

**Power and its *Doppelgänger*: James I and the Political Theology of Images
(The Peace Conference, Somerset House, 1604)**

« Il ne suffit pas de mettre la peinture en rapport avec l'espace, il faut la mettre en rapport avec le temps, un temps propre à la peinture. Traiter un tableau comme s'il opérait déjà une synthèse du temps. Dire : un tableau implique une synthèse du temps. Dire : faites attention, le tableau ne concerne l'espace que parce que, d'abord, il incarne une synthèse du temps. Il y a une synthèse du temps proprement picturale et l'acte de peindre se définit par cette synthèse du temps »,

Gilles Deleuze, *Sur la peinture. Cours Mars-Juin 1981*, (Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 2023), p. 36¹.



[Figure 1: Juan Pantoja de la Cruz (?), The Somerset House Conference, 1604, oil on canvas, 205 cm x 268 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London, England, inventory no°: NPG 665]

¹ “It is insufficient to merely establish a correlation between painting and space; rather, it is imperative to establish a connection with time, specifically a time that is inherent to painting. It is essential to conceptualise a painting as if it were already synthesising time. The assertion that a painting implies a synthesis of time is paramount. It is crucial to exercise caution and acknowledge that the primary concern of the painting is space because, first and foremost, it embodies a synthesis of time. There exists a synthesis of time that is inherently pictorial, and the act of painting is defined by this synthesis of time” (translated by the author).

The *Somerset House Conference*, a large-scale painting housed in London's National Portrait Gallery – with a contemporary copy in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich – provides crucial insight into the political and diplomatic performance of visual discourse at the heart of confessional conflicts in early modernity². The study of this painting has generated extensive debates regarding both its attribution and the interpretation of its broader significance³. We propose a reading of the painting's "hors-champ" (out-of-frame elements) in order to unravel its iconographic framework and thus account for its visual discourse.

This historical conjuncture represents a critical moment, when multiple dimensions – political, geopolitical, diplomatic, confessional, military, and commercial – were crystallizing, we aim to study the scene depicted in the painting of the Somerset House conference through a multimodal approach. Our analysis will explore the meaning of the image, the actors it portrays, and its specific configuration.⁴ Our analysis examines the 'hors-champ' of the painting, which include not only what is visible but also what remains unseen, yet is revealed through a network of multiple texts—such as the treaty itself, its ornamentation, diplomatic relations, and the memoirs and political correspondence of the advisors depicted⁵.

Our analysis will focus on three key aspects. First, we will examine how the tableau virtually reconstructs the negotiations by bringing together actors who never occupied the same space. Second, we will analyze how the political timeline is stretched through the various temporal layers present in the tableau. Finally, we'll decipher the painting's complex allegory, notably through the interplay of glances and the symbolism of the tapestry.

Contemporary scholarship on diplomatic gestures and objects, together with studies of magnificence as political expression, has significantly enhanced our understanding of diplomatic practices in the modern era. At the crossroads of cultural history and political history, these studies highlight the importance of ceremonies, material exchanges and bodily behavior in the construction of international relations. This renewal of diplomatic history is particularly evident in three key areas, which should be considered alongside our analysis of the Somerset House painting.

The first concerns the theatricality inherent in diplomatic interactions. Ambassadors, aptly described by Jean-Claude Waquet as 'human letters', use their physical presence, gestures and posture as much as the objects they wield - credentials, sealed letters, dispatches - to communicate subtle political messages. In the case of the Somerset House conference, this theatricality is strikingly evident in the staging of bodies and objects, notably through the arrangement of delegations around the negotiating table and the complex interplay of glances between participants.

The second axis focuses on the study of diplomatic ceremonial itself. Recent studies have shown how gestures, postures and exchanges of gifts were meticulously codified to reflect -

² Nicolas Le Roux (ed.), *Les guerres de Religion. Une histoire de l'Europe au XVIe siècle* (Paris: Passés/Composés, 2023); W. Palaver, H. Rudolph and D. Regensburger (eds.), *The European Wars of Religion: An Interdisciplinary Reassessment of Sources, Interpretations, and Myths* (London-New York: Routledge, 2015); Luise Schorn-Schütte, *Konfessionskriege und europäische Expansion: Europa 1500-1648* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2010); V. Castagnet, O. Christin and N. Ghermani (dirs.), *Les affrontements religieux en Europe: Du début du XVIe au milieu du XVIIe siècle* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2008).

³ Roy Strong, *Tudor & Jacobean Portraits* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969), pp. 351-353; Maria Kusche, *Juan Pantoja de la Cruz* (Madrid: Castalia, 1964); Maria Kusche, *Juan Pantoja de la Cruz y sus seguidores*. Bartolomé González, Rodrigo de Villandrando y Antonio López Polanco (Madrid: Fundación de Arte Hispánico, 2007); Gustav Ungerer, 'Juan Pantoja de la Cruz and the Circulation of Gifts between the English and Spanish Courts, 1604/5', *SEDERI*, 9 (1998), pp. 59-78.

⁴ W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁵ Ralph Dekoninck, 'Image du désir et désir de l'image. Ou comment l'image parvient-elle à se nier', in Jean-François Chassay and Bertrand Gervais (eds.), *Paroles, textes et images. Formes et pouvoirs de l'imaginaire* (Université du Québec à Montréal: Figura, Centre de recherche sur le texte et l'imaginaire, Collection 'Figura', 19), vol. 1, pp. 255-267.

and sometimes challenge - political and social hierarchies. Ceremonial should not be understood as mere decorum: it constitutes a political language in its own right, a means of expressing and negotiating power relationships. Our painting offers a particularly rich illustration of this, notably in the way it stages the virtual meeting of delegations and their relationship to sovereign authority, symbolized by the off-screen dais.

A third line of research has emerged around a cultural approach to diplomacy, emphasizing the significance of informal norms, social practices, and symbolic representations. This perspective makes it possible to understand diplomacy as a total phenomenon, which is not limited to verbal or written exchanges, but mobilizes a whole repertoire of gestures, objects and performances. Evelyn Welch's work on the material culture of diplomacy and Timothy Hampton's work on the languages of diplomacy have highlighted the importance of magnificence as an instrument of power and negotiation.

This recent historiography invites us to focus on the performative and material dimensions of diplomatic representation in the Somerset House painting. The objects featured - the oriental *kilim*, the tapestry depicting David and Uriah, the powers held by the negotiators - are not merely decorative elements, but actors in the diplomatic process in their own right. Likewise, the positioning of the bodies, the attitudes and the gazes are part of a meticulously orchestrated choreography that reflects the power relationships and negotiating strategies at work.

More broadly, these new approaches to diplomatic history enable us to understand how the painting itself, as a diplomatic object offered by James I to Philip III, is part of an economy of gift and counter-gift characteristic of international relations in the modern era. The very choice of subject - a negotiation scene rather than a more traditional representation of the signing or ratification of a treaty - testifies to an evolution in the representation of power, where the exhibition of the *arcana* of the State becomes an instrument of diplomacy.

The year 1604 marked a decisive break in the sequence of conflicts that have engulfed Western Europe since the end of denominational unanimity between France, Spain - including in its northern modality - and the kingdom of England⁶. This break corresponds to the peace signed and sworn to in 1604 by King James I of England and King Philip III of Spain. At this point, let's remind ourselves of some of the background to the intense geopolitical confrontation between the two powers. In 1604, two new sovereigns reigned over England (since 1603) and Spain (since 1598)⁷. The Somerset Conference can be seen as the end of a cycle of violence, and the dawn of a new prosperity for the two maritime giants; indeed, this is what the painting promotes. James I's accession to the English throne in 1603 marked a turning point in Anglo-Spanish relations: unlike his predecessor, Queen Elizabeth I, who had pursued an anti-Spanish policy, James I established himself as *rex pacificus*, eager to bring peace to Europe⁸. However, this desire for rapprochement with Spain met with strong resistance in English society, where anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish feelings inherited from previous decades persisted⁹. The

⁶ C. Giry-Deloison, 'England and the Spanish Netherlands, 1600-1630', *Revue du Nord*, 377.4 (2008), pp. 671-686.

⁷ G. PARKER, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: the logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries' wars*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 2004.

⁸ Joe Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2000, pp. 73-101; R. Malcom Smuts, *Political Culture, the State, and the Problem of Religious War in Britain and Ireland, 1578-1625*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023, pp. 446-488; D. NEWTON, *The Making of the Jacobean Regime. James VI and I and the Government of England, 1603-1605*, Woodbridge and London, The Boydell Press and The Royal Historical Society, 2005; P. Croft, 'Rex Pacificus, Robert Cecil, and the 1604 peace with Spain', in *The Accession of James I: Historical and Cultural Consequences*, ed. G. Burgess, R. Wymer and J. Lawrence (London, 2006), pp. 140-154.

⁹ ALLEN, PAUL C. "The Policy of Rapprochement." *Philip III and the Pax Hispanica, 1598-1621: The Failure of Grand Strategy*, Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 115-40; WHITE, JASON C. "Militant Protestants: British Identity in the Jacobean Period, 1603-1625." *History*, vol. 94, no. 2 (314), 2009, pp. 154-75; T. Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War* (Cambridge, 1989); G. R. Waggoner, 'An Elizabethan attitude

ramifications of England's military involvement in the Netherlands proved extensive. The Anglo-Spanish War (1585-1604) precipitated direct confrontation, culminating in the 1588 Spanish Armada episode. Although this invasion attempt failed, it initiated nearly continuous warfare between England and Spain until 1603. Subsequently, this protracted conflict profoundly affected relations between England and the Spanish Netherlands¹⁰. In commercial terms, it accentuated Antwerp's decline as the hub of Anglo-Flemish trade¹¹. English merchants, who had already begun to turn to other places such as Hamburg, accelerated their withdrawal from the Spanish Netherlands. Politically, English intervention helped to prolong and internationalize the conflict in the Netherlands. It strengthened the position of the rebellious provinces, which finally gained *de facto* independence in 1581 with the creation of the United Provinces. The Netherlands thus found itself divided between a Protestant-majority, independent northern part, allied to England, and a southern part that remained under Spanish domination and essentially Catholic. This division had lasting consequences for Anglo-Flemish relations. England developed close commercial, political and military ties with the United Provinces. On the other hand, its relations with the Spanish Netherlands, now reduced to the southern provinces, remained tense and limited throughout the conflict.

The end of Elizabeth I^{re}'s reign and the accession of James I in 1603 marked a new turning point in these relations. James I, keen to play a peacemaking role in Europe, sought first and foremost to improve his kingdom's relations with Spain. However, the 1604 treaty established a precarious peace and did not aim to resolve all latent conflicts between the Spanish, Flemish, Dutch and English poles of power. However, it did represent a decisive step in the conduct of the war on one specific point: the restoration of maritime security for trade, on the seas and in the ports¹². This point was discussed regularly throughout the eighteen negotiating conferences that preceded ratification of the¹³ treaty. Our hypothesis in this short study is as follows: it is this central point that the table shows, while composing a complex relationship not only with political time (that of the conference, the close context of trade negotiations and the longer time of the wars of the XVIth century), but also with space (political centers, imperial peripheries, delegation links between absent sovereigns/principals and present commissioners)¹⁴. On the

toward war and peace', *Philological Quarterly*, xxxiii (1954), 20-33; R. B. Manning, 'The Jacobean peace: the irenic policy of James VI and its legacy', *Quidditas*, xxxix (2018), pp. 147-89.

¹⁰ R. B. Wernham, *Return of the Armadas: the Last Years of the Elizabethan War With Spain* (Oxford, 1994); Ferrer-Bartomeu, J. (2022). Pour une histoire rapprochée de l'État. The representation of political writing in the Renaissance (Castile-England, 1590-1604). *Annales de l'Est*, 70 (1), 141-160 ; Joseph Cuvelier, "Les Préliminaires du Traité de Londres (29 août 1604)", in *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, t. II, fasc. 3, 1923, pp. 485-508 ; A. CRESPO SOLANA, HERRERO SÁNCHEZ, eds, *España y las 17 provincias de los Países Bajos. Una revisión historiográfica (XVI-XVIII)*, t. I, Córdoba, 2002; Thomas, C. (2008). Flemish "embassies" to European courts (1598-1621): a recognition of sovereignty? Le cas des négociations du traité de Londres de 1604. *Revue du Nord*, (N° 377(4), p. 687-700.

¹¹ P. Croft, 'Trading with the enemy, 1585-1604', *Historical Journal*, xxxii (1989), 281-302; Monique Weis, 'Commercer avec les 'hérétiques'. Les relations économiques entre les Pays-Bas espagnols et l'Angleterre élisabéthaine', 2014, *Bulletin de la Société royale d'histoire du protestantisme belge*, 133, pp. 1-16; Alexandra Gajda, 'War, peace and commerce and the Treaty of London (1604)', *Historical Research*, 96, 274, 2023, pp. 459-472; E. Smith, *Merchants: the Community That Shaped England's Trade and Empire, 1550-1650*, (New Haven, Conn., 2021); see also Robert Brenner's influential *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653* (Princeton, 2003).

¹² Alexandra Gajda, War, peace and commerce and the Treaty of London (1604), *Historical Research*, Volume 96, Issue 274, November 2023, pp. 459-472; Guillaume Calafat, *Une mer jalouée. Contribution à l'histoire de la souveraineté (Méditerranée, XVII^e siècle)*, Paris, Seuil, 2019.

¹³ Bernardo Garcia Garcia, *La pax hispanica : política exterior del Duque de Lerma / Bernardo José García García* - Leuven : Leuven University Press , 1996, p. 46-47.

¹⁴ Gaudin, Guillaume and Stumpf, Roberta (eds.), *Las distancias en el gobierno de los imperios ibéricos. Concepciones, experiencias y vínculos*, Madrid, Casa de Velázquez, Collection de la Casa de Velázquez, 190, 2022; Ferrer-Bartomeu, J. (2022). *L'État à la lettre. Écrit politique et société administrative en France durant les guerres de religion (vers 1560 -vers 1620)* (First edition). Ceyzérieu, France: Champ Vallon ; Ferrer-Bartomeu, J.

other hand, the treaty reorganized the fronts of the various conflicts opened up in the territories of the Spanish Netherlands against the new power of the United Provinces, which grew in strength until the Twelve-Year Truce in 1609. The first XVIIth century also saw a gradual decline in the Spanish monarchy's arbitral role in Europe, as it moved more towards a transatlantic imperial perspective.¹⁵

This textual apparatus forms the substrate as well as the tight discursive weave of this fascinating painting. The margins of the picture are doubled by a powerful threshold effect¹⁶. In this instance, the negotiators direct their attention to the dais above them, out of view. We stand on this platform with the two eminent spectators of this diplomatic gift from James I to Philip III - the English sovereign kept a copy. The face-off between the two negotiators is matched by the face-off between the sovereigns and their commissioners. The King of England and the King of Spain are to be placed in the upper part of the negotiation room, which we know consists of a dais beneath a canopy¹⁷. In this way, the painting's more general theme points towards the mysteries of the state, the secrecy of negotiations, made visible for a brief moment by this photographic snapshot, which escapes our comprehension so much the image is composed and seems to deny itself under the effect of the dialogue between its center - the *kilim* - and the other fabric stretched across its left margin - the tapestry.

We are thus in the presence of a hyperimage, a media device designed to explain the fundamental oxymoron of the *arcana* spectacle¹⁸: here, this concept refers to the painting's visual device, which accumulates several levels of reading and meaning, creating a complex network of references and symbols. This superimposition manifests itself both in space - through the juxtaposition of delegations and decorative elements - and in time - through the different temporalities evoked by the painting.

Virtual recreation of potential worlds

Several significant problems arise in analyzing both the scene and the painting, ranging from mistaken identification of the painter, faulty markings - and even manipulation - to doubts about the tradition and purpose of the painting and its Greenwich double¹⁹. In short, what's going on? At first glance, not much. We are faced with a scene that was to become a classic in the representation of peace in the 17th century²⁰. Two delegations face each other, some of them looking in the direction of the viewer. The English, on the right, face the Hispano-Flemish, on the left²¹. The table is upholstered in an oriental fabric, a *kilim*, and on it, the writing desk

(2022). Quand le pouvoir vint à l'écrit. The offices of the secretaries of state from Villeroy to Richelieu. *Geneses*, 126 (1), 11-33.

¹⁵ José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez, "Les acteurs de l'hégémonie hispanique, du monde à la péninsule Ibérique", *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 2014/4, pp. 927-954; P. Cardim, T. Herzog, J. J. Ruiz Ibáñez and G. Sabatini, *Polycentric Monarchies: How did early modern Spain and Portugal achieve and maintain a global hegemony?*, Portland, Or., Eastbourne, 2012; Jean-Paul Zuñiga, "L'histoire impériale à l'heure de l'histoire globale". Une perspective atlantique", *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, tome 54 - n°4bis (2007), p. 54-68; Jean-Paul Zuñiga *Constellations d'Empire*. Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2023.

¹⁶ To complete the present study, we plan to discuss in a future contribution the ornamentation of the two treaties sworn by James I in 1604 and Philip III in 1605. Here are the references, taken from *The Sale of the Century*, op. cit. p. 154: Ratification by James I of the Treaty of Peace, 1604 Parchment with two green wax seals. Three pages. 855 x 794 mm - Simancas, Archivo General, AGS PR 55-38 (FE 889) ; Ratification by Philip III of the Treaty of Peace, 1604 Illuminated bound volume with wax seal and silken seal bag. Four pages. 460 x 570 mm Richmond, Public Record Office, E30/1705.

¹⁷ Tudor & Jacobean portraits, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ F. Thürlemann, *More than One Picture. An Art History of the Hyperimage*, trans. E. Tucker, Los Angeles, 2019.

¹⁹ See above, n. 2

²⁰ *Repräsentationen des Friedens im vormodernen Europa*. Henning P. Jürgens (Hg.) Bonn 2021

²¹ Catherine Thomas, *Le Personnel du Conseil privé des Pays-Bas des archiducs Albert et Isabelle à la mort de Charles II (1598-1700)* : dictionnaire prosographique, Bruxelles, Archives et bibliothèques de Bruxelles, 2005,

before the English Secretary of State displays the conclusions of the negotiations, the Treaty of London itself²². The room is soberly decorated, a window is open on the side of the Spanish-Flemish delegation, a tapestry is stretched behind it. Yet nothing is quite so simple at Somerset House, and we need to unfold the image, which concatenates time into the folds of vast political spaces over which the ambitions of the two imperial superpowers of the early ^{eighteenth} century now extend.

First of all, the painting captures, as though in a single moment, the long months of negotiation between the distant poles of power that are Madrid, Brussels and London. Never before have the envoys been brought together in this room at the same time²³. Diplomatic processes typically involved other elements: private consultations, bilateral talks, functional specialization of councils, between service aristocrats and jurists. And, above all, how many secretaries, clerks and petty feathers were there in this hive of activity that usually haunts cabinets, councils, offices, parliament and the palace²⁴? Not one of them survived the visual performance mill: how can we explain this? What's more, the length of the negotiations is not only due to the material difficulty of communicating between principals (the sovereigns and the archdukes) and commissioners (the motley Hispano-Flemish delegation, the English delegation). It is indeed time as a strategic, political and diplomatic resource that the painting unfolds, unrolls and manifests²⁵. Indeed, we know that the internal interests of the Spanish-Flemish delegation were not strictly aligned between Philip III's commissioners and those of the Archdukes²⁶. Indeed, Philip III wanted to discover the English aims in order to negotiate the most advantageous peace possible. To this end, he arranged for his ambassador, Juan de Tassis, to make numerous stopovers and gave explicit orders for the diplomat to wait in Brussels before embarking for London. The Venetian ambassador, Giovanni Scaramelli, thus reports on James I^(en)'s meeting with one of the archdukes' chief negotiators, Count d'Arenberg, on the subject of ambassador Juan de Tassis's delay:

Le retard de l'arrivée de Taxis est dû à des ordres formels du roi d'Espagne. Il doit attendre à Bruxelles jusqu'à ce que Sa Majesté puisse prendre une décision d'après les informations que fournira le comte d'Arenberg, de manière à ne manquer d'aucun des avantages résultant des délibérations et de l'attention employées par les Espagnols dans toutes leurs affaires.²⁷

This delay by Tassis alarms England as to the real intentions of the King of Spain, and shows us the other side of the negotiation coin, made up of forced delays which serve not only to temporize in order to discover the game of yesterday's adversary, but also to await orders and written authority - authority which Arenberg has not received and which he is not vested with

163 p. and *Le Visage humain de l'administration : les grands commis du gouvernement central des Pays-Bas espagnols, 1598-1700*, Bruxelles, Académie royale de Belgique, 2014.

²² MacLean, Gerald. "Ottoman Things in Early-Modern England." *Geographies of Contact*, edited by Caroline Lehni et al, Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2017, pp. 92-107; MacLean, G. (2007). *Performing East and Captive Agency*. In: *Looking East*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 97-119.

²³ Jérémie Ferrer-Bartomeu, *Pour une histoire rapprochée*, art. cit. p. 151-152.

²⁴ For a study of the infra-secretariat during the Renaissance, see : Jérémie Ferrer-Bartomeu, *L'État à la lettre....* op. cit. p. 44 et sqq. and Damien Fontvieille, *Les commis des secrétaires d'État en France à la Renaissance. Entre domesticité et structuration d'une administration*. *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine*, (n° 70-1(1), 2023, p. 5-28.

²⁵ "It's not enough to relate painting to space, you have to relate it to time, a time specific to painting. Treat a painting as if it were already a synthesis of time. Say: a painting implies a synthesis of time. Say: be careful, the painting only concerns space because, first and foremost, it embodies a synthesis of time. There is a synthesis of time that is properly pictorial, and the act of painting is defined by this synthesis of time", Gilles Deleuze, *Sur la peinture*. Cours Mars-Juin 1981, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 2023, p. 36.

²⁶ Catherine Thomas, art. cit. p. 694-695.

²⁷ Letter dated August 6, 1603, quoted by Joseph Cuvelier, *op. cit.*, p. 500.

for these negotiations. Additionally, the English privy Council refused to negotiate the entire treaty with the Flemish alone, who were rightly considered to be in a position of subjection to Spain, from which they expected a minister plenipotentiary: in this case, Juan de Tassis.²⁸

On the other hand, the technical skills of the first envoys, led by the Count of Arenberg, were not sufficient to conduct the diplomatic dialogue. By his own admission, he was not sufficiently qualified to understand, even linguistically, the terms of the debate. Arenberg expressly asked Archduke Albert to send President Richardot, the head of their Privy Council, to assist him:

Letter from the Prince-Count of Arenberg to Archduke Albert, written from Steyn on August 8, 1603 (original in French with translation).

Jusques à ici j'ay fait ce que j'ay peu, mais plus avant je confesse à Votre Altesse, encores que la volonté et zèle au service d'icelle ne peult estre plus grand, entrant plus avant en matière je ne me voudrais fyer à moi mesmes seul, car je promectz à Votre Altesse qu'ils estoient cest après disner à trois discourant et me retournant, tantost d'une façon, tantost d'une aultre, leurs discours que je y perdis quasy le Nord, car tantost l'ung parloit françois, l'aultre italien et le troisième latin, à quoy je rendis les aboy.²⁹

The Flemish members of the delegation had other interests in view of the war with the rebellious Protestant provinces in the north. They were aiming for a swift peace, and the swift restoration of safe seas and harbors for their ships, the main driving forces behind the development of their economy³⁰. These misaligned interests between Spaniards and Flemish found their first line of friction in a competing relationship with time³¹. And it is this disjunction of interests that the painting, commissioned by Jacques I^{er}, shows us. The immediate consequence of this competition on the relationship to time is sedimented in the photographic snapshot: we observe the successive times of arrival of the representatives, virtually all together in the same room. More significantly, the artist conveys the potentiality of the meeting of characters facing each other, through the face-to-face game of two delegates: on the left, Alessandro Robida, Senator from Milan, and on the right, Charles Blount, Master-General of Ordnance, one of the first captains of the English army³². This virtual meeting is one of the first problems posed by the painting.

The second problem is more complex. It has to do with the composition of the canvas, the date of 1594 indicated and the signature of the painter - Juan Pantoja de la Cruz, painter to

²⁸ Catherine Thomas, art. cit. p. 696 ff; WAQUET Jean-Claude, *Temps et diplomatie dans l'Europe moderne (XVIe-XVIIIe siècle)*, Geneva, Droz, 2024.

²⁹ Henri Lonchay and Joseph Cuvelier (eds.), "Pièce 359", *Correspondance de la cour d'Espagne sur les affaires des Pays-Bas au XVII^e siècle*, t. 1, Brussels, Kiessling, 1923, p. 169.

³⁰ M. Weis, art. cit; Régibeau J., "Aux marges du congrès, un congrès à la marge. Franco-Spanish negotiation practices outside Westphalia (1648-1650)", in *xvii^e siècle*, vol. 298/1 (2023), p. 127-155.

³¹ Gilles Deleuze, op. cit., p. 36. For reflections on the relationship to time in the Renaissance, cf. the introduction by Alexander Nagel, Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, New York, Zone Books, 2010.

³² On Robida, see: Rodríguez, Manuel Rivero. "A Peace in Context: Spanish Change in Italian Affairs." *Stuart Marriage Diplomacy: Dynastic Politics in Their European Context, 1604-1630*, edited by Valentina Caldari and Sara J. Wolfson, NED-New edition, Boydell & Brewer, 2018, pp. 243-58. For specific information on the staff of the Spanish-Flemish delegation, see: C. Thomas, op. cit, 2014; Cuvelier J. Les préliminaires du Traité de Londres (29 août 1604). In: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, tome 2, fasc. 3, 1923. pp. 485-508; on Jean Richardot's role in the negotiations: Victor Brants, *Un ministre belge au XVII^e siècle : Jean Richardot, chef-président du Conseil privé des Pays-Bas, 1597-1609*, vol. 8, Académie royale de Belgique, 1901, pp. 831-914. More generally, on secretary-diplomats in early modern Europe, see : *Secretaries and Statecraft in the Early Modern World Search* in this book Search within full text Get access Edited by Paul M. Dover, Kennesaw State University Publisher: Edinburgh University Press Online publication date: November 2017 Print publication year: 2016

Philip III's bedroom³³. This is where the fiercest controversy over the painting is concentrated, between supporters of Pantoja de la Cruz and those of a Flemish master or school. The controversy appears to have subsided recently with the publication of Brown and Elliott's book, and we will adhere to their conclusions. The painting is indeed inspired by Flemish styles and promotes the new European commercial and maritime order, which the English secured in their negotiations with the Hispano-Flemish. In addition to the sound arguments put forward by art historians, a number of other details easily convince us of this: the different places given to the two delegations - the English have more room, and therefore more space, to impose their objectives - the writing tablet placed in front of the English Secretary of State, Robert Cecil, the allegorical motif of duplicity expressed through a tapestry placed behind the Hispano-Flemish (we'll come back to this later).

Pantoja de la Cruz's signature at the bottom of the painting and the date 1594 - ten years before the signing of the treaty - raise fundamental questions for those wishing to analyze and understand the overall economy of the image³⁴. The hypothesis of the Spanish painter's lapsus calami, in falsely attributing this masterpiece to himself, does not, by itself, convince us³⁵. We must look elsewhere, no doubt by taking a closer look at a detail of the tapestry depicting the episode of Uriah the Hittite, placed behind the Hispano-Flemish³⁶. The date 1560 appears in the margin of the tapestry and is referenced in the painting's margins. We hypothesize that it is in this marginal inscription that lies the main key to interpreting the painting.

The analysis of the off-screen can be carried out in several ways: we need to study not only what's in the margins, but also the *elephant in the room*, the centrality of the *kilim-adorned* table device; and, complementarily, we need to pay attention to the textual apparatus surrounding the negotiations: this set of sources, too, composes a problematic relationship to the study of the margins³⁷. The painting's final off-field is made up of what we don't see, or rather, what we guess too well: the prominent place given to the very concept of delegation - rather than representation - and therefore to powers (present in the painting, expressed by the pieces of paper held in the hands of the delegates), making a hollow return to the exaltation of sovereign

³³ On the debates surrounding the attribution of the painting, see Brown, Elliott, *The Sale of the Century* and more generally note 2.

³⁴ According to Roy Strong, who led the material analysis of the painting at the NPG, the signature (which turns out to be authentic) and the date are very old, almost contemporary with the painting's creation: R. Strong, 1969, p. 352-353.

³⁵ Brown, Elliott, *op. cit.* p. 145.

³⁶ For the study of this tapestry, we would like to express our deep gratitude to Professors Guy Delmarcel (KU Leuven) and Didier Martens (Université Libre de Bruxelles), for taking the time to extensively search Henri VIII's collections for any mention of such a tapestry. At this stage, it appears that the tapestry does not exist in any inventory and that it is itself a virtual creation by the painter, or even a quotation from the tapestry commissioned by Margaret of Austria and acquired by the Tudor sovereign Henry VIII in 1528. The tapestry is conserved at the Musée national de la Renaissance in Écouen (France): *Tenture de l'histoire de David et Bethsabée*, 5^e pièce, 1510-1515, Bruxelles, Flandres, tapestry, 4.58 m x 7.24 m, Musée national de la Renaissance (Écouen, France), inventory no. E.Cl.1615.

³⁷ Numerous accounts of the negotiations, right through to the diplomacy of the treaty itself, can be found in Robert Cecil's papers. See: *Calendar of the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House*, vol. 16, 1604, London, Originally published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933. They are also reported by A. Gadjia, *art. cit.* p. 463, n. 29: "The English diary of the negotiations is Thomas Edmond's account, 'A Journal of the Conference betwixt his Majesties Comissioners and the Commissioners of the King of Spaine and the Arche Dukes of Austria', The National Archives of the U.K., SP 103/64, fols. 141r-193v". On the *kilim* and more generally the eastern tropism of Stuart England: English-Transylvanian contacts in the 17th century: the early Stuarts and Transylvania during the Thirty Years' War / Katalin Eperjesi *Alphabet of title: Latin Author(s): Eperjesi, Katalin (1979-....). Author Date(s): 2008 Language(s): English Country: Germany Publisher(s): Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2008; Jardine, L. and Brotton, J., Global Interests: Renaissance Art Between East and West, London, Reaktion, 2000; Appleby, J. C., "War, Politics, and Colonization, 1558-1625," N. Canny, ed. in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol 1: *The Origins of Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 55-78.*

majesty, in the first place, that of James I, the patron, and in the second place, that of Philip III

38

Stretching political time

While the Somerset House conference maintains a singular, situated relationship to the time of the event itself - the months of negotiations leading to peace between the two powers that had been at war for decades - it is also the advent, in the way a diplomatic conference is represented, of a radical novelty, even an exceptional strangeness³⁹. From a reticular point of view, the closed space of the negotiation room is inscribed in multiple otherworldly spaces.

First of all, the painter materializes this network through the state papers - or, to put it more accurately, the powers - held in the hands of two figures within the two delegations: Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton and Governor of the Cinque Ports, and Jean Richardot, President of the Privy Council of the Archdukes, Sovereigns of the Netherlands and Franche-Comté. This reminder of powers also forms a complex relationship with political time. The instructions to the ambassadors extraordinary and other members of the various Spanish, Flemish and English councils and juntas are materialized here under the media device of the bond of subjection between the envoys and their sovereigns. But there is a third - and ultimate? - of political writing: the writing box placed before the powerful English Secretary of State, Robert Cecil, who sets the terms of negotiation and the articles of peace. It is unimaginable that it was Cecil himself who set down the terms of the complex agreement between the delegations. Indeed, we know the writing style of the secretaries of state, who were titular secretaries in 1604 and no longer in office; While these high-level administrators wrote their secret correspondence in abundance, in the form of drafts - minutes - part of which often had to be encrypted by a clerk at a later date, these great servants of the State practiced dictation to an army of plumitifs, clerks, translators-interpreters in various languages (truchements) and other clerks (some of whom were so-called hand secretaries who knew how to imitate their master's handwriting and signature)⁴⁰. Here, in the confined space that depicts the *arcana* of the State, no small hand of these great pens disturbs the almost impeccable symmetry of the composition. What's more, all that remains of the State are its *arcana*, as its functional personnel take a back seat to its legitimate sovereignty. This is suggested by Bryan Organ's masterly reading of the work in his

³⁸ On remote government and the concepts of delegation and representation, see : GAUDIN Guillaume and RIVERO RODRÍGUEZ Manuel, *Que aya virrey en aquel reyno*: vencer la distancia en el imperio español , Madrid, Spain, Polifemo, 2020; Aznar, D., Hanotin, G., & May, N. F. (eds.). (2015). *In the king's place* (1-). Casa de Velázquez. For an overview of the intensity of the renewal of studies on diplomacy and its plural actors, see : *L'Invention de la diplomatie. Moyen Âge-Temps modernes*, dir. Lucien Bély, Paris, PUF, 1998 ANDRETTA Stefano, PÉQUIGNOT Stéphane and WAQUET Jean-Claude (dir.), *De l'ambassadeur : les écrits relatifs à l'ambassadeur et à l'art de négocier du Moyen âge au début du XIXe siècle*, Rome, École française de Rome, 2015. BÉLY Lucien, *L'art de la paix en Europe. Naissance de la diplomatie moderne*, Paris, Le Noeud gordien, 2007; Fontvieille, D., Lorenzelli, C., Nevejans, P. and Pélissié du Rausas, A. (2024). The margins of diplomatic negotiation: assessments and historiographical perspectives. *Histoire, économie & société*, 43e année(3), 4-16; Jean-Marie Moeglin and Stéphane Péquignot (dir.), *Diplomatie et " relations internationales " au Moyen Âge (ixe-xve siècle)*, Paris, PUF, 2017; Dante Fedele constructs a legal history of diplomacy in terms of the legal status of the ambassador (*Naissance de la diplomatie moderne (XIIIe-XVIIe siècles)*). *L'ambassadeur au croisement du droit, de l'éthique et de la politique*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2017); J. Watkins, 'Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, xxxviii (2008), pp. 1-14.

³⁹ On the representation of the administration in 16th-17th century iconography, see: Jérémie Ferrer-Bartomeu, "La figure du ministre ou le troisième corps du roi. Contribution à l'histoire des représentations et des matérialités politiques (Europe, première modernité)", in *La Part de l'œil*, n° XX-XX, p. XX-XX.

⁴⁰ On the socio-political worlds of the written word, see: Jérémie Ferrer-Bartomeu, op. cit; Damien Fontvieille, *Le Clan Bochetel. Au service de la couronne de France, xve-xviiie siècle*, Paris, École nationale des Chartes, 2022.

depiction of Roy Strong⁴¹ : the vast machinery of violence, domination and paperwork fades behind the surface of the egg-shaped faces of the peace commissioners.

An examination of the position of the *escritoire* in front of Cecil as further evidence of the painter's identity: a Fleming in the service of the English rather than a Spanish court painter. The temporal threshold effect adds to the spatial one: we arrive as if after the final term of the negotiation - the treaty will be signed on August 28, after nearly twenty conferences, before being sent to the sovereigns for ratification and confirmation - the sheet of paper placed on the writing-table in front of Robert Cecil is blackened with fine, nervous handwriting. This configuration thus transforms our understanding. The unveiling of the secret of the negotiations, for a time and a time only, takes place once the provisions of the treaty are firmly established, as this blackened sheet suggests.

Autopsy of an allegory

As previously established, the picture's device seems relatively simple: an irenic face-to-face meeting of delegates who were once enemies, literally sitting around the negotiating table to conclude a just peace and restore their commercial capacities on the seas. The image functions to reorganize, in the visual order, the tumult of reality, thus helping to calm, pacify, smooth and order political society⁴². This is how we can assess its performance. However, the apparent symmetry of the two functional pairs of diplomatic delegations - the two fragments of the Somerset meeting, it might be said - is disrupted by a number of elements. These details could be harbingers of the difficulties of enforcing and maintaining peace. The presence of the half-open window may mislead us in this disruption of symmetry: on the contrary, it's a sign of good fortune, of the opportunity (the opening) to seal a good peace and the extensions (commercial, among others) expected from it.⁴³

In addition to the two envoys facing each other, the others scrutinize those looking at the painting: the two sovereigns. This face-off between diplomatic administrations and sovereign power is not uncommon, and is reminiscent of Horst Bredekamp's work on the later visual strategies of Thomas Hobbes⁴⁴. But let's turn our attention to a final element that singularly disturbs the painting's symmetry: the scene unfolding behind the Spanish-Flemish delegation is no less disturbing than this face-to-face encounter between the sovereigns and their envoys

This is the face-off between another king, in this case King David, and one of his servants, Uriah the Hittite. David, by means of a sealed letter - reminiscent of the powers held by Richardot and Howard - sends his faithful servant to the front line of battle, to certain death, in order to steal his wife, Bathsheba⁴⁵. As much as the scene depicted in the painting, this tapestry expresses a virtuality and potentiality - there is no trace of it in the collections of Flemish tapestries in England⁴⁶. However, one of James I's illustrious predecessors, Henry VIII, had a passion for the story of King David, with whom he identified, including in its sinful aspects,

⁴¹ Sir Roy Strong by Bryan Organ oil on canvas, 1971 69 7/8 in. x 69 7/8 in. (1775 mm x 1775 mm) Purchased, 1980 Primary Collection NPG 5289; see: *infra*.

⁴² J. Fletcher, 'Substitution and Diplomacy', in L. Campbell, P. Attwood, eds, *Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian* (London, 2008), pp. 46-63; L. Bély, 'Souveraineté et souverains: la question du cérémonial dans les relations internationales à l'époque moderne', *Annuaire-bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de France* (1993), pp. 27-43.

⁴³ Painted Windows Jane Hayward *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin New Series*, Vol. 30, No. 3, *Stained Glass Windows* (Dec., 1971 - Jan., 1972), pp. 98-101 (4 pages) Published By: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

⁴⁴ Horst Bredekamp, *Thomas Hobbes, Visuelle Strategien. Der Leviathan: Urbild des modernen Staates. Werkillustrationen und Portraits*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999; Thomas Hobbes, *Der Leviathan. Das Urbild des modernen Staates und seine Gegenbilder. 1651-2001*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020.

⁴⁵ *Reformation Commentary on Scripture. Old Testament, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles*, Derek Cooper, Martin J. Lohrmann (eds.), Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, pp. 378 ff.

⁴⁶ See note 36.

and commissioned a cycle of tapestries illustrating the main scenes of his life⁴⁷. Here again, the relationship to time is engaged, promoting continuity between the Tudor and Stuart dynasties, or the notion of the functional couple that runs through the whole picture (the two delegations, the two kings, the two copies of the same motif, the two central characters of the tapestry, and the two sovereigns scrutinizing their commissioners). Let's go so far as to say that this painting is a reflection on power and its double, which lies precisely in its representation, or even figuration. And beyond this hypothesis, James I's conception of sovereignty and perfect monarchy finds expression in the *naos* of the State's *arcana*.

What period does this tapestry commemorate? In what political context does it inscribe its gesture? And, to take up the analysis of Giorgio Agamben, a reader of Eric Auerbach, are David and Uriah the Hittite the allegory of duplicity, or its figure⁴⁸? That is, the concrete anamnesis of the betrayal suffered by the English merchants in the port of Antwerp? Or the prophetic fulfillment of the irremediable failure of peace? Let's go back to the strictest meaning of the parable: Uriah is a faithful servant, as evidenced by his posture, typical of Renaissance iconography; kneeling, often depicted with his hands clasped to his chest, he is about to receive the fatal order enclosed in the king's letter, intended for an absent agent, Joab. In the Book of Samuel, David is the antitype par excellence; in Luke, Christ is called Son of David, which he is literally by Joseph. Power and its double thus find a new way of expressing themselves here, in a complex, composed, masterful reflection, where time unites the antitype and its perfect figure, the Tudor dynasty - Henry VIII - and the Stuart dynasty - of which James I is the first monarch, inaugurating a holy millennium through this just peace.

If we look closely at this image within the image, or rather at its position within the image, we also note that the tapestry has been placed behind the Spanish-Flemish delegation, as if on purpose, in a space that was not intended for it. In this way, the composition of the scene takes on a different meaning, less irenic and fraught with dangers and pitfalls. Peace has not yet been sworn by the two kings, and if the treaty - or at least its "minute- is indeed fixed on the sheet of paper placed in front of Robert Cecil, there are still several stages to go before the truce turns into peace. Moreover, the means by which David dupes his servant is not insignificant: it's a secret bill, a sealed letter that sends not Uriah but Joab to place Bathsheba's husband on the front line of the fighting, abandoning him to his tragic fate. This reading of the allegory of duplicity and deception, placed behind the Hispano-Flemish, ultimately makes it clear that this is not a work by Philip III's painter, Juan Pantoja de la Cruz, but a commission by James I from one of the most renowned Flemish artists of his - and his predecessor's - court, most probably John de Critz the Elder, whose portraits of Thomas Sackville and Robert Cecil are very similar⁴⁹. But the tapestry's precise position provokes a fascinating shock: it's the English who have before their eyes, overlooking the Spanish delegation, the fateful warning, this coded and booby-trapped reflection on power and the perfect monarchy. In this way, the margin assigns the Spanish-Flemish delegation a type, but dialogues, like a warning, above all with the English deputies for whom it is undoubtedly intended.

⁴⁷ Tudor-Craig, Pamela, "Henry VIII and King David." *Early Tudor England*, edited by Daniel Williams, The Boydell Press, 1989, pp. 183-205 ; King David as a Model for Kingship in the English Renaissance Word count: 26,434 Ellen Vanderstichelen Student number: 01100862 Supervisor(s): Prof. Dr. Guido Latré A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature Academic year: 2017 - 2018 ;

⁴⁸ Auerbach Eric, *Figura, La loi juive et la promesse chrétienne* [1938], Paris, Argo Macula, 2003; Giorgio Agamben, *Lo Spirito e la Lettera. Sull'interpretazione delle Scritture*, Vicenza, Neri Pozza, 2024.

⁴⁹ Brown, Elliott, op cit p. ; Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury by Unknown artist, after John De Critz the Elder oil on panel, 1602 35 1/2 in. x 28 7/8 in. (902 mm x 734 mm) NPG 107 Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset (1536-1608) being presented with Petitions by his Secretary attributed to John de Critz, the Elder (Antwerp 1551/52 - London 1642) Sissinghurst © National Trust Sissinghurst Castle © NTPL Sissinghurst © National Trust 1 2 Next image Category Art / Oil paintings Date circa 1605 - 1610 Materials Oil on canvas Measurements 2100 x 1600 x 30 mm Place of origin England Order this image Collection Sissinghurst Castle Garden, Kent NT 802395

What remains to be explained is the date 1560 on the margin of the King David tapestry. More precisely, this date refers to the commercial treaty that formed the basis of the London Merchant Adventurers' monopoly on the export of fabrics to the Netherlands and northern Germany. The 1560 agreements were in fact a complex set of tripartite arrangements, as they also involved the Hanseatic League: the Hanse Teutonic Guild in London had received extensive privileges for the export of fabrics, alongside those acquired by the Merchant Adventurers. According to Wolf-Rudiger Baumann's analysis in *The Merchants Adventurers and the Continental Cloth-trade (1560s-1620s)*, this configuration could be understood as a model for the opening up of trade. This is undoubtedly the final explanation of what was at stake during the London Peace Conferences. The hypothesis of a revival of the peace treaties between Scotland and England does not convince us⁵⁰. To do so, the kingdom of France would have to be brought into the great game of negotiations, which is not, in our opinion, the primary goal of the new Stuart king. Since one of the thorniest points in the negotiations concerned maritime trade, we believe that 1560 refers rather to the *Company of Merchant Adventurers'* acquisition of a monopoly on the export of Flanders fabrics⁵¹. Following the resumption of the race war and violent repression after 1566, this monopoly was undermined. The explicit mention of this date, in a painting celebrating the restored peace between the two maritime powers, is a clear manifestation of England's objectives. In the same way, the *kilim* covering the negotiating table is a sign of the commercial and imperial ambitions of English power: the textures of the textile are added to the weave of the painting, both a Flemish tapestry representing European trade and a *kilim* revealing the ambitions of great trade with the Orient⁵².

The English monopoly on the export of cloth from Flanders was part of a long tradition of trade between the two regions, but it also heralded a new era of tension and change. The Company, founded in the 15th, was a powerful association of London merchants with a monopoly on the export of cloth to the continent. Its continental headquarters were in Antwerp, *the hub* of international trade in the 17th. The *Merchant Adventurers* enjoyed considerable privileges in the Antwerp metropolis, particularly in terms of taxation⁵³. The monopoly of 1560 further strengthened the *Merchant Adventurers'* dominant position in Anglo-Flemish trade, granting them close control over the flow of textiles, one of the main commodities traded between the two regions. This privilege can thus be seen as a concession made by the authorities of the Spanish Netherlands to preserve good economic relations with England despite growing political and religious tensions.

It was only in the context of the intensification of denominational conflicts from 1566 onwards that the company began to work on moving its headquarters to other trading centers (Emden, Hamburg)⁵⁴. These plans, initially used as a means of pressure in negotiations with the Dutch authorities, were to gradually take shape as the situation worsened. The outbreak of the Dutch Revolt in 1566 marked a decisive turning point, and the crackdown on Protestant merchants following the arrival of the Duke of Alba convinced the company to leave Antwerp. Admittedly, the definitive break did not take place until 1582, but the main activities had already left the city several years earlier: Antwerp had lost its status as a *hub* of international trade, and

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⁵¹ G.D. Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor*, Manchester, 1975; *The Queen's Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands*, Manchester, 1986; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution. Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*, London-New York, Verso, 2003 (1993); MacLean, art. cit. pp. 92 ff.

⁵² M. Weis, art. cit.

⁵³ G. Unwin, "The Merchant Adventurers Company in the Reign of Elizabeth", in: *Studies in Economic History*, London, 1958, pp. 133-151.

⁵⁴ Monique Weis, 'La diplomatie au service du commerce : Les relations politiques entre les Pays-Bas espagnols et les villes hanséatiques de Hambourg, de Brême et de Lubeck pendant les années 1560', in Jean-Pierre Poussou (ed.), *Les monarchies européennes à l'époque moderne : Mélanges offerts à Jean-François Labourdette* (Paris: Publications de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne), pp. 203-18.

many foreign merchants had already left. This development was also part of a wider transformation of European trade networks, with the center of gravity of international trade gradually shifting northwards, to the benefit of places like Amsterdam and Hamburg. The painting of the Somerset House Conference captures precisely this moment when these contradictory trends clashed. Tensions over trade issues came to a head during discussions on trade with the Spanish colonies in the New World and the Pacific. The Spanish proposal stipulated that trade should be allowed "in all kingdoms where trade is permitted". Admiral Nottingham rejected this formulation and even produced a map to support his position, questioning the right of the Spanish king to deny English traders access to areas where his own ships did not go, such as China or Java. This session, which probably took place on June 20, 1604, plunged the negotiations into confusion. The Spanish delegates, already divided on the issue, were caught off guard, especially as they doubted whether the proposed wording would be acceptable to Madrid. In the end, as Cecil wrote to Parry, "considering our free trade to the East and West Indies, we have pressed this point much with them, but find no possibility of obtaining it from their hands, and therefore, rather than admit the least prejudice against it by treaty, His Majesty has resolved to pass over this point in silence, and leave it undetermined as it was by the Treaty of Vervins"⁵⁵. The question of free trade in the context of the Indies returned to the table a fortnight later, with the English delegates this time citing a Spanish jurist, Hernando de Minchaza, to challenge Spain's right to prohibit free navigation and question its exclusive claims to trade with the New World. If the *kilim* is the elephant in the room, it represents precisely this crucial issue that was deliberately omitted from the treaty: it symbolizes what the text covers up, or rather, what it conceals.

The painting of the Somerset House Conference is thus an exceptional testimony to the political, diplomatic and commercial transformations that marked the early 17th century. Through its virtuoso composition, it manages to synthesize three fundamental dimensions: the virtual recreation of a complex negotiation, the articulation of multiple temporalities, and the allegorical staging of power. In so doing, he inaugurates a new way of representing the exercise of political power, in which the written word and bureaucracy begin to assert themselves as the true mainsprings of diplomatic action. The collective portrait of the negotiators thus becomes the mirror of a political modernity in the making, where the force of arms gradually gives way to the power of the written word.



Figure 2: Cecil Beaton, Sir Roy Strong, silver bromide print on white card, 1967, 20.8 cm x 21.1 cm, (Collection Condé Nast/Cecil Beaton Archive), National Portrait Gallery (London), inventory no. NPG x12533



Figure 3: Bryan Organ, Sir Roy Strong, oil on canvas, 1971 177.5 cm x 177.5 cm, National Portrait Gallery (London), inventory no. NPG 5289

Conclusion

One more element to add to the record of the attempt to identify the painter: it is indeed President Richardot, representing the Flemish pole of the delegation, who holds the piece of paper in his hand, and not one of the Spanish agents. During the preparatory stages of the negotiations, the Count of Arenberg complained about his difficult relations with the King of Spain's agents: "They proved to be our masters rather than our companions"⁵⁶. Placing the dispatch in the hands of Richardot himself allows us to understand this picture as a manifestation of the prominent place of the Flemish administration within the negotiation cycle; if this cannot be understood as revenge, at least it allows a more advantageous re-reading of their role during the treaty, against the backdrop of dissensions between the administrations of the Iberian Peninsula and the Netherlands, well documented in the work of Catherine Thomas⁵⁷. The dispatch as an instrument of information is thus discreet; it shows what these technical tools were for the contemporaries surrounded by such iconography: the sedimentation of power mechanisms envisaged as the *arcana* of the State through which courts and councils, diplomatic representations, inscribe their political practices in the long time of deliberation, negotiation, colloquy and orality, under the permanent control of the sovereign power of kings. This closure of state paper contrasts with the glorious manifestation of kings' success on the battlefield. Nonetheless, these papers were formidably effective in the conduct of political affairs. This secretive, hidden dimension of the dispatch is notable in the Somerset House painting, as it seems to stand in stark contrast to the wide-open device of the writing-table, where an ink-blackened sheet can be seen placed in front of Cecil.

This examination demonstrates how the Somerset House Conference painting transcends mere historical documentation. Through sophisticated visual strategies, it articulates multiple temporal and spatial dimensions of early modern diplomacy. The work thus constitutes both a representation of and meditation upon the nature of political power. Furthermore, it prefigures the emergence of bureaucratic statecraft as a defining feature of modern governance.

In 1967 and again in 1971, the director of the National Portrait Gallery, Roy Strong, was pictured in front of the imposing painting⁵⁸. In 1967, he photographed himself in front of the scene. In 1971, he expressed his intimate attachment to the painting in paint. Only one fragment is visible, the Hispano-Flemish delegation. The composition and treatment are very different from the 1967 image. While the features of the English and Spanish-Flemish envoys are perfectly rendered by Cecil Beaton's lens, Bryan Organ's brush reinterprets the Somerset House painting and its tapestry, presenting us with only ovoid, featureless, unrecognizable faces. Power has become an abstract surface⁵⁹. Only paper hands and powers, like the *kilim* motif, remain. The tapestry has disappeared in a dark cloud. Roy Strong, who has devoted so much of his life to the study of this painting, has in our view rightly understood the fragmentary nature of this image, operating in functional pairs, threshold effects and folds, trapping the image in anfractuosités. The new Stuart sovereign promotes his dynastic filiation, but more certainly realizes it in the true face-to-face encounter that the painting introduces, beyond the envoys: James I, King Christ, contemplates Henry VIII, the new David, his antitype. And with him, we stand at the heart of the *arcana imperii*. James I delivers his theological-political message in one of the first representations of the bureaucratization at work in the written word: the Spanish envoys no longer have faces, they have become, at the end of the peace conference, the *figura*

⁵⁶ Charles d'Arenberg to the Archdukes, April 26, 1604, quoted by C. Thomas, art. cit. p. 696.

⁵⁷ C. Thomas, art. cit.

⁵⁸ Sir Roy Strong by Cecil Beaton bromide print on white card mount, 1967 8 1/4 in. x 8 1/4 in. (208 mm x 211 mm) Given by Cecil Beaton, 1968 Photographs Collection NPG x12533 ; Sir Roy Strong by Bryan Organ oil on canvas, 1971 69 7/8 in. x 69 7/8 in. (1775 mm x 1775 mm) Purchased, 1980 Primary Collection NPG 5289

⁵⁹ For this beautiful formula, we depend on Marie Lezowski's reflections in *L'Abrégé du monde : Une histoire sociale de la bibliothèque Ambrosienne (vers 1590-vers 1660)*, Bibliothèque d'histoire de la Renaissance, 9 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015).

of power. A crucial visual element has not yet been emphasized: the striking contrast between the tapestry and the olive tree in the overall economy of the image. While the English delegation faces the representation of royal duplicity, the Spanish delegation contemplates the classic biblical image of peace. In this play of contrasts and doubles that structures the image, this opposition immediately strikes the viewer. The treaty, still to be finalized in Cecil's hands, is adjacent to the olive tree but not quite beneath it, as if to suggest that peace has not yet been fully realized, that its promise has yet to be fulfilled.