by Elizabeth herself but does not attempt to argue the case either way in Susan Doran, “Elizabeth I’s Religion: The Evidence of Her Letters”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51, no. 4 (October 2000): 699–720.
 35. Henry Woudhuysen, “The Queen’s Own Hand: A Preliminary Account”, in Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo (eds), *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing* (London: The British Library, 2007), 19.
 36. Stephen W. May, “Queen Elizabeth’s Performance at Paul’s Cross in 1588”, in Torrance Kirby and P.G. Stanwood (eds), *Paul’s Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 303. The editors of *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* agree less emphatically with Woudhuysen’s conclusions, writing only that the prayer book is “largely in the hand of John Palmer”, see Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 311. Two of these same editors, writing in the later *Elizabeth I: The Autograph Compositions* are openly divided on this point, with one (Marcus) aligning with Woudhuysen and the other (Mueller) feeling that the possibility that they were written in Elizabeth’s hand remains, see Marcus and Mueller, *Elizabeth I: The Autograph Compositions*, 44.
 37. For Palmer, see Leonard W. Cowie, “Palmer, John (d. 1607)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (2004), DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/21192, accessed 1 March 2020.
 38. Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, reprint with alterations (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996), 64. For debates surrounding the nature of Elizabeth’s personal faith, see Collinson, “Windows in a Woman’s Soul”, 90–93.
 39. Diana Scarisbrick, “Anne of Denmark’s Jewellery Inventory”, *Archaeologia* 109 (1991), 220.
 40. Erna Auerbach, *Nicholas Hilliard* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 77–79; and Goldring, *Robert Dudley*, 96.

41. For girdle books, see Hugh Tait, "The Girdle-Prayerbook or "Tablet": An Important Class of Renaissance Jewellery at the Court of Henry VIII", *Jewellery Studies* 2 (1985): 29–57.
42. John Lyly, *Euphues and His England*, 1580, republished in Richard Warwick Bond (ed.), *The Complete Works of John Lyly* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), Vol. 2, 199.
43. Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*, 100–102.
44. Jane A. Lawson, "This Remembrance of the New Year: Books Given to Queen Elizabeth as New Year's Gifts", in Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo (eds), *Elizabeth I and the Culture of Writing* (London: The British Library 2007), 133–171; and Jane A. Lawson, *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges 1559–1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 291.
45. Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*, 104. In the early 1570s, Leicester had been heavily involved in the exchange of portraits relating to a potential match with Anjou, see Elizabeth Goldring, "The Earl of Leicester and Portraits of the duc d'Alençon", *The Burlington Magazine* 146, no. 1211 (February, 2004): 108–111; and Goldring, *Robert Dudley*, 79–83.
46. Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 159–171; and Holt, *The Duke of Anjou*, 118–123. For discussion of public and court reactions to the first visit of Anjou, see Natalie Mears, "Counsel, Public Debate, and Queenship: John Stubbs's 'The Discoverie of a Gaping Gulf', 1579", *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 3 (September, 2001): 629–650. Whether these negotiations were driven either by heart or by head on Elizabeth's part is discussed in Natalie Mears, "Love-Making and Diplomacy: Elizabeth I and the Anjou Marriage Negotiations, c.1578–1582", *History* 86, no. 284 (October 2001): 442–466.
47. Simon Adams, "Dudley, Robert, Earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (2008), DOI:10.1093/ref:odnb/8160, accessed 1 March 2020.
48. Holt, *The Duke of Anjou*, 160–164.
49. "Court gossip says that the marriage is concluded, but more serious heads do not believe it", see Hieronimo Lippomano, Venetian Ambassador to France, writing to the Venetian Signory, "Venice: November 1581", in Horatio F. Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 8, 1581–1591* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1894), 21–22, *British History Online*, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/venice/vol8/pp21-22>, accessed 1 March 2020.
50. Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 187; and Holt, *The Duke of Anjou*, 160 and 162.
51. Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony*, 187.
52. Goldring, *Nicholas Hilliard*, 171; and Henry Woudhuysen, "Leicester's Literary Patronage: A Study of the English Court, 1578–1582" (DPhil thesis, Oxford, 1981), 348.
53. Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Elizabeth: Collected Works*, 302–303.
54. Edmond, *Hilliard and Oliver*, 74.
55. Woudhuysen, "Leicester's Literary Patronage", 38.
56. Woudhuysen, "Leicester's Literary Patronage", 44–45.
57. Michael Questier, *Dynastic Politics and the British Reformations, 1558–1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 138.

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